UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN IN NKWANTA SOUTH MUNICIPAL

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**EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN IN NKWANTA
SOUTH MUNICIPAL**

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**A dissertation in the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies,
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Isaac Adams Amakye declare that this dissertation, except quotations and references contained in published works that have all been identified and duly acknowledged is entirely my work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: …………………………………

DATE: …………………………………………….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and supervision of this work was done with the guidelines for the supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.
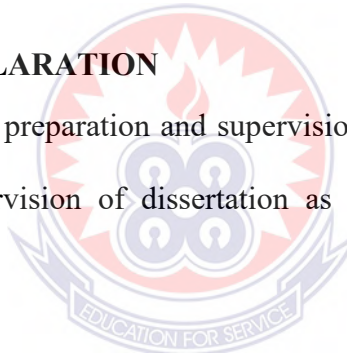
Dr. Harrison Kwame Golo (Supervisor)

Signature: …………………………….……

Date: ………………………………………….

DEDICATION

This dissertation is affectionately dedicated to my wife Mrs. Priscilla Amankwa Adams and Oti regional director of the Department of Social Welfare Mr. Innocent Komla Agbolosu.

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Praise God Almighty for granting me the strength and opportunity to embark on this academic journey at the University of Education, Winneba. My appreciation to my wife, Mrs. Priscilla Amankwa Adams for helping me with the application to gain admission to this university, for supporting me in the initial financial requirement that was needed for me to start my academic journey, and for his constant love and advice throughout the journey. I will forever be grateful for the knowledge and skills acquired to help me through my life's chosen career.
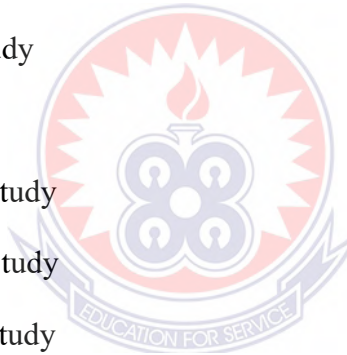
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of children witnessing domestic violence, focusing on child protection stakeholders in the Nkwanta South Municipal area. Utilizing a qualitative methodological approach, the research involved eight stakeholders with a minimum of one year of experience in supporting victims of domestic violence. Drawing upon insights from existing literature, an interview instrument was devised to gather data from participants. The analysis of responses revealed five prominent themes encapsulating the effects of domestic violence on children who witness it directly or indirectly. These themes include psychosocial effects, negative attitudes, coping mechanisms, externalizing/internalizing behaviors, and parental attachment. Participants emphasized the significance of these factors in understanding the consequences faced by children exposed to domestic violence. Overall, this study sheds light on the multifaceted impact of domestic violence on children and underscores the importance of considering various dimensions when addressing this critical issue in child protection.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Act 732 of Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana entitled Domestic Violence Act 2007, defines domestic violence as "an act under the criminal code of 1960 (Act 29) which constitutes a threat or harm to a person under the Act likely to result in physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, emotional abuse, harassment, and behavior or conduct that in any way harm or may harm another person, endangers the safety, health or well-being of another person, undermines another person in privacy, integrity or security" (Domestic Violence Act, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Domestic violence causes immediate devastating consequences to those affected: physical injuries, mental health problems, and poor well-being, to name but a few. But it also has long-term, far-reaching effects, including persistent inequalities between men and women, which limit women and girls' abilities to fulfill their potential (Ghana Domestic Violence Report, July 2016). Those who experience domestic violence have longer-term poor physical and mental health, a higher risk of contracting HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, and restricted choices in terms of accessing education and jobs. It is also likely that they will have lower levels of education, income, and productivity. These consequences are not only life-changing for the women and men concerned, but also for their families, communities, and wider societies, as gender inequalities become entrenched (Ghana Domestic Violence Report, 2016).

According to Section 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, "When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect

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children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job". This presupposes that adults including the parents of the child must see to it that, their actions or decisions will not hinder the growth and development of their child. It is also imperative that all institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, should ensure that children enjoy their rights devoid of any form of abuse. According to Section 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after – for example, if a parent hurts or does not take care of a child. Children whose parents don't live together should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child. In this regard, children are meant to live and grow under the custody of their parents, except when there is a presence of something that is a hindrance to their growth and development. This section of UNCRC explains how important it is for every child to grow up with his or her parents. The law acknowledges the fact that children grow up and develop better with their parents. Despite this, many parents are very violent toward each other. Regardless of whether the children are there or not, some parents fight each other to the extent of getting injured in the process. While 158 countries have passed some version of laws against domestic violence (www.unwomen.org), intimate partner violence continues to be a problem globally. For example, of the 87,000 women murdered in 2017 across the world, 50,000 of them were murdered by an intimate partner or a family member, and the continent of Africa recorded the second-highest number for that year (UNODP, 2019).

According to Section 5 of the Ghana Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) "no person shall deny a child the right to live with his parents and family and grow up in a caring and

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peaceful environment unless it is proved in court that living with his parents would: lead to significant harm to the child; or subject the child to serious abuse; or not be in the best interest of the child". This implies that, unless there is the presence of an impediment that hinders the growth and development of the child, every child must grow with his parents. Nonetheless, adults and parents of many children make decisions regardless of how the decisions will affect the growth and development of their children, and by extension, the adult lives of these children are affected directly or indirectly by these decisions. Some of the decisions include violent treatment of spouses, known as domestic violence. Domestic violence deprives children of their right to live with their parents and their development to become responsible adults. Exposing children to violence has numerous negative effects on the growth and development of the child. Due to the inhumane treatment given to some children by their parents, Ghana's Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) was amended in 2016 as The Children's (Amendment) Act, 2016 Act 937. According to Section 1a of the Children's (Amendment) Act, 2016, any child under the care of a parent or guardian, because of substance abuse is unfit to have the care of the child. This means that, if a parent or a guardian of a child abuses drugs, that parent is unfit to have custody of the child. Considering the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, this law presupposes that, the child is not safe with such a parent. There is a higher possibility of such a parent being violent due to drug abuse.

In Ghana, a country where domestic violence rates are high, 33–37 % of women experience intimate partner violence according to public health reports (Campbell, 2016). Further, according to Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center, a nonprofit in Ghana, 1 in 3 women suffer physical violence from their current or past partner, while 3 in 10 women admit to being forced to have sex by their partner (see

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http://gendercentreghana.org/; Institute of Development Studies (IDS) et al., 2016). These numbers report fewer cases than what goes on in reality, as there is a marked absence of documentation, literature, statistics, and information in general that indicate the depth of violence that Ghanaian women experience (WHO, 2013). For instance, Adinkrah (2014) mentions how the lack of research on the problem of intimate partner femicide-suicide in Ghana, has affected the way police and lawmakers approach the issue, by reducing and normalizing what seems to be a familiar form of tragedy in the region.

However, Women are not the only victims of domestic violence. According to Pingley (2017), domestic violence affects people of all genders, ages, and class and greatly affect the happiness of family especially children who are most affected after women. In Ghana, attention is often directed to victims of domestic violence which in most cases are women but neglecting children in the homes where the violence took place. Children may not be the direct victims of domestic violence but witnessing the acts of violence caused by misunderstanding in homes subsequently affects the life and general well-being of the children.

Children are most vulnerable to domestic violence as they are psychologically affected by what they see or remember from home. Children go through pain and anger as they witness their mothers suffer all forms of abuse and violence (Kertez et al., 2021). Domestic violence highly influences children and poses all forms of emotional problems such as fear, emotional confusion, depression, nervousness, possible adaptation problems, difficulty, and unwillingness to interact or socialize with colleagues and friends (Mittal, 2020). Children are gifts of nature, a marriage blessing, and an asset to every nation. Most marriages land on rocks because of the absence of

children. Some couples spend millions of cedis in a quest to bring forth children but when they are blessed with these same children, they end up traumatized and putting them on the streets through conflicts (Musah, 2013).

Children are adversely affected by witnessing domestic violence. Although many parents believe that they can hide domestic violence from their children, children living in these homes report this differently. Research suggests that 80% to 90% of these children are aware of the violence (Musah 2013). Even if they do not see a beating, they hear the screams and see the bruises, broken bones, and abrasions sustained by their mothers. Infants exposed to violence may not develop the attachments to their caretakers that are critical to their development. In extreme cases, they may suffer from "failure to thrive" (Clark & Smart, 1993).

According to Gregory (2006), children who live in violent homes can have many problems. They can have trouble sleeping. They can have trouble in school and in getting along with others. They often feel sad and scared all the time. They may grow up feeling bad about themselves. These problems do not go away on their own. They can be there even as the child gets older.

There has been a rise in the awareness creation about the rate of domestic violence and its associated effects. Several attempts have been made in recent times to eliminate domestic violence against women and children. Civil societies and governments around the world have acknowledged that violence against women and girls (VAWG), including domestic violence, is a violation of basic human rights and a global policy concern. In recognition of this international attention, "eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres" is one of the targets against which Sustainable Development Goal number 5 aimed at achieving gender

equality and empowering all women and girls will be measured. To further underscore the importance of tackling violence against women and girls, the "elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls" was chosen as the review theme at the 60th Session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women in March 2016.

To meet the significant challenges of domestic violence, child protection stakeholders need to understand them and be able to identify, assess, and treat children and adolescents who have been victims or witnesses of domestic violence. The primary focuses of many researches are on the effects of domestic violence on the primary victims who mostly are women. What are the consequences of domestic violence on secondary victims such as children who witness one parent abuse the other in their homes? The empirical focus of this research will therefore be on the effects of domestic violence on children as a whole.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

On 2 June 2010, the Ghana News Agency reported that according to Chief Superintendent of Police and National Coordinator of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU, formerly the Women and Juvenile Unit, WAJU), Ghana had recorded about 109,784 cases of violence against women and children between 1999 and May 2010. These mouthwatering statistics indicate the high levels of violence inflicted on women and children, despite the various efforts being made by national and international stakeholders to reduce and if possible, eradicate such behavior.

Considerable effort has been made in Ghana over the last three decades to reduce the incidence of domestic violence. Some of the first studies on domestic violence in Africa took place in the 1990s in Ghana, as well as in Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa

(Hodgson, 2002; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994; Watts, Osam, and Win, 1995). These studies were motivated by the actions of activist groups, which played an important role in the formulation and passing of domestic violence laws in Ghana (Bowman, 2002; Kimuna and Djamba, 2008; Schneider, 2008).

"The efforts to put the Domestic Violence Act in place in the late 1990s were accompanied by much publicity in the media. Physical spousal abuse became a regular theme in media reports, which resulted in the establishment of the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) now Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police in 1998, a specialized unit that handled crimes against women and children" (Amoakohene, 2004). During early 2002, an increased number of stories on a series of murders of women by their partners were publicized, fueling further the debate on violence against women in Ghana and enabling CSOs to mobilize public action. Do we even try to find out whether these atrocities happened in the presence of their children or if these children were directly involved in these acts? Although the government of Ghana has taken several initiatives since 1992 to increase the protection for children in response to concern about cases of abuse against them, lack of resources has hindered the service delivery of DOVVSU, one of the institutions mandated to protect and promote the rights of the child in the country (Golo *et al*, 2017).

