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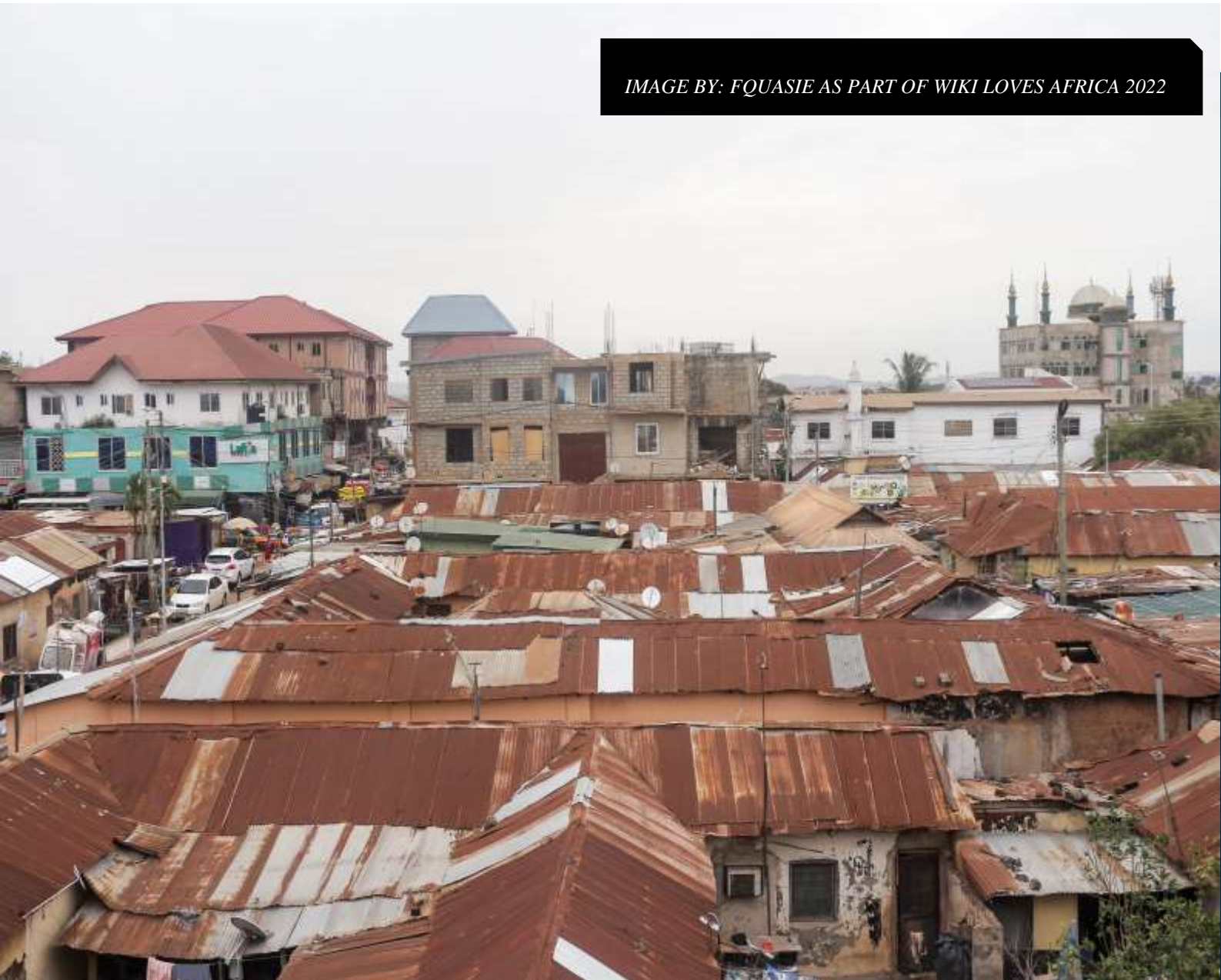
Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

**“Gaza Love... The Beating is What They Prefer”:
The Correlative Relationship Between Practices of IPV in Nima, Ghana, and The Construction of Gender**

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine, based on the accounts of men, the relationship between their understanding and performativity of gender, particularly masculinity, and the prevalence of IPV in Nima, a boisterous suburb in the heart of Accra, Ghana. The study utilizes Judith Butler's "Gender as Performativity" theory as well as Lori Heise's integrated, ecological framework that presents violence as a multilayered phenomenon involving an interaction between personal history, situational, and socio-cultural factors to understand the etiology and prevalence of IPV in this community. In carrying out this study, I conducted in-depth interviews with respondents between the ages of 25 and 40 living in different neighborhoods of Nima. Also, in order to provide a distinct sense of how violence is framed and negotiated by a survivor of IPV in this community, I interviewed a young woman who had recently been battered by her boyfriend.

Key words: Gender, Gender Violence, IPV, Masculinity, Femininity, Performativity

1 INTRODUCTION

“The act of abuse does not occur in a bubble devoid of thought, and therefore those thoughts and perspectives regarding abuse must be studied in order that they might be changed or influenced.” - Baffour Takyi and Jesse Mann (2006, p. 64)

1.1 General Introduction

Be it in thriving or struggling economies; dictatorships, democracies, or anything in between, intimate partner violence (IPV) is considered one of the ever-present forms of human rights violations in the world (WHO, 2021). Though no one gender can be exclusively categorized as perpetrators or survivors, women have been disproportionately affected in cases of IPV. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that IPV is the most common form of violence for women aged 15 to 49 (WHO, 2021). It is also a widely recognized public health issue that has a debilitating impact on morbidity and mortality (García-Moreno et al., 2015). The UN Women (2022) posit that in 2020, globally, a woman or girl was killed every 11 minutes by an intimate partner or other family members in their home.

Scholars worldwide have responded to the ubiquitous nature, enormity, and damning statistics of the subject in question with a plethora of studies dedicated to analyzing and understanding the etiology of IPV and its consequent effects on every stratum of the lives of survivors (Schafer, Caetano, & Cunradi, 2004; Carter & Weaver, 2003; Brownridge & Halli, 2002; Heise, Pitanguy, & Germain, 1995; Clark, 1992; Cunningham, 1992; Schlesinger, Dobash, & Weaver, 1992; Cameron & Frazer, 1987). Many of the scholarly contributions emanating from Africa emphasize the role of poverty, religious dogma, and socio-cultural practices in providing fertile conditions for the prevalence of the peril (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Farred, 2002; Omeje, 2001; Mann & Takyi, 2009; Mukamana et al., 2020; WHO, 2021).

Ghana is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa where IPV is rife (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Amoakohene, 2004; Issahaku, 2017). Even though institutions like the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), formerly named the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU), are fully functional and the 1992 constitution dedicates a portion of the chapter on *Fundamental Human Rights* to guaranteeing and protecting women’s rights, findings from the 2016 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), coupled with incessant media reports, suggest that the wheels of this menace have hardly slowed. Reports assert that around 33% to 37% of Ghanaian women have suffered some form of intimate partner violence (Adjah & Agbemafle, 2016).

Reflecting what transpires on the national stage is Nima, a popular suburb in the heart of Accra. Nima is a boisterous place plagued with poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, and few educational opportunities (Essamuah & Tonah, 2004; Owusu et al., 2008). This suburb consists of closely knit strands of neighborhoods where families often live in compound houses and generally operate along the lines of the proverb "it takes a village to raise a child," a statement that alludes to collective social responsibility in ensuring the well-being of children and that of the community as a whole (Essamuah & Tonah, 2004; Owusu et al., 2008). This notwithstanding, Nima is often tagged with unruly aggression, crime, and violence (Owusu et al., 2008). Stories abound of youth from this area mobilized for cases relating to election violence and land disputes (van Riel, 2015). I grew up in one of the neighborhoods of this suburb, and as long as I can remember, IPV has always been a part of Nima. It is very much weaved into the fabric of everyday life, so much so that when cases like assault happen, they are hardly condemned with any notable vehemence or reported to the authorities. For people who pride themselves on community ideals and taking care of each other (Owusu et al., 2008), this begs a lot of questions.

One feature that distinguishes Nima from other communities in Ghana is the presence of a culture that places a premium on terms like *idonkerifi*, among others. Translated literally, this is a Hausa (a popular language in West Africa) phrase that means being *hard-eyed*. Figuratively, however, *idonkerifi* is a context-laden term that implies adaptability and *copability*; being relentless and determined; treating violence as manly; showing little to no emotions in hurtful or stressful situations; being fearless and having the capability to instill fear in others; being hard or cold in manner or approach; and surviving against all odds. Since people in Nima operate within structures of limited resources and conspicuous economic deprivation, from a very young age, *idonkerifi* is trumpeted as a pertinent trait to have when navigating life in these parts. Throughout one's development in Nima, it becomes even more apparent that *idonkerifi* is indispensable in negotiating one's day-to-day survival. For girls and women, it is considered good to have this trait, or at least some aspects of it. But for boys and men, it is incumbent and expected of them, as it is treated as a valuable social currency. People who possess and, importantly, readily flex this trait are feared, revered, and rewarded by having things go their way and in accordance with their whims and fancies. Consequently, *idonkerifi*, alongside various gender stereotypes, religious beliefs, and other social norms, work in tandem to significantly inform and impact the conceptualization, understanding, performance, and achievement of gender amongst people living in Nima. In some regards, *idonkerifi* can be said

to be Nima's own version of what Zaitchik and Mosher (1993) term *machismo*, an assemblage of inter-related characteristics, namely, danger as exciting, violence as manly, and toughness as emotional self-control. Scholars on issues relating to gender emphasize that the various ways people conceptualize, construct, and construe gender play a significant role in determining how they perceive themselves and others, as well as the various ways they conduct themselves and respond to the conduct of others in their relationships and everyday interactions (Dery, 2019; Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel, Heilman, & Peus, 2019). Accordingly, this can potentially impact perceptions and the prevalence of IPV (Dobash & Dobash, 1998; Adjei, 2018; Dery, 2019; Bates, Klement, Kaye, & Pennington, 2019). It is against this backdrop that this study sets out to investigate, based on the accounts of men, the relationship between their understanding and performance of gender, mainly masculinity, and the prevalence of IPV in Nima. Due to the limited format of this project and findings that assert that boys and men in low-income neighborhoods are most likely to rely on brawn and aggression in asserting their internalized concepts of normative masculinity (Pyke, 1996; Courtenay, 2000), the study will focus mainly on physical violence and partially on sexual violence within dating relationships in Nima.

1.1.1 Problem Statement

Reports by the Domestic Violence in Ghana (2016, p. 18) attest that childhood exposure to violence was strongly related to an individual's likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator of violence in adulthood. Moreso, Donaldson (1993), Zaitchik & Mosher (1993), and Spencer et al. (2004) assert that boys and men from low-income communities are those most likely to be witnesses and/or survivors of persistent violence and crime. By virtue of Nima's profile, this means a significant percentage of adults in Nima are likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence. According to the same aforementioned report from Ghana, this would mean Nima is "poised for a vicious intragenerational cycle of domestic violence" (Domestic Violence in Ghana, 2016, p. 18). The report also claimed that domestic physical violence was popular among women and men in low-income neighborhoods. While there have been several scholarly works on gender-based violence in Ghana, it is a thankless task to find a study of IPV that focuses the spotlight on Nima, a place plagued by poverty, crime, and violence (Essamuah & Tonah, 2004; Owusu et al., 2008). Most of the literature on IPV from Ghana focuses on women, their ordeals, perspectives, and coping mechanisms. Only a few studies focus on men and the factors influencing their actions. Further, as is the case with Takyi and Mann (2006), even when studies have included men, they are often quantitative, and/or the main focus has been married or ever-married men (e.g., Dery, 2021). It goes without saying that men in dating relationships

are as culpable as married or ever-married men in cases of IPV. According to Takyi and Mann (2006), more younger men than older men in Ghana think wife beating is justified. That notwithstanding, there is a dearth of research focused on men in dating relationships in Ghana and their connection to IPV as perpetrators. As mentioned earlier, some traits of idonkerifi can be classified as machismo or hypermasculinity. Zaitchik and Mosher (1993) assert that hypermasculinity is most evident among teenage boys and young men. It is based on this and studies by Ellemers (2018), Dobash and Dobash (1998), and Bates et al. (2019), which suggest a link between the interpretation of gender and the prevalence of IPV, that this study sets out to interrogate heterosexual men between the ages of 25 and 40 in dating relationships in Nima. In subsequent chapters, the reason for this particular profile of prospective participants will be explained further.

1.1.2 Research Objective

The study has two interconnected objectives. The first is to highlight the factors that account for the causes and prevalence of IPV in Nima. The second objective is inspired by an observation by Anderson and Umberson (2001). They assert that, though several gender-critical scholars have claimed that domestic violence is a resource by which men construct and achieve their masculinities, very few studies have identified the exact ways in which these men portray themselves as masculine actors. The second objective, therefore, is to examine the correlative relationship between the specific practices and experiences of IPV in Nima and the construction, policing, and achievement of gender, mainly masculinity. To achieve this objective, the study will attempt to glean from the accounts of would-be respondents' the various reasons for the causes and prevalence of IPV in Nima and simultaneously investigate how that correlates with their construction and performance of gender.

1.1.3 Research Question

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following questions are investigated:

1. According to the residents of Nima, what are the reasons for the cause and prevalence of IPV in their community?
2. What is the relationship between their understanding of gender and the prevalence of IPV in Nima?

1.1.4 Motivation

After the *#metoo* campaigns in various parts of the world, the scope for what constitutes gender violence seems to have become ever more elastic. However, in Ghana, although IPV is common and affects all sections of the population regardless of age, ethnic, religious, economic, or social backgrounds (Tayki & Mann, 2006), the discourse seems to have hardly changed. Ghana's criminal code still maintains archaic definitions for what constitutes sexual offenses, including rape (Nlasia, 2019; Agboli, 2023). In spite of the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy across the country (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 2014), various sections of the populace, spearheaded by religious organizations and officials in government, strongly opposed the introduction of sex education into the school curriculum. They argued that was a ploy to render children licentious rather than an attempt to educate them on their bodies (GhanaWeb, 2019). The situation is even dire in a suburb like Nima, which is characterized by high illiteracy rates, low opportunities, and economic deprivation. Even though everyday violence is rampant in this suburb, there is not much talk about what fuels the actions of perpetrators, who are predominantly men. In cases where there is, it dovetails into victim blaming, or legitimizing and excusing the actions of the perpetrators.

That notwithstanding, in the same month when the international news media was shaken by the details of the horrific murder of Karabo Mokoena in Johannesburg, South Africa (Saba, 2017; Maseko, 2017), Maayaa Sowah, a young lady from Nima, was also brutally murdered by an ex-partner who lived in another suburb far removed from Nima. There was outcry and loud agitation by all and sundry, including those who also engage in varying degrees of IPV, albeit not in a similar brutal fashion. This left me wondering why a group of people who live essentially on community ideals could be disturbingly passive and tolerant of everyday violence but roundly and rightly condemn an extreme or fatal case. Must it take a gruesome death before we find our voice? I hence consider it a responsibility to contribute to the body of knowledge on IPV by investigating the etiology and prevalence of IPV in Nima.

Moreover, what is overwhelmingly evident during conversations with people in and out of Nima is that many herald the peculiar masculinity that is characteristic of *idonkerifi*. Having lived in Nima for most of my life, I am intrigued about how the traits of *idonkerifi* could be affecting the lives of residents in the community, particularly their intimate relationships.

1.1.5 Relevance for Peace and Conflict studies

IPV encompasses the three types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural, as theorized by Galtung (1969). The damning statistics on IPV as well as its debilitating consequences for the

overall wellbeing of women present an urgent need to find sustainable solutions to this ubiquitous canker that plagues the world. The United Nations (UN) indicates that one in four women all over the world may experience sexual violence at some point by an intimate partner. Worldwide statistics on homicide identify intimate partners as key culprits (Tayki & Mann, 2006). In Africa, Takyi and Mann (2006) opines that the practice (IPV) is widespread, "afflicting all segments of the population and transcending ethnic, religious, and social boundaries" (p. 62). Reports in Ghana suggest that one out of every three women has experienced physical abuse from an intimate partner (Amoakohene, 2004). If the reports by the DV in Ghana (2016) are anything to go by, Nima is ripe for a vicious cycle of violence. As the quote that opens this chapter suggests, the behaviors of men can best be influenced by understanding their culture. This study attempts to do exactly that. By highlighting the specific practices by which perpetrators in Nima enact violence as part of constructing their masculinity and enforcing gender normativity, the study will provide an understanding of men as gendered subjects operating within specific sociocultural contexts. This also sheds light on the exact beliefs that might prove to be obstacles to achieving gender equity and social justice. Ultimately, the findings of the study can potentially inform the various ways in which peace advocates and policymakers can best negotiate these practices and other related sociocultural norms towards mitigating IPV and other forms of patriarchal oppression.

1.1.6 Chapter Overview

This section provides a brief overview of the chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 1 This chapter presents a general introduction to this study. It presented the problem statement, the research objectives, and the research questions that this study intends to interrogate.

Chapter 2 provides the background and literature review of the study. It discusses violence against women in Ghana, IPV, and masculinity. A portrait of the research site, Nima, is also presented.

Chapter 3 details the methodology used for this research, the experiences during the fieldwork, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 discusses the various concepts and theoretical frameworks that will guide the analysis of the gathered data.

Chapter 5 presents and analyzes the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 presents further discussions, the conclusion, and some recommendations.

2 BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part introduces Ghana and its history of violence against women. An overview of Nima as a community is also presented. The second part reviews some related literature pertinent to the study.

2.1.1 Ghana and Violence Against Women

Ghana is a West African country bordered by Côte d'Ivoire in the west, Togo in the east, Burkina Faso, and the Atlantic Ocean in the north and south, respectively. There are currently 16 regions in Ghana, and Accra is the national capital. After the most recent national consensus in 2022, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) pegged the country's population at around 31 million (GSS, 2022). Females make almost 51% of this number, while males stand at around 49%. More than half the people of Ghana live in urban areas. Ghana is a heterogeneous and complexly diverse country, boasting over 70 ethnic groups. Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Dangme, and Gurma are, however, the main ethnic groups. Because these ethnic groups possess their own distinct languages, over 80 languages are spoken in Ghana, though some are mutually intelligible. The languages most widely spoken are Twi, Hausa, Ewe, Ga, Dagaare, Dagbani, and Fante. That said, English is the country's official language.

In spite of all the texture and color they add to the country's illustrious history and make-up, just about every one of these groups observes and champions inhumane practices that, since time immemorial, subjugate, discriminate, oppress, and blatantly violate the human rights and dignity of women and girls in Ghana. Some of such harmful practices include child marriage, witchcraft accusations, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), widowhood rites, *trokosi* (a traditional religious practice common amongst Ewes, whereby young virgin girls are used as payment or appeasement to the gods), wife inheritance, and others (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Amoah, 2007; Amoakohene, 2004; Adomako Ampofo, 1993; Tenkorang et al., 2013). These practices are so deeply ingrained in the mores and norms of the people that they are embodied and legitimized, hence defying any attempts at change (Robinson, 1995). To make matters even more difficult, in many instances, these practices come with the added strand of the oppressed justifying their oppression. Domestic Violence in Ghana (2016) attests that, on average, more women than men were likely to condone domestic violence in Ghana.

It was not until the 1990's, after the remarkable efforts of civil societies, women's rights organizations, and international bodies, that, with the rollout of the 1992 constitution, the Government of Ghana passed several national laws guaranteeing and protecting women's and girls' rights. These national laws and policies also criminalize practices like widowhood rites, *trokosi* (a ritual servitude where virgin girls are offered as religious atonement to the gods), and others (Domestic Violence in Ghana, 2016). That notwithstanding, rampant cases of spousal abuse and the murder of women resulted in further pressure on the powers that be, necessitating the establishment of the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police Service (GPS) in 1998 to deal specifically with cases that affected women and girls. In its early years of operation, reported cases at WAJU skyrocketed from 360 in 1999 to 3622 in 2002 (Amoakohene, 2004). This, in a sense, highlights the worrisome state of violence against women in Ghana. In the same vein, one could argue that it indicated women's trust in the effectiveness of WAJU and the efforts of the Unit and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in trumpeting awareness and encouraging women to report cases of violence meted out against them.

After various intense debates (Adomako Ampofo, 2008) and even more fervent pressure from civil society actors, NGOs, media, and the general public, the process of government intervention through the passing of laws and implementation of policies to curb violence against women in Ghana came to full circle with parliament finally enacting the Domestic Violence Act (732) in 2007 (Domestic Violence in Ghana, 2016). The Domestic Violence Act is significant to this study as it states what qualifies as domestic violence in Ghana, as well as spelling out, in broad terms, varying actions recognized by law as physical and sexual violence, economic and psychological abuse, harassment, and intimidation. Since this study is about IPV in dating relationships, it leans specifically on the part of the Act that emphasizes that perpetrators and survivors do not have to be married for the legislation to be binding (Domestic Violence Act, 2007).

It goes without saying that, like women and girls, men and boys in Ghana also suffer violence of a physical, sexual, economic, and psychological nature from close and intimate relations in Ghana. According to Domestic Violence in Ghana (2016), 12 months prior to their nationwide survey, 20% of men in Ghana had experienced at least one type of domestic violence. Studies by Mantey (2019) corroborate this report. It is also worth noting that, inasmuch as there is no official data to acknowledge their existence, transgender and gender non-conforming people live openly in Ghana (Kokoroko, 2022). Terms like *Kojo Besia* (an effeminate man) and *Obaa*

Berema (a masculine woman) have long been part of the vocabularies of many of Ghana's indigenous languages. Even before colonization, these monikers were used to refer to people who fell outside the dominant gender identities and gender norms (*LGBT in Ghana: "We Exist and We Are Here"*, 2022). Currently, though, due to the climate of hostility towards LGBTQI people, these people face or risk facing different forms of violence. Anecdotal evidence gleaned from various social media posts suggests that violence towards trans and gender non-conforming people by strangers and intimate partners alike is also commonplace in Ghana (Kokoroko, 2022).