Nonetheless, the results of domestic violence or abuse can be very long-lasting. People who are abused by a spouse or intimate partner may develop sleeping problems, depression, anxiety attacks, low self-esteem, lack of trust in others, feelings of abandonment, anger, sensitivity to rejection, diminished mental and physical health, inability to work, poor relationships with their children and other loved ones, substance abuse as a way of coping. Physical abuse may result in death if the victim does not leave the relationship.

The researcher's interest is drawn to domestic violence because he lives in a community where most children by observation are very violent, drug addicts, disrespectful, and perform abysmally in schools. In Nkwanta South, Oti Region where the research was carried out, Islamic and traditional cultural practices are dominant. Men in the municipality are permitted to marry more than one wife and as many as four wives, provided they have farms or cattle. In the polygamous environment, most men take advantage of that and marry more than one wife, only to give birth to numerous children they cannot cater to by providing their basic needs and eventually neglecting their responsibilities. In a farming and trading community, children are often sent to farms and markets to neglect their schooling. In one of the communities called Kecheibi, a woman told the researcher in a sensitization program that, she prefers her husband beating her to abandoning her. An understanding of such a mindset can be achieved through research.

Much research in literature have focused on the consequences of domestic violence on the primary victims who are mostly women. Contrary to the view that only women suffer from the consequences of domestic violence, children who witness domestic violence may develop serious emotional, behavioral, developmental, or academic problems. As children witness domestic violence continuously, they may become violent themselves, or withdraw. Some act out at home or school; others try to be the perfect children. No matter the cause of domestic violence, the parties who are directly or indirectly involved in the act of violence in the home may become depressed and have low esteem. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effects of domestic violence on children in the Nkwanta South Municipal.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the main effects of domestic violence on children in the Nkwanta South Municipal area of the Oti Region of Ghana. This study highlights the profound effects of domestic violence on innocent members (children) of the family. A reasonable sample of child protection stakeholders were selected from the Nkwanta South Municipal for this study.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The study focused on the effects of domestic violence on children in Nkwanta South Municipal from the perspectives of the child protection stakeholders in the municipality. Particularly, the study has the following objectives:

1. To find out the effects of domestic violence on children in Nkwanata South.

2. To find out how the effects of domestic violence on children affect the adult lives of children in Nkwanta South.

3. To find out effective ways to help reduce the effects of domestic violence on the adult lives of children in Nkwanta South.

1.5. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following questions guided the study:

i. What are the effects of domestic violence on children in the Nkwanta South Municipal?

ii. How do the effects of domestic violence on children in Nkwanta South Municipal affect their adult lives?

iii. What are the effective ways to help reduce the effects of domestic violence on the adult lives of children in Nkwanta South.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The major significance of this study is its contribution to existing knowledge on domestic violence and its consequences on its victims including children. Child Protection Stakeholders in the Municipality and NGOs will find this study useful as it explores their roles in instituting measures to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence in the country and to protect children who are directly or indirectly affected by domestic violence. Policymakers will be abreast with the innovative ways of tackling domestic violence in Nkwanta South Municipal and beyond.

Moreover, this research will help the Department of Social Welfare to appreciate the effects of domestic violence in the Nkwanta South Municipal and plan the activities suitable to help reduce the effects of domestic violence on children in the municipality. Finally, students and researchers will find this study of great benefit as it serves as a framework for which subsequent studies on the area can be conducted.

1.7. Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to Nkwanta South Municipal in the Oti Region. The general intent of this study is to know how domestic violence directly or indirectly affects the lives of children in the Nkwanta South Municipal with a focus on how these effects of domestic violence on children affect their adult lives. Nkwanta South Municipal is a cosmopolitan district with more than fifteen (15) different tribes.

Phenomenological studies meant to explore participants' perspectives and experiences regarding the effects of domestic violence on children in the Nkwanta South Municipal are used for this study. To obtain all accessible information for the study, the researcher assured the participants that any information submitted would be used for academic work and ensure confidentiality.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This work is organized into five chapters. Chapter One consists of the introduction, which consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, and the organization of the study. Chapter Two reviews existing literature that relates to the topic under study. Chapter Three gives the profile of the selected organization to be studied. It also describes the data that forms the basis for the research reported in this paper and provides an overview of the methods used in the study. The fourth chapter will deal with the results of the analysis. That is the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the data collected from the field. Chapter five which is the last chapter, summarizes the whole work, concludes, and provides recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The rationale of this study rests on the premise that children's development is influenced partly by what happens at home. To comprehend fully the perceived effects of domestic violence on the development of children, there is a need to review related literature, both theoretically and empirically.

This chapter reviews the literature on existing studies and works conducted by researchers and scholars from published and unpublished sources, the internet, and other reference books relevant to the current study. The literature also captures books, articles, and journals written about the topic. This chapter examines and reviews the following areas: The concept of Domestic Violence, the Effects of Domestic Violence on Children, the Effects of Domestic on Adult Lives of Children, and the Theoretical/Conceptual Framework.

2.1 Concept of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is now treated widely as a human rights issue. Domestic violence activities are considered to violate the basic rights of its victims. It took many years for domestic violence to be recognized as a violation of fundamental human rights and not a private matter (Ajayi and Soyinka-Airewele, 2018). Several different terms have been used for the concept of domestic violence such as domestic abuse, family violence, intimate partner violence, wife assaults, etc. These labels highlight different dimensions of the concept of domestic violence. There exist varying definitions of domestic violence, and as a result, researchers and international organizations have attempted to give a clarifying definition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO),

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violence is an intentionally manifested action, coercion, or empowerment against oneself and others to cause injury, death, or shock.

According to Musah, (2013), there is no single, precise definition for domestic violence. According to Andrew (1999), from the medical model perspective, the main criterion that has defined domestic violence for years is injury in the case of physical abuse and sexual penetration. Domestic violence according to this view is relatively clear. It is synonymous with broken bones or cuts and bruises displayed in the hospital (Andrew, 1999).

United Nations defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behaviors towards an intimate partner in a close relationship where the abuser expects power and controls the victims. According to the United Nations, domestic violence includes any behaviors that frighten intimate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone UNICEF (2000). Musah (2013), said that domestic violence involves acts of physical violence such as beating, stabbing, slapping, murder, and threats with a weapon or an object and traditional practices that are harmful to a certain group of people such as women. USAID (2006) defined domestic violence as an abuse by one person against another in an intimate relationship including marriages, cohabitation, dating, or relationship within the family. Domestic violence is one of the most pervasive human rights violations, denying its victims equity, security, dignity, equality, and their fundamental freedom and self-worth (Pesoob, 2010).

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service in the United Kingdom in its Domestic Violence Policy, defines domestic violence as: "Patterns of behavior characterized by the misuse of power and control by one person over another who are or have been in an intimate relationship. It can occur in mixed-gender relationships or

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same-gender relationships and may have profound consequences for the lives of children, individuals, families, and communities. It may be physical, sexual, emotional, and/or psychological. The latter may include intimidation, harassment, and damage to property, threats, and, financial abuse". (p. 23).

The introduction of the organic law 1/2004 (Independent Analysis of Domestic Violence in Spain) in December 2004 redefined domestic violence as violence originating from the position of power of men over women. Men have been specifically excluded from the definition on the basis that government figures show that around 88%-90% of victims were women. The new law, which changes several other laws and sentencing, provides instant protection to all women, eviction of men from their family homes, before trial, and a suspension of the presumption of innocence (Musah, 2013).

In conclusion, the term "domestic violence" typically refers to violence between adult intimate partners. The range of conduct included in this term currently varies with the context within which it is used. Clinical definitions are often broader than legal definitions. For example, one clinical source defines domestic violence as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners. By contrast, a model code on domestic and family violence limits its definition to acts of physical harm, including involuntary sexual acts, or the threat of physical harm.

2.2 Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Children constitute a significant demographic profoundly affected, either directly or indirectly, by domestic violence, which not only violates their fundamental rights but also hampers their overall development. The home, traditionally a haven for children, becomes a source of insecurity and fear in the presence of domestic violence,

compelling children to seek solace outside their homes. Exposure to violence in the domestic sphere can potentially lead children to exhibit violent behavior in their future relationships. Various dimensions, encompassing physical, mental, relational, and educational aspects, underscore the extensive repercussions of domestic violence on children (Kertesz et al., 2021).

2.2.1 Physical Consequences

Domestic violence is a pervasive societal issue that exacts a profound toll on its victims, with particularly severe consequences for the physical and mental health of children, as underscored by the Ghana Domestic Violence Report of July 2016. The repercussions extend beyond immediate harm to children attempting to shield victims, typically their mothers, and the associated physical injuries such as bruises, fractures, dental damage, and even hair loss, as documented by Khemthong and Chutiphongdech in 2021.

Moreover, exposure to domestic violence heightens the vulnerability of both mothers and children to a myriad of health risks. The correlation between domestic violence and pregnancy complications, as well as susceptibility to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, is well-established (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). The intimate connection between the well-being of mothers and the health outcomes of newborns is evident, with low birth weight being a particularly prevalent consequence for children born to mothers who have endured abuse (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

The ramifications of domestic violence extend beyond the physical realm into the intricate web of mental health. Victims, often mothers, resorting to substance abuse as a coping mechanism introduces an additional layer of adversity for children. The traumatic experiences that propel victims toward substance abuse can impede vital brain functions and metabolic processes (Holt et al., 2008). This not only exacerbates

the challenges faced by victims themselves but also imposes a detrimental impact on the cognitive and physical development of children within such households.

The cyclical nature of domestic violence becomes apparent as children, exposed to such harmful behavior, internalize it as the norm. This internalization manifests in the adoption of aggressive conduct as a purported means of conflict resolution, perpetuating the cycle through generations (Lloyd, 2018). Breaking this cycle requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of domestic violence, provides support to victims, and instigates societal change.

Children born into environments of domestic violence face a predisposition to adverse physical consequences from birth. The correlation between maternal abuse and the increased likelihood of giving birth to low-weight babies serves as a stark reminder of the intergenerational impact of domestic violence (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). Beyond the immediate physical ramifications, the insidious nature of domestic violence penetrates the very core of a child's being.

Domestic violence erodes not only the physical health of children but also their personality, consciousness, and concentration. Mahapatro (2018), highlights the far-reaching psychological consequences, with manifestations including violent behavior and a lack of awareness regarding appropriate social interactions. The toll on the developmental trajectory of these children is substantial, as they grapple with the enduring scars of their early experiences.

In conclusion, the prevalence of domestic violence casts a long and dark shadow over the lives of its victims, particularly children. The Ghana Domestic Violence Report of July 2016, alongside studies by Khemthong and Chutiphongdech (2021), Garcia-Moreno et al. (2005), Holt et al. (2008), Lloyd (2018), and Mahapatro (2018),

collectively underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts to address this pervasive issue. Interventions must extend beyond immediate physical safety to encompass the intricate interplay of mental and emotional well-being, breaking the cycle of violence and offering a path toward healing and resilience for the generations to come.

2.2.2 Psychological Impact

Children, tragically, emerge as silent sufferers in the wake of domestic violence, grappling with an intricate web of psychological aftermath that often goes unnoticed. The psychological consequences inflicted upon them are profound and diverse, encapsulating a spectrum of emotions that echo the traumatic experiences they endure. Edwards (2019), outlines this intricate tapestry of effects, including fear, guilt, emotional distancing, habitual lying, and an impaired ability to empathize.

The psychological fallout of domestic violence is not a monolithic experience for children; rather, it manifests in a myriad of behavioral responses. Some children externalize their pain through negative behavior, acting out as an expression of the turmoil within. Others, however, internalize their distress, concealing their suffering behind a facade that may ultimately give way to the insidious grip of depression (Khemthong & Chituphongdech, 2021).

Extensive research consistently underscores the vulnerability of children exposed to domestic violence, shedding light on the pervasive psychological effects they endure. Brown and Bzostek (2003) and Kilpatrick et al. (1997) contribute to this body of knowledge by highlighting the diverse range of psychological consequences experienced by such children. Among these effects, anger stands out as a prominent emotion, reflecting the turmoil within and often manifesting as disruptive behavior or explosive outbursts.

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Insomnia, cognitive impairments, and learning difficulties emerge as additional psychological scars borne by children exposed to domestic violence. The persistent stress and anxiety induced by living in an environment rife with conflict can disrupt sleep patterns, impair cognitive functioning, and hinder academic performance. The cumulative toll on the mental well-being of these children extends beyond the immediate trauma, permeating their daily lives and shaping their developmental trajectories.

The specter of post-traumatic stress looms large over children who witness domestic violence, casting a long shadow that can persist into adulthood. The harrowing experiences they endure can leave an indelible mark on their psyche, contributing to a heightened state of alertness, hypervigilance, and a compromised ability to regulate emotions. Such manifestations of post-traumatic stress serve as poignant reminders of the enduring impact that domestic violence can have on the mental health of its youngest victims.

In unraveling the intricate psychological aftermath of domestic violence on children, it becomes evident that the scars run deep and multifaceted. Edwards (2019), Khemthong and Chituphongdech (2021), Brown and Bzostek (2003), and Kilpatrick et al. (1997) collectively underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions that address not only the immediate physical safety of children but also the intricate landscape of their mental well-being.

Understanding the nuanced psychological consequences is paramount for developing holistic support systems that recognize the diverse ways in which children may respond to the trauma of domestic violence. It is a call to action, urging society to prioritize the mental health of these silent sufferers, break the cycle of intergenerational trauma, and

pave the way for a future where children can grow and thrive free from the shadows cast by domestic violence.

2.2.3 Impact on Relationships and Socialization

Children inherently derive fundamental developmental skills through the lens of relationships, and the corrosive impact of domestic violence on these connections cannot be overstated. Witnessing violence within the confines of their home environment disrupts the stability and responsiveness of these essential connections, leaving a profound imprint on the developmental trajectories of children. This essay delves into the intricate ways domestic violence undermines the foundational aspects of children's relationships, leading to instability, confusion, and a compromised ability to navigate social interactions.

Mittal (2020), underscores that the fallout of domestic violence on children is particularly evident in the destabilization of the foundational relationships that serve as the building blocks of their development. The confusion and pressure induced by witnessing violence at home create an environment where the reliability of relationships becomes questionable. Trust, a cornerstone of healthy relationships, is eroded as children grapple with the incongruity of violence within the supposed sanctuary of their homes. This erosion of trust becomes a pervasive theme that resonates through their interactions, hindering their ability to form stable and secure connections with others.

The challenge intensifies as children caught in the throes of domestic violence navigate conflicting loyalties within their family unit. Thornton (2014), highlights the complexity of this issue, noting that children may find themselves torn between loyalty to the perpetrating parent and the victimized parent. This internal conflict places an immense psychological burden on children, often pushing them to resort to imitating

violent behavior as a misguided attempt to gain attention or assert control in an environment fraught with unpredictability. The imitation of violent behavior as a coping mechanism further compounds the challenges faced by these children, perpetuating a cycle of dysfunction in their interactions.

Socially, the victims of domestic violence, including the children who witness it, often confront a barrage of challenges that hinder their ability to form friendships and navigate relationships outside the family unit. Pingley (2017) emphasizes that the stigma associated with being a victim of domestic violence creates a barrier to social integration. The fear of judgment and unsafety permeates the social sphere of these children, impeding their capacity to engage authentically with their peers. The resultant isolation further exacerbates the negative impact of domestic violence on their social development, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of social challenges.

In conclusion, domestic violence casts a long and dark shadow over the foundational relationships that children rely on for their development. The instability, confusion, and compromised ability to navigate social interactions represent just a few facets of the intricate ways in which domestic violence disrupts the essential connections that underpin healthy development. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is paramount to fostering an environment conducive to the flourishing of children's social and emotional well-being, providing a foundation for resilience and positive relationship building.

2.2.4 Educational Implications

Domestic violence, although not directly wielding a tangible impact on a child's education, unfolds a cascade of profound indirect consequences that permeate various aspects of their academic journey. The intricate interplay of physical, psychological,

social, and educational factors underscores the complex nature of the challenges faced by children exposed to violence in the home. This essay delves into the multifaceted repercussions of domestic violence on a child's education, exploring developmental regression, sleep disturbances, behavioral issues, and the broader implications on academic performance.

Developmental regression stands out as a poignant manifestation of the indirect consequences of domestic violence on a child's education. Musah (2013), highlights that exposure to violence in the home environment can trigger regression in developmental milestones, disrupting the natural progression of cognitive, emotional, and social growth. The stressors inherent in domestic violence situations create an environment where children are compelled to divert cognitive resources away from learning and development towards coping with the emotional turmoil generated by the violent occurrences within their homes.

Sleep disturbances emerge as another critical facet of the indirect impact of domestic violence on a child's education. The unsettling nature of violence within the home disrupts the emotional well-being of children, leading to difficulties in establishing and maintaining healthy sleep patterns. Carlson (2000), underscores the detrimental effects of sleep disturbances on cognitive functioning, memory consolidation, and attention span, all of which are pivotal components of effective learning. The compromised quality of sleep experienced by children exposed to domestic violence thus becomes a significant barrier to their academic success.

Behavioral issues further compound the challenges faced by children navigating the tumultuous waters of domestic violence. Gichuba (2017), posits that the stressors associated with witnessing violence at home can manifest in various behavioral

problems, including increased aggression, concentration difficulties, and heightened anxiety. These behavioral challenges create an unfavorable learning environment for affected children, hindering their ability to engage effectively in educational activities. The classroom, intended to be a space conducive to learning and growth, becomes fraught with difficulties for children grappling with the aftermath of domestic violence.

The intricate web of challenges associated with domestic violence culminates in a negative influence on a child's ability to learn. The stressors and emotional burdens carried by these children can result in heightened levels of anxiety, concentration difficulties, and increased aggression, all of which detrimentally impact their academic performance (Carlson, 2000; Gichuba, 2017). These challenges not only hinder the acquisition of knowledge but also undermine the overall educational experience, creating barriers to the realization of academic potential.

Emotional challenges, such as low self-esteem and depression, represent yet another layer of the complex interplay between domestic violence and its impact on a child's education. Abuya and Onsomu (2012) emphasize that these emotional challenges contribute significantly to absenteeism and school dropout rates. The compromised mental and emotional well-being of children exposed to domestic violence creates a pervasive sense of hopelessness and disengagement from the educational process, further perpetuating cycles of academic underachievement.

In conclusion, the impact of domestic violence on children's education is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing developmental regression, sleep disturbances, behavioral issues, and emotional challenges. The intricate interplay of these factors underscores the complexity of addressing the indirect consequences of domestic violence on a child's academic journey. Acknowledging and comprehensively addressing these

challenges is crucial for the well-being and development of the younger generation, necessitating targeted interventions that extend beyond the confines of the classroom to create a conducive environment for learning and growth.

2.3 Impact of Witnessing Domestic Violence on the Adult Lives of Children

The repercussions of exposure to domestic violence during childhood extend into adulthood, profoundly influencing parenting and intimate relationships. Attachment theory, which underscores the pivotal role of parents in providing protection and security, becomes compromised when parents themselves are unable to maintain a safe environment, leading to strain in the parent-child relationship (Waldman-Levi et al., 2013).

Belsky (1999) discerns variations in attachment patterns and parenting styles between secure mothers in secure relationships and those in non-secure relationships. Children who have experienced abusive or unresponsive caregiving may develop adverse reactions, resulting from either a lack of attachment or heightened anger, potentially leading to negative consequences for their emotional well-being (Waldman-Levi et al., 2013).

Research suggests a correlation between childhood exposure to domestic violence and the likelihood of perpetrating such violence in adulthood, particularly among men (Adams, 2007). Many female victims of domestic violence have backgrounds that involve witnessing violence between their parents, fostering the internalization of harmful patterns (Payne & Gainey, 2009). According to learning theory, boys may "learn" abusive behavior, while girls may "learn" patterns of victimization (Payne et al., 2011).

Dutton (2000) asserts that domestic violence disrupts a child's emotional attachments, significantly impacting their lifelong abilities, particularly in forming intimate relationships. Attachment issues stemming from childhood experiences may manifest in adulthood, contributing to jealousy and fear, ultimately escalating into heightened aggression and violence within intimate relationships (McKee & Payne, 2014).

The challenges experienced by adults who witnessed domestic violence in childhood extend beyond relational difficulties. Individuals may struggle with emotional regulation, potentially leading to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Waldman-Levi et al., 2013). Additionally, the learned behaviors and coping mechanisms developed during childhood exposure to violence may influence the ability to trust others, hindering the establishment of healthy and stable relationships.

Furthermore, the intergenerational transmission of violence is a concerning pattern. Adults who witnessed domestic violence may inadvertently perpetuate similar patterns within their own families. The cycle of violence can continue if individuals do not receive adequate support and intervention to break the learned behaviors acquired during their formative years (Adams, 2007).

To address the long-term impact of witnessing domestic violence, interventions should encompass not only immediate support for children but also ongoing resources and therapeutic assistance for adults. Breaking the cycle requires targeted efforts to disrupt learned patterns, promote healthy coping mechanisms, and foster positive relationship dynamics. Ultimately, a comprehensive approach is essential to mitigate the enduring effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence on the adult lives of those who witnessed it.

2.4 Effective Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Adult Lives of Children

Domestic violence, a pervasive social issue, can have profound and long-lasting effects on children, impacting their adult lives in various ways. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive strategies aimed at mitigating its impact on children as they grow into adulthood. Drawing upon existing literature, this review explores effective ways to reduce the effects of domestic violence on the adult lives of children in the Nkwanta South Municipal area, focusing on interventions and programs designed to support these individuals.