2.1.1.1 Prevalence of IPV in Ghana

According to the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) conducted in 2014, approximately 27.7% of women aged 15–49 in Ghana have experienced some form of physical, emotional, or sexual violence perpetrated by a current or former partner (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). However, the rates of IPV vary significantly across regions, with the northern parts of the country consistently reporting higher levels of violence compared to the southern regions (Issahaku, 2019). Poverty and economic deprivation have been identified as significant risk factors for IPV in northern Ghana (Dzuvor et al., 2020). Limited access to education, employment opportunities, and financial resources can exacerbate power imbalances within relationships, fostering an environment where violence is more likely to occur (Tenkorang et al., 2018). Additionally, the traditional gender roles that confine women to domestic spheres and limit their economic autonomy can further entrench their vulnerability to abuse. In some cases, the emphasis on maintaining family honor and avoiding societal stigma may discourage victims from seeking help or reporting instances of violence (Amoakohene, 2004). Conversely, robust community support systems and the active involvement of traditional leaders can serve as protective factors, providing avenues for intervention and promoting non-violent conflict resolution. In many communities in Ghana, traditional notions of masculinity are deeply intertwined with concepts of power, control, and the preservation of honor (Adinkrah, 2011). These ideals have been theorized in the literature as factors that foster an environment where violence against intimate partners is perceived as a means of asserting dominance and maintaining a sense of masculinity (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Heise, 1998; Tenkorang et al., 2018). Moreover, the societal expectation for men to be the primary providers and decision-makers within the household can contribute to a sense of entitlement, which, when threatened, may manifest in violent behavior to reassert authority (Issahaku, 2019).

In many communities in Ghana, the interplay between religious teachings and sociocultural traditions has significantly shaped gender roles and expectations (Ampofo et al., 2005). While a few doctrines and norms emphasize mutual respect, kindness, and harmony within marital relationships, many religious doctrines and cultural norms sanction and justify male authority and the subordination of women (Zakiya et al., 2019). In some instances, these religious doctrines have been referenced to rationalize or enable intimate partner violence, particularly when men feel their position of power is challenged (Awedoba, 2007). Recognizing the pivotal role that masculine ideologies play in perpetuating intimate partner violence, various interventions and programs have been implemented in Ghana to challenge harmful gender norms and promote more gender-equitable relationships (Issahaku & Naamah, 2017). These efforts have included community-based initiatives and educational campaigns aimed at redefining masculinity and the provision of support services for victims of violence (Addo-Lartey et al., 2019). While these interventions have yielded some positive outcomes, their overall impact has been limited by the deep-rooted cultural beliefs and social structures that reinforce rigid gender roles and enable the perpetuation of violence (Agyei-Mensah, 2001). Addressing the relationship between masculinity and IPV requires a multifaceted approach that challenges harmful masculine ideologies, promotes gender equality, and empowers both men and women to build healthy and respectful relationships (Issahaku & Amadu, 2016; Tenkorang et al., 2018). By engaging communities, religious leaders, and traditional authorities and fostering an environment that values the dignity and autonomy of all individuals, it may be possible to dismantle the cultural and societal barriers that contribute to the perpetuation of IPV in Ghana.

2.1.2 Masculinity in Ghana

Few studies emanating from Ghana have attempted to interrogate the interpretation of masculinity and gender in general and how it affects the organization of life and social institutions. To comprehend the dynamics of masculinity and its relationship with intimate partner violence within any community in Ghana, it is crucial to delve into the intricate tapestry of influences that have shaped gender roles and societal expectations over generations. Interestingly, due to enduring traditions, the influences of colonialism and its vestiges, religion, and now modernization, masculinity in Ghana can be a complex arena of conflicting beliefs and influences (Dery, 2020). Traditional notions of masculinity in Ghana often emphasize qualities such as strength, authority, and provider roles within the family and community (Adjei, 2016). These ideals are deeply rooted in enduring cultural practices and beliefs. For

example, among the Akan people of Ghana, the institution of chieftaincy plays a central role in defining and perpetuating ideals of masculinity, with chiefs embodying authority, wisdom, and protection (Miescher, 2007). That said, the demands of a contemporary world have led to shifting gender roles, which have seen many women work long hours to support their families (Ampim et al., 2020). That notwithstanding, many contemporary gender scholars have asserted that in Ghanaian society, prevalent concepts of masculinity revolve around men's ability to wield control and authority over women as breadwinners. This discourse is exploited to preserve gender hierarchies between men and women. Male dominance in this hierarchy is sometimes exercised through IPV (Dery, 2021).

2.1.3 An Overview of Nima

Nima is a boisterous, densely populated, low-income community in Accra, the capital of Ghana. It is approximately 7 kilometers from the city center and the second most populated urban area in Accra, with a population of around 81,000 people hailing from all over Ghana and West Africa and occupying an estimated 1.59 square kilometers of land (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). With its haphazardly built compound houses, roofed with rusted corrugated iron sheets that have television poles and satellite dishes shooting up from atop most of them, Nima is promptly conspicuous to anyone touring the capital for the first time.

Nima, as a suburb of Accra, started taking shape in the 1940s. Originally a land for families from the Ga ethnic group, it was inhabited by Fulani cattle herders who used the mostly forested area as a grazing field for their livestock before sale in the Accra market (Essamuah & Tonah, 2004). The establishment of an American military base around the area during the Second World War resulted in many migrants trooping in to take advantage of the many available job opportunities offered by the base, including working as stewards, artisans, laborers, and so on (Arn, 1996; Gough and Yankson, 2001; Songsore, 2003). The population was further bolstered after a number of Gold Coast (Ghana's name before independence) soldiers returning from the Second World War also settled in the area with their families. Soon, due to its lure of cheap rent, the availability of a huge expanse of land to build on, and its proximity to the city center, which was at the time experiencing a massive economic boom after Ghana's independence, Nima became an attractive destination of choice for migrants from all over Ghana (mainly from the Northern region, the Ashanti region, and the Volta region) and West Africa, notably Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria (Essamuah and Tonah, 2004; Owusu et al., 2008). Consequently, before the 1970s, most of the area in Nima was occupied with clustered

compound houses built without regard for any planning norms as landowners sought to take advantage of the ever-increasing demand for rented apartments (Songsore, 2003).

Presently, Nima is a migrant community with a heterogeneous outlook where people of different nationalities, ethnicities, religious backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and educational levels live side by side with each other in relative peace. Though some of the residents here are high-income and middle-income earners, the majority of the population is in the low-income and unemployed brackets (Owusu et al., 2008). Nima boasts a thriving and vibrant open market where one could find anything and everything, from foodstuffs and clothes to electronics. In line with gender norms and gender roles in Ghana, women occupy most of the market spaces, mainly as tabletop traders of all kinds of goods. Also, a good number of women work as *chop bar* (local restaurants) and roadside tabletop eatery owners and assistants, cleaners, and artisans—mostly as hairdressers and seamstresses. The men, on the other hand, are mostly artisans, trotro (local bus) drivers and mates (assistants to local bus drivers), okada (motor bikes used as taxis) riders (Awumbila et al., 2014), and a few others occupy the spaces in the market that rely heavily on brawn to manage.

Regarding educational background, the population census in 2000 indicates that about 34% of people in Nima aged 6 years and over have never had any formal education. 27% dropped out after junior high school (middle school), and only a measly 2% have had post-secondary school education. For those who have had tertiary school education, the number stands at 1.8% (Owusu et al., 2008). Further, religion is a big feature of life in Nima. Mosques, churches, and Islamic schools abound in the area. Owing to the fact that many in Nima have roots in parts of northern Ghana and West Africa where Islam is the dominant religion, 54% of the inhabitants are Muslims, 40% are Christians, and the remaining profess belonging to other religions (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). In conformity to the aforementioned figures, Islamic religious activities are prevalent throughout the neighborhoods in this area. Interestingly, it is not uncommon to find hitherto practicing and non-practicing Christians who converted to Islam and families that are a mashup of Islam, Christianity, a-religious and non-practicing people. Also, because many people in Nima keep in touch with their places of origin, they, regardless of their religious affiliations, still observe practices mostly associated with indigenous African spirituality since these are usually woven into socio-cultural mores and norms like rites of passage, celebration of festivals, belief in voodoo, and seeking spiritual revelations and answers from seers. Furthermore, consistent with the heterogeneity in Nima, the inhabitants speak several languages. Though Hausa is the main *lingua franca* here, Twi, Ewe, Ga, and pidgin

English are quite popular too. Then there are languages like Dagbani, Mamprusi, Dagaare, and Frafra that are common amongst people in Nima who originate from northern Ghana. Generally, depending on the makeup of the neighborhood in which a person from Nima grew up, they are most likely to speak Hausa, or their ethnic language, in addition to at least one or more other languages.

2.2 Review of Related Literature Review

2.2.1 Causes of IPV

IPV continues to be a widespread problem throughout Africa, influenced by an intricate combination of sociocultural, economic, political, and environmental factors. Based on recent studies and analysis, this literature review seeks to highlight the various factors contributing to IPV in the African context.

Socio-economic disparities, specifically economic disparities and poverty have been identified as major factors contributing to IPV in Africa (Bankole et al., 2018; MacQuarrie, 2015). Restricted access to resources and economic opportunities intensifies gender disparities, promoting unequal power dynamics in relationships and heightening the likelihood of violence (Amoakohene, 2004). The perpetuation of IPV is further exacerbated by economic dependence and financial stress, emphasizing the crucial connection between socioeconomic factors and IPV dynamics (Heise, 1998).

Cultural norms and traditional gender roles significantly influence attitudes towards IPV in Africa (Kumi-Kyereme & Amo-Adjei, 2016). The existence of patriarchal systems and the societal norms that uphold male dominance in relationships contribute to unequal power dynamics and the acceptance of violence against women. The cultural tolerance of violence exacerbates survivors' reluctance to seek assistance or denounce their perpetrators, as they fear social ostracism or reprisal. This underscores the imperative to confront detrimental societal standards and advocate for gender parity.

Cultural acceptance of violence is a strong predictor of IPV (Heise, 1998). In specific cultural settings in Africa, violence, including IPV, may be widely accepted or even endorsed as a method of resolving conflicts or asserting dominance within relationships (Kumi-Kyereme & Amo-Adjei, 2016). It is crucial to question and challenge cultural norms that accept or rationalize violence to establish environments where IPV is not accepted, and survivors are encouraged to seek assistance without the fear of being stigmatized or facing retaliation.

The presence of stigma and shame about experiences of IPV can serve as substantial obstacles to seeking assistance and revealing instances of abuse (Kumi-Kyereme & Amo-Adjei, 2016). Survivors of domestic disputes are hindered from seeking support services or sharing their experiences due to cultural beliefs that assign blame to victims or consider such disputes as private matters. It is essential to promote community awareness and establish safe spaces where survivors can seek assistance without worrying about being judged or facing retaliation. These measures are crucial for ending the pattern of silence and creating a supportive environment for survivors.

Institutional and legal challenges arise due to the presence of ineffective legal systems and insufficient institutional responses, which impede survivors' ability to obtain justice and access support services (Muluneh et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2019). The lack of consequences for those who commit crimes and the societal obstacles that prevent victims from seeking assistance contribute to the continuation of patterns of mistreatment. Strengthening the legal framework, improving the availability of legal remedies, and ensuring that those responsible for IPV are held accountable are crucial measures for tackling IPV in Africa.

Intersectionality and Marginalization: Various intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation combine with gender to worsen vulnerabilities to IPV (Van Niekerk & Boonzaier, 2019). Women from ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ individuals, who belong to marginalized groups, are at an increased risk of experiencing violence as a result of multiple forms of discrimination and social exclusion intersecting. To ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals, it is crucial to tackle structural inequalities and promote inclusive strategies for preventing and intervening in IPV.

Experiencing trauma, such as childhood adversity and exposure to violence, plays a role in both the act of perpetrating and being a victim of IPV (Domestic Violence in Ghana, 2016; Kumi-Kyereme & Amo-Adjei, 2016). Implementing trauma-informed strategies that target the root causes of mental health problems and offer comprehensive assistance to survivors is crucial for interrupting the pattern of violence and fostering the process of healing and recuperation.

Socialization and Gender Socialization: The process of socialization, particularly about gender, has a significant impact on the development of attitudes and behaviors associated with IPV (Adjei, 2018; Dery, 2021). Societal conventions and anticipated behaviors related to masculinity and femininity frequently perpetuate imbalanced power dynamics and establish aggression as a standard in relationships. It is crucial to promote non-violent conflict resolution

and challenge harmful gender stereotypes from a young age to prevent the continuation of IPV from one generation to another.

Migration and displacement can lead to forced displacement, which occurs when individuals are forced to leave their homes due to conflict, environmental disasters, or economic factors. This displacement puts individuals at a greater risk of experiencing IPV, as highlighted by Jetzlsperger (2021). According to DeJesus (2018), displacement causes a disturbance in social networks and support systems, making existing stressors worse and increasing susceptibility to exploitation and abuse. To effectively tackle the specific difficulties encountered by displaced populations, such as cramped living conditions and restricted availability of resources, it is necessary to implement focused interventions that are customized to the requirements of these communities.

IPV revolves around the fundamental concept of power and control, wherein the perpetrators aim to establish dominance and exercise control over their partners (Dery, 2019; McCloskey et al., 2016). To maintain power and instill fear in victims, individuals often utilize economic control, emotional manipulation, and coercive tactics. To prevent IPV and cultivate respectful and equitable partnerships, it is crucial to address power imbalances within relationships and promote healthy communication and negotiation skills (Dery, 2021).

The media and cultural narratives have the power to shape attitudes towards gender roles and relationships, influencing how people perceive acceptable behavior (UN Women, n.d.; Buqa, 2022). The depiction of women in a manner that promotes hatred and prejudice towards them, along with the celebration of male authority in media, plays a role in making violence against women appear acceptable and commonplace (UN Women, n.d.). Advocating for media literacy and promoting responsible depiction of gender dynamics can confront detrimental norms and foster positive relationship models within communities.

Political instability, weak governance, and conflict-related violence give rise to situations marked by a lack of law and order and a lack of accountability for wrongdoing (Muluneh et al., 2019). In these circumstances, individuals who commit IPV may behave without fear of punishment, as they are aware that they are unlikely to experience any repercussions for their actions. Improving the systems of governance, increasing the availability of legal remedies, and ensuring that those responsible for violence are held accountable are crucial for dealing with IPV in states that are affected by conflict and are in a fragile state.

Availability of firearms and weapons: The widespread presence of firearms and weapons, especially in areas affected by conflict, increases the dangers of IPV and intensifies the level of violence (McCloskey et al., 2016). Convenient availability of firearms amplifies the deadliness of domestic conflicts and presents substantial hazards to the well-being of survivors. Disarmament initiatives and efforts to regulate the accessibility of weapons are essential for diminishing the frequency and intensity of IPV in areas where weapons are easily obtainable.

The transmission of violence across generations occurs when individuals are exposed to IPV within their families. This exposure can lead to the perpetuation of harmful relationship patterns, as children learn and internalize these behaviors (Domestic Violence in Ghana, 2016). Interventions targeting the interruption of this cycle must cater to the requirements of both victims and offenders, by advocating for constructive parenting methods and imparting non-aggressive conflict resolution abilities to prevent the perpetuation of violence in future generations.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse: The misuse of substances, such as alcohol and drugs, is frequently linked to higher levels of perpetrating IPV (McCloskey et al., 2016). Substance abuse has the potential to impair cognitive abilities, worsen conflicts, and reduce self-control, resulting in increased aggression and violence in interpersonal relationships. It is crucial to address substance abuse through prevention and treatment programs in order to decrease the occurrence of IPV and disrupt the pattern of addiction and violence.

Gender disparities in educational access and opportunities hinder the economic autonomy and ability of women and girls to assert their rights in relationships (Osorio, 2023). Higher levels of education are frequently associated with a decrease in IPV, as education acts as a protective factor against violence. Advocating for the education of girls and empowering women economically are crucial tactics for tackling the underlying factors of IPV and promoting gender equality (Global Education Monitoring Report Team and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022).

The long-lasting impacts of colonization on gender relations and power dynamics in African societies are evident in their historical legacies (Miescher, 2007; Dery, 2021). The enduring impact of colonial-era policies and practices, which marginalized women and perpetuated male dominance, can still be observed in the patterns of IPV (Dery, 2021). Recognizing and confronting these past wrongdoings is crucial for advancing gender equality and dismantling oppressive structures that perpetuate violence towards women.

Community and social support are vital in preventing and addressing IPV. Strong social support networks and community interventions play a crucial role in this regard (Kumi-Kyereme & Amo-Adjei, 2016). Establishing inclusive communities that actively advocate for gender equality, offer secure havens for survivors, and actively confront detrimental societal standards can foster environments that have zero tolerance for violence. For sustainable transformation, it is crucial to implement community-based initiatives that involve men and boys as partners in the prevention of violence and the promotion of positive masculinity.

2.2.2 Masculinity and IPV

IPV is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across diverse cultures and societies (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Central to understanding this phenomenon is recognizing the role masculinity plays in its perpetuation. Traditionally defined by qualities like power, dominance, and control, masculinity has been closely linked to IPV. This traditional understanding often fosters the belief that men should exert control over their partners, leading to violence as a means of asserting dominance.

Moreover, societal expectations surrounding masculinity contribute to the normalization and acceptance of IPV. Men are socialized to view aggression and control as indicators of strength, perpetuating a harmful cycle where conforming to these norms reinforces IPV. In some cultures, masculinity is intertwined with the ability to exert power over others, including intimate partners. Consequently, IPV becomes a means for men to assert dominance and validate their masculinity.

Research consistently shows a gender disparity in IPV, with women predominantly being the victims and men the perpetrators. Additionally, conforming to traditional masculine norms can have detrimental effects on men's mental and social well-being, often leading to higher rates of depression, loneliness, and substance abuse. The impact of IPV on women is severe and enduring, with a greater risk of experiencing serious and even lethal abuse.

Despite these challenges, it's essential to recognize that not all men adhere to harmful stereotypes of masculinity. Many actively oppose IPV and strive for healthy, non-violent relationships.

2.2.3 Understanding Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Relation to IPV

Gaining a deep understanding of the intricate nature of masculinity and how it interacts with gender relations is essential for fully grasping the dynamics of IPV. The objective of this literature review is to examine different viewpoints on masculinities and their consequences for

IPV. This review aims to provide insights into the correlation between masculinity and IPV by analyzing various scholarly works, such as those authored by Connell (2005), Kimmel (2002), Messerschmidt (2018), Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015), Heise and Kotsadam (2015), and Flood (2007).

Connell (2005) presents a fundamental framework for comprehending masculinities, highlighting the societal creation of gender roles and the hierarchical structure of masculinities. Kimmel (2002) examines gender symmetry in domestic violence, emphasizing the importance of addressing both male and female perpetration and victimization. Messerschmidt (2018) explores the connection between masculinities and crime, specifically examining how specific types of masculinity contribute to violent behaviors, such as IPV.

Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015) propose a change in approach to preventing IPV, suggesting a shift from focusing on individual interventions to addressing broader societal norms and gender dynamics. Their work highlights the significance of involving men and boys in initiatives aimed at questioning conventional ideas of masculinity and advancing gender equality. Heise and Kotsadam (2015) provide a comparative analysis, investigating the occurrence of IPV in various societies and historical periods. Their research emphasizes the influence of cultural norms on the formation of attitudes towards violence and gender roles.

Flood (2007) provides a thorough examination of men and masculinities from a global standpoint. Flood illuminates the intricate relationship between masculinity, power, and violence by examining various cultural interpretations of masculinity. The importance of considering local interpretations of gender and power dynamics is emphasized in his work, highlighting the necessity of context-specific strategies to tackle IPV.

2.2.4 Masculinity and The Prevention of IPV

Expanding on the knowledge shared by these scholars, it becomes clear that successful IPV prevention strategies must tackle the fundamental dynamics of masculinity. Through the act of questioning and defying strict societal expectations regarding gender, and by advocating for different ways of embodying masculinity, interventions have the potential to interrupt the patterns that contribute to violent behavior. Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015) propose a comprehensive approach that extends beyond modifying individual behavior to include wider social and structural changes. This entails not only involving men and boys as allies, but also advocating for policy reforms and institutional changes that promote gender equality. Cultural considerations and contextualized approaches are crucial in comprehending the patterns of IPV, as emphasized by Heise and Kotsadam (2015). They stress the significance of considering

cultural norms and historical contexts. Cultural norms dictate that behavior deemed acceptable or expected in one culture may be deemed unacceptable in another. Hence, it is imperative to customize interventions according to particular cultural contexts, considering local beliefs, practices, and power dynamics. Effective implementation of this initiative necessitates engaging in cooperative efforts with local communities and stakeholders to create programs that are attuned to the cultural nuances and preferences of diverse populations.

Flood's (2007) global perspective supports the idea that masculinity is not a single, fixed concept, but rather a flexible and situation-dependent phenomenon. Flood emphasizes the importance of using detailed approaches that acknowledge the variety of male experiences and identities by studying masculinities in various cultures and regions. This situation requires adaptability in intervention approaches, recognizing that what is effective in one setting may not necessarily be suitable in another.