2.4.1 Providing Comprehensive Support Services

Research underscores the importance of comprehensive support services for children exposed to domestic violence. These services encompass counseling, mental health support, legal assistance, and access to safe shelters (Stover et al., 2010). By providing a holistic support system, children are better equipped to cope with the trauma of witnessing domestic violence, reducing the likelihood of negative outcomes in their adult lives.

2.4.2 Early Intervention and Prevention Programs

Early intervention and prevention programs play a crucial role in mitigating the impact of domestic violence on children. These programs target at-risk families and provide education, resources, and support to prevent violence and address underlying issues (Kitzmann et al., 2003). By intervening early, these programs aim to disrupt the cycle of violence and promote healthier family dynamics, thereby reducing the long-term effects on children.

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2.4.3 Trauma-Informed Care Approaches

Trauma-informed care approaches recognize the impact of trauma on individuals and prioritize their safety, empowerment, and recovery (Hopper et al., 2010). Implementing trauma-informed practices within support services ensures that children exposed to domestic violence receive sensitive and appropriate care. By addressing the underlying trauma, these approaches help mitigate the adverse effects on children's adult lives.

2.4.4 Strengthening Protective Factors

Protective factors, such as supportive relationships, resilience, and positive coping skills, play a crucial role in buffering the effects of domestic violence on children (Masten, 2001). Interventions aimed at strengthening these protective factors through community support networks, mentorship programs, and skill-building initiatives can help mitigate the impact of violence and promote positive outcomes in adulthood.

2.4.5 Education and Awareness Programs

Education and awareness programs are instrumental in addressing the root causes of domestic violence and changing societal attitudes and behaviors. These programs aim to challenge misconceptions, promote gender equality, and teach healthy relationship skills (Fulu et al., 2017). By fostering a culture of respect and non-violence, education initiatives contribute to reducing the prevalence of domestic violence and its impact on children.

Effective strategies to reduce the effects of domestic violence on the adult lives of children in Nkwanta South require a multifaceted approach encompassing comprehensive support services, early intervention and prevention programs, trauma-informed care approaches, strengthening protective factors, and education and

awareness initiatives. By implementing these strategies collaboratively, stakeholders can work towards creating safer and healthier environments for children exposed to domestic violence, thereby mitigating its long-term impact on their adult lives.

2.5 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Two theories provided the framework for conducting this study of the general effects on children exposed to domestic violence. The first is the social learning theory by the psychologist, Albert Bandura. The social learning theory states that behaviors are learned and/or acquired from other people. The social learning theory addresses the issue of how children's behaviors can be affected by being witnesses to domestic violence and possibly learning some of the negative behaviors such as aggression, defiance, manipulation, or acting out. Considering how pervasive the problem of children witnessing domestic violence is, it is necessary to understand how some children exposed to domestic violence can learn these effects from their parents.

The second theory that guided the conceptualization for this study is the person-in-environment theory by Mary Richmond. The person-in-environment approach emphasizes the importance of understanding a person and how the environment they are in can shape their behavior. This theory makes the connection between children and their behaviors when they are in an environment where domestic violence is present. This theory is important to the study because it provides a better understanding of domestic violence and the environment that these children are growing up in. Therefore, children who grow up in homes with domestic violence will sometimes have behavioral traits such as anger aggression depression, or anxiety, from witnessing the violence. Understanding the relationship between witnessing domestic violence and the

behaviors children display is very beneficial to improving services for children with violence in the home.

This study also seeks to understand whether participants are likely to physically abuse their children due to their experiences as children. The study seeks to understand whether men are likely to resort to physically abusing women when they engage in an argument due to the environment, they grew up in (domestic violence home). There is the rationale that women who are physically abused in their marriages continue to stay in the marriage because of what they grew up witnessing in their homes and so they see this act as a normal occurrence in every marriage.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

The current literature focuses on the issue of domestic violence itself and seeks to understand the effects that it has on children. To better understand the impact that witnessing domestic violence has on children it is important to first understand the issue of domestic violence. Once this issue of domestic violence is familiar then certain theories like the social learning theory can become the guiding principle for understanding the effects that witnessing and experiencing domestic violence has on children. The literature on the effects of children exposed to domestic violence indicates that the effects vary greatly from child to child. The effects often include anxiety, fearfulness, and a propensity for violence. These effects may have lifelong repercussions in their adult lives if they are not checked.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research approach adopted for the research. It discusses the plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, instruments for data collection, sampling design, analysis, and interpretation. It gives a background of the area studied, sources of data, methods of data collected, sampling methods, analysis, and ethical issues. It also gives details about the population, samples and sampling approaches, and the research instruments used in collecting data for the study.

3.2 Research Design

The study design is a critical component of any research endeavor, serving as the blueprint that ensures a coherent and logical integration of various study components to effectively address the research problem (Thakur, 2021). In this study, the focus revolves around investigating the effects of domestic violence on children and understanding how these effects shape their adult lives if not mitigated promptly. To achieve this, the chosen study design adopts a qualitative methodological approach, emphasizing the collection of primary data to explore the nuanced experiences and perceptions surrounding domestic violence and its consequences on children during their formative years and into adulthood.

Qualitative research, as defined by the chosen approach, seeks to delve into the depth and richness of human experiences. By employing qualitative methods, the study aims to gain a nuanced understanding of how children who directly witness domestic violence navigate their lives, both in the immediate aftermath and in the long term. This

approach facilitates the exploration of diverse perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted impacts of domestic violence on the lives of these children.

However, as with any research design, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. One notable weakness inherent in the qualitative data collection process is the potential for social desirability bias. Social desirability bias occurs when participants provide responses that they believe will present them in a favorable light, possibly concealing their true opinions or experiences (Nikolopoulou, 2023). In the context of this study, where child protection stakeholders are the participants, there exists the possibility that these stakeholders may be hesitant to reveal certain aspects of their experiences, fearing judgment or a perception of incompetence from their peers.

Given that the research focuses on obtaining insights from stakeholders directly involved in child protection in the specific context of Nkwanta South, this potential bias is a consideration. Stakeholders may be inclined to present a more favorable image of their efforts, potentially downplaying challenges or gaps in addressing the effects of domestic violence on children. Recognizing this limitation, the researcher remains mindful of the need to interpret the qualitative data with a critical lens, considering the potential influence of social desirability bias on the participants' responses.

In summary, the chosen qualitative research design serves as a robust methodological approach to unravel the intricate effects of domestic violence on children, both in the short term and over the course of their adult lives. However, the study acknowledges the inherent limitation of social desirability bias, particularly when engaging child protection stakeholders. By maintaining awareness of this potential bias, the research aims to navigate its impact and contribute valuable insights into the experiences and

perspectives of those working to address the effects of domestic violence on children in the specific context of Nkwanta South.

3.3 Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is pivotal, involving a nuanced and empathetic engagement with study participants to access their thoughts and feelings on often personal and sensitive topics (Auston & Sutton, 2015). In the context of this study exploring the effects of domestic violence on children, the researcher assumed a multifaceted role encompassing careful participant selection, questionnaire preparation, data collection, and the safeguarding of participant information.

One of the initial responsibilities undertaken by the researcher was the meticulous selection of study participants. Given the sensitive nature of the topic—domestic violence and its impact on children—the selection process was crucial in ensuring a diverse and representative sample. This involved identifying individuals with direct experience or expertise in child protection within the context of Nkwanta South. The intention was to capture a range of perspectives that could provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The researcher played a significant role in crafting the questionnaire used in data collection. This process required careful consideration of the study objectives, ensuring that the questions posed were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting the depth of information needed to meet the research goals. The questionnaire design aimed to create a safe and open space for participants to share their insights, acknowledging the sensitive nature of the topic at hand.

The ethical responsibility of the researcher extended beyond data collection to the safeguarding of participant information. Recognizing the sensitive nature of the data

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gathered, the researcher implemented measures to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This involved the secure storage of data and the utilization of coding systems to protect participant identities. Clear articulation of these mechanisms was essential, and participants were informed about the steps taken to safeguard their data. Before the commencement of the research, participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study, the potential risks involved, and the protective measures in place. Informed consent was sought, highlighting the commitment to ethical standards in research.

Moreover, the researcher played a crucial role in building rapport with participants. Establishing trust is paramount in qualitative research, especially when exploring sensitive topics such as domestic violence. The researcher's interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, and empathy contributed to creating an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives.

In conclusion, the researcher's role in this qualitative study encompassed various facets, from participant selection to questionnaire preparation, data collection, and the safeguarding of participant information. Adhering to ethical principles and prioritizing participant well-being, the researcher navigated the intricacies of engaging with a sensitive topic, ultimately contributing to the depth and richness of the data collected. The commitment to transparency and ethical conduct ensured the study's credibility and the protection of participants in the exploration of the effects of domestic violence on children in Nkwanta South.

3.4 Population and Sample Selection

The study population refers to the specific group of individuals or objects that share a common characteristic and are of interest to a researcher (Gulzar, 2023). The population study comprises child protection stakeholders in the Nkwanta South Municipality. The choice of the population is because they work with children and ensure that children's rights are protected and promoted. They also work with victims of domestic violence and their family members. In the jurisdiction of Nkwanta Municipal, there are thirty (30) child protection stakeholders. Some of them are parents, family/extended family, Ghana Education Service (Teachers, School Administrators, PTA, etc.), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (Social Welfare), Judicial Service, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organization (CSOs), Traditional Leaders and Local Council Churches (LCC).

The research area for this study was limited to child protection stakeholders in the Nkwanta South Municipality who work with victims of domestic violence. Nkwanta South Municipal is one of the nine (9) districts in Oti Region, Ghana. Originally it was part of the larger Nkwanta District on 10th March 1989, which was established by Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 1496, until the northern part was split in 2008. The Administrative Capital of the Municipal is Nkwanta.

The Municipal is bounded to the north by the Nkwanta North District, to the south by the Kadjebi District, to the east by the Republic of Togo, and to the west by the Krachie East District. The municipality is characterized by conflicts and social vices (domestic violence, armed robbery, child trafficking, drug abuse, murder cases, child marriage, student truancy, etc.) due to its cosmopolitan nature (made up of many different tribes).

Sample size is a research term used for defining the number of individuals included in a research study to represent a population (Kibuacha, 2021). According to Kibuacha (2021), determining the appropriate sample size is one of the most important factors in statistical analysis. Using a sample has the advantage of being cost-effective and time-conscious. The method of purposive sampling was used in this study to develop the sample of the research under discussion. According to this method, which belongs to the non-probability sampling techniques, sample members were selected based on their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject. In this study, the sample population selected were agencies or stakeholders responsible for handling issues of domestic violence and child rights in the municipality. Child protection stakeholders such as Social Welfare, DOVVSU, CHRAJ, Ghana Education Service (GES), World Vision International, Afrikids Ghana, ActionAid Ghana, and Konkomba Workers Welfare Association (KOWWA) were selected because they are among the most qualified groups to provide an account of the effects of domestic violence on children who are victims or those who witness acts of domestic violence.