2.2.5 Potential Areas for Future Development

As we consider the future, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the interdependence among masculinities, gender dynamics, and violence. Both scholars and practitioners are increasingly adopting comprehensive approaches that tackle the underlying factors of IPV while also promoting gender equality and social justice. This necessitates continuous endeavors to confront detrimental gender norms, enhance the agency of marginalized communities, and cultivate partnerships across various sectors and fields of study.

To comprehend the significance of masculinities in IPV, it is essential to analyze and differentiate between different scholarly viewpoints. Connell (2005) and Kimmel (2002) provide valuable perspectives on how masculinity is formed and its impact on IPV. On the other hand, Messerschmidt (2018) and Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015) offer detailed examinations of the complex connection between different forms of masculinity and violence. Through the process of comparing and contrasting these viewpoints, we can enhance our comprehension of the intricate nature of IPV and the influence of gender on the development of violent behaviors.

The construction of masculinities is a topic explored by Connell (2005) and Kimmel (2002), who both emphasize the influence of cultural norms and power dynamics on the formation of gender identities. Connell employs a structural framework that highlights the hierarchical aspects of masculinities, whereas Kimmel concentrates on the individual and interpersonal aspects of gender relations. Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity highlights the supremacy of specific manifestations of masculinity compared to others, while Kimmel's

examination delves into how individual men navigate and embody masculinity in their day-to-day existence.

The connection between masculinities and IPV is explored by Messerschmidt (2018) and Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015), who provide complementary viewpoints on this matter. Messerschmidt's research on masculinities and crime offers valuable insights into how specific manifestations of masculinity can contribute to violent behaviors, such as IPV. He highlights the significance of comprehending how different forms of masculinity intersect with other societal elements, such as race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, in shaping outcomes related to violence. Conversely, Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015) propose a change in the approach to preventing IPV, by going beyond interventions focused on individuals and instead addressing wider social norms and structural inequalities. The text underscores the significance of gender inequality in sustaining violence against women and girls and stresses the necessity for transformative strategies that question conventional concepts of masculinity.

Heise and Kotsadam (2015) and Flood (2007) offer insights into the relationship between masculinities and IPV from a cross-cultural standpoint. They emphasize the significance of considering cultural norms and historical contexts when examining patterns of violence. The research conducted by Heise and Kotsadam investigates the cross-cultural trends of IPV and highlights the influence of cultural norms on shaping attitudes towards violence and gender roles. Flood's comprehensive viewpoint highlights the wide range of male identities and emphasizes the necessity of tailored strategies to tackle intimate partner violence, taking into account specific circumstances. He underscores the ever-changing and energetic essence of masculinity, emphasizing the significance of comprehending specific environments and actively involving oneself with a range of viewpoints.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the field site and relevant research relating to IPV and masculinity.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of this study. The study adopts a qualitative research design that mainly employs primary sources, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, complemented by secondary sources in collecting data to interrogate the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The chapter will also discuss participant characteristics, challenges in the field, and the limitations of the study.

3.1.1 Research Design

As suggested earlier, this study hinges on engaging with and ascertaining the authentic perceptions of people, mainly men, in Nima regarding IPV and, to some extent, gender. In *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, Silverman (2000) asserts that it is critical for researchers to immerse themselves in the social world of the group they are studying in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the complexity inherent in the social group as well as a deeper understanding of their perspective. In this regard, the study will adopt a qualitative research design, including in-depth interviews, in an attempt to collect firsthand information from participants and achieve its stated objectives. It is worth pointing out that researchers such as Mahoney and Goertz (2006) contend that quantitative methods like questionnaires, surveys, longitudinal studies, and statistical analysis can also prove useful in conducting a social inquiry about a particular social group. However, due to requisites like a large sample size, considerable time, and substantial financial resources often associated with quantitative research but not readily available for this project, the qualitative method proved favorable.

This study is grounded in a constructivist ontological perspective and an interpretivist epistemology. Constructivist ontology maintains that social actors, including the researcher, actively and constantly construct social phenomena through their perceptions, interactions, experiences, and actions (Becker, 1982; Bryman, 2016). This perspective highlights the idea that reality is not a predetermined or fixed entity but rather is created through ongoing processes of negotiation, interpretation, and meaning-making within specific social and cultural frameworks (Bryman, 2016). Constructivist ontology lends itself to an interpretivist epistemology that asserts that unlike objects in the natural sciences, humans are all unique and possess a certain level of subjectivity (Bryman, 2016). In this regard, gender and IPV, as well as the subtleties and intricacies of intimate relationships, are realities constantly constructed,

produced, and construed by the people of Nima in accordance with their specific social and cultural frameworks. Hence, this study acknowledges the role of social, cultural, and situational contexts in shaping people's subjective perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. Also, since the study engages with people and not objects, it acknowledges the inherent biases of the human element. Although Silverman (2000) notes that susceptibility to a high degree of subjectivity is a drawback of a qualitative research method, Diefenbach (2009), conversely, indicates that it can be argued that the subjectivity of the human element in qualitative research has a tendency to foster creativity and innovation in how the method and its approaches are applied.

3.1.2 Data Collection Methods

In order to obtain an in-depth understanding that reflects the complexity and diversity of the participants' views and lived experiences, this study employed a combination of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with individual participants and a focus group discussion for the collection of data. Semi-structured interviews, unlike structured and unstructured interviews, are characterized by their flexibility in that they permit participants or respondents to express themselves freely while adhering to an interview guide (Bryman, 2016). This flexibility also makes it possible for the researcher to probe for more details or clarification and ask spontaneous follow-up questions if the need arises (Bryman, 2016). The interview guide was prepared in advance and proved particularly vital in keeping the discussions within the bounds of the subject matter. Also, starting with an interview guide made it feasible to verify that all or nearly all the key questions were addressed in line with the goals of the study. It was crucial to preserve the respondents' privacy in order to guarantee both their security and data quality. In line with this, every respondent's name was substituted with a pseudonym. The only condition for assigning the pseudonyms at random was that they fall within the same etymological range as the participants' true names in order to maintain data consistency for analysis and presentation later in the thesis.

With the consent of participants, all the interviews were recorded and stored safely upon the completion of the research. The study also used field notes ascertained mainly through observing participants and activities on the field. This complemented the firsthand information gathered directly from participants and provided even more insight into behaviors, social norms, and cultural contexts.

3.1.2.1 Participant Selection

Participants for this study were selected using a combination of purposive and random sampling method. Bryman (2012) explains that purposive sampling involves selecting research participants who possess certain characteristics and are capable of contributing their knowledge and lived experiences to the research topic and questions. The participants were mainly men in Nima between the ages of 25 and 40 who are or have ever been in dating relationships. More so, using purposive sampling culminated in selecting four men who admitted having ever perpetrated physical violence against their partners and one 28-year-old woman from Nima who suffered both physical and sexual violence at the hands of her partner. My original intention for the study was to engage with only male respondents between the ages of 25 to 40 living in different neighborhoods of Nima. However, discussions with many people with a Western or high-income and/or intellectual background necessitated interviewing a survivor of IPV in Nima to provide a firsthand perspective of how a person from the community construes and handles the violence they have experienced. The participants were intentionally selected so they could contribute valuable insights to the research questions and topic through their lived experiences.

All the respondents fall into category (c) of the definition of "domestic relation" as provided for in Ghana's 2007 Domestic Violence Act. Thus, the respondents were once in an actual or perceived intimate relationship, or they were, at the time of the study, either courting or in an actual or perceived romantic or intimate relationship. This also captures what this study means by intimate partner and explains the choice of the characteristics of the respondents. Further, due to the conservative culture in Ghana as a whole, many people only start seriously courting and committing to intimate relationships in their mid-20s (UNICEF Ghana, 2018). This also explains the choice of age range in selecting participants for the research. A total of 14 participants were selected for this study. Of the total number, five had completed senior high school (formerly senior secondary school), two had dropped out of senior high school, four had completed junior high school (formerly junior secondary school), one had dropped out of junior high school, and two had earned college degrees. All the participants have witnessed or experienced physical violence in their formative years as a mode of care or discipline at the hands of a parent, relative, or member of the community. *Table 2 shows a detailed composition of participants.*

It is worth mentioning that selecting only heterosexual people in dating relationships to contribute their perspective on violence against women does not posit that only heterosexual

relationships exist in Nima. Homosexual relationships also exist in Nima (Kokoroko, 2022; LGBT in Ghana: “We Exist and We Are Here”, 2022). However, due to the hostility directed at the LGBTQI+ community in Ghana (Kokoroko, 2022), these relationships are often not openly expressed. Thus, it is increasingly difficult to find and openly engage with homosexuals about matters relating to any form of violence they might have experienced or are experiencing within their relationship(s).

Table 2			
<i>Participants Composition</i>			
Pseudonym	Age	Education	Employment
Muntari	28	Senior High School	Kitchen Help
Nuhu	31	College	Artisan
Mustafa	34	< Senior High School	Footballer
Ishaka	32	Junior High School	Unemployed
Yaw	32	Junior High School	Unemployed
Samuel	36	< Senior High School	Unemployed
Faruk	34	Senior High School	Artisan
Adjei	32	Junior High School	Unemployed
Bernard	38	< Junior High School	Unemployed
Tanko	33	Senior High School	Trader
Danlad	25	Senior High School	Trader
Asibiri	26	Junior High School	Self-employed

Danjuma	31	College	Self-employed
Sadia	26	Senior High School	Trader

Note: Sadia is the only woman interviewed amongst the 14 participants

3.1.2.2 Data Collection Process: In-Depth Interviews

In carrying out this study, I conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews with respondents from Nima, mainly men between the ages of 25 and 40 who are in dating relationships. Three of these interviews were with men who had ever beaten up their partners. Also, in order to provide a distinct sense of how violence is experienced and framed by a survivor of IPV in this community, I interviewed a young woman who is a survivor of IPV. According to Silverman (2000) and Bryman (2012), one-on-one interviews allow for nuanced exploration of each respondent's perspectives, experiences, and insights, helping to facilitate rich, detailed data acquisition. Furthermore, the intimate nature of these interviews fosters rapport and trust between the researcher and participants, potentially eliciting more candid responses. As mentioned earlier, all the interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. I began each interview by giving a short explanation of what the research is about so that the participants would understand the topic better and have a chance to ask questions before the actual discussion commenced. In addition, as this is a sensitive topic, I started the interviews on a lighter note to settle them in. I asked them about their perspective on love and their overall experience of dating in the community. I found that this broke the ice and set us up for more detailed and candid discussions.

3.1.2.3 Focus Group Discussion

I also conducted two separate focus group discussions consisting of five members at a time. A focus group session provides a platform for interactive discussion that enables participants to engage with one another, share diverse viewpoints, reinforce the positions of each other, and collectively co-construct meaning around the topic under discussion (Silverman, 2000; Bryman, 2012). Additionally, focus group sessions complement one-on-one interviews as they have the potential to offer insight into how different individuals construe an issue as members of a collective group rather than from an individual standpoint (Silverman, 2000; Bryman, 2012). Before each session began, I explained to the participants that there was no judging and no wrong or right answers. I emphasized the need to respect the perspectives and lived experiences of everyone present while assuring them that the discussions are for research and

educational purposes. An incident I find worth noting is that having arranged with one of the participants who had hitherto admitted to being a perpetrator to be present at one of the focus group sessions, when the topic concerning having ever hit a partner came up, the other participants promptly, albeit jokingly, identified him and another participant as those who are best suited to give firsthand information regarding the subject in question. All the interviews, including the focus group discussions, were conducted predominantly in Hausa. But as is typical with conversations in Nima, the participants and I freely engaged in code-switching by often mixing it up with English, Twi, and/or Ga to put our point across. In cases where I struggled to understand a word, sentence, or jargon used, the participant(s) helped me decipher exactly what was being communicated by expanding on their initial point or by translating to English. More, all the interviews, apart from the session with the lady, took place at what is called 'Base(s)' in Nima and parts of Ghana. Bases refer to specific spots in the neighborhood where people, mostly men of the same age range, converge at different times of the day to pass time and discuss diverse topics ranging from sports to politics to personal affairs. The importance of bases for learning, navigating, honing, and achieving one's masculinity will later be discussed.

3.1.2.4 Secondary sources

Apart from the primary data collected during the fieldwork, secondary sources of information were also used in this research. These include academic and scholarly publications, unpublished materials, journals, and print and electronic media publications. These works were key in enhancing my understanding of the research topic and complementing the primary data.

3.1.3 Positionality and Reflexivity

When conducting qualitative research, one is constantly faced with situations in which their background, personal experiences, cultural or societal values, and other characteristics may affect how they approach their topic, participants, and data processing (Silverman, 2000). As previously alluded to in Chapter 1, I am a heterosexual man who was born and bred in Nima. This positions me as an insider since I share a familiar cultural, social, and experiential background with the participants under study. Consequently, the participants recognized and often treated me as one of their own. According to Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), having this kind of established familiarity with respondents can be advantageous to an insider researcher. I encountered some of these advantages during my fieldwork. Firstly, though the topic of this study is a sensitive one, at times, participants felt comfortable enough to crack jokes and poke fun at each other and themselves, knowing I would understand and appreciate the context.

During one of the focus group sessions, while making his point, one of the participants used the word "improvise." Another participant immediately retorted, "Papa Nii is at it again." Everyone busted out laughing as we all recognized that it was a reference to the famous TV character from the popular taxi driver series who was known for his use of flamboyant words. Secondly, because I am fluent in the major languages spoken in Nima, namely Hausa, Twi, Ga, and Pidgin English, it was quite easy to engage with participants in the language they are most comfortable with. This meant that participants could use phrases, jargon, and sentences that best captured their thought process and feelings without concern that they would be lost on me. Lastly, my insider status also meant I was quite easily allowed access to the bases where most of the interviews and discussions for this study took place. Before, during, or after the discussions, participants readily shared their meals, snacks, or tea with me—a practice that is the norm at these bases. However, Weber (1946, as cited in Silverman, 2000) argues that the type of relationship a researcher has with a group being studied increases the likelihood that the research will be compromised. Thus, it is for this same familiarity that I had to be doubly wary in my interaction with participants and the information they provided in order to mitigate the probability of marring the study by taking things for granted or by presenting my own subjective bias regarding the participants and the subject matter. In line with this, I always asked participants to clarify in plain language what they meant by a particular jargon, phrase, or euphemism so that I did not end up misrepresenting their actual views while processing the data collected. Also, as an educated man who has lived in Nima throughout my childhood and adult life, I have my own perceptions and preconceptions about gender, IPV, and its prevalence in the community. For this reason, I constantly resorted to reflective listening in order to avoid assuming anything about the participants' lived experiences or even passing judgment on their choices and perceptions. Nonetheless, I do acknowledge that my familiarity with participants, my background as an educated member of the community, the tone of my voice, my expressions, and even the ways I formulate and ask my questions could influence some of the participants to tweak their responses so as to placate me or other respondents or to project a more positive or manly impression of themselves. It is therefore crucial to be aware of this when analyzing the data.

3.1.4 Ethical Considerations

In conducting qualitative research, it is important to carefully adhere to ethical protocols throughout the study in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, as well as safeguard the wellbeing and dignity of all participants (Silverman, 2000). Moreso, when the research topic is

a sensitive subject and the study requires the gathering of data, it could potentially make participants feel overwhelmed, anxious, and incriminated. Accordingly, this study was carried out in line with the aspects of research ethics as espoused by Silverman (2012). This included adhering to the principles of voluntarily participating, confidentiality and anonymity, and minimizing harm or discomfort to participants. Data collection only commenced after a back-and-forth discussion with Sikt, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, to assess and eventually confirm that ethical guidelines are strictly adhered to, and the safety of participants is prioritized throughout the research process.

Further, the participants were given the freedom to decide whether or not to take part in the interviews and discussions after the research topic and objectives were explained to them and after having the opportunity to ask any questions they might have had. They were also given the option to withdraw their consent at any time if they felt it was necessary. Also, due to the sensitivity of the research topic, I was conscious of the fact that for some informants, it may be difficult to recount their experience of intimate partner violence and/or violence they have inflicted on others. For this reason, before each session, all participants were informed about their right to take breaks, postpone, or cancel a session all together in case it got unbearably overwhelming. For the sake of confidentiality and to ensure the safety of participants, one-on-one interviews took place in settings and conditions that the participants suggested were convenient and safe for them. For the interview with the young woman, she had initially suggested that she would want the ‘gatekeeper’ around while she did her interview. Hence, preparations were made for that. However, on the day of the interview, she insisted that she would be much more comfortable if she had the interview with me all alone. This meant that the interview took place with just her at a location and in conditions where she felt comfortable enough to freely express herself without the fear or anxiety that someone else would be privy to her story. In addition, inasmuch as most of the participants had a laissez-faire attitude concerning their identity and the information they were divulging, their names and identities were anonymized in a bid to avoid compromising their safety and security.

3.1.5 Preparation for field work and challenges in the field

As part of my preparation for field work, and to complement my knowledge from the Gender and Peace module from the Centre of Peace Studies, I took a course at the psychology department titled Gender and Socioeconomic Inequality. This proved pivotal as it enhanced my understanding of the research topic as well as shed light on stereotypes and socioeconomic

structures that could potentially impact power relationships and social dependency in societies and across cultures.

Inasmuch as I lived in Nima for most of my life and I was quite familiar with the residents, culture, and local contexts, I considered it vital to get in contact with a ‘gatekeeper’ to facilitate and smoothen my initial interaction with potential participants. According to Lavrakas (2008), a gatekeeper is a person who serves as a connection between the researcher and prospective respondents. For this study, a gatekeeper came in the form of Joojo, a friend who is the leader of a small non-governmental organization (NGO) formed by the men from a *base* in one of the communities in Nima. He mobilizes the group in their monthly clean-up exercises, where they tidy up gutters in various neighborhoods, the marketplace, and other spots in the community that need attention. Due to this and his charisma, Joojo is well-known and respected in many of the interlinked neighborhoods of Nima. I first contacted him and told him about the project and the characteristics of the participants I was looking to interview. Days later, we met in person. He took me to various bases at different times after he had informed the members of each base to be present in order to meet us. While there, Joojo introduced me to the men and succinctly highlighted what the study is about. After the initial introduction, I got the chance to detail the objectives and research topic to prospective participants, as well as appeal to them to volunteer their participation. The same process happened when Joojo took me to a few homes and introduced me to some men and women. Most of the questions posed by potential participants revolved around the purpose of the interview and the study as a whole. A few others also cautioned against posting their interviews on social media. In line with this, great efforts were made by me and Joojo to assure prospective participants that their names will be replaced with pseudonyms. We also informed them that the interviews will be conducted solely for academic purposes and no part of it will be posted on social media or presented to a media house.

One of the significant challenges in the field centered on language. As suggested earlier, many people in Nima, especially the youth and those within the age range characteristic of the participants of this study, are multilingual. As such, though the interviews were mainly conducted in Hausa, participants and I often engaged in code-switching by incorporating Twi and English to make our points. In general, this was advantageous as it allowed us, regardless of our level of proficiency in any of the aforementioned languages, to adequately express our thoughts. That notwithstanding, during the interviews and the transcribing process, it was at times challenging to find the accurate English equivalent to some Hausa or Twi words, phrases,

or jargon, and vice versa. Depending on the context or where the stress is, some words or phrases in Hausa or Twi could take on a slightly or significantly different meaning when translated to English. For example, during the interview with Sadia, she said the sentence “ya jii ni” a lot. These words, at least based on the local parlance in Nima, could translate to English as “it hurt me,” or “it disappointed me,” or “it depressed me.” To resolve such situations, during the transcribing process, I had to contact her and a few other participants to help arrive at translations that best captured their narratives. In addition, because of the conservative culture in Ghana, sex and sexual violence are not a topic that is often openly discussed (Amoakohene, 2004). As a result, often euphemisms or jargon are employed to refer to such topics. It was hence quite a challenge finding ways to coin and ask the questions related to sexual violence in a manner that would not make participants shy away or that did not come across as incriminating or judgmental.

Another challenge had to do with the availability of respondents. The original plan was to interview at least two women who have ever experienced IPV so as to present a varied sense of how violence is experienced and negotiated in Nima. However, after having spoken to and scheduled an interview with two other women, one of them was taken ill, so the interview could not happen. For the second woman, it was difficult to get a hold of her. Due to a combination of her commitment at work and the traffic situation in Ghana, she often left home early and got back really late. We ended up rescheduling twice, and then, on another occasion, I met her absence upon arriving at the agreed interview location. She later explained that she had to “attend to a family emergency thing at their family house at Kasoa (a town 31km away from Nima).”

Lastly, I was constantly confronted by the question of whether the data I was collecting and the study as a whole may further reinforce stereotypes about Nima. In the same vein, I questioned if I had any right at all to disrupt the lives of people who were settled in their ways and resiliently finding ways to cope and live. Ultimately, I embraced the fact that it is imperative to present how the people of Nima, much in their own words, create, experience, and interpret their everyday realities. Apart from the data collected and the study as a whole, which adds to the discourse on IPV, it also potentially offers much-needed insight and understanding to the people in Nima. On that note, I was conscious of ensuring that the conceptual and theoretical frameworks chosen for the study would be used to analyze the data gathered in pursuance of achieving the objectives of the study.

3.1.6 Limitations of the Study

Since the residents of Nima are heterogeneous, with their diverse ethnic groups, religions of practice, socioeconomic, and educational levels, one could argue that the study could have benefited from purposefully selecting participants to reflect this diversity instead of merely focusing on people in dating relationships. Regarding this, Takyi and Mann (2006) found that in Ghana, male attitudes toward violence against women seem to be influenced by ethnicity. Also, adding another female voice could have been insightful. However, due to limited time and resources, as well as challenges in the field, these could not happen. Further, as mentioned before, due to the popularity of interethnic marriages and the closely knit nature of communities in Nima (Owusu et al., 2008), it can be argued that the impact of specific ethnic norms on an individual's socialization can easily be blurry since people tend to absorb various norms from the diverse ethnic groups living side by side with each other. Nonetheless, by employing focus group sessions, the study attempts to, at least, remedy these limitations by presenting what the collective perspective in Nima seems to be concerning intimate partner violence.

3.1.7 Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the methodology and methods employed by this study. It explained that the study adopts elements of a qualitative research design in its bid to achieve its objectives. I used both in-depth interviews as well as focus group sessions to engage with a total of 14 participants living in Nima. I also detailed my insider position in relation to the group under study and the challenges faced during the fieldwork.

4 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the literature on the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning this thesis is laid out. Various concepts and their relevance to the study are explained. Further, Lori Heise's integrated ecological framework and Judith Butler's gender performativity will be discussed as the key frameworks central to the analysis of the data gathered for this study.

4.1.1 Gender

Due to its deep rootedness, what counts as “woman” or “man” may seem straightforward, hence going unchallenged for centuries (Bem, 1993). The term *sex* was chiefly used in place of *gender*, or at times, both terms were used interchangeably to refer to the biological categorization of individuals as male or female (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000). However, with the rise of social constructivism in the 20th century, scholars emphasized that the concept of gender is constructed by enduring cultural norms and social interactions (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011; Woldelessie, 2020). This can be gleaned from Simone de Beauvoir's revolutionary book *The Second Sex* and most profoundly in her famous words, “One is not born, but rather becomes [a] woman” (p. 283). Thus advancing the argument that *gender* is not a result of innate, biological characteristic(s) of women and men. Rather, it is socially constructed (Lorber, 1993). In spite of the fact that in everyday usage, it is still commonplace for “sex” and “gender” to be used interchangeably (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000), academia has seen a shift. Scholars and gender experts insist that *gender* and *sex* are two distinct, albeit closely related, concepts. They assert that it is problematic to use both terms interchangeably (West & Zimmerman, 1987). That said, neither *sex* nor *gender* is simple to definitively characterize (Woldelessie, 2020).

In recent years, the general consensus has been to represent *sex* as a biological differentiation based on chromosomes, genitals, hormones, and other physical attributes between males, females, and intersex (Lorber, 1995; OHCHR, 2015). *Gender*, on the other hand, explores what constitutes “man” or “woman” in a particular culture or community (Woldelessie, 2020). It broadly encompasses the sociocultural norms and normative behaviors that are observed, routinely enacted, construed, and legitimized in any given culture or society with respect to the biological categorization of the sexes, mainly the binary, that is, male or female (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Lorber, 1995; Woldelessie, 2020).

Early constructivist discourse asserted that gender was a status attained at an early age through imbibing and enacting observed normative behaviors as well as cultural and social norms (West

& Zimmerman, 1987; Cohn, 2013). Thereafter, what has become a coherent identity chiseled through psychological, cultural, and social processes remains static and unvarying (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Cohn, 2013). This explanation, however, fails to account for the various ways in which social interactions and social structures, as well as the malleability and evolution of cultural norms and societal expectations, continuously influence the construction and expression of gender in any given society and throughout an individual's life (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The various ways in which gender is shaped by and shapes social interactions and social structures ensure that gender is a continuum (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Woldelessie, 2020). Consequent constructivist scholars thereby posit that gender is not a stable accomplishment. Rather, it is something one does on a daily basis in ways that are expected of and considered appropriate for one's assigned sex, as part of navigating social interactions and engaging with social structures and institutions (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988; Butler, 1990). Gender is hence reinforced, layer by layer, by the repetitive production and reproduction of these doings until gender becomes institutionalized, normal, and natural (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988; Butler, 1990). As a result, not doing gender seems almost impossible (West & Zimmerman, 1987). That notwithstanding, Judith Butler (1988) argues that the very fact that gender is performative makes it possible to dispute its reified status, and by committing to and repeating different ways of doing, gender can be undone, altered, and transformed. Also, throughout an individual's life, enactments of gender permute and change depending on how they perceive themselves, who they are engaging in social interaction with, and what social or institutional arena they find themselves in (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988). The interactional element that influences the doing of gender in social situations and within institutional arenas elicits responses of approval, reward, or condemnation from other social actors, oneself, and society at large (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As psychology asserts, the promise of reward and/or the threat of punishment is a potent tool for getting people to conform (Glick et al., 2000). Consequently, people who deviate from the norm face stigmatization and other social sanctions. This further ensures that women and men kowtow to the production and reproduction of femininity and masculinity as defined by society in order to be competent members of their community (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In many cultures, these definitions of femininity and masculinity are steeped in a system that enforces male dominance and female deference. This system is known as patriarchy (Lorber, 1993). A patriarchal system operates and maintains a hierarchy within and between the sexes by conferring on men and women a distinct set of roles and traits by which gender is to be performed. Within this system, agentic traits like assertiveness, risk-taking, aggression,

independence, and leadership competence are stereotypically associated with masculinity (Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019). These traits are more valued, revered, and rewarded compared to traits stereotypically associated with femininity like caregiving, sociability, emotional sensitivity, docility, fragility, and passivity (Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019). Since women in a patriarchal system are considered the second sex (Beauvoir, 1949), their role tends to be that of expressions of subordination and servitude to men, who are socialized to be dominant and stoic (Lorber, 1993; hooks, 2004). Among other things, this essentially makes gender a key aspect of power relationships (Connell, 1987). Between and within the sexes, those who are considered to be accurately doing gender in accordance with a culturally constructed distinct set of masculine and feminine roles and norms are more revered and rewarded. The most highly enamored cultural and social ways of doing gender are known as hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity (Paechter, 2018). Consistently and routinely adhering to these distinct gender norms, which may vary from culture to culture, further deepens and legitimizes the notion of the supposed “natural differences” between the sexes and keeps the hierarchy in place (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

It is worth mentioning that, in spite of its waning popularity in academic spheres and criticisms that it legitimizes patriarchal oppression and sexism (Wittig, 1980; Brannon, 1998; Cosgrove, 2000), scholars of essentialism continue to present a counternarrative to that of the constructivist discourse on gender. They laud the significance of *nature (biological structures and processes)* in determining why men and women exhibit certain traits and gravitate towards particular gender roles. They contend that this is illustrated by men being more prone to aggression due to competitive instincts, while women may be more nurturing because of evolutionary pressures related to caregiving (Goldberg, 1973; Pinker, 2002).

Attempting to come to terms with the enduring contestations between both schools of thought, Eagly & Wood (2013) lament treating the influence of nature and nurture (sociocultural influences) on gender as competing explanations and instead propose recognizing the significance of integrating both causal influences in analyzing and understanding the complex discourse of gender.

4.1.1.1 Hegemonic Masculinity

As highlighted earlier, masculinity, just as femininity, is a social construct, and as such, cultures define and sanction what counts as masculine and feminine (Lorber, 1993; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Kimmel (1994, p. 120) defines masculinity as follows:

A constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our world. Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed. Manhood does not bubble up to consciousness from our biological makeup; it is created in culture. Manhood means different things at different times to different people.

Performances of masculinity that best embody socially sanctioned conceptions of behaviors and activities expected of men are categorized as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1998; Courtenay, 2000; Paechter, 2018). The term *hegemonic masculinity* connotes that there exist other types of masculinity, but they are less heralded. They are lowly ranked with respect to the hierarchy of multiple masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (2005) identifies *complicit masculinity* and *subordinate masculinity* as the other types of masculinity. Throughout his lifetime, a man can and often shuttles between the different types of masculinities in the hierarchy. Connell (2005) points out that a man's normative masculine status must be repeatedly earned through the constant production of normative behaviors, lest they be emasculated. In this regard, many men feel emasculated when they do not receive the treatments they believe they are entitled to because of their manhood. They therefore perceive themselves as less of or believe that others see them as such (Connell, 2005).

Based on factors like race, age, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, this *hierarchy of masculinities* also determines what mode of power, dominance, and control are at the disposal of men (Pyke, 1996; Courtenay, 2000). For example, upper-class men often have financial and political power at their disposal, whereas lower-class men must rely on other forms of interpersonal power, such as physical strength and aggressiveness, to enact their masculinity (Pyke, 1996; Courtenay, 2000). In many cultures, especially those where patriarchy reigns supreme, hegemonic masculinity is strictly binary with respect to sex and gender (Paechter, 2018) and is characterized by superiority, dominance, violence, competitiveness, bravery, stoicism, and resistance to traits stereotypically associated with femininity (Connell, 2005). Through everyday interactions and potent forces of influence like the media and religious doctrines, boys and men are socialized into aspiring to this kind of masculinity (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Mosher & Tomkins, 1988; Lukas, 2002). As is typical with gender roles and performances, boys and men who are deemed to have accurately enacted hegemonic masculinity are often revered and rewarded (Connell, 2005). Hegemonically masculine men do not only wield power over women but also others who are also considered inferior, including children, nonhegemonic, counter-hegemonic, and subaltern men (hooks, 2004; Connell, 2005; Markou,

2021). The far-reaching impact of socialization as well as the lure of reverence and reward makes it so that some girls and women also succumb to enacting stereotypical hegemonic masculine behaviors in certain social engagements and institutional arenas (hooks, 2004). In spite of the negative tag associated with it in recent studies, it is reductive and problematic to construe hegemonic masculinity as merely a collection of toxic traits and behaviors (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Markou, 2021).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) assert that inasmuch as normative attitudes, traits, and activities associated with hegemonic masculinity are enduring, they tend to evolve and vary across cultures—locally, regionally, and globally. In this regard, normative behaviors considered hegemonic masculinity can become unpopular, while other hitherto nonhegemonic or counter-hegemonic performances of masculinity can, over time, be elevated to the status of hegemony. Since few boys and men actually completely embody hegemonic expressions of their gender, hegemonic masculinity is often not the most prevalent in a society, but it is the most enamored and thus the yardstick for other performances of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

4.1.1.2 Hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity is considered the exaggerated and overemphasized expression of behaviors, traits, and activities commonly associated with hegemonic masculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). In the literature, this version of masculinity has also been referred to as machismo or macho personality (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993; Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, & Seaton, 2004). Zaitchik and Mosher (1993) argue that hypermasculinity consists of an assemblage of inter-related characteristics, namely, danger as exciting, violence as manly, toughness as emotional self-control, and calloused (insensitive) attitudes toward women and sex. *This is highlighted in Table 1.* Even though any man can enact hypermasculine behaviors, due mainly to the complexities of forming one's identity as well as increasing awareness regarding the possibilities of reward and the threat of reproach and violent abuse during adolescence, hypermasculinity is most evident amongst boys and young men between the ages of 12 and 35 (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993; Spencer et al., 2004). This also happens to be the time when peer group support for behaviors of hypermasculinity is high, and boys and young men feel the increasing need to gain the approval of their peers or prove that they belong (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993; Spencer et al., 2004).

Table 1	
<i>Characteristics of hypermasculinity and related descriptions</i>	
Characteristics of Hypermasculinity	Descriptions
1. Danger as exciting	the attitude that survival in dangerous situations is manly.
2. Violence as manly	the attitude that violent aggression, either verbal or physical, is an acceptable expression of masculine power and dominance.
3. Calloused attitude towards women and sex	the attitude that intercourse with women is a source of male power and female submission, and that sex is acceptable without empathic concern for the female's subjective experience.
4. Toughness as emotional self-control	the belief that anger is the only valid male emotion and that expressing emotions, particularly those stereotypically associated with femininity like sensitivity, fear and empathy, is a sign of weakness.

Note: Based on Mosher and Sirkin, 1984, p 151-152; Hall, 1992, as cited in Zaitchik and Mosher, 1993, p233

Pyke (1996) theorized that those most likely to be hostage to the production and reproduction of hypermasculinity are working-class boys and men, as well as those in underprivileged communities. Because these boys and men can scarcely lay claim to political and economic power, they rely on brawn and aggression to assert their internalized concepts of normative masculinity (Pyke, 1996; Courtenay, 2000). Moreover, these are the groups most likely to be witnesses and/or survivors of persistent crime (a feature of low-income communities). Since

masculine standards prohibit the expression of anguish and vulnerability, acting tough and fighting becomes a coping mechanism (Donaldson, 1993; Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993; Spencer et al., 2004).

4.1.2 Violence

Violence is a difficult concept to define. It exists in many forms and is susceptible to socio-cultural, political, and historical underpinnings (Potter, 1999, as cited in Amoakohene, 2004; Woldeselassie, 2020). In this regard, who and what is considered violent is ambivalent and varies depending on specific contexts and circumstances. That said, in the field of peace and conflict studies, Galtung's definition and categorization of violence are widely accepted (Vorobej, 2008). Embedded in his ideas of peace, Johan Galtung, a pioneer of peace research, teases out three kinds of violence, namely, personal/direct, structural, and cultural. *Direct violence* is defined as any intentional action committed by an individual or group with the goal of causing physical or mental harm to oneself or another (Galtung, 1969). Here, both the perpetrator and victim, as well as the violent act, are identifiable (Brunk, 2000). In its report on violence and health, the World Health Organization (2002, p. 5) echoes this definition, as it defines violence as follows:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

What is evident with these definitions of direct violence are the elements of *intentionality* and *harm*. Potter (1999, as cited in Amoakohene, 2004) asserts that at least one of these elements must be present in order for an action to be deemed as [direct] violence. Importantly, violence as an act that results in harm cannot be properly construed without considering the social and cultural structures that give it meaning (Woldeselassie, 2020). In his work *The Anthropology of Violence*, David Riches (1989) suggests that while the use of physical violence may always be legitimate in the eyes of the perpetrator, that is often not the case for survivors or witnesses. *Structural violence* accounts for forms of violence that are often not immediately identifiable and hence need to be understood beyond surface phenomena that virtually focus on actors and intentional behaviors aimed at causing harm. It is the kind of violence evident in the various ways in which socio-cultural, political, and economic structures hamper people from realizing their full human potential (Galtung, 1969). Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) assert that structural violence affects people on a regular basis, but because it is obscured within the

hegemony of ordinariness, it is often overlooked and remains invisible. Structural violence is defined as violence embedded in the machinations of societal structures and institutions, resulting in the inequality of power, resources, and life opportunities (Winter, 2012). Thus, no single individual can be promptly pointed out as the intentional actor. Instead, the violence emanates from and is perpetuated by the social structure in and of itself. Examples of structural violence include poverty, infant mortality, subordination, and social exclusion as consequences resulting from class domination, sexism, racism, patriarchy, apartheid, and other forms of discrimination and injustice (Winter, 2012; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004). In his work *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*, James Gilligan (1997) contends that from gender violence and suicide to war and hate crimes, structural violence is the leading source of direct violence. Both are so intimately linked as cause is to effect that it is irrelevant to ascertain which of the two is more dangerous or lethal (Gilligan, 1997).

Cultural violence is another type of violence that is not immediately identifiable. It entails symbolic and intangible aspects of violence that play an influential role in enforcing and reinforcing structural and direct violence. Galtung (1969) postulates that cultural violence encompasses social norms, narratives, prejudices, and biases deeply rooted in a society's culture that justify and reinforce social hierarchies, discrimination, and inequalities. Consequently, this leads to the acceptance and normalization of violence as a means of preserving the status quo. In this regard, cultural elements, including arts, religious doctrines, media representations, educational systems, (pseudo) science, language, and video games, are considered forms of violence insofar as they serve as an underlying force that sustains, legitimizes, naturalizes, and makes alluring direct and structural violence (Galtung, 1969; Bourdieu, 1991; Power, 2009). Cultural violence, though a form of indirect violence, is instrumental in inhibiting attempts at addressing direct and structural violence. Galtung (1969) adds that cultural violence is inextricably linked to direct and structural violence, resulting in a complicated web of violence and oppression.

4.1.2.1 Gender Violence

Gender violence is considered a multifaceted and pervasive issue plaguing communities throughout the world, be it rural or urban, egalitarian or elitist (Cameron & Frazer, 1987; WHO, 2021). As previously suggested regarding violence as a whole, due to the socio-cultural conditions that dictate what is and is not violent, there is no universally agreed-upon explanation or definition for gender violence. It is best construed by taking into account the specific ways in which diverse factors in a particular context inform its nature and prevalence (Crenshaw,

1991). Further, gender violence is primarily influenced by the cultural understanding of gender and power (Woldeselassie, 2020). That said, in *Gender Matters*, Van Der Veur et al. (2007, p. 18) provide a working definition, as they defined gender-based violence as:

any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Gender violence includes a wide range of physical, sexual, psychological, and socio-economic forms of violence that affect women, girls, and sexual minorities disproportionately but also impact boys and men (Van Der Veur et al., 2007; United Nations, 2006). This kind of violence can take many forms, including battering, murder, rape, sexual harassment, human trafficking, verbal abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and emotional abuse, among others. It is deeply rooted in and reinforces unequal power dynamics, with perpetrators using violence as a means to control, intimidate, or subordinate an individual or a group of people (Van Der Veur et al., 2007; United Nations, 2006). Gender violence can be perpetuated by anybody, including a current or former partner, a family member, a coworker, schoolmates, friends, strangers, or anyone acting on behalf of cultural, religious, state, or intra-state institutions (Van Der Veur et al., 2007). Gender violence is an example of all three types of violence, as categorized by Galtung, working in tandem to bring about and sustain what Liz Kelly (1988) tags a *continuum of violence* (the idea that violence against women is not only limited to overt physical violence but can also encompass more subtle forms of emotional, psychological, or structural violence that harm individuals or communities in various ways). In essence, gender violence is a direct violence that is often a consequence of power imbalances created by socio-cultural structures and sustained and reinforced by social norms, cultural narratives, religious dogma, media (mis)representations, and narratives.

4.1.2.2 Intimate Partner Violence

IPV is considered one of the most common forms of gender-based violence in the world (UN Women, 2021). It encompasses a range of abusive behaviors, often characterized by the use of power and control by one person within an intimate relationship to exert dominance, subjugate, and harm the other. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) defines IPV as:

behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors.

IPV disproportionately affects women. Reports indicate that one in every three women, or approximately 736 million, will experience physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner during their lifetime (WHO, 2021). According to UN Women (2022), one in every four Ghanaian women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner. Also, Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) found that there is a 35% risk of women staying in urban areas in Ghana experiencing some form of IPV. Aside from many Ghanaian women losing their lives as a result of IPV, studies by Amoakohene (2003) and the Domestic Violence in Ghana Report (2016) found that IPV also has adverse effects on the psychological and emotional health of survivors, with many testifying to experiencing fear, stress, trauma, and humiliation, leading to low self-esteem, a feeling of lack of freedom, and erosion of confidence. Regarding perceptions on IPV, as mentioned earlier in the introduction, Takyi and Mann (2006) found that more men who have never been married (40.5%) compared to men who have ever been married (33%) in Ghana think wife-beating is justified. Strikingly, the Domestic Violence in Ghana Report (2016) corroborated findings by Takyi and Mann (2006) that reveal that women were consistently more inclined than men to find wife beating acceptable and justified. This is, to an extent, a consequence of social mores and cultural narratives that socialize girls and women accordingly (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994).

Earlier research (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979) often condensed IPV to an issue of men's violence against women, with gender as the crux of the matter (Bates et al., 2019). However, contemporary research and scholars (e.g., hooks, 2004; Hunnicutt, 2009; Bates et al., 2019) have challenged this notion. Bates et al. (2019) point out that studies show that there are several instances where the violence within intimate relationships is reciprocal, both in severity and proportion, and has little to do with self-defense. In a good number of cases, women struck their male partner's first (Stets & Straus, 1989, as cited in Bates et al., 2019). Further, other studies also report that IPV is no less severe and rampant in lesbian relationships than in heterosexual and gay male relationships (Bates et al., 2019). Lastly, debunking the notion that IPV is merely an expression of male dominance over women, Bates et al. (2019) posit that studies (e.g., Tjaden & Thomas, 2000) suggest that men are just as violent in homosexual relationships too. This notwithstanding, as mentioned earlier in the introduction, inasmuch as lesbian and gay male relationships exist in Ghana, they are often closeted since hostility towards the LGBTQI community is still rife (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). Thus, there is not much empirical data to juxtapose the violence within homosexual relationships to that of heterosexual relationships in

Ghana. In addition, due to the scope of this research, the focus will mainly be on the violence perpetrated by men in heterosexual relationships.

Since this study is situated in Ghana, it endeavors to examine violence as it is socially, culturally, and lawfully defined within the country's borders. The study conforms to the provisions of the 2007 Domestic Violence Act in its attempt to identify and analyze the incidence of the various forms of IPV, in this case, physical and sexual violence. For the purpose of this study:

Physical violence is defined as slapping, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, dragging, or throwing objects at someone; choking, strangling, or burning someone; using a weapon, hazardous chemicals, or substances against someone; or kicking.

Sexual violence is defined as acts of unwanted sexual comments or physical contact; rape by physical force, or otherwise forced sex (for instance, by blackmail or threats); denial of using protection during sex; a sexual partner hiding their HIV status; sexual acts and intercourse that were performed on the basis of feeling there was no option; or penetration with an object against someone's will.