Participants in this study met the following criteria; are child protection stakeholders; work directly with victims of domestic violence and provide aid of any form to victims of domestic violence.

Eight (8) participants from the above-mentioned child protection stakeholders were selected for the research to gather varying perspectives while remaining true to the other population of professionals working in child welfare.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection instruments are the tools and methods you use to gather and record information for your research or evaluation project, for example, surveys,

questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations, tests, and more (Linkedin, 2023). Qualitative research uses primary data which are specific data collected by researchers from first-hand sources using methods like interviews, experiments, surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups. In this study, the main qualitative approach included structured interviews with stakeholders like CHRAJ, DOVVSU, GES, Social Welfare, and other Civil Society Organizations.

The Municipal Child Protection Committee (MCPC) of Nkwanta South Municipal headed by the Municipal Coordinating Director approved for the researcher to conduct a qualitative study after the researcher sent a letter requesting permission from the committee. After the approval, the researcher sent out a mass electronic email to all participant departments (see Appendix D). Departments that were interested in participating in the study called the researcher to schedule a time that was best for them. The researcher provided stakeholders with information regarding the purpose of the study, then the researcher visited the various respondents in their offices to proceed with the interview. The researcher conducted the interviews and data was collected using a digital recorder. The collection of data and analysis took place during a one-month window (March 2022).

3.6 Recording and Managing Data

The interview process in this study was meticulously structured into four sections, reflecting a comprehensive approach to gathering data on the experiences and effects of domestic violence on children, both in their immediate lives and as they transition into adulthood. The integrity of the research was upheld through the careful adherence to ethical considerations and the utilization of validated responses for analysis.

The first section of the interview focused on establishing the purpose of the study and obtaining informed consent from participants. This initial step is crucial in ethical research, ensuring that participants are aware of the study's objectives, potential risks, and protective measures in place. By obtaining informed consent, the researcher laid the groundwork for a transparent and respectful engagement with the participants, fostering a sense of trust.

The second section delved into the collection of demographic information from participants. Understanding the backgrounds of those contributing to the study is essential for contextualizing the data and gaining insights into how various factors may influence their perspectives on domestic violence and its impact on children.

The core of the interview, encapsulated in the third and fourth sections, focused on exploring participants' experiences regarding the effects of domestic violence on children. Five overarching themes were identified to guide the data collection process. These themes provided a structured framework for investigating the negative effects of domestic violence on children's behavior, the psychological impact on children, the manifestation of internalized or externalized behavior, coping mechanisms adopted by children, and the implications of domestic violence on parental attachment.

Despite the challenges inherent in qualitative research, such as the potential for participants to skip questions, the study successfully collected 8 completed and validated responses. The decision to include participants who skipped certain questions but provided responses to other sections, particularly in the open-ended portions, added depth and richness to the dataset. This approach recognizes the value of participants' contributions beyond mere quantitative completion.

Post-interview, the recorded discussions underwent a meticulous translation process by language experts proficient in Twi, Ewe, French, and English. This multilingual competence was essential in capturing the nuances and intricacies of participants' expressions. The researcher then cross-referenced the translated scripts with written notes, ensuring precision and quality assurance in the transcription process.

The subsequent step involved the independent transcription of the interviews by the researcher, providing a firsthand engagement with the data. Following transcription, the researcher employed a coding process based on emerging themes. This thematic coding facilitated the organization and analysis of the qualitative data, extracting meaningful patterns and insights from the participants' narratives.

In conclusion, the interview process in this study demonstrated a robust and systematic approach to understanding the effects of domestic violence on children. The careful structuring of the interview into distinct sections, the adherence to ethical considerations, and the meticulous handling of the data from translation to transcription and coding underscore the methodological rigor employed. The utilization of emerging themes as a coding framework ensures a nuanced exploration of the participants' experiences, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3.7 Methods for Verification and Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are critical components in ensuring the robustness and credibility of research findings. In this study exploring the effects of domestic violence on children, measures were implemented to enhance the reliability and validity of the collected data.

Reliability, as defined by Hair et al. (2014), refers to the consistency of assessments and the extent to which they align with the intended results. To fortify the reliability of

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the data in this study, a post-transcription verification process was undertaken. All participants were contacted to verify or confirm their views after the transcription of the interviews. This meticulous step aimed to ensure that the transcriptions accurately captured the participants' thoughts and that the data retained its meaning throughout the transcription process. Importantly, the involvement of participants in the verification process adds a layer of authenticity and participant validation to the study, strengthening the reliability of the data.

Validity, on the other hand, pertains to the accuracy of an assessment and whether it measures what it is intended to measure (Rezaei, 2015). In this study, the research adhered to appropriate research procedures prescribed by the research methodology to ensure validity. The themes guiding the data analysis emerged both from the collected data and the relevant literature reviewed. This integration of participant perspectives and established literature contributes to the alignment between the research objectives and the actual measurements.

To further enhance validity, a pre-test of the interview guide was conducted with two interviewees before the full-scale data collection. This pilot phase allowed for the identification of potential ambiguities or shortcomings in the interview guide, leading to necessary modifications to ensure clarity and relevance. Additionally, the study adapted a structured interview format from the literature, leveraging established methodologies to enhance the validity of the research design.

The meticulous oversight of a research supervisor played a crucial role in ensuring the overall quality and trustworthiness of the research. Criteria such as transferability, dependability, general understandability, flow of argument, and logic were rigorously applied to verify and bolster the study's credibility. This holistic approach to ensuring

the reliability and validity of the research design attests to the thoroughness and conscientiousness with which the study was conducted.

In conclusion, the commitment to enhancing reliability and validity in this study is evident through post-transcription verification, pre-testing of the interview guide, and adherence to established research procedures. The integration of participant perspectives, the use of structured interviews from the literature, and the supervision by a research advisor collectively contribute to a robust and trustworthy research design. These measures not only fortify the study's findings but also underscore the ethical responsibility of the researcher to conduct meaningful and rigorous research on the effects of domestic violence on children.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is a pivotal phase in the research process, involving the systematic collection and examination of data to discern underlying patterns and trends (Simplilearn, 2023). In the context of this study, the data analysis process unfolded after the completion of participant interviews, with the researcher engaging in a meticulous and comprehensive approach to uncover meaningful insights from the collected information.

The initial step in data analysis involved an attentive review of the recorded interviews. The researcher listened to the recordings multiple times to ensure a thorough understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Following this, the recorded discussions were transcribed onto paper, a critical task that required precision to accurately capture the nuances and expressions embedded in participants' responses.

Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher embarked on an exploration of participants' responses, centering the analysis around the five common themes

identified in the study. These themes, encompassing the negative effects of domestic violence on children's behavior, psychological impacts, manifestations of internalized or externalized behavior, coping mechanisms, and implications on parental attachment, served as the organizational framework for the analysis.

The analysis sought to distill key insights from participants' narratives, shedding light on the multifaceted ways in which domestic violence affects children. Notably, some participant responses were directly incorporated into the thesis to bolster and further support the identified common themes. This inclusion of direct quotes enhances the credibility and authenticity of the study by grounding the analysis in the participants' own words.

The overarching goal of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between beliefs about the effects of children witnessing domestic violence and existing literature on the subject. By aligning participant responses with established themes, the analysis serves to bridge theoretical insights with lived experiences. This synthesis not only enriches the findings but also provides a nuanced perspective on the intricacies of the effects of domestic violence on children.

In conclusion, the data analysis process in this study represents a rigorous and systematic endeavor to distill meaningful patterns and insights from the participants' narratives. By closely aligning with common themes and integrating direct participant responses into the thesis, the analysis not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also offers a bridge between theoretical understanding and the real-world experiences of those directly impacted by domestic violence.

3.8 Limitations

This study acknowledges that it is not without limitations. One of the study's limitations is the sample size. The sample consisted of eight participants. Due to the busy schedules of the child protection stakeholders, it was difficult to elicit desired participation in the study. To grasp a more in-depth understanding of the effects of children's exposure to domestic violence, a larger sample size may be required.

Moreover, time is a factor in the limitation of this work. Given the deadline of this study, one would not have time to read through all related articles in a journal and write a review on each. Nevertheless, the researcher had a timetable developed for each stage of the study that made him comply with the academic calendar.

Finally, another limitation of the study is participants' unwillingness to offer information on the effects of domestic violence on children due to their busy schedules at the office. To obtain all accessible information for the study, the researcher would assure the participants that any information submitted would be used for academic work and ensure confidentiality. Finally, this study is conducted with limited financial resources.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of domestic violence on children and its impacts on their lives when they become adults in the Nkwanta South Municipality.

This chapter deals with the presentation of the results of the data analysis. The results are presented in three sections. Part one presents the demographic characteristics of participants. The second part is based on the analysis of the responses from child protection stakeholders on the effect of domestic violence on children in the Nkwanta South Municipality. The third section discusses the results and findings of the study.

4.2 Demographic Data of Participants

Demographic information was elicited from participants who are child protection stakeholders in the Nkwanta Municipality. These include age, sex, and number of years participants have worked with domestic violence victims. The distribution of child protection stakeholder participants is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Demographic data of participants

PARTICIPANT	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS
1	42	Female	Tertiary	6 years
2	28	Female	Tertiary	8 years
3	38	Male	Tertiary	4 years
4	32	Female	Secondary	3 years
5	54	Female	Secondary	20 years
6	49	Male	Tertiary	24 years
7	36	Male	Tertiary	2 years
8	40	Female	Tertiary	5 years

Source: Field Survey, March 2022

The total number of participants who provided demographic information is eight (8). The participants' ages ranged from twenty-eight (28) to fifty-four (54) years. All participants mentioned that they received formal education.

Furthermore, regarding how long employees have worked with domestic violence victims (precisely children), it came out that they had worked with victims for two (2) to twenty-four (24) years. The maximum number of years a participant had worked with domestic violence victims was twenty-four (24) years and the minimum was two (2) years.

Regarding the gender of participants, five (5) of the participants were females while three (3) were males.

4.3 Presentation of the Findings

4.3.1 Objective One: Effects of domestic violence on children in Nkwanta South.

The responses were grouped into five thematic areas, namely, *psycho-social effects, negative attitudes, coping mechanisms, externalizing behaviors, and, parental attachment*. These categories were utilized to guide the discussion in the following chapter.

Psychosocial effects

Psychosocial issues are one major problem that confronts children within the Nkwanta South Municipal Assembly. Responses from participants indicate that children who face challenges in their upbringing normally suffer from psychosocial problems. According to data collected and analyzed; girls were more likely to have suffered violence while many of the boys had problems dealing with their aggression toward others.

Under the psychosocial effects of domestic violence on children, the participants expressed their views on how children who witness domestic violence suffer various forms of psychosocial problems. According to one of the participants:

"*Being exposed to anything traumatic puts these kids at a higher risk for having more depression, depression is one of the big ones*".

In this sense, children who witness their mother/father being beaten may suffer from depression. One female participant said this about psychosocial effects:

"General Anxiety; don't want to go home, don't know what is going to happen at home. Oppositional Defiant Disorder, conduct disorder."