Deriving from the definition of 'domestic relation' as stipulated in the 2007 Domestic Violence Act, specifically the provision in category (c) (*see appendix for the entire Act*), within the context of this study, *intimate partner relation* refers to a relationship in a domestic situation that exists or has existed between a respondent and another, particularly a heterosexual one, and includes a relationship where the partners are engaged, courting, or are in an actual or perceived romantic, intimate, or cordial relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship.

4.1.3 Theoretical Framework

Over the years, several frameworks have been used to conceptualize and understand IPV. Many of these frameworks often focus on the effects of patriarchy, male aggression, individual pathology, poverty, the prevalence of cultures of violence, and other sociological factors (Bowman and Schneider, 1998; Schneider, 2000; Lawson, 2012). One of such approaches to understanding IPV is the Social Exchange Theory. This theory borrows from the field of economics and attempts to explain violence in intimate relationships by contending that individuals make rationale choices in their relationships based on a cost-benefit analysis (Homans, 1958; Gelles, 1983). Social exchange theory, in the context of IPV, implies that perpetrators may act violently if they believe the potential reward, such as control, power, or

satisfying some emotional desire, outweighs the possible drawbacks and risk of punishment, including ostracization or possible legal consequences. Gelles and Straus (1988) argue that individuals essentially resort to violence in their relationships because they know they can get away with it since any social controls capable of holding them accountable may be defunct. Further, due to factors like economic dependency, power imbalances, and emotional and economic investments in the relationship, victims of IPV may struggle or find it impossible to walk away from abusive relationships (Homans, 1958; Gelles, 1983, as cited by Lawson, 2012). Social exchange theory has been criticized for oversimplifying a phenomenon as complicated and multifaceted as IPV. Critics also assert that social exchange theory fails to sufficiently address the emotional and psychological factors that contribute to violence within intimate relationships (Dutton, 2007). Also, Johnson (2008) opines that by primarily focusing on a rationale choice model, social exchange theory does not effectively capture the distinct patterns and motivations behind different forms of IPV.

Another framework that has been rather groundbreaking and used extensively to conceptualize IPV is feminist theory. This theory, grounded in feminist scholarship, proposes that gender and power imbalances should be the crux of any discussions and analysis of IPV (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). Feminist theory posits that IPV is a manifestation of broader patriarchal structures and systems that perpetuate and reinforce the subjugation of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). Scholars who make a case for feminist theory emphasize that violence in intimate relationships is a result of male domination over women, cultural narratives, established gender roles, and the devaluation and disregard of women's autonomy (Lawson, 2012). As mentioned earlier, this theory has been criticized for conceptualizing IPV as violence that only affects women. Many scholars (e.g., Dutton, 2006) and several studies (as cited in Bates et al., 2019) establish that women can be just as violent in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

Social learning theory (SLT) is another framework that has proved pivotal in the conceptualization and understanding of IPV. The brainchild of Albert Bandura (1977), this theory considers how the interaction between environmental and cognitive factors shapes human behavior. Social learning theory highlights that a person's behaviors can be significantly impacted by observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of role models and their social environment. In relation to IPV, the theory asserts that individuals who are witnesses or victims of violence in their families or within their social environment may be more likely to perpetrate IPV themselves. The postulation of this theory

is evident in the findings previously mentioned regarding the Domestic Violence in Ghana Report (2016, p. 18) that attest that a person's chance of being a victim or perpetrator of IPV is highly correlated with their early exposure to violence.

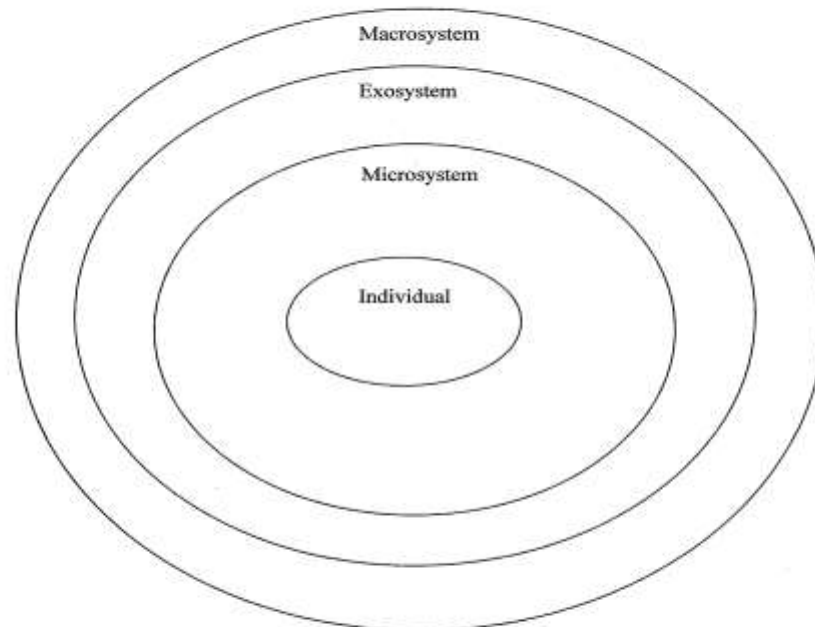
The theories mentioned above provide valuable insights and are immense contributions towards better understanding an issue as complicated as IPV. And although, individually, these aforementioned theories tease out elements that could be relevant to this study, they fall short of singlehandedly offering an integrative perspective for analyzing IPV, especially in an intricate setting like Nima.

4.1.3.1 The Integrated Ecological Framework (IEF)

It is specifically towards presenting a multidimensional approach to understanding IPV that Lori Heise (1998) proposes the *integrated ecological framework* to better “reflect the full complexity and messiness of real life” (p. 262). The framework unifies diverse theories from different perspectives and disciplines of academia into a multifaceted framework that explores IPV across personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors. Heise posits that violence in intimate relationships is not caused exclusively by a singular factor but rather a complex interaction between individual, socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. While insisting that gender is a core element in any analysis of IPV, the integrated ecological framework stretches feminist theory to incorporate other multifactorial theoretical elements other than patriarchy as well as highlighting other factors that are not particularly limited to gender, including cultural norms, individual history, and personality (Heise, 1998; Lawson, 2012). This makes the integrated ecological framework one of the few theories that take into consideration the interplay between direct, structural, and cultural violence in exploring and understanding IPV.

Heise categorizes the various determinants of IPV under four different but connected system levels, namely, ontogenic factors (individual history), microsystem factors, exosystem factors, and macrosystem factors. The more factors present, the higher the chance of violence in an intimate relationship. Figure 1 depicts the four concentric circles that best represent the integrated ecological system.

Figure 1.
An Ecological Framework of Factors Related to Violence Against Women (Based on Heise, 1998)



Individual Factors: e.g., Witnessing/being a victim of family violence as a child
Microsystem Factors: e.g., Male dominance in the family,
Exosystem Factors: e.g., Low socio-economic status
Macrosystem Factors: e.g., Masculinity linked to dominance and aggression

At the *individual level*, citing studies supported by empirical data (e.g., Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Dutton, 1995), Heise asserts that in understanding IPV, it is incumbent to take into consideration the ontogenic factors that shape and influence an individual's actions and reactions in relation to violence. Ontogenic factors refer to elements of a person's developmental experiences and circumstances, including witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood and the absence or rejection of a father. These childhood experiences, as corroborated by the Domestic Violence in Ghana Report (2016), have proven to be risk markers for later becoming assaultive against intimate partners in adulthood. Heise highlights that being reared by peer groups from an early age has also been hypothesized by Draper and Harpending

(1982, 1987) as potentially influential in promoting hypermasculine behaviors like violence as a manly and calloused attitude towards women.

Next is the *microsystem factors*. This highlights the immediate settings where perpetrators and survivors of violence live, as well as the interactional element of social situations that directly impacts the behavior of people. In cases of IPV, the family and its structure are the most salient microcosms. For violence that happens outside of the home, Heise indicates that the microsystem is best visualized as the immediate context of the abuse (Heise, 1998). In this sphere, Heise notes that factors that contribute to IPV include male dominance in the family, male control of wealth, and marital conflict. This study may have little to do with married couples, but it is important to mention that, more often than not, dating relationships in Nima and Ghana at large adhere to identical principles and gender roles underpinning marriages. This means these microsystem factors are still relevant.

Exosystem factors are the third level of analysis proposed by Heise as part of the integrated ecological framework. This focuses on institutions and social structures, both formal and informal, that accommodate, thereby dictate, and impact happenings in the microsystem. Some of these institutions and structures include neighborhoods, workplaces, and social networks. Importantly, exosystem factors are frequently the result of influences and shifts in a wider social context (Heise, 1998). Heise indicates that low socio-economic status and delinquent peer associations are among some of the prominent exosystem factors linked to IPV. This sphere of analysis suggests that the actions of people, including the perpetration, acceptance, tolerance, and nature of IPV, do not happen in a vacuum but are likely to be shaped by the conditions prevalent in their community, the opinions of neighbors, coworkers, traditional and religious leaders, as well as other local social organizations and networks (Heise, 1998; Domestic Violence in Ghana Report, 2016).

The fourth and final tier within Heise's integrated ecological framework is the *macrosystem factor*. This sphere represents a wide range of cultural norms, social values, religious dogma, and beliefs that filter through and mold the other structures and factors lower down in the social ecology (Heise, 1998). Here, macrolevel factors like acceptance of interpersonal violence, condoning violence as an accepted means of social control, and others like male supremacy, adherence to strict gender roles, and hypermasculinity are identified as risk factors for IPV due to their ability to establish an asymmetry of power in community institutions and within intimate relationships. Though many of these macrolevel factors are associated with patriarchy, in presenting them individually, the integrated ecological framework attempts to dissect a

system as elaborate as patriarchy by emphasizing the usefulness of analyzing its various components and the unique ways in which each one can influence the actions of perpetrators and, consequently, the prevalence of IPV.

Despite providing an overarching framework that has proved pivotal in analyzing and understanding IPV, the integrated ecological framework has not evaded criticisms. Firstly, Heise's proposed framework has been criticized for treating the four aforementioned layers as impermeable and underemphasizing their interdependency (Domestic Violence in Ghana Report, 2016). Several studies (e.g., Minayo, 1994; Jewkes et al., 2002) highlight that in many cases, an individual's experiences and personal history is oftentimes inseparable from the exosystem and microsystem factors (Domestic Violence in Ghana Report, 2016). Furthermore, the framework is criticized as Western-centric, and for ignoring the impacts of major historical and economic shifts like colonialism, capitalism, apartheid and globalization in establishing intersecting forms of violence as well as influencing the nature of violence, including intimate partner violence (Domestic Violence in Ghana Report, 2016). This study duly acknowledges the above criticisms. To mitigate this, the study intends to highlight situations where different levels of the IEF interact to impact the etiology or prevalence of IPV as discussed by a prospective respondent. For the second criticism, it might not be particularly relevant in this case since the study primarily seeks to derive from the material experiences of respondents what factors correlate with elements theorized by Heise as high markers for IPV. That is, the above criticisms notwithstanding, the IEF proposed by Lori Heise remains relevant in analyzing the diverse factors that possess the potential to impact the etiology, nature, prevalence, and understanding of IPV in a community as heterogeneous and complex as Nima. For this reason, this study elects to examine the accounts of participants through the lenses of the IEF as well as Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (to be further explained later) in attempting to meet the research objectives and find answers to the research questions.

4.1.3.2 Gender Performativity

The brainchild of Judith Butler, the theory of gender performativity features in and has been fine-tuned over the years in many of the scholar's works, including *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988), *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies That Matter* (1993), and *Undoing Gender* (2004). As suggested earlier, their postulation of gender is grounded in the social constructivism paradigm, and as such, Butler defines gender as "the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity" (1988, p. 520). They insist that gender is heavily influenced by social norms, social agents, and social interactions. It is against this

backdrop that Judith Butler asserts that gender is performative. Performativity does not simply translate to “gender is performance,” as performance connotes taking on a role and acting in a way that is key to the gender one is and/or the gender one presents to the world (Butler, 2011). Performativity is a term Butler borrowed from the work of linguist and philosopher J.L. Austin, particularly the concept of “performative utterances.” Performative utterances are speech acts that do not particularly describe a given reality but, by virtue of a combination of social authority, social conventions, and approval, bring into existence that which they state (Butler, 2011; Szorenyi, 2022). For example, the expression “I promise” is a performative utterance, as it is not a simple descriptive utterance, but saying this also connotes doing the act of promising (Will, 2015). Thus, a promise only comes into effect through the act of saying, “I promise.” More so, the sentence “I now pronounce you man and wife,” uttered by a person with socially approved authority, brings into effect a married couple expected to adhere to a host of social conventions and responsibilities (Butler, 2011; Szorenyi, 2022). Butler argues that gender operates in a similar manner. Gender is thus performative in the same way that performative utterances are performative. Accordingly, when we name a child “girl” or “boy” or refer to ourselves and others as “man” or “woman,” we are, both knowingly and unknowingly, participating in constructing and defining these categories (Butler, 1990; Will, 2015; Szorenyi, 2022). Butler further contends that gender proves to be performative in that it exists through the stylized repetition of various acts and ways of speaking and doing that make it up. As mentioned earlier, over time, gender subjectivities are constructed and reified through gender expressions, gender norms, and stereotypes (Butler, 1988, 1999). In this regard, the theory of gender performativity also highlights that in order to accomplish our gender, we tend to resort to bodily gestures, enactments, and behaviors that fulfill social expectations, narratives, and stereotypes regarding our gender, as well as those that we have come to expect from ourselves.

In the context of IPV, since gender acts as a system that frames and defines the authority, privileges, and responsibilities assigned to men and women (Dobash and Dobash, 1998, as cited by Anderson and Umberson, 2001), stereotypes and norms regarding masculine superiority, subordination of women, and violence as manly, amongst others, appear normal and natural (Butler, 1990). This instructs the ways in which both men and women stylize their bodies, self-stereotype, and engage in various enactments and behaviors, including using and justifying acts of violence in their intimate relationships as part of constructing and achieving their gender identities. Significantly, Butler also insists that because gender is performative, it is possible to

contest its reified status, and by committing to and repeating new ways of doing, gender can be undone, altered, and transformed.

The theory of gender performativity has been critiqued for being limited to specific forms of gendered experiences. Scholars such as bell hooks (1992) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) argue that Butler's theory ignores the intersectionality of identity and oppression by failing to effectively address the multiple ways in which gender interacts with race, class, and sexuality to produce unique experiences for different people. This criticism implies that a more nuanced and intersectional approach is required to adequately account for the complexities of gendered experiences and the numerous axes of oppression that affect marginalized people. Also, another major criticism of Butler's gender performativity theory is that it tends to reduce gender to a purely performative or discursive construct, thereby failing to highlight the diverse ways in which gender is experienced through the body and in the material world (Bordo, 1993; Halberstam, 1998). While gender may be performative in some sense, reducing gendered experiences to discourse alone neglects the ways in which gender is experienced through the body and is shaped by physiology and other material factors (bell hooks, 1992; Bordo, 1993; Halberstam, 1998). This means Butler's theory may overlook the unique experiences of individuals who do not conform to normative gender roles, for example, trans people and individuals who identify with what Halberstam terms "female masculinity"—people who are biologically female but dress and act in ways that society typically associates with masculinity (Bordo, 1993; Halberstam, 1998).

While these criticisms are indeed noteworthy, some of the issues and contexts underscored do not concern the demography this study seeks to engage with. Also, some of the criticisms is another reason why this study is relevant. By analyzing respondents account of IPV through the lens of Butler's theory, the study spotlights the various ways by which the construction and interpretation of gender affects the everyday realities of people living in a marginalized community.

4.1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the definitions of the relevant concepts of gender, hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, violence, gender violence, and intimate partner violence are discussed. Also, Lori Heise's integrated ecological framework and Judith Butler's gender performativity are introduced and discussed as the two frameworks that will drive the analysis of the data gathered for this study. Moreover, the chapter examined the key tenets of both frameworks that are

relevant to the objectives of the study and can help in explaining the data gathered. It is also important to mention that, where necessary, the study will draw upon other scholarly works in order to decipher and explain the data collected from the field.

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the two research questions of this study. It presents and analyzes the accounts of respondents through the lenses of Butler's "*Gender as Performativity*" and Heise's integrated ecological framework. Also, where necessary, the study draws upon other scholarly works in order to decipher and explain the data gathered from the field. The analysis and discussions will be carried out under a number of themes and sub-themes drawn from the patterns identified during the transcription of the field interviews.

5.1.1 Reasons for the Cause and Prevalence of IPV in Nima

This section gleans from respondents' accounts the various reasons for the causes and prevalence of IPV in Nima. The study will attempt to situate the many reasons alluded to by respondents in the IEF, as presented by Lori Heise (1998). Simultaneously, the study will attempt to tease out from the speech acts of respondents the link between their construction and performance of gender and the prevalence of IPV in Nima. The analysis is enhanced by establishing connections between the findings, relevant theories, and literature.

5.1.1.1 Undermining or Disrespecting the Authority of Men

According to the findings of this study, undermining or disrespecting the authority of men by women is one of the main causes of IPV in Nima. This was a common theme from both the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. Many of the participants, even those who have never hit a woman, suggested that when a woman gets into a relationship, it is mandatory for her to live by the dictates of her partner. And she risks a beating if she goes against his authority. Throughout the course of making their submissions on this particular subject, some of the respondents constantly interchanged the authority of a husband with that of a boyfriend. It was, thus, apparent that they do not necessarily believe a boyfriend wields any less authority or deserves any less respect than a husband. One of the respondents, who appeared to have the support of the group, had this to say:

For a woman, in this instance, as long as your boyfriend marries you, there's nothing he tells you to do, that you should refuse to do for him. For instance, as your husband, if I find that you frequent a particular place and I tell you that from now onwards you should stop going there, you have to stop going to that place because I am your husband. I feel even if I'm merely your boyfriend and I forbid you from frequenting a particular place, as long as you give me that respect, and you respect that I'm your boyfriend, when I say stop going

to that place, you have to stop. Refusing to oblige is partly the cause of the beatings. It contributes to the beating. (Ishaka)

The way the statuses of 'boyfriend and husband' are conflated here perfectly captures how intimate relationships in Ghana are influenced by the broader sociocultural context. In many parts of the world, it is common for dating relationships to reflect the various ways people understand, apply, and abide by the privileges, responsibilities, and gender norms often prevalent in marriages and as dictated by the community and cultural context (Taylor, Kosakowska-Berezecka, De Guzman, Xia, Padasas, & Eстераich, 2024). This is the case in many communities in Ghana as well, including Nima. Thus, though there are no legal or formal regulations that bind people in a dating relationship, many boyfriends expect and demand to be treated as masters, while girlfriends take on subordinate roles. As is evident in this account, for example:

As a woman, you have to give your partner the maximum respect! Just as you do with your father, who's responsible for you, as soon as you're in the hands of your partner, he has essentially become your father as well. Especially after he marries you because he takes over the responsibilities of your father. Hence, you have to give him the same respect as you give to your father. He replaces your dad at that moment because he's the head of the family. And just as when you're under the jurisdiction of your father and you're asked, 'Who's the head of your family?' Your dad will be in that position. So, when you're with your partner, he will be in that same position. (Muntari)

That said, in explaining that disrespecting the authority of men by women leads to IPV in Nima, one of the participants suggested that the power and authority a man has over a woman is only activated when he marries her:

one of the main reasons why many men beat women is due to this one issue that I've identified. Let's say, that's your partner, and fine before you got married, she's often seen amongst a particular group of friends. After the marriage, you instruct her to stop sitting amongst the said group of friends, but she refuses and still spends time with them. That's what brings about the beating. Definitely, that is a case of disrespect! "This is where I usually sit to pass time. I'm a woman and now someone has married me — I don't like your group of friends so stop spending time with them." ("They're bad company!", remarks another respondent). But still, you keep sitting among them. By all means, when you come home, I'll lash you. Seriously, I'll lash you. (Samuel)

The above statements substantiate the various predictors of IPV that fall under macrosystem level, as explicated by the IEF (p. 277). These include male supremacy, rigid gender roles, and

the approval of physical chastisement of women. It can be argued that a sense of male supremacy and the entrenchment of rigid gender roles that require women to be submissive to men are the factors that embolden respondents to demand to be treated as masters and be aggrieved to the point of meting out “punishment” when their demands are ignored. Consequently, this results in violence against women in intimate relationships in Nima. Moreover, though reports from the 2016 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) found that there has been a decline in the acceptance of physical assault against women in intimate relationships throughout Ghana, it can be gleaned from the various accounts of the respondents that the phenomenon is still rife in Nima. Thus, the respondents suggest that they condone or approve of physical chastisement of women in cases where a wife or girlfriend disobeys the instructions of her husband or boyfriend. This is consistent with studies by Ofei-Aboagye (1994) and Takyi and Mann (2006), which found that across some cultures and communities in Ghana, a certain level of woman battering is considered appropriate and permissible. Condoning or approving of physical chastisement of women in itself validates several studies (e.g., Narayana, 1996, as cited in Heise, 1998; Adjei, 2018; Dery, 2019) that found the said phenomenon as a strong predictor of woman battering across various cultures.