One participant, being a professional stated anxiety disorder as one of the effects of witnessing domestic violence as a child.

During the interview, most of the participants mentioned various forms of mental disorders that children go through when they are exposed to domestic violence. Some of these disorders were Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Chronic Adjustment Disorder (CAD). All eight (8) participants made mention of one or more mental disorder(s) as psychosocial effects of domestic violence on children.

Table 4.2. Psychosocial disorders stated by participants

PARTICIPANT	Mental Disorders Mentioned
1	Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Depression, Anxiety
2	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Mood Swing
3	Depression, Temper Tantrums, Anxiety
4	Chronic Adjustment Disorder (CAD)
5	Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Depression
6	Depression, Anxiety, Mood Swing, Temper Tantrums
7	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Chronic Adjustment Disorder (CAD)
8	Depression, Anxiety

Source: Field Survey, March 2022

Negative emotions

Negative attitudes can be described as any feeling that causes a person or groups of persons to be miserable and sad (Mental Health Foundation of Australia-Victoria, 2021). The responses from participants indicate that negative emotions make children dislike themselves and others, and reduce their self-confidence self-esteem, and general life satisfaction. Negative emotions are hate, anger, and sadness (Mental Health Foundation of Australia-Victoria, 2021). One participant stated that negative emotions can dampen a person's enthusiasm for life.

Based on the data collected, participants mentioned that domestic violence can cause a child to develop a negative attitude toward life. These negative attitudes were described by one female participant:

"*It would affect their trust, even me being a grown person now that would affect me in trusting people in intimate relationships". "With little boys, they would be violent, not necessarily in the sense of abusing their significant other but just in the sense of acting out in school and things like that because they are not being exposed to quote-unquote normal behavior"*.

Participants added that boys may also become violent to others since they frequently witness violence as the only way to resolve issues.

Another participant added this:

"*What they see is what they do so it could become a cycle that just keeps going" If they abuse their children that's what their children are exposed to and then it becomes a generational thing"*.

The participant continued that they could get in trouble at school. Another participant stated:

"*They could not have a good academic standing because, "they may not attend classes that often because of bruises…" "lack of concentration especially in a school setting where they are expected to sit and take in all these other things, English, Math, whatever they are learning, the focus is affected."*

All the participants talked about the negative attitudes put up by children who witness domestic violence. They mentioned poor academic performance, and violent attitudes towards their friends and sometimes their siblings. One participant added that children who witness their parents fighting all the time develop poor conflict-resolution styles. She stated:

"Their conflict resolution style. They fight, in a fight or flight situation. They are going to fight instead of wanting to resolve through communication. So, they have poor communication styles".

All the participants mentioned some of the negative attitudes put up by children who witness domestic violence.
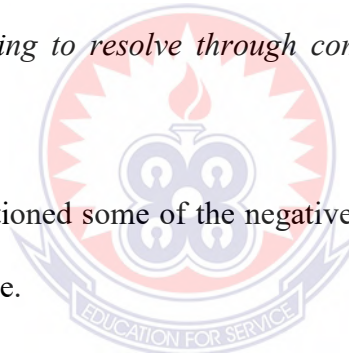
Coping mechanism

Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Data collected for this study shows that coping mechanisms are one of the effects of domestic violence on children. According to the participants, whilst adults may be capable of using various forms of coping mechanisms to their advantage, children suffer various consequences when they use coping mechanisms wrongly. It was also noted that some coping mechanisms bring positive results as one of the participants said that writing was one of the coping mechanisms these children normally adopt that bring positive results:

"These children try to write or do anything that they like to do that gets their mind off what's going on in their house". "Writing because sometimes you can say things to yourself that you can't say to other people".

Some of the responses from the participants of this study indicate that children take bad counsel from their friends who advise them to use hard drugs to get over the numerous unending traumas they are subjected to by their violent parents. A participant passionately indicated:

"Children tend to practice self-harm, drug abuse, or hanging with the wrong crowd. These bad friends give them bad counsel. However, it is good when they bury themselves in positive things or better means of life like journaling, talking to someone, listening to music, etc."

From the participants of this study, listening to music, journaling, and talking to someone are positive coping mechanisms that tend to help children develop new skills in life. However, participants stated that most of the victims who come to them find it difficult to adhere to these positive coping mechanisms. They added that children are too weak to practice positive coping mechanisms that are beneficial to their future. That is why some of them tend to practice self-harm or drug abuse which is very common in the Nkwanta South Municipal. Most of them rely on friends to survive as they become clingy to people who show care and love to them, according to the responses from the participants. One male participant stated:

"Usually because some of them have been exposed to domestic violence for so long, they don't understand what's happening, they tend to stuff their feelings and then just take it out on others in a different way. They can become clingy to individuals they do feel comfortable and safe with. Some can develop negative coping skills like cutting

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themselves. Girls tend to do that more often than boys. Boys can become aggressive. They can tell another adult; actually, verbalize what's going on. Some kids for whatever reason, it might not affect them."

The responses also indicate that some of the children exposed to domestic violence become clingy to those who give them comfort. A participant also mentioned negative coping mechanisms such as cutting (that is, causing pain to their own body with sharp objects) and girls are more often than not using this mechanism. Another participant talked about how children try to repress their feelings as a way of coping but explode when it becomes an overdose. He stated:

"A lot of them would hide it so they will try to repress it but that just translates to acting out, a lot of them will start running away, start acting violently towards others peers and their siblings" "Some of them use school as a way to cope, anytime they don't have to be in the home; they use that as a way to cope rather, they are at their friends, family, or even in their rooms and play a lot of hobbies".

Five out of the eight participants talked about the violent behavior of children who witness domestic violence no matter how they try to use positive coping mechanisms to curb the situation. However, one of the participants objected to the idea that children have no such coping mechanism. He said this:

"Trying to make sense of it".

The responses from the participants indicate that children who witness domestic violence will find ways to stay at home by devising coping mechanisms. One such coping mechanism is the use of drugs. Participants added that these smoking attitudes normally continue to their adult stages where they become drunkards or weed smokers. One female participant stated that:

"When kids witness domestic violence at a fairly young age the more likely they will start abusing substances".

Externalizing/Internalizing Behaviors

A child who exhibits externalizing behavior engages in behaviors that harm others as opposed to lashing out at the self (which is known as externalizing behavior). Externalizing behaviors include physical aggression, verbal bullying, relational aggression, defiance, theft, and vandalism. The responses from the participants show that some of the children who witness domestic violence tend to exhibit externalized behaviors due to the trauma they go through. Boys are more likely than girls to show more blatant externalized behaviors. In this study, participants mentioned the various forms of externalized behavior exhibited by children who are exposed to domestic violence. One participant stated:

"Boys feel like being violent because they think it's normal or okay; they will either start shouting back at parents or whoever it is, siblings or some other random person, and then eventually they will think physical altercation is the only way to resolve a problem. As for girls, I think it will also lead to something like verbal or physical altercations between themselves."

In this study, the violent behaviors of most people were attributed to domestic violence by most of the participants. A participant stated:

"*The children see their parents slapping and hitting each other, they see it as normal and try to replicate such behaviors both at home and in school according to the participant."*

Other participants talked about how these children get into fights since they see violence as the only way to resolve conflict. He continued that some of these children do not

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know what is socially acceptable and tend to act out wrongly which normally results in injuries. One participant added:

"Acting out in class, attention seeking, they might act out in school settings. They don't know what is socially acceptable".

The responses from the participants of this study indicate that children exposed to domestic violence hardly respect the elderly because they witness their mothers verbally abusing their fathers whereas their fathers physically abuse their mothers. With these behaviors, they hardly stay at home and try to join children with similar problems to enjoy truancy and poor academic performance. A male participant stated:

"I've seen it to the point where they can be violently attacking other kids and adults. As I alluded to before, girls tend to cut because they tend to internalize so they can be emotional cutters and have suicidal thoughts, you know those are the extremes". Another participant added: *"Withdrawal, isolation, failing grades, disruptive, become abusers, seek abusers."*

Most of the participants of this study mentioned the fact that boys normally exhibit these externalizing behaviors whereas girls exhibit internalizing behaviors.

Parental Attachment

The responses from the participants of this study show that children who witness their parents abusing each other do not learn to form healthy attachments in life. They suffer from insecurity and a lack of empathy. A participant stated that in extreme cases these children suffer from anger and attachment disorders.

In this study, participants stated that children who witness domestic violence suffer from attachment problems and normally get confused about how to relate to their parents. One participant stated:

"They get angry at the abuser, but I would also think that they would be angry at the person who is being abused" like why won't you leave, you know, or why aren't you fighting back".

According to one participant, they normally get angry at the abuser. He stated:

"*They ask questions such as, "Why is the victim not leaving the house?" In this circumstance, children will try to fight the abuser, if possible, to save the victim. They tend to hate the abuser's gender throughout their lives. They also get angry with the victim for staying despite the constant abuse".*

Another participant added:

"Towards the person being abused, I feel like they'll feel scared for that parent as for the other parent they will feel resentment and hate towards that person".

The responses also indicate that these children will love the abused and hate the abuser. They lose attachment to the abuser because they tend to feel insecure with such a parent. Another participant added*:*

"At the core of it, it's their parents so they want to love them regardless of the negative activity that's going on. I think, as kids get older, they may experience more negative feelings towards their parents. For a partner who stays whether it's the dad or the mom, the kids might not understand and might grow to get frustrated with that person because why would you stay in a situation like that? And I mean overall, I think the feelings,

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especially of the little ones it's love they want to protect. Against the aggressor, I think there are feelings of fear and mistrust, and just growing fearful of him or her".

In this circumstance, the child gets frustrated and keeps asking himself or herself why the victim continues to stay in such a hostile environment. The child in many situations tries to persuade the victim to as a matter of urgency leave such an abusive relationship to save his or her life. The child will also develop fear for the abuser and lastly, mistrust the abuser, that is, suffer a lack of parental attachment to the abuser.

All the participants stated that parental attachment is one of the effects of domestic violence on children.

4.3.2 Objective 2: Effects of domestic violence on children in their adult stages.

The second objective of this study was to find out the effects of domestic violence on the adult lives of children exposed to domestic violence. As part of the questionnaire, the views of the child protection stakeholders (participants) were sought on how the effects of domestic violence on children will impact their adult lives. As discovered in the first objective, the data collected indicated that children who are exposed to domestic violence suffer a wide range of psychosocial issues, behavioral problems, attachment problems, negative attitudes, and repercussions from using coping mechanisms wrongly. The participants' responses show that these effects are cyclical. That is, children who witness domestic violence are likely to replicate the same in their homes when they marry as adults.

A participant stated: *"The family is the first and foremost socializing agent and tends to inculcate a whole lot of things into the children as they grow. Children inherit almost everything from their parents whether hereditary or acquired characteristics. As*

children see their parents fight day and night, they finally resolve that it is normal practice to beat your spouse when there is a misunderstanding".