Also, it can be argued that the practice of condoning physical chastisement of women and its impact on IPV is an extension of a bane that results from a culture that permits physical punishment of children under certain circumstances. It is worth noting that Ghanaian culture endorses physical punishment of children by parents, relatives, and other elderly people as a form of care and discipline (UNICEF Ghana, 2015). Although Heise lists both factors at different levels of the nested ecological framework, macrosystem and ontogenic, respectively, I attempt to establish a connection between the two. Strikingly, during the interviews, especially the focus group discussions, some of the respondents constantly used the Hausa term *yara* (children) or *yara mata* (girls) when they referred to *mata* (women). On the other hand, it is unheard of for a woman in the same age bracket as a group of men to refer to them as *yara or yara maza* (boys). It is always *maza or mazaje*, words that can both translate to *men* in English. The respondents, inadvertently or otherwise, employ this particular speech act of the Hausa language to construct femininity in a way that further strips women of their agency and entrenches their subordinate role while simultaneously entrenching the superiority and dominance of men. This is somewhat akin to how slaveowners in America, and later, many white people during the “equal but separate” Jim Crow era, used the word *boy* to address black men as a way of infantilizing and ‘keeping them in their place’, so to speak. Conversely, black

men always had to address white men as *sir* (Davis, n.d.). This comparison might come across as rather extreme, but the formula is significant, and the result remains the same. In discussing the various ways in which the treatment of women as the second sex shares some similarities with the treatment of the Negroes as second-class citizens, Simone de Beauvoir (1949, p. 22) argues:

Whether it is a race, caste, a class, or a sex that is reduced to a position of inferiority, the methods of justification are the same... but there are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of the Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former master class wishes to 'keep them in their place'—that is, the place chosen for them.

I speculate that deploying such a speech act, knowingly or unknowingly, in a way that subordinates and infantilizes women in a culture that already permits using the right amount of physical punishment to discipline children provides a legitimating rationale for the respondents to "punish" partners whom they deem deviant.

Furthermore, these assertions by the respondents allude to the performativity of gender. In demanding respect and expressing their authority the way they do within the above accounts, the respondents attempt to achieve and reinforce masculine subjective norms like male superiority and male dominance. Also, as is epitomized by the way they start their comments with "*as a woman*" or "*for a woman*" and the overall gendered overtone of their submissions, the respondents attempt to construct and sustain stereotypical feminine norms like the submissiveness of women. In line with this, the respondents suggest that violence is not just a viable tool for constructing and achieving their masculine identity but also a potent resource for enforcing and sustaining the compliance and subordination of women. This is evident in the following account as well:

Sometimes you have to announce your presence as the man. I mean, sometimes a woman has some flaws about her — example, probably you're frantically looking for something, so you call her to say, "Oh, I want you to do this or that for me." In that instance, for all you know, she's busy sitting somewhere chatting, but she would inform you that she's busy with something important at the moment. In this case, if you chance on her and see for yourself exactly what she's busy with, you can be overcome with indignation. And in that moment, you have to ginger her (vernacular for meting out beatings). One slap should come. Seriously! And next time when you need her to do something for you, she'll take you seriously. (Nuhu)

This tendency of employing violence as a legitimate resource for reinforcing gender normativity is remarkably similar to the findings of Dery & Diedong (2014), Adjei (2018) and Dery (2019). Essentially, IPV is a tool for reifying the apparent natural differences between male and females. In addition, there is a sense of unidirectionality about the said *maximum respect* and *authority* alluded to by the respondents. This is even more evident in the following account:

We live in an African community, and as we all know, there's a power given to a man—like in a marriage, over his partner. And as a woman, you have to understand that. You have to understand that traditionally this is what goes on in the society. Even though, I am not saying he should impose anything on you. Or push you down or punish you. But there's some kind of respect that is required that a woman gives to a man in a marriage and in a relationship. (Danjuma)

This confirms Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) argument that for a man, "he is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (p. 16). The problem, in this case, IPV, is deeply rooted in this categorization, which leads to the subjugation of women by construing and treating them as the second sex. With regards to this study, the said subjugation is manifest in violence of a physical nature as perpetrated by men in Nima against women. The act of violence is, hence, a stylized enactment employed by the men in Nima over the course of time to achieve their conception of masculinity while also attempting to compel women to stylize their bodies to fit their conception of the ideal feminine. This lends even more credence to Judith Butler's arguments that gender is "an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (1989, p. 519)

It is worth noting that one of the respondents did present a sense of mutuality regarding the value of respect in intimate relationships. He indicated:

Respect and understanding—these are the all-important elements.... Provided that you respect me, and I respect you, and we understand each other, when I say, 'Hey madam! Don't sit here again, or else you will chop slap,' she won't sit there. Because she respects me, and we understand each other. Assuming she also tells me, "Kojo, you see this particular thing that you do, I don't like it," because I respect her and we understand each other, I will also stop. (Kojo)

Inasmuch as Kojo talks about *respect and understanding* as a two-way street, the asymmetry of power within the relationship he describes is exceedingly evident. From the above account, his own instruction is laced with a threat of physical violence in case it is disobeyed. In contrast,

the woman's demand comes forth as a sober plea. The language deployed here, by a man seeking to allude to an egalitarian relationship, and the ease with which he says “...otherwise you will chop slap”, demonstrates the extent to which masculine authority and violence against women is justified and normalized in Nima.

5.1.1.2 The Incessant Need of Men to Control Women

Closely related to the previous point, another theme that stood out from the collected data as a reason for the cause and prevalence of IPV in Nima is men’s insistence on controlling women. Many of the respondents indicated that controlling their partners is an indispensable requisite for a lasting and functional relationship, and physical violence happens to be one of the consequences of carrying that out. They excused and justified their actions by citing their general intention to advance their relationship into marriage. In line with this, some respondents explained:

Regarding relationships, there are some who are hoping to take it to a different level, and then there are those whose relationship wouldn’t end in any good result. For those seeking to take it to a different level, it is necessary that, as a man, you’re able to control the woman from the time of the relationship leading to the that next level [marriage]. But if you couldn’t control her during the time of the relationship until you got to the next level, then you wouldn’t be able to control her anymore. This is why, from the onset, you have to let her know that ‘this thing you’re doing is correct and that thing is wrong.’ Sometimes, it is the process of controlling the woman that brings about the beating. (Mustafa)

The thing is, for someone else, they could be dating, but just for the sake of dating. There is nothing more. Just dating. But for another person, he could be dating with the aim of marrying his partner. This is why he might feel that maybe wherever she is going—since he wants to build a family with her—it wouldn’t favor him. Like if you’re dating a woman who you would want to marry but she frequents the club. She drinks, she smokes, and she does various things; that wouldn’t favor you! If it is a woman whom you have intentions of marrying, you wouldn’t sign on to that. So, based on that, you could tell them, ‘Oh, hey, I don’t like this. I don’t want you to go here or there. But go here, do this, and do that.’ If she also has any input, she can say it. (Danlad)

Danlad also cited religious and quasi-religious doctrines to justify the necessity of exerting control over his partner. He details this in the following account:

For me, I am a Muslim, and for a Muslim, if you take alcohol, your prayers will not be accepted for forty days. That’s part of it. Because let’s say your partner drinks alcohol—also, they say that for a Muslim, when you get married, all the responsibilities of the woman

are on your shoulders. If, before you get married, she frequents the club, yet you don't voice your displeasure about that and you consistently condone her doing whatever she likes, later, when you get married and you tell her to stop going to there, it will become an issue. In addition, if you haven't prayed for 40 days and maybe during that period, you die, definitely—as Muslims, we believe in judgment day. So, on judgment day, even though you have done everything of yours to a 100%, if the woman you married doesn't do a 100%, she will pull you and put you in hell! Because all her responsibilities are yours to bear. (Danlad)

Other respondents also rationalized their behaviors by presenting the act of controlling their partners as something done for the good of women. They claimed that the act of controlling was necessary in order to prevent their partners from getting involved in bad company. Also, they hinted that controlling their partners was crucial to keeping women's demands in check. As in the following examples:

You know, we are all human beings. You can't be doing something worthwhile, then me, who is your boyfriend or husband, will tell you to stop the good thing you're engaged in. Also, I can't see you sitting with a good friend—someone I know can advise you in a good way—then I inform you to stop spending time with them. Therefore, before I come to instruct you to stop spending time with a particular person or to stop doing something in particular, maybe I've noticed that you won't end up on the good side with the particular path you're trying to take. So, if I tell you to stop once, I tell you to stop twice. I tell you to stop three times, but you don't; that's what causes all of the problems. (Nuhu)

There are some people who are already deviant and others who are not. There are people who demand a lot of things from their partners. Like, give me this or give me that. Give me this specific amount of money. Give me 1000ghs (\$100) or 500ghs (\$50). Or give me 100ghs or 200ghs. And they often get what they demand. But for yours, when she makes such demands, you can't give it to her. Hence, if she continues to compare herself and mingle with those who ask and get 1000ghs, 500ghs, 100ghs, and 200ghs from their partners, what then will become of our relationship? Maybe I have realized that my relationship with my partner is different from the one her friends have with their partners. Maybe, for my partner and me, we don't demand so many things from each other. Maybe what I am able to offer she takes in good faith. But if she begins to compare herself and mingle with someone who demands a lot, and I fail to control her from that time on, then when she also starts demanding a lot, there's little I can do. (Mustafa)

As the case may be, if you give your girlfriend 20ghs or 10ghs, and, in the course of the relationship, she meets someone else who gives 50ghs, that could prompt changes in her

attitude. For instance, your girlfriend says, “Oh, we've got a ceremony coming up, and the prescribed attire costs a total of 100ghs”. However, because you don't have the money, you say “Oh, my beloved, here's 50ghs to supplement your finances.” But if you're unable to get the total amount, the person will feel aggrieved about only getting 50ghs. This is where the problem is. Thus, if you're unable to control the person, that would mean the relationship has started crumbling. (Yaw)

The responses of respondents align with some of the predictors of IPV categorized by Lori Heise as *microsystem* factors. Specifically, the IEF, referring to earlier studies (e.g., Frieze & McHugh, 1981, as cited in Heise, 1998), indicates that intimate relationships with a power structure characterized by male dominance where men strictly control the movements and whereabouts of their partners are one of the strongest predictors of high rates of men's violence against women (Heise, 1998, p. 270). The various accounts presented here attest to the respondents' unequivocal desire to control their partners, made possible by an asymmetry of power that sees these men assume a dominant role in their intimate relationships. The narratives of Nuhu and Mustafa, also confirm findings by Frieze and McHugh (1981) and Dery (2019) that assert that in relationships with such a power structure, physical violence tends to be an important resource employed by men as a means of achieving their goal of controlling women. Moreso, under *macrosystem* factors of the IEF, Heise identifies that an enduring element that triggers high violence by men against women in a society is a cultural and/or religious definition of masculinity that is “linked to dominance, toughness, or male honor” (p. 277). By referencing religious doctrines and cultural norms to justify their controlling behaviors and some of what they consider to be their responsibilities within their relationships, the respondents inadvertently shed light on the impact of cultural values and religious beliefs in shaping their overarching notions of a masculinity that is evidently linked to dominance. This is scarcely surprising, as Ghana is largely a patriarchal country with strict adherence to stereotypical gender norms, including men's superiority, male dominance, the passivity of women, and the role of women as caregivers (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994; Domestic Violence in Ghana Report, 2016; Dery, 2019). According to Ofei-Aboagye (1994), many Ghanaian folklore, oral traditions, and proverbs are embedded with narratives that entreat men to secure their wives' obedience and fidelity. Some of these gender stereotypes are still popular narratives in present-day Ghanaian music, stage plays, and motion pictures. Danjuma was referring to these patriarchal norms when he states that, “*We live in an African community, and as we all know, there's a power given to a man—like in a marriage, over his partner.*” In addition, as mentioned earlier, Nima is a place that acclaims and rewards *idonkerifi*, a trait or constellation of traits that can be categorized as

hegemonic masculinity. Some of these traits, including treating violence as manly, treating danger as exciting, and exalting men capable of instilling fear in others, prove that, in some cases, *idonkerifi* can be deemed hypermasculine traits. Apart from indicating that the respondents have been shaped by these hegemonic patriarchal and hypermasculine discourses, the field interviews also show that the respondents perform and attempt to achieve their masculine identities in congruence with these broader gendered social discourses. Fundamentally, the narratives and actions of respondents affirm the works of several gender critical scholars who have linked patriarchy (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; hooks, 2004) and hypermasculinity (e.g., Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993; Pyke, 1996; Courtenay, 2000) to the causes and prevalence of violence against women.

Additionally, there are shades of what Glick et al. (2000) describe as hostile and benevolent sexism in the way the respondents imply that they engage in controlling their partners for the good of these women and because it is a responsibility bestowed on them by tradition and God himself. The respondents, simultaneously, suggest that women have no agency of their own and men are omniscient beings who know what is good for women and what is not. Also, inasmuch as the respondents justify and excuse their controlling behaviors as an act of care towards their partners, the findings of Anderson and Umberson (2001, p. 367) confirm that in other heterosexual relationships, when men feel controlled by their partners, they describe it as emasculating and problematic. Thus, it can be argued that the act of controlling one's partner "for their good" is gendered. It is construed by respondents as a prerogative reserved for men, and to achieve its full essence and for its effective operationalization, women are barred from this masculine economy. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler (1993, p. 36) critiques "the economy that claims to include the feminine as the subordinate term in a binary opposition of masculine/feminine excludes the feminine [and] produces the feminine as that which must be excluded for that economy to operate." Tellingly, during the field interviews, the respondents showed no hesitation in using the word "*control*". Moreover, in the focus group sessions, the apathetic reactions of other respondents to the word "*control*" suggest that it is scarcely regarded as a taboo term by the men in Nima, so long as women are the objects. It is merely an essential toolkit at the exclusive disposal of men that needs to be deployed to keep women in check and to enforce gender normativity towards the supposed betterment of intimate relationships. The act of controlling women and resorting to violence to see it through is, hence, construed as part of the respondents' essence as men. Thus, it is another enactment by which they construct, express, and attempt to accomplish their masculine identities.

5.1.1.3 Widespread Financial Dependence of Women on Men

Inasmuch as it is a common feature of dating relationships in Ghana for women to depend on their boyfriends, and sometimes expect of them, to take care of some of their financial needs (Amoakohene et al., 2019, p. 29), much of the data collected from the respondents indicates that this phenomenon is even more widespread in Nima. This is evident in the following accounts:

In these parts, when you're dating, they [women] want you 24/7 to buy everything for them. Or you're the one who'll pay for everything. Whatever bill it is, you have to pay it because they don't want to. They have made up their minds that they will not pay for anything. So, it is you who has to pay for everything: transportation, food, drinks, and in some cases even [sanitary] pads. (Tanko)

In this community of ours, as soon as you meet a woman, they make it look as though you have to be [financially] responsible for them. However, before you came into her life, she was living and eating. But the moment you come into her life; you would have to start giving her chop-money (money for one's daily meal). Why? Am I your father? (Nuhu)

The respondents went on to further explain the correlation this dependency has on the causes and prevalence of IPV in Nima. They elucidate that footing the bills of women does not only accord men the license to exert their authority over their partners, but it also compels women to kowtow to such authority. This, hence, further entrenches the asymmetrical relationship between the sexes that begets the asymmetric violence of men against women. One of the respondents affirms:

It is common to hear men say that "I give you money for your needs, yet you don't want to heed what I say." This could spark that thing that makes one feel like they are entitled to beat you since they cater for your needs. Also, most of the time, even for the women, after she has been battered, she won't leave that relationship because she knows that if she leaves — since most of them are unemployed and they depend solely on their men, she'd think that "yes, he beat me up but if I leave him, tomorrow, who's going to cater for my needs? Maybe I'll end up with another person who also spends on me and beats me up." Frankly, it is not every man who gives you money, takes care of your needs, and buys you everything, who will forgive you when you don't heed his word, or he find that you're cheating on him with another person. Some men will beat you because they feel they are justified since they do everything for you. There are even some situations where the man takes care of the woman and some members of her family. So, why won't he feel justified?! (Danjuma)

Because it is the man who is spending most of the time, it gives him some kind of power over the woman. So far as he's the one taking care of your needs, he feels empowered to say: don't go here or there. Do this or do that. He knows you're heavily dependent on him and without him, where are you going to get your needs from? Even you [the woman] will feel that way. You will feel like this is the person who has authority over me by virtue of the monies he gives to me. (Danlad)

It is a fact that since you're the one who's often spending and doing everything, you feel that you have power over the other person. You feel that when you command the person, she has to obey. If you say: don't go here, she has to listen. Because at the end of the day, the person calls you for chop-money, clothing and her other needs. Even if she's sick, she wants you to pay for the hospital bills. As for her, she doesn't do anything. She doesn't spend on you, but you spend on her. So definitely, you'll feel like you're now the one in control. You've almost become her God. Hence, when you say: don't go here or there, you feel like she has to obey you. (Tanko)

The widespread financial dependency and its consequent impact on IPV, as alluded to by the respondents, is in tandem with Lori Heise's integrated ecological framework. It reflects different factors from different levels of the social ecology as expounded by the multidimensional framework. Firstly, the widespread financial dependence of women on men falls under the microsystem level, where factors like male control of wealth and male dominance are strong predictors of IPV. The above assertions of the respondents corroborate findings by Levinson (1989) and Kalmus and Straus (1984) that male economic and decision-making authority in a society, and women's economic dependence on men are key predictors of severe woman battering in intimate relationships. In addition, from the above revelations, respondents also hint that unemployment and economic deprivation are reasons why women stay in abusive relationships even if it is detrimental and they risk even more violence. This reflects what Lori Heise labels *exosystem factors*. The IEF attests that poverty resulting from low economic status and unemployment makes it "more difficult for women to leave violent or otherwise unsatisfactory relationships" (Heise, 1998, p. 275). Moreover, although violence against women happens in every socioeconomic class, there is compelling evidence of higher incidence of woman battering in neighborhoods where women live in poverty (Heise, 1998). As established earlier and confirmed by respondents, Nima is a place stricken with economic depravity, and as such, many women live in poverty (Owusu et al., 2008). Similarly, poor access to paid work for women is listed by the WHO (2021) as a major risk factor for both physical

and sexual violence against women. Put together, this offers insight into why cases of IPV are predominant in Nima and why the women in Nima are very likely to be victims of assault.

Two other interesting points emerged with respect to this theme. Firstly, though some of the male respondents claimed that the financial autonomy of a woman makes it less likely to control or exert authority over her, Sadia was adamant that she would rather her partner be richer than her. She reasons that this is necessary as he is the man of the house, and women tend to deviate from their subordinate role when they are the wealthier spouse.

Honestly, for myself, I've never wished to be wealthier than my husband or partner. I want my husband to be wealthier than me. Because he's the man of the house. He's the one who has to settle everything down. You know, for us women, when we are rich to some extent, we stop respecting our men. There are a lot of women like this. (Sadia)

Her assertion is a testament to the importance of sociocultural norms in determining the various ways people interpret and attempt to achieve their genders. Also, Sadia's statement substantiates Schippers' (2007) argument that in order to maintain the hierarchy between the genders, hegemonic femininity is defined and enacted in a position of subordination to hegemonic masculinity. In line with this, women who attempt to embody idealized hegemonic masculine traits are stigmatized so as to keep the act of social dominance over the "other" within the exclusive confines of men. Through this speech act and her desires, Sadia is able to achieve her conception of the ideal feminine, which is supposed to be complementary to her conception of the ideal masculine. She reinforces her position in this idealized hierarchical relationship as one of subordination to, not usurping of, the masculine. Achieving this idealized hegemonic femininity also means she avoids stigmatization and other unpleasant social sanctions.

To lend weight to the above analysis, some of the respondents assert that even when a woman is financially dependent and somehow contributes to the relationship, that does not excuse or relieve her from subordinating to men. As in the following example:

There's some kind of respect that is required that a woman gives to a man in a marriage and in a relationship. Don't let it be the case that because you have it [financial capability] and you're contributing to the relationship, the dynamics change. All of these kinds of things, it is important that women properly grasp them. Regardless of whether they contribute their share of the finances, they [women] have to know that that kind of respect exists. It is constant. (Danjuma)

In turn, through this speech act, Danjuma constructs his masculinity by insisting on segregating women from the arena—that is, the act of social dominance over the "other." This ensures that

it remains exclusive to men and that his masculinity is not threatened. Consequently, he reinforces the ascendancy and dominance of men in this binary relationship of masculine and feminine.

5.1.1.4 Physical Violence is the Result of Women Themselves

Another theme that emerged from the field interviews is the claim by respondents that the violence perpetrated within intimate relationships in Nima was the doing of women themselves. Regarding this theme, different respondents presented different narratives. In what might perhaps strike as bemusing at first glance, some of the respondents claimed that the physical violence perpetrated by men within their relationships was the preference of women themselves. They asserted that this preference is linked to a phenomenon they term *Gaza love* (a popular jargon in parts of Nima often used to refer to dysfunctional relationships where abuse is a norm). Some of the respondents explained by saying:

For some of the girls, when you shout at them, they say plainly that they prefer being beaten to being yelled at — Gaza love! For them, the beating is what they prefer. They like that better than entertaining them. They are actually the ones who insist on physical violence to keep them grounded in the relationship. (Muntari)

There's this lady who comes to our base every now and again. She would often say that when she is dating a man who doesn't beat her, she feels as though he doesn't love her. So, when she's in such a relationship, she will sometimes do things that would provoke the man to beat her. There are actually plenty of them like that. (Danlad)

The above statements corroborate the findings of the 2016 Domestic Violence in Ghana report, which attest that many women in Ghana found spousal beating acceptable (p. 17). More so, the statements and the *Gaza love* phenomenon echo the works of Dr. Lenore E. Walker (1979) and Dr. Judith Lewis Herman (1997), who underscored the significant impact that early exposure to abuse and violence has on a person's perceptions of their intimate relationships, often causing them to see violence as a distorted expression of care or love. This then conforms to the conditions labeled as individual or ontogenic factors in Heise's nested ecological framework regarding the etiology of violence. Akin to Albert Bandura's SLT, Heise points out that an individual's personal background of ever witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood may inform or provide an explanation for the expectations and behaviors that they bring to their relationship. Taking into consideration the fact that in Ghana, physical violence at the hands of a parent, a guardian, or any other elderly person in the community is endorsed as a way of caring for or disciplining children (UNICEF Ghana, 2015), it can be argued that the young

women alluded to by the respondents in the above accounts may be construing violence by their partners as a warped form of compassion and love since it is what they are most familiar with from their formative years. More especially, in the case of Nima, where violence is reportedly pervasive and many families live in close proximity (Essamuah & Tonah, 2004; Owusu et al., 2008) and ascribe to the dictum “all the adults are responsible for all the children,” there is a high possibility that the women the respondents reference have witnessed or experienced some form of violence in their childhoods. Also, to buttress this argument even more, the 2016 Domestic Violence in Ghana report indicates that childhood exposure to violence is strongly correlated with a Ghanaian adult’s chance of becoming either a victim or a perpetrator of violence.

In addition, I speculate that this presumed preference for physical violence by women within their relationships could be the effect of *idonkerifi*. There is a high likelihood that growing up in a hypermasculine setting would mean that some women would also be socialized to see violence as a way of solving problems, danger as exciting, and generally be hard-eyed, so to speak. In describing his girlfriend, Muntari mentions:

She is one of those girls who leans more towards Gaza love. Though she doesn’t smoke or anything, she hangs out with other women who do, and she does everything with them. So, she has that kind of lifestyle. I mean, she often behaves like one of those hard-core street ladies. She behaves like a man, carries herself like a man, and is hot-blooded like a man. (Muntari)

Another respondent, recounting an incident involving his girlfriend, explains:

So, we’re dating, and she hears that I’m dating someone else in addition. Instead of coming to me and questioning me about what she heard, she didn’t do that! Rather, she went right ahead and called her crews (a jargon used colloquially to often refer to a gang of friends or loyalist). She went to assemble her friends, telling them about what she heard and asking them to accompany her to the other girl’s place in order to fight. She asked them to go with her and fight because this person is dating her guy, and for that matter, they should go and beat her up. (Mustafa)

It can be argued that the women mentioned in the above accounts exhibit tendencies that have been theorized in the literature as hypermasculine (Mosher and Sirkin, 1984; Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993). As such, I speculate that this could also be a reason why they appear to insist on using violence to solve the problems in their relationships. Hypermasculinity, as mentioned earlier, is a macrosystem factor in the ecological framework that has been found to be a

prominent predictor of high rates of violence in a society. Besides, as part of the macrosystem level of the framework of violence, Heise identifies that societies that support the use of force by adults to settle disputes had far higher rates of violence against women.

More, the fact that these women are described as exhibiting traits that are normatively considered masculine gives substance to Judith Butler's argument that "*gender is in no way a stable identity... and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.*" (1988, p. 519). In this sense, by committing to different kinds of repetitive enactments, as appears to be the case with the women referenced in the above statements, one is capable of "*gender transformation*" (p. 520), and/or subverting the normative binary framework of gender.

Another narrative that emerged in relation to this theme concerns respondents attributing the blame for their violent behaviors to women. Some respondents implied that their behavior was a necessary response to their partner's refusal to heed their instructions, and in certain circumstances, violence is the only viable means of correcting women they deem deviant. In what also appeared to be an attempt to rationalize their violent behaviors, the respondents started their statements by announcing that they actually consider IPV to be wrong. As in the following accounts:

For me, I feel all these types of beatings that happen in relationships are wrong. However, for the girls as well, that is what they like. The beating is what they like. In that, if the person is doing something and maybe you express your disapproval about their actions, they will ignore you and keep at it because they want to see the end product behind your displeasure about their actions. (Mustafa)

Sometimes, in a relationship, it is not right for a man to beat a woman. But also, in some circumstances, you need to improvise. When you're lenient, when you're soft on them [women], they will overpower you. That's why sometimes you have to announce your presence as the man! For some women, excuse me to say, but they act as if they are out of their minds. Hence, you have to bring their mind back home. Like, give her one kpaa! [makes the sound of a slap]. One slap is okay. (Ishaka)

These statements imply that some of the respondents, including perpetrators, actually consider IPV to be wrong. However, they alleviate themselves of any guilt or shame by suggesting that their behavior is the fault of women or that the use of violence is necessary. This notwithstanding, it can be gleaned from Ishaka's "*when you're lenient, when you're soft on*

them, they will overpower you” comment that some respondents resort to violence because of their fear of being emasculated and as a means to cling onto their patriarchal dominance. It can be argued that this attitude stems from the respondent’s sense of superiority and moral authority bestowed by gender and sociocultural norms. In line with this, the respondents have the legitimacy to use violence, and women are at their mercy when it comes to determining how much violence is the right amount of violence required to ensure compliance. Ofei-Aboagye’s (1994) study found that in some ethnic groups in Ghana, one to three slaps is what is perceived as acceptable. As mentioned earlier, Heise labels a culture that permits physical chastisement of women as a macrosystem-level factor in the framework of violence. Thus, as epitomized by Ishaka’s assertion that “one slap is okay,” men are allowed to use violence in their relationships without any feelings of guilt or remorse so long as they keep within the threshold, especially when it is within the culturally sanctioned context of correcting a deviant woman.

The final narrative that emerged from the field interviews in relation to this theme centered on women as perpetrators and the respondents as victims of IPV. Two of the respondents asserted that they had been physically abused by their partners. In describing their experience, they both trivialized the incident. One of the respondents, who appeared embarrassed about the episode at first, was quick to claim that even though his partner was aggressive and attempted to hurt him, he was unscathed by her violent behavior. The other respondent recounted his experience in a rather comical manner, thereby diminishing its seriousness. Interestingly, they both took responsibility for the violent behaviors of the women involved in these incidents:

She slapped me. I didn’t feel anything — I was even looking at her like she was only playing or something. Because she has never done that before. She threw her hand, and I was just standing there. She wanted to prove something, so she threw her hand. I was just looking — even though her actions came from a place of anger, and she was aggressive, but it didn’t harm me; it didn’t do anything to me. I was just standing there, looking back at her. Later, she came to apologize on her own because she had never done anything like that.... I let it go because sometimes, maybe you’re the one who caused that situation, and I have to admit that I provoked her anger, so I took it like that. (Danjuma)

In my case, we were involved in a tussle because I had promised to give her some money, but honestly, I didn’t have it. It was merely a ploy to get her to come over to my place.... She held me tightly by my collar, and the tussling intensified till we were both separated by passersby. Out of nowhere, she threw a stone at me. I tell you no lie, the size of the stone she threw, I could’ve lost half of my face had it hit me. Thankfully, I swerved it like we

were in the Matrix.... I see it as my fault the way everything played out. It was because I promised her when I knew it was a lie all along. (Samuel)

The above accounts, especially Danjuma's statement, corroborate the findings of Stets & Straus (1989, as cited in Bates et al., 2019), who found that in a significant number of IPV cases involving heterosexual couples, women struck their male partner's first.

In one of the focus groups, the respondents reaction to a question regarding violence they might have suffered at the hands of their partners provided some insight into why many men may trivialize their experience or hardly report their experience as survivors of abuse. Tellingly, as soon as this question was posed, a few of the participants responded with shrieks and scornful expressions, implying that this is out of order, and it better not happen. Then Nuhu retorted, "*Don't even try. I'll dead-ed you!*" (A colloquial slang used in the community and parts of Ghana that plays on the word 'dead' to add emphasis to the ruthlessness one intends.) Such scathing reactions from one's peers could potentially deter men from effectively speaking about the violence they may have suffered for fear of being emasculated and/or ridiculed (Hamberger & Guse, 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005).

Nevertheless, it can also be argued that the trivialization and comical undertone of the above accounts, as well as the respondents scornful and scathing reactions to the idea of violence as perpetrated by women against them, is another way by which they understand and perform gender. Trivializing the harm done to them or minimizing the seriousness of the situation can be construed as an expression of *idonkerifi* assimilated through years of socialization. Also, by minimizing the seriousness of the violence of their partners or its effect on them, the respondents hint that women are inept at enacting harmful physical violence. Conversely, as evident in Nuhu's "*I'll dead-ed you!*" comment, the respondents present their own violence as serious and possibly fatal. This, hence, is a reproduction and reinforcing of gender stereotypes and gender differences that assert that violence is the forte of men, not women (Dobash & Dobash, 1998; Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019).

5.1.1.5 Conflicts: Cheating and the Incessant Use of Inflammatory Language

Many of the respondents pointed out that a significant number of the cases of IPV in Nima can be attributed to the conflicts that occur between intimate partners. They shared that in cases where the conflict reaches a crescendo, battering could be so severe as to lead to the woman passing out. The main point that stands out amongst the many reasons stated for such conflicts is cheating or the suspicion thereof. Regarding this, one of the respondents claimed:

Most of the time, whenever you see someone beating their girlfriend here in Nima and you ask about what is happening, the reason is almost always unfaithfulness. You would hear things like the woman is dating—he would say that is his girlfriend, and they've been together for a while. But he saw her or caught her with someone else, or something like that. So, always, when you see some kind of battering happening, you would hear that he caught her with someone else. (Faruk)

The following accounts are those of other respondents confirming Faruk's assertion:

All of us here know about one of our brothers who beat her girlfriend till she passed out. He had heard a rumor that the girl was cheating, so he went to confront her to talk it out. However, things escalated. And you know how anger is; in the course of all the confusion, he subjected her to severe battering until she passed out. (Tanko)

The first time I beat a woman, she was out cheating on me but lied to me that she was at home. At the time, I had fallen for her, and I was very much in love. I quickly jogged to their house. While there, I asked that, since she's at home, she should step out so that I could see her. That didn't happen. After I'd stood there for almost an hour, I saw her arriving home from a pathway. So, I confronted her. Upon realizing that her story didn't add up and seeing her squirm with guilt, I slapped her a few times. (Nuhu)

He'd seen a number on my phone and asked about it. I told him it's this guy who's talking about assisting me with a move overseas. He thought I was lying, and due to that, he got upset and beat me up. It was really distressing because you [her partner] accused me wrongly and also beat me up and injured me. It hurts. It really hurt and left me extremely distressed. (Sadia)

Some of the cases of physical violence resulted from the respondents' displeasure at women's reactions to men cheating or their suspicion thereof. The following account is an example:

I was on the phone with someone else when she walked in on me at home. At this time, I was dating someone else alongside her. She started complaining loudly. The group of friends that I was living with during this period could hear her whining and yelling. She was basically airing our private issues loudly for everyone to hear.... That's when I stopped her. In trying to stop her, she kept yelling and yelling until she began raining insults on me. The insults just wouldn't stop. You see, that's when the slapping also comes in handy. Maybe the slap will be the solution to what is happening. At that point, if you land a slap, even if it's just one slap, it'll reduce the commotion. And the next slap will bring it to an end. (Muntari)

Validating the studies of Browne (1987) and Wilson and Daly (1995, as cited in Heise, 1998), who found that sexual jealousy and accusations of infidelity are frequent causes of spousal conflict and abuse, it is obvious that fidelity is a grave concern for intimate partners, both women and men, in Nima. However, from the field interviews, it was apparent that many of the respondents considered *cheating* to be an exclusive domain of men, and women must, by all means, be segregated from this sphere. In line with this, some of the respondents criticized women whom they suspected of infidelity and "greed." That said, in the same breath, the respondents appeared to gloss over their own acts of *infidelity* as something "natural" to men and a thing to be overlooked. Interestingly, Sadia also appears to share these sentiments. They cited religious doctrines and biological differences between the sexes to justify their conspicuous bias:

For some women, they think about what you [the man] are doing—maybe you are dating her, and you go to date another person as well. When she finds out, she'll decide that since this is what is happening, she also has to go and date another person in addition to you. Because you're doing it, she also thinks she should do the same! Even nowadays, for the women here, even if you're dating only her without adding another person, she'll date another person in addition to you. But, as is well known, women cannot marry two men, but a man can marry up to four wives. But due to greed, our women have no issue adding. They feel if they're dating you and you only give them 10Ghs (equivalent to \$1), they need to date someone else in order to get 10Ghs more just to buy material things. (Ishaka)

Women don't have to compare more things that men do and say they also want to do the same. Because there are some women who look at the fact that maybe with this guy, though we're dating, he's cheating and doing some other things on the side. So, I also want to go behind him and do the same thing as he's doing. (Mustafa)

For a man, it has become like a condition...sometimes, you [the woman] could be sacrificing yourself for the person all the time, yet his gaze is still set on what is out there. That's just an attribute of men. You just can't put a stop to them. (Sadia)

The statements by Ishaka and Mustafa bring back into focus Butler's (1993) assertion that the feminine is produced as that which has to be excluded for the effective operationalization of a social order that includes the feminine as a subordinate term in a binary relation of masculine and feminine. The respondents attempt to exclude women from the practice of *infidelity* in order to effectively construct their masculinity and maintain their dominance. To this effect, the respondents gender *sexual infidelity* and *sexual lust* as exclusive masculine characteristics, thus

providing the legitimating rationale for stigmatizing women who attempt to stake a claim for these practices.

Also, the respondents suggested that the physical assault linked to these conflicts is a consequence of women's penchant to use inflammatory language or go overboard with their insults.

As for women, they are capable of saying certain unpleasant things. At times, even what they say might not be exactly true, but they say it anyway just to get back at you or infuriate you. And in that instance, if you are unable to get a hold of yourself, you could lose your temper and end up doing something regrettable. (Danlad)

In recounting the severe battering she had experienced at the hands of her partner, Sadia shared that the assault escalated when she made some inflammatory comments to her partner as retaliation for his initial violent actions. The following is her account of the incident:

He was talking to me angrily, then he slapped me. Since I was hurt, I told him, "Oh, I stopped loving you long ago! I don't love you anymore. I only pretend to love you. Haven't you realized that whenever you're sharing something with me, I don't feel any sympathy for you? It is because I don't love you anymore." That was when he retorted by saying, "So all this while he's with me, he's been toiling for nothing?" I then told him to stop toiling because I don't love him. I'm only pretending to love him. That was when he absolutely lost it! He grabbed a belt and started beating me mercilessly. Then, he grabbed a knife. He brought out a knife! [she laughs embarrassingly] And then he said, since I said I don't love him; he'll kill me and also kill himself in order to end it all. (Sadia)

As for a woman, she'll certainly insult you. Because you'll beat her, but she can't beat you. Usually, when you're trading words with a woman, whatever you do, it will result in something worse because there is no way you can be better than a woman at using sharp-worded and inflammatory language. In such situations, she'll try to get you upset, and if you're also someone who struggles to keep your temper in check, it'll result in fighting. (Muntari)

Conflict within intimate relationships is one of the factors listed by Heise (1998) as part of a microsystem level in the IEF. According to Heise, the literature consistently shows that marital conflict is highly predictive of wife abuse. The above statements by respondents prove that IPV resulting from conflict between couples is not limited to marriages, and those that occur in dating relationships can be just as brutal. Coleman and Straus (1986, as cited in Heise, 1998) suggest that the possibilities of conflict morphing into violence are much higher in relationships

with an asymmetrical power structure than in egalitarian relationships. Evidently, due to the asymmetrical power structure underpinning many of the relationships in Nima, women are prone to physical assault whenever they appear to be challenging the authority of men during a quarrel. It makes little difference if women are merely suspected of wrongdoing; they could sustain severe beatings. And, as in the case of Muntari, even on occasions where women are justifiably upset because they feel aggrieved by their partner's wrongdoing, they are still not spared if they do not vent their spleen in a manner that is considered appropriate by the said partner.

Moreover, the respondents gendered violence and the use of inflammatory language. Though some respondents previously shared stories of women exhibiting physically violent attitudes, regarding this particular theme, the use of inflammatory language was generally associated with women, while violence was considered manly. When Muntari mentions *“as for a woman, she'll certainly insult you. Because you'll beat her, but she can't beat you...there is no way you can be better than a woman at using sharp-worded and inflammatory language.”* He and other respondents who share similar sentiments reinforce and reify gender differences by suggesting that these actions are somehow innate to women and men, and enacting them constitutes an accomplishment of their conception of ideal femininity and masculinity. Such binary discourses are not only limiting but also foundational to the 'othering' and subjugation of women (de Beauvoir, 1949; Butler, 1988). Further, it is worth noting that, unlike enacting harmful physical violence, respondents were quick to emphasize that women are good at using sharp-worded rhetoric or hurling insults at others — an act considered a feminine trait in Ghana. This is scarcely surprising since, in many cultures, feminine traits are considered inferior and undesirable in relation to masculine traits (Schippers, 2007; Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019). That said, in patriarchal societies, in order to maintain the sanctity of social life, hegemonic femininity has to complement “hegemonic masculinity in a relation of subordination” (Schippers, 2007, p. 95). Hence, by distancing themselves from the act of using sharp-worded rhetoric and thrusting women forward, the respondents cling onto their masculinity while “situating the feminine in a complementary hierarchical relationship with the masculine” (Schippers, 2007, p. 96).

5.1.1.6 Intervention of Family and Key Community Members

Heise (1998) highlights that several researchers contributing to the discourse on IPV (e.g., Counts, Brown, & Campbell, 1992) laud family and community intervention as having a

potentially mediating effect on partner abuse (p. 275). Thus, according to the IEF, one of the prominent predictors of low rates of violence in a society is the propensity of family or community members to step in when a woman is being assaulted. This is considered an exosystem factor in the social ecology. Furthermore, the framework indicates that women with strong social networks of friends and family were less likely to be victims of abuse. As mentioned earlier, Nima is characterized by a strong sense of community and good neighborliness, mostly resulting from its tightly knit neighborhoods, where families and neighbors live in cramped compound houses (Owusu et al., 2008). An advantage of this is that, in Nima, it is commonplace for family or community members to intervene during cases of partner abuse. Sadia alludes to one of such interventions while recounting her experience of assault:

Upon seeing the knife, I was terrified, so I started screaming. At this point, I began begging him. While begging him, other people in the [compound] house came over to intervene. We've never had a fight that caught the attention of our neighbors until that day. (Sadia)

Also, previously, Samuel referred to passersby intervening during his altercation with his partner. He mentioned:

She held me tightly by my collar, and the tussling intensified till we were both separated by passersby. (Samuel)

These statements notwithstanding, further analysis of the findings indicates that in Nima, the impact of family and community members on the prevalence of IPV is more complex than discussed by Heise as an exosystem factor of the framework of violence. The analysis of the field data reveals that, in spite of the influential role family and other community members play in mitigating abuse, another aspect of their mediating role actually contributes to the prevalence of IPV in the community. In the aftermath of cases of severe battering, there is a tendency for family or respected members of the community to step in and apologize on behalf of the perpetrator, while also imploring the survivor and her family to let the case be resolved privately or between the families without taking it to the authorities. This is exemplified in the following statements:

It was distressing because he accused me wrongly and also beat me up and injured me. It ached. It really ached and left me extremely distressed. Due to his actions, I could go and report him [to the police], and that would've been a huge case on its own. However, due to the intervention of his friends, aunt, and sisters, who came to plead with my aunt and reason

with me, I decided to give him another chance. If he ever repeats that mistake, there's no way I'll change my mind again. (Sadia)

The initial idea was to arrest the guy. Even his friends thought that his actions [battering his girlfriend until she collapsed] were not normal, so they reported the case to the police. However, elders of the community intervened and enjoined that it should be treated as an everyday relationship drama and settled at home. So, the case was withdrawn and settled between the partners and their families with the help of the elders. (Tanko)

The mediating effect of family and key members of the community ensures that strong words of rebuke may be the only retribution for the perpetrators, in spite of the vicious assaults respondents alluded to. It is worth noting that both perpetrators were also reported to be repeat offenders. Tanko asserted that it was not the first time that their "friend" was violent, and that he carried on being abusive to other women he was involved with in the community. Sadia also mentioned that, though this was the worst, it was not the first time she had been beaten by her partner:

This wasn't the first time. It has happened before. This is the third time, actually. However, what happened last time was a kind of beating I've never witnessed in my entire life [laughs it off embarrassingly]. It was extreme. It hurt me so much that I didn't know what to do with myself. (Sadia)

This corroborates arguments made by social exchange theorists who contend that in the face of defunct social controls, people may fundamentally turn to violence in their relationships because they believe the potential reward, such as control, power, or satisfying some emotional desire, outweighs the possible drawbacks and risk of punishment, including ostracization or possible legal consequences. The analysis of the data reveals that, in the case of Nima, due to the aforementioned intervention by family and other community members, perpetrators may persist with their violent behaviors, thereby contributing to the prevalence of IPV in the community. Further, the above statements also highlight that this mediating power of family and community members is a reason why several studies (e.g., Amoakohene, 2004; Domestic Violence in Ghana, 2016) have found that many cases of IPV go unreported in Ghana. Lastly, in some cases, the mediating role of family and key community members could also translate into influencing survivors to stay with abusive partners in spite of their violent tendencies. This exposes survivors to the possibility of experiencing even more abuse and worse consequences from IPV. Sadia alludes to this kind of influence in the following account:

Due to the episode with the knife and generally since we had that fight, even now, sometimes in my quiet moments, I don't even wish me and him would get married in the future. I've lost some interest in him. Actually, we should have already been married. Before the Greater Eid [Eid al-Adha], his mum called me to discuss marriage plans and set a date, but I put a stop to it. I told her that I don't want it. This prompted more intervention and conversations by his mum, some elders, his sisters, and other people, resulting in us settling the issue and getting back together. (Sadia)

It can be argued that the workings of the intervention of family and key community members reflect the beliefs and norms in Nima and Ghana at large, which treat IPV as part and parcel of all intimate relationships; hence, the priority is often to resolve cases of abuse privately without involving state actors like the police. More so, the above statements and the intervention of family and community members reflect a larger cultural ethos that places a premium on keeping partners together rather than prioritizing the safety of survivors. Here, an exosystem factor (the intervention of family and community members) and a macrosystem factor (a culture ethos that prioritizes keeping partners together in spite of the history of abuse) of the IEF interact to influence the cause and prevalence of IPV in Nima.