One male participant stated:

"Their conflict resolution style. They fight, in a fight or flight situation. They are going to fight instead of wanting to resolve through communication. So, they have poor communication styles".

Another male participant added:

"That is why you see a cycle because they grow up thinking this is what love is, this is what a relationship looks like." "Boys tend to repeat what they saw and become physically or emotionally abusive and girls will pick a partner who will probably physically or emotionally abuse them."

Another participant added: *"Even in a boy-girl relationship, you see the boy physically abusing the girl but this girl will not leave the boy since she sees it as love."*

All the participants agreed that most abusive partners were once children of abusive partners. They concluded that if children are continuously exposed to domestic violence, they will grow to practice the same in their homes.

4.3.3 Effective Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Adult Lives of Children

The third objective of this study was to find out the effective strategies to mitigate the impact of domestic violence on the adult lives of children who are exposed to domestic violence. As part of the questionnaire, the views of the child protection stakeholders (participants) were sought on the effective strategies to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on the adult lives of children. The participants' responses were grouped in

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three themes as follows: *Trauma-Informed Care*; *Early Interventions; and Education and Awareness.*

Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care acknowledges the need to understand a client's life experiences in order to deliver effective care and has the potential to improve client engagement, counselling adherence, psychosocial outcomes, and to avoid vicarious trauma. In this study, participants stated trauma-informed care as an effective strategy to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on adult lives of children. One participant stated:

"I communicate to them that they can collaborate with me on their choices"

Another participant also stated:

"I establish a rapport with them and ensure them of confidentiality. I try to build trust so that they can open up to me. I don't force them to talk."

"I empower them with urgency to make their own decisions about what is most comfortable for them." Another participant added.

Early Intervention

Early intervention was stated by five (5) out of the eight (8) participants as an effective strategy to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on the adult lives of children. In this sense, therapy is initiated within the first 30-45 days after the traumatic event. The goal of the early intervention is to reduce the impact of the trauma on the child. One participant stated:

"It is easy to help a child to overcome a trauma than an adult. The intervention is needed as soon as possible. Yes, no time to waste."

Another participant stated:

"Have you forgotten the saying that, "A stitch in time saves nine"? We don't have to wait till the child's life is destroyed before we show that we care."

"Providing the counselling support for the child and his/her family plays a crucial role in mitigating the impacts of domestic violence on children." Another participant stated.

Education and Awareness

Awareness creation was another point stated by many of the participants as an effective strategy to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on adult lives of children. In this sense, participants emphasized need for periodic sensitization on the consequences of domestic violence on children and its impacts on their adult lives. One participant stated:

"Children are the weaker vessel here. The suffer the most when it comes to violence in the home but stakeholders do not pay much attention to them. There is the need to educate parents on how their violent attitudes affect their children."

Another participant stated:

"Some of these parents are selfish. They hardly think about the repercussions of their violent attitudes on their children. I guess continuous education will change their mindset about domestic violence."

4.4 Discussion

Earlier research has documented the various effects of domestic violence in a variety of contexts. Various studies have been conducted on the effects of domestic violence on children. Studies have shown that children's exposure to domestic violence (DV)

results in many developmental effects. These children are considered to suffer from a wide range of psychosocial, cognitive, and behavioral effects. The study reveals that children exposed to domestic violence in Nkwanta South Municipal encounter various psychosocial effects, including Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Chronic Adjustment Disorder (CAD), Depression, and Anxiety. Major psychosocial issues in children exposed to domestic violence include family problems, anxiety, substance abuse, and violence (Robinson and Suarez, 2015). Edwards (2019) supported that the psychological aftermath of exposure to domestic violence on children can include fear of harm, abandonment, guilt, inability to experience empathy, habitual lying, low frustration, emotional distancing, excessive worry or sadness, poor judgment, shame, and fear about the future.

In terms of academic performance, Musah (2013), stated that exposing children to domestic violence will lead to poor academic performance. Musah's study talked about the cognitive effect of domestic violence on children. In the literature review, this can be seen under educational effects. It is stated that it becomes very difficult for school-going children who witness all forms of domestic violence to perform because education itself is stressful. Previous studies have found a negative relationship between domestic violence and children's learning. Carlson (2012) claims that, children who are exposed to domestic violence experience anxiety, lack of concentration in class, and an increase in aggression all of which negatively impact their academic performance. According to Gichuba (2017), students who have been exposed to domestic abuse may have difficulty completing academic tasks.

According to this study, children who are exposed to domestic violence normally do not only fight instead of resolving conflict but also have poor communication styles.

This is supported by Lloyd (2018) that domestic violence can lead to a child displaying more violent conduct against others; they are often unaware of the proper way to engage with people since they believe domestic violence is normal behavior, eventually leading to aggressive behavior. They feel that is the only way to resolve conflict. In this sense, boys tend to repeat what they saw and become physically and emotionally abusive and girls will pick a partner who will probably physically or emotionally abuse them.

This study also discovered that, as kids are exposed to domestic violence at a fairly young age the more likely they will start using substances (drug abuse). In the reviewed literature, children who witness domestic violence may use alcohol or other substances as a way of blocking out disturbing experiences and memories. When the substance or alcohol gets into the body of a child, it could affect the brain such as slowing things down including deteriorating metabolism in the body (Holt et al, 2008).

In this study, the researcher discovered externalizing behaviors as one of the effects of witnessing domestic violence. Machapatro (2018) shows that the most visible physical effect of a child's manifestation is his or her external behaviors. Domestic violence can lead to a child displaying more violent conduct against others; they are often unaware of the proper way to engage with people since they believe domestic violence is normal behavior, eventually leading to aggressive behavior (Lloyd, 2018). They may resort to violence in an attempt to resolve a situation. Under relationship effects, children who are victims of domestic violence are negatively perceived by society, causing the children to feel ashamed (Pingley, 2017). As a result, children are unable to make friends and hence prefer to live alone (isolation). They feel scared and unsafe in every relationship since they have a strained family bond due to domestic abuse. In some

instances, children may not be socially acceptable due to their aggressive behavior and inability to have a good relationship with other people (Thornton 2014).

A review of the collected data revealed that children who witness domestic violence get confused about who to love and who to hate among their parents. As stated under the relationship effects in the literature review, when domestic violence occurs at home, children feel pressured and confused about as to which of their parents to choose. According to Thornton (2014), some children may overcome the pressure and ignore the family relationship because they feel their parents are not interested in their feelings. He further claims that children who are unable to ignore domestic violence continue to confuse their minds and start copying violent behavior to solicit attention from their parents. Children exposed to violence in the family tend to avoid having good relationships with other people because, the family relationship makes them anxious about their relationship with other people (Holt et al., 2008). This will eventually lead to poor relationships in the future. A thorough review of the collected responses indicates that when exposed to domestic violence, the effects extend to adult lives. The impacts of domestic violence help explain the difficulty that many experience in parenting as well as in intimate relationships. This is supported by Payne & Gainey (2009) that many female victims of domestic violence come from homes where they witnessed domestic violence between their parents. This is also captured in Payne et al (2011) that learning theory would explain that boys "learn" how to become abusers and girls "learn" about victimization.

Children's exposure includes being present during the event, witnessing the aftermath, hearing it during or after the event, attempting to break up the abuse, or being abused after the event occurred. All of these have negative effects on the child. In research

studies assessing the effects of domestic violence on children, violence between parents may be considered harmful to children and can be described as child abuse. These effects can contribute to the cycle of violence and have long-term health and developmental consequences (Jamil & Hyder, 2022). The implications of this exposure can lead to physical health, mental health, challenges in the development of social skills, and changes in cognitive processing. Living in a home with domestic violence not only puts the children at risk of being abused themselves but also may make them feel vulnerable or responsible for the abuse that is occurring.

Domestic violence, a pervasive social issue, can have profound and long-lasting effects on children, impacting their adult lives in various ways. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive strategies aimed at mitigating its impact on children as they grow into adulthood. According to this study, various strategies to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on adult lives of children were discovered. For instance, trauma-informed care was discovered as one of the strategies. This is supported by Hopper et al. (2010) which states that Trauma-informed care approaches recognize the impact of trauma on individuals and prioritize their safety, empowerment, and recovery.

According to this study, another strategy to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on adult lives of children is early intervention. This is reiterated in Kitzmann et al., (2003) early intervention programs target at-risk families and provide education, resources, and support to prevent violence and address underlying issues. The last but the least is education and awareness. Education and awareness programs are instrumental in addressing the root causes of domestic violence and changing societal attitudes and behaviors. This is supported by skills Fulu et al. (2017) who state that

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education and awareness aim to challenge misconceptions, promote gender equality, and teach healthy relationship.

This research was conducted to study the effects of domestic violence on children. The research showed an undeniable effect on children's cognitive, social, and behavioral development. These findings suggest that there is a correlation between witnessing domestic violence and the development of children. Research on this data also shows the importance of considering the effects of domestic violence on children and their development when implementing interventions and considering policy changes.

Throughout this research, there was not one area of a child's development that was more impacted than the other. This research showed that there can be significant effects of domestic violence on a child's cognitive, social, and behavioral development, however, the research did not mention the physical developmental effects of domestic violence on children. Based on this research project this would be an area of research that could be expanded.
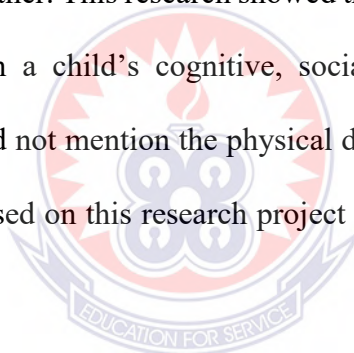
4.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed results, outcomes, and findings. Qualitative data collected were presented, discussed, and analyzed. Throughout the analysis and discussions, the two research questions were used as yardsticks to conclude.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter delves into a succinct summary and discussion of the study's findings, centering around two crucial research questions regarding the impact of domestic violence on children in Nkwanta South Municipal, Oti Region, Ghana. Utilizing insights from Child Protection stakeholders and the extensive literature review, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research endeavors.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.1.1 RQ 1: Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

The study's exploration of the effects of domestic violence on children in Nkwanta South Municipal unveils a spectrum of profound psychosocial consequences. Notably, children exposed to such violence exhibit a range of mental health challenges, including Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Chronic Adjustment Disorder (CAD), Depression, and Anxiety. These identified effects delve beyond mere behavioral manifestations, encapsulating the intricate psychological toll experienced by these vulnerable individuals.

The negative emotional responses observed among these children permeate various facets of their lives, giving rise to self-esteem issues, trust deficits, and academic struggles. Externalizing behaviors, such as aggression, emerge as coping mechanisms, illustrating the adaptive strategies these children employ to navigate the challenging environments in which they find themselves. The study underscores the critical role of these coping mechanisms in shaping the future well-being of the affected children,

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recognizing the lasting impact that early exposure to domestic violence can exert on their developmental trajectories.