5.1.2 Conception and Contestation of Gender

Although the findings analyzed and shared so far give an extensive insight into the respondents' understanding of gender and how that impacts the causes and prevalence of IPV in Nima, I endeavored to ascertain their explicit response to the question, *Are men and women equal or not?* Their statements regarding this question shed more light on their conception and contestation of sex and gender. Also, their response provides further understanding of their actions and behaviors. The following quotes are their statements regarding the said question:

Men and women are not equal. This is why God made the categories of man and woman in order to establish the difference. Man! Woman! Women have breasts men don't have breasts. That is why we happen not to be different. We are two different creatures in all aspects. If you look at our natural makeup, we're two different people. At that time of the month, women bleed, and men don't. Generally, men and women cannot be equal. Because nature in itself shows that when a man reaches a certain stage, with a sound mind, and financially also sound, you should get married. Religion, both Islam and Christianity, also states this. For a man, when you get to a particular level, you'll get married. Plus, it is you, the man, who'd marry the woman, not the other way around. (Nuhu)

Men and women are not equal. They have to know — I mean, women themselves have to know that they are not the same as men. Because for women, it gets to a time when it seems

they have faded in the system. They are old. But for a man, he'd get to that age and beyond and yet still hold onto his condition. The power of our physicality is different from that of women. (Mustafa)

No. They can't be equal. You know, there is a big, big difference between a man and a woman. What we (men) can do, they (women) cannot do. In terms of being polygamous, a woman can't marry a second husband. There are some responsibilities at home that a woman can't take on. For instance, when there's going to be a family meeting, who's the head? It is the man who takes up that responsibility, you see. (Samuel)

To an extent, men and women are not equal. Because even though I'm a woman and I'm not married, I sometimes admit to myself that men are really trying. It's a man who has to marry a woman, then it's a man who shoulders the responsibility of going out to find money for food, rent, the upkeep of the children, and so on. Everything is his responsibility.... Also, there are times when a man happens to be a lazy person, and the onus lies on the woman to go out and fend for the family. All the while, this same man will be womanizing. That said, if you're taking good care of your wife and doing everything for her perfectly, I'll always say that men are doing a more commendable job than women. (Sadia)

From the above statements, the respondents appear to conflate the concepts of *sex* and *gender*. Their explanations corroborate Pryzgodá and Chrisler's (2000) assertion that it is still common for people to confound both concepts in everyday usage. In the first half of his statement, Nuhu, for example, cites biological differences like breasts and menstruation to buttress his point about why men and women are not equal. However, in a rather interesting twist, he also suggests that marriage is a natural obligation for all men, provided they are sound in the mind and stable financially. He states with conviction that "*for a man, when you get to a particular level, you'll get married.*" This is obviously untrue, as anecdotal evidence attests that many men have lived well into their golden years and died in Nima and all over the world without ever marrying. That said, Nuhu's assertion sheds light on the significance of marriage in the construction of one's masculinity in Nima. He further explains this difference between men and women by alluding to sociocultural norms in Nima and Ghana at large that place the responsibility of proposing marriage on men. In line with this, the act of proposing marriage is gendered and universalized by Nuhu as a practice exclusively reserved for men. The fact that cultures exist and have existed where women propose marriage to men and women (Pirani et al., 2023; CBS News, 2007) corroborates social constructivist arguments that the construction and *doing* of gender are continuously influenced by cultural norms and societal expectations (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988). Though backed with conviction, Nuhu's claims,

which are steeped in religious beliefs and ultimately reinforce gender differences, are unfounded.

In the case of Mustafa, he too cites biological differences, whereas Samuel and Sadia's statements focus on the sociocultural norms and responsibilities of men and women in Nima and within Ghanaian society as a whole. Strikingly, though Sadia hints at situations where women subvert stereotypical gender roles and take up the responsibility of breadwinner of the family, a phenomenon that Essamuah and Tonah (2004) found is on the rise in Nima, it does not seem to affect her stance on the subject matter. Overall, based on essentialist notions of gender and traditional gender roles and responsibilities, the respondents conclude that men are different and hence cannot be equal to women. This discourse does not only inform the various ways in which they construct and enact their gender, but it also impacts their conduct and expectations in their intimate relationships. As the findings of the study have revealed so far, such discourse inspires and legitimizes IPV, other patriarchal modes of oppression, and sexism.

5.1.3 Conclusion

Based on the research questions, this chapter presented and analyzed the data gathered from the field interviews. The analysis is interwoven with the personal experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of respondents from the field site. Judith Butler's "Gender as Performativity" as well as Lori Heise's integrated ecological framework are the main theories that drive the analysis and discussions of the data. Fundamentally, the study identified that respondents constructed and policed practices that are considered high markers for IPV as the exclusive prerogative of the masculine. These practices include the acts of dominance, use of fatal violence, controlling the "other" for their own good, and infidelity. They policed and barred women from these arenas while defining and constructing subordinate and complementary practices, like the use of inflammatory language and acts of deference, as the forte of the feminine. By constructing and gendering these practices as innate to men and women, the respondents performed masculinity, reified gender differences, and positioned the feminine as subordinate to the masculine in a hierarchical relationship.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter further discusses some salient findings regarding IPV in Nima. It also shares the study's contribution to the subject matter, suggests recommendations for plausible ways to mitigate the problem, and offers some insights for future research.

6.1.1 Discussion

The study found that many of the predictors of IPV, as outlined by Heise in the IEF, abound in Nima. This highlights the prevalence of IPV in the community presently and implies that the problem may persist in the years to come if tangible measures are not put in place to impact the situation. The respondents' descriptions and perceptions of IPV suggest that masculine superiority and violence against women are justified and normalized in the community. Additionally, the respondents' accounts reveal that, fundamentally, the understanding, interpretation, and enactment of gender are at the heart of cases of IPV in Nima. Many of the respondents perpetrated or condoned IPV as a way of constructing or enacting their masculinity and reinforcing gender normativity. In this regard, the study corroborates the assertion by Dobash and Dobash (1998) that gender, as a system that informs the responsibilities and expectations of women and men in intimate relationships across many cultures, encourages IPV, including battery. This enjoins that if progress is to be made in curbing IPV in Nima, urgent attention needs to be directed at improving the attitudes and understandings of both women and men regarding their perceptions of gender. Other notable causes of IPV in Nima, as identified by this study, include economic deprivation, which leads to the dependency of women on men for most of their basic needs. In addition, the mediating role of family and key members of the community also emerged as one of the reasons for the prevalence of IPV in the community.

Some of the respondents' statements, especially on the *act of controlling* their partners and masculine superiority, were remarkably similar from interview to interview and amongst respondents from the two different focus group sessions. This attests to the existence and impact of a larger gendered social order.

Since many of the respondents were either unemployed or in the low-income bracket, the study also corroborates the findings of the Domestic Violence in Ghana Report (2016) which claimed that domestic physical violence was popular among women and men in low-income neighborhoods.

Further, out of the total number of respondents interviewed, only three (3) of them explicitly claimed that they have never used physical violence in their relationships. These three, along with the only female respondent interviewed, also asserted that they abhor woman battering. They make this clear in the following accounts:

For me, for the kind of love I'm involved in, I don't hit women. And all the women I've dated have whined that I'm self-conceited. For me, if I'm dating you and I say one and you try to say two, I'll be quiet; that's it. I won't speak anymore. Thus, when you leave, you'll call me and apologize. For all the women I've dated, I've never once hit any of them. I've never insulted any woman. But if I talk to you about something and you give me a rude answer, I won't talk anymore. Even if I were standing with you, I'd turn around and leave. (Bernard)

In all relationships, it is not right to raise your hand at a woman and beat her up. It is unacceptable.... There are so many who have broken up due to battering. There are people who don't like that due to a relationship, you beat them up. The very day you beat them up, you're done. The relationship is over. (Sadia)

My opinion is that it is wrong for a man to lay his hand on a woman, no matter what. As a man, you shouldn't hit any woman, whether she's your girlfriend or not. Indeed, sometimes a woman can do something that would provoke you. But it is never right to lay hands on a woman. Frankly, I have never liked that thing. (Danjuma)

Personally, I don't support—you know, we are all different people, but for me, in the first place, I don't support a man who beats a woman. Even if it's your partner or any other woman for that matter. It's a practice I don't condone or engage in. (Tanko)

That notwithstanding, in the course of the interviews, Danjuma made comments that appeared to suggest he might excuse violence against women in cases where they cheat or are suspected of cheating. As in the following example:

The beating is just not right. If you feel your partner is behaving in ways that you can't tolerate, ignore them or just leave the relationship.... Even though, in some cases, like cheating, you can say you have the right — most of the time, when you hear what they [men] say, you'll realize they have the right to beat her. But beating in itself is an action that shouldn't be a characteristic of a relationship. (Danjuma)

Furthermore, condemning IPV did not stop the respondents from reinforcing gender normativity by expressing domineering, controlling or submissive notions steeped in patriarchal discourse.

The study identified that the respondents level of education did not necessarily have a linear association with their attitudes and perceptions of IPV. Neither did it affect their penchant to construct, enact, and police gender in conformity with patriarchal notions of gender difference and hierarchy. For example, Danjuma (a college graduate) and Bernard (a junior high school dropout) do not condone or enact violence in their relationships. Conversely, Nuhu (a college graduate), Mustafa (a senior high school dropout), and Asibiri (a junior high school graduate) asserted that varying degrees of physical violence are a necessary resource for the viability of intimate relationships. This seems to suggest that patriarchal gender discourse permeates all agents of socialization alike, and formal education is not immune. Or that other agents of socialization like family, religion, peers, and the media are having a greater impact than schools in influencing perceptions of gender in Nima.

Whereas in previous studies conducted in Ghana (e.g., Amoakohene, 2004), sex and sexual violence were not topics participants were willing to talk about, participants of this study openly discussed sex and sexual violence, although, as is typical in Ghana, their statements were laced with euphemisms. One respondent, Sadia, even volunteered stories of her experience of sexual assault that were not linked to the reason for her selection as a participant in the study. This shift might be a result of an attitudinal difference between different generations of Ghanaians. On this topic, one of the respondents confessed to coercing his partner into consenting to have sex with him. He suggested that, since he did not physically force her, his actions were tolerable. The following is his account of the incident:

I didn't use force; I used some other kind of way. Like telling her if she doesn't help me, I'll suffer with blue balls, and I can die. So that's some mentality of another way. It is not force, but I used that way. I told her to help me; otherwise, if she leaves, it'll be tough on me. My balls could hurt severely, so she should help me so that we can do what we have to do. That's what made her reconsider her decision and agree to the sex. However, in that moment, she didn't want to, but after I used that way, she agreed. So as for force, I've never used force. And this way is not something we can consider to be by force. (Samuel)

Apart from Samuel, the other respondents overwhelmingly condemned sexual violence that occurs in dating relationships. As in the following examples:

On this particular issue, as humans, it is not always that you'd feel for something sexual. Maybe if, in that instance, the man feels for sex and the woman doesn't, it doesn't have to become a situation where you're resorting to forcing her to do something that she doesn't want to do. That's basically classified as rape. (Mustafa)

For issues regarding sex, it is important that there's an understanding between both you and her. Maybe she's come to your place and you're feeling like you want to have sex with her, but she tells you she won't agree or she's not in the mood. In that moment, you have to understand...although it could be unpleasant for you, it is better than forcing her and ending up with major problems afterwards. (Faruk)

Sex is something that requires that both parties understand each other. If the woman is not on board and the man wants to do it by force, that's called something like rape, you see. If she isn't on board, be patient with her. (Bernard)

Disturbingly, in the case of marital rape, the respondents, including Sadia, were less critical. They expressed that since sex is part of the obligations of marriage, it is incumbent that the wife fulfill her obligations. This is similar to studies by Amoakohene (2004) and the Domestic Violence in Ghana Report (2016), which found that some Ghanaians do not view marital rape as a crime. Also, some of the respondents emphasized that denying a husband sex is one of the main reasons for infidelity. According to the participants:

With regards to marriage, it is mandatory that when a man wants to have sex, his wife agrees to do what we wants. If she refuses, she has transgressed...whatever you're doing, whatever work you're engaged in, as long as your husband wants to have sex with you in a marriage, you have to stop and attend to his needs. (Ishaka)

Your husband has a right to sex with you. Even if he forces you, it is because it is obligatory. But if he hasn't married you, it doesn't have to be obligatory. However, provided that a man marries you, it has become obligatory to give it [sex] to him. (Sadia)

Since that is your wife, whom you married, any time you feel for it (sex), she has to give it to you...there are some women who often deny sex to their husbands. This is what sometimes causes some men to resort to cheating. We all know that men's sexual desires are high. If a man wants sex and his wife doesn't give it to him, anytime he sees another woman, he's eager to try to woo them. And as soon as he finds someone who's willing, he starts cheating. (Bernard)

This major shift in tone points to a legitimating rationale provided by sociocultural norms and religious dogma that strips a woman of all agency after a man "makes her his wife." As Mustafa best puts it:

I am not married, but according to the things said by married people, it is mandatory. A man has authority over his wife; hence, whatever he asks for, including sex and all, she has to do it for him. (Mustafa)

In spite of the ascendancy and dominance of men that characterize intimate relationships in Nima, two male respondents, Danjuma and Samuel, have also experienced physical violence at the hands of women. This lends weight to the argument by Bates et al. (2019) that women sometimes resort to violence in their relationships, not for the sake of self-defense. Moreover, this reflects another reason why analyzing IPV through the lens of the IEF is significant. The framework offers an opportunity to access particular factors that may be influencing individual cases rather than lumping all cases under a single, overarching theory. That said, though men also experienced IPV, the abuse women experienced was more vicious, structural, and normalized.

6.1.2 Recommendations

“Popular culture is where the pedagogy is” – bell hooks

In one of the respondents’ submissions concerning sexual violence, he expressed that he had recently been educated on an enhanced definition of rape. He claimed:

What I’ve come to understand recently from talking to others is that even while having sex with a woman, if at some point she changes her mind and says she won’t do it again, you have to stop. Otherwise, anything you do from that point on is considered rape. So, it all boils down to understanding each other. If she agrees, fine. If she doesn’t, although it could be unpleasant for you, it is better than forcing her and ending up with major problems afterwards. (Faruk)

This is particularly impressive, as Ghana’s criminal code still maintains archaic definitions for sexual assault (Nlasia, 2019; Agboli, 2023). Faruk’s experience offers hope that intervention programs and policies can and will work in a matter of time. In line with this, I make the following recommendations:

Firstly, as the study has shown, it is imperative that perceptions and discourses on gender be treated seriously. Over the years, some religious doctrines and sociocultural practices have been phased out as a consequence of becoming unpopular due to their tendency to incite violence (Woldeselassie, 2020). The same needs to happen with regards to discourses with overt and subliminal messages that present the feminine as subordinate and inferior in a hierarchical relationship with the masculine. Such discourses need to be categorically condemned and flagged for their role in contributing to the everyday violence perpetrated against women in communities like Nima. Alternative discourse that champions gender equity needs to be propagated. As shown by the work of Eskilsson (2003, as cited by Schippers, 2007), it is

possible to reduce the level of male dominance within a culture as long as the differences between idealized masculine and feminine traits are not construed to mean the former is superior to the latter.

Due to the high rate of illiteracy in Nima, popular culture must be seriously considered as a viable resource for challenging the societal hegemonic discourse about gender hierarchies and gender stereotypes. The residents of Nima are well known for watching and extensively discussing TV shows that grip the attention of the entire country. Presently, most of these shows are telenovelas that are dubbed from South Asia and Latin America and then voiced in a local dialect, mostly Twi, in order to reach as many people as possible. One of the respondents alluded to this in the following statement, where he complained about his partner:

Sometimes the women don't learn. They watch a lot of telenovelas, but they don't learn anything! (Asibiri)

Unfortunately, most of the plot lines and characters in these shows reinforce gender normativity. I recommend that conscious thought go into choosing entertaining TV shows that attempt to subvert the patriarchal gender system by exalting gender-equitable masculinity and presenting women in different leadership positions. Also, TV stations should be charged with raising awareness about IPV and its harmful effects through the shows they sell to audiences. Oftentimes, these shows are discussed by young and old people alike. I reckon that shows with content anchored around influencing perceptions on gender and the severity of IPV would also help improve the mediating effect of family and key members of the community when they intervene in cases of IPV.

Further, I recommend that influential voices at the *bases* in Nima, opinion leaders, hairdressers, and other artisans be educated and mentored to be agents who often engage their peers and clients in discussions about IPV, the adverse effects of distorted notions of care, and gender equity. This could also have the double effect of ensuring that the right messages from gender-sensitive TV shows are getting across and that patriarchal stereotypes are challenged.

Moreover, according to Ellemers (2018), gendered stereotypes are inculcated at an early age. In line with this, low-level schools and upwards within Nima and throughout Ghana should be encouraged to include in their curriculum workshops and projects specifically targeted at subverting problematic gender-based discourse and improving the various ways boys and girls construe gender.

Lastly and importantly, as the study identified, many of the respondents' conceptualization, interpretation, and enactment of gender and violence are deeply engrained through years of socialization. Thus, these beliefs may not be easily altered. Hence, though progress is possible, peace policymakers need to be patient and persistent with their efforts.

6.1.3 Conclusion

This study examined the various ways in which the interpretation, enactment, and achievement of gender, particularly masculinity, translate into the subjugation of women and the prevalence of IPV in Nima, a suburb of Accra, Ghana. Particularly, the study examined the correlative relationship between the specific practices and experiences of IPV in Nima and the construction, policing, and achievement of gender, mainly masculinity.

The respondents constructed and policed practices that are considered strong predictors of IPV as the exclusive prerogative of the masculine. These practices include the use of fatal violence, acts of dominance, paternalism, infidelity, and infantilizing the "other." They policed and segregated women from these arenas while defining and constructing subordinate and complementary practices, like the use of inflammatory language and acts of deference, as the forte of the feminine. By constructing and gendering these practices as innate to men and women, the respondents performed masculinity, reified gender differences, and positioned the feminine as complementary to the masculine in a hierarchical relationship.

The respondents conflated the concepts of sex and gender and consequently suggested that the differences between idealized masculine and feminine traits, as well as the "exclusive" masculine roles they perform, place them above women in an idealized gender hierarchy. This interpretation of their gender provided them with the legitimating rationale to enact elements of paternalism and present themselves as omniscient individuals who understand what works best for women. They sometimes appear to present their efforts as done because they care about women. However, there is no room for women to oppose, negotiate, or reject this warped concept of care. At their core, these *acts of care* work like a decree. Like all decrees, it must be adhered to, or else there are consequences that range from one or two slaps to vicious battering. Furthermore, the study identified that male respondents often used language that infantilized women. In line with this, the study speculates that infantilizing women and constructing the feminine as subordinate provides the respondents with the legitimating rationale to exert authority over women, be aggrieved when they feel their words were not heeded, and mete out

punishment as a way of discipline and care. Ghanaian culture condones such actions and reactions when dealing with children and other subordinates.

Additionally, unlike the various studies cited by Heise (1998, p. 275), which identify family and community intervention as having a potentially mediating effect on partner abuse, this study found that influential role to be more complex. In Nima, the mediating power of family and key community members actually contributed to the prevalence of IPV. Due to the good neighborliness that exists in Nima (Owusu et al., 2008), family and key community members prioritize maintaining the cordiality between families and intimate partners rather than severing ties. Consequently, survivors of IPV are often influenced to stay with their assaultive partners, thereby risking even more and worse abuse.

Fundamentally, by analyzing respondents' accounts of IPV through the lenses of Judith Butler's "*Gender as Performativity*" and Lori Heise's integrated ecological framework, the study concludes that respondents gendered some practices associated with IPV in order to construct patriarchal masculine identities and enforce the subordination of women. By spotlighting these practices, the study hopes to have provided policymakers and peace advocates with an understanding of the culture of men and other sociocultural norms that could be negotiated towards mitigating IPV and other forms of patriarchal oppression.

It is worth calling attention to the limitations of this study. A future study could consider investigating what factors account for men with fairly identical ecological influences differing in their abhorrence and use of physical violence against women in their intimate relationships. Considering how Sadia deals with the violence she has experienced, further research could examine how women raised in hypermasculine communities construe and negotiate the violence they experience in their intimate relationships.

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Appendix One

Interview Guide

1. What does love mean to you?
2. How long have you been with your partner?
3. What attracted you to your partner?
4. What do you think attracted her to you?
5. What is your general experience of dating here in Nima?
6. Who often makes decisions in your relationship?

Interviews

One-on-One Interviews

Nuhu 05-02-2024

Muntari 06-02-2024

Asibiri 07-02-2024

Sadia 08-02-2024

Focus Group Interviews

Ishaka, Samuel, Mustafa, Faruk, Bernard (12-02-2024)

Tanko, Danlad, Yaw, Kojo, Danjuma (15-02-2024)