Furthermore, the research sheds light on a significant compromise in parental attachment experienced by children exposed to domestic violence. This compromised attachment manifests in pervasive feelings of fear, anger, and mistrust among the affected children. The disruption of the foundational parent-child bond highlights the far-reaching consequences of domestic violence, extending beyond immediate behavioral concerns to encompass fundamental aspects of emotional security and relational trust.

In essence, the study's findings illuminate the intricate web of psychosocial consequences faced by children who witness domestic violence. The identified mental health challenges, coupled with the coping mechanisms employed and compromised parental attachment, collectively emphasize the urgent need for targeted interventions to mitigate the profound and lasting impact of domestic violence on the well-being of these vulnerable individuals.

5.1.2 RQ 2: Impact on Adult Lives

The research findings reveal a distressing cyclical pattern wherein the adverse consequences of domestic violence on children extend into their adult lives. This cycle manifests as a complex interplay of factors, with a notable outcome being the development of deficient conflict resolution skills. Children exposed to domestic violence grapple with navigating conflicts, inheriting a distorted understanding of dispute resolution. This deficiency becomes pronounced in adulthood, contributing to challenges in personal and professional relationships, perpetuating maladaptive behaviors across generations.

Communication issues also emerge as a significant outcome in adults who witnessed domestic violence as children. The tumultuous household environments hinder the development of effective communication skills, leading to challenges in expressing emotions and fostering strained relationships. Additionally, there is a pronounced tendency among these individuals to engage in abusive relationships, highlighting the pivotal role of the family unit as a socializing agent. The normalization of violence within the family perpetuates a cycle wherein individuals replicate the dynamics they were exposed to in their formative years, posing challenges to both individuals and the societal fabric.

The research underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to disrupt this cyclical pattern. Addressing only the immediate effects of domestic violence on children proves insufficient; there is a critical imperative to break the chain of learned behaviors infiltrating their adult lives. Recognizing the family as a crucial nexus for behavior transmission, interventions should encompass both the immediate aftermath of violence and the long-term repercussions on adult behavior.

5.1.3 Effective Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Adult Lives of Children

The research findings reveal effective strategies to mitigate the impact of domestic violence on the adult lives of children.

Firstly, trauma-informed care was discovered to be one of the effective strategies to help the impacts of domestic violence on the adult lives of children.

Secondly, early intervention was also discovered as an effective strategy to help mitigate the impacts of domestic violence on the lives of children.

Thirdly, education and awareness was found to be one of the effective strategies to help mitigate the impact of domestic violence on the adult lives of children.

In essence, the study emphasizes the intricate and enduring impact of domestic violence on the developmental trajectories of children, as evidenced by poor conflict resolution skills, communication challenges, and a proclivity for abusive relationships in adulthood. This underscores the urgency of comprehensive interventions that delve into the root causes and disrupt the perpetuation of learned behaviors across generations.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the escalating societal concern surrounding children's exposure to domestic violence. The identified consequences encompass not only poor socialization and educational challenges but also concerning participation in the cycle of violence. Mental health issues, substance abuse, and externalized behaviors further exacerbate the impact on parental attachment, influencing the trajectory of their adult lives. The study underscores the urgent need for effective interventions to break this cycle and safeguard the overall well-being of children in Nkwanta South Municipal.

5.3 Summary

5.3.1 Implications

The study's implications emphasize the imperative for parents to recognize the indirect harm inflicted upon their children in domestic violence situations. Fostering a violence-free environment is crucial for optimal child development. Additionally, the study brings attention to the overlooked role of children in such situations by law enforcement agencies, necessitating a more comprehensive approach to child protection.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings, recommendations are put forth for consideration:

1. Holistic Treatment Plans: Child protection stakeholders should consider psychosocial effects when developing treatment plans, incorporating both child and family-focused interventions.

2. Community Education: Social workers should advocate for community and professional education on various facets of domestic violence, emphasizing safety plans and awareness.

3. Systemic Changes: Social workers should champion changes in guidelines for assisting domestic violence victims, addressing systemic problems, and allowing adequate time for understanding survivors' needs.

4. Policy Considerations: Policymakers should integrate the effects of domestic violence on children into policy mitigation plans.

5. Resource Allocation: The government should allocate resources for comprehensive care plans and case management, encompassing prevention, protection, prosecution, and collaboration among child protection stakeholders.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The study's findings pave the way for future research endeavors, including:

1. Family Therapy Interventions: Exploring family therapy as an intervention for children exposed to domestic violence, with a particular emphasis on addressing attachment issues.

2. Child Abuse Dynamics: Investigating the relationship between children exposed to domestic violence and child abuse, identifying common forms and responses.

In conclusion, this chapter accentuates the pressing need for proactive interventions to break the cycle of violence and safeguard the well-being of children exposed to domestic violence in Nkwanta South Municipal.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a structured interview to solicit your responses on the Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and its impact on their adult life. Your participation in this interview as a child protection stakeholder in the Nkwanta South Municipal is very much appreciated

Section A: Demographics

1. What is your gender? *Mark only one circle.*

- o Male
- o Female
- o Prefer not to say

2. What is your age range?

Tick all that apply

- o 16-25
- o 26-35
- o 36-45
- o 46-55
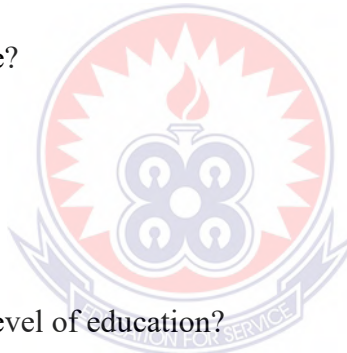
3. What is your highest level of education?

Tick all that apply

- o Basic education (B.E.C.E)
- o Secondary Education (SSSCE/WASSCE/GCE O-Level or A-Level)
- o Diploma
- o Bachelor's Degree
- o Postgraduate degree (Masters/PhD)
- o Other

4. Which department do you work in as a child protection stakeholder?

Ans: ………………………………………………………………………………

5. How long have you worked in this department as a child protection stakeholder?

………………………………………………………………………………………

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Section A: Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

6. What detriments have you seen as a result of children being exposed to domestic violence?

Ans: ……………………………………………………………………………………

7. What strengths, if any do children display when they are exposed to domestic violence?

Ans: ……………………………………………………………………………………..
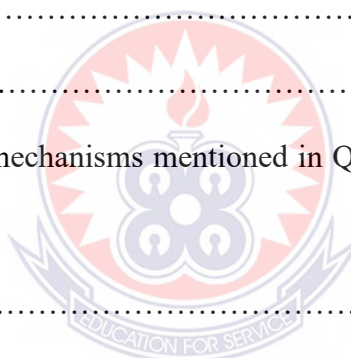
8. What coping mechanisms do children implement after being exposed to domestic violence? (both positive and negative).

Ans:……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

9. Which of the coping mechanisms mentioned in Question 8 above seem to be more effective?

Ans……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

10. How often would you consider exposure to domestic violence to also be child abuse?

Ans: …………………………………………………………………………………

11. What are the children's attitudes towards their parents involved in the violent relationship?

……………………………………………………………………………………

12 How are the children being affected emotionally by witnessing the violence?

……………………………………………………………………………………

13. How are the children's social skills impacted by witnessing the violence?

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……………………………………………………………………………………

14. What are some of the internal behaviors of children exposed to domestic violence?

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15. What are the external behaviors of children exposed to domestic violence?

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16. How often do kids exposed to domestic violence have pro-violent attitudes?

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17. Do children exposed to domestic violence also participate in the abuse of one of the parents?

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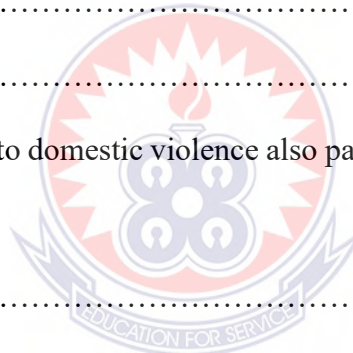
18. How are the children being affected developmentally after being exposed to domestic violence?

Section C: The Impacts of Domestic on the Adult Lives of These Children

19. Do children grow with the negative attitudes they have after being exposed to domestic violence?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

20. What are some of the negative attitudes that impact the adult lives of these children exposed to domestic violence?

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…………………………………………………………………………………………

21. How do you differentiate the impact of domestic violence in the adult lives of boys and girls?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

22. Is there any probability that these attitudes will be passed on to their children as they become adults?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION D: Effective Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Adult Lives of Children

23. What kind of support do you provide for domestic violence victims?

Ans: …………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………….

24. Do you have any intervention programmes for children from domestic violence homes? If yes name one.

Ans: …………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………….

25. How do you handle children who are traumatized by the violence attitudes of their parents?

Ans: …………………………………………………………………………………..

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

I am conducting a study to examine the effects of domestic violence on children. I would like you to participate in this study. If you are interested in participating, please read and sign the attached consent form.

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the effects of domestic violence on children. Isaac Adams Amakye, Master of Arts in Conflicts, Human Rights and Peace Studies graduate student under the supervision of Dr. Harrison Kwame Golo, Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Education, Winneba. This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of Education, Winneba.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to examine the beliefs about the effects of children witnessing domestic violence. This study will utilize a qualitative research design, using structured interviews. Our qualitative research design allowed for better insight into the beliefs people had about the effects of children witnessing domestic violence.

DESCRIPTION: If you agree to participate in our study, you will be asked to participate in a structured interview measuring the effects of domestic violence on children. The interview will be administered in your own office. The interview should take between 15-20 minutes.

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PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdrawal from participation at anytime and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

ANONYMITY: You will not be asked to state your name during the interviews. No identifying information will be used in this study. All tapes, transcribed interviews, and consent forms will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Isaac Adams Amakye will be the only person with access to this confidential information. At the conclusion of the study, all tapes will be erased and transcribed interviews, notes, and other information will be destroyed.

DURATION: The interviews should take between 15-20 minutes.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in the research.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH: I understand that this research will be audio recorded Initials____.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this project, please contact my research supervisor, Dr. Harrison Kwame Golo, Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Education, Winneba. hkgolo@uew.edu.gh

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Agreement: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Study of the Effects of Domestic Violence on Children Debriefing Statement

This study you have just completed was designed to investigate the effects of domestic violence on children. In this study researcher was interested in interviewing child protection stakeholders to gain insight in their experiences about the effects that occur to children who have witnessed domestic violence. The instrument utilized during the interview provided a deeper understanding of what professionals' view are the effects of children witnessing domestic violence. We are particularly interested in the effects of domestic violence on children and its impact in their adult lives. Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the interview with other students.

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Dear Child Protection Stakeholder,

My name is Isaac Adams Amakye. You are being asked to participate in a study titled, Effects of Domestic Violence on Children in the Nkwanta South municipal, because you are currently a child protection stakeholder and have been working domestic violence victims. I am completing this research as part of our Masters dissertation. This research is completely anonymous and your confidentiality will be protected. Should you choose to participate in this study, please contact Isaac Adams Amakye via email at isaacadamsamkye@gmail.com.

Thank you for your participation.

<div align="right">

Sincerely,

Isaac Adams Amakye.

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