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### Violence against women and socio-economic well-being in Jirapa, north-western Ghana

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#### ABSTRACT

The incidence of gender-based violence against women has been on the rise globally. While a multitude of factors accounts for the problem generally, there are location-specific nuances. This paper investigated gender-based violence against women in the Jirapa area of north-western Ghana using a mixed method approach covering one hundred and forty sampled victims. Data were collected using in-depth interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and key informant interviews. Among others, violence against women in the Jirapa area is increasing despite several policy interventions made. Alcohol abuse on the part of males, cultural practices including patriarchal inheritance, abduction of girls for marriage, wife battering, low educational attainment and poor access, ownership, and control over resources among women are the causes of gender-based violence in the area. The study revealed that gender-based violence has negatively impacted the socio-economic well-being of women in the Jirapa area and threw their futures into jeopardy. The findings also show that the violence meted out to women in the study area negatively affected their socioeconomic well-being. The study concludes that the incidences of violence against women in the area are deeply rooted in the culture of the people and are regarded as a norm. It is recommended that stakeholders (chiefs, NGOs, and the Local Government Authority) create better access to resources and stem the tide of gender-based violence in the area. Enforcement of the law must also be done by the Ghana Police Service devoid of fear of reprisals or fervour.

### 1.0 Introduction

In recent years, there has been increased attention on the relationship between Violence Against Women (VAW), HIV/AIDS and livelihoods. The United Nation (2021) indicates that almost one in every three women suffer from physical or sexual violence from an intimate or non-intimate partner or both at least once in a lifetime. The most affected are women and girls above 15 years constituting 30 percent of their category and 737 million women and girls in absolute terms. Gender inequality, limited access and control over land, water, and other productive resources; lack of access to education and health services, food insecurity, conflict and displacement continue to fuel the vicious cycle of both VAW and low socioeconomic wellbeing of women. VAW and food insecurity have been noted to contribute directly and indirectly to vulnerability to diseases and low capacity to cope with infections. According to the World Health Organisation

(2021), the incidence of VAW has been reported to affect mostly the productive population groups (age 15 to 45) with its devastating impacts on agriculture and food security. The stigma associated with VAW leads to the victims being excluded from communal, economic, and social activities, and deprives them of most needed support. This leads most victims to adopt risky coping strategies such as commercial sex, especially those facing food and livelihood insecurity and humanitarian crises. This often leads to further erosion of the existing livelihood asset base and deepens further their state of vulnerability to violence and HIV as well as other STDs (United Nations, 2004). Violence against women emerged as a serious global health, human rights, and development issue. It is a symptom of underlying gender inequalities and power imbalances which knows no borders. It transcends the boundaries of geography, race, culture class and religion, hence affecting every community in any corner of the world. To address the menace, several strategies have been

employed by governments the world over and various pressure groups and civil sector organizations through the establishment of legal frameworks and interventions towards prevention, treatment, and enhancement of participation. These efforts notwithstanding, the scourge remains pervasive (Luckson, 2013). According to Lithur, (2012), Ghana made some efforts at addressing violence against women along with several other countries. This is evidenced by several amendments to existing laws, including aspects of the criminal code which prohibit female genital cutting, cruel widowhood rites and other traditional practices considered to be harmful to women. Other interventions include the enactment of the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560), Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732), the Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694), criminalization of cultural servitude (*Trokosi*) and the increase in the sentence for female genital cutting, the establishment of special gender base courts in Kumasi and Accra.

In the Jirapa Municipal area of the Upper West Region of Ghana, several measures are equally in place to reduce the menace of violence against women. Action aid Ghana in collaboration with the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the Department of Social Welfare formed, in not less than 30 communities, the Community-based Anti-violence Teams (COMBAT) who are charged to help in resolving and/or reporting cases of violence against women at the community level. This team was formed to reduce violence against women in the Municipality. Whilst women, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2021), constituted 52.9 percent of the total population of the Municipal area and are the active labour force in the food chain, they are mostly the victims of domestic violence. So, where women are deprived of having access to productive resources, low participation in decision-making, low levels of education and are the most neglected gender group, the economic output of the people is much affected as productivity is low leading to malnutrition of most women and children and the untimely death of some people. Ahenkorah (2021) also notes that there is a high incidence of violence against women in polygamous marriages while Adewale (2021) established that elements within polygamous marriages in Ghana tend to support violence against women and its accentuation.

Furthermore, in Ghana and the Jirapa Municipality to be precise, despite several efforts by the state and non-governmental agencies in tackling the Violence Against Women menace, it is still on the increase. From the Ghana Statistical Service (2015), the prevalent forms of Violence Against Women (VAW) and girls include Physical violence, Sexual violence, Economic violence, psychological violence, and Traditional practices which are harmful to children and women. In the cultural sense (among the Dagaaba) in the Jirapa Municipal area, much credence is given to male ownership of resources leaving their female counterparts relegated to the background, thereby depriving women of productive resources which could enhance their economic status and social standing. For instance, according to Aasoglenang et al. (2013), in most cultures in northern Ghana, which includes the Jirapa area, women traditionally

have no proprietary rights over land. Pappoe and Ardayfio (2012) noted that 72 percent of women suffer from many forms of violence at the hands of their husbands, close partners, and relatives. These, coupled with the patriarchal nature of the people further make women servants and subordinates other than their own masters. In the year 2004, Action Aid Ghana and its partners in the Jirapa area reported the following statistics on Violence Against Women in the area: 28 cases of physical abuse, 12 sexual abuse cases, 46 abducted schoolgirls who were put into forced marriage were reported and other cases. Buttressing the point, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) noted that on average, cases of violence against women reported in the Jirapa area in a year ranged from 20-33. Most of these cases were physical and sexually related. In 2014 official figures from DOVVSU indicated that out of the 184 cases of gender-based violence recorded by the region, 54 came from Jirapa alone. In 2015, the total number of cases for the region was 167 with 74 of them from Jirapa Municipality. Again, in 2016, it was 160 for the region and 34 cases for the Jirapa Municipality. The regional case count reached 337 in 2018, 463 by 2019 and reduced slightly to 384 in 2020.

The literature available suggests that there is a positive correlation between violence against women and their socioeconomic, mental, and physical well-being generally (GSS, 2015; Ahenkora, 2021; WHO, 2021; Adewale, 2021). This suggests that violence against women is linked to power relations where the powerful in society (men) deny the powerless (women) any right and power because women are not able to challenge the status quo due to the cultural construction of masculinity and femininity. However, how influential violence against women is on the socio-economic well-being of rural women, especially those in the Jirapa municipality received little or no empirical attention. This paper, therefore, seeks to unearth the nature of VAW in Jirapa, its drivers and how it affects their socioeconomic well-being. In the rest of the paper, we delve into the theoretical context and the materials and methods that were used in conducting the study. Next, we present and discuss our findings and conclude.

## 2.0 Theorizing violence against women

According to Patton and Renn, (2016), over the years, several major theories have been proposed to explain gender development. The theories differ on several important dimensions. One dimension concerns the relative emphasis placed on psychological, biological, and socio-structural determinants. Psychologically oriented theories tend to emphasize psychic processes governing gender development. In contrast, the sociological theories focus on socio-structural determinants of gender-role development and functioning, while biologically oriented theories focus on gender differences arising from the differential biological roles played by males and females in reproduction which underlie gender-role development and differentiation. The overarching theories that underpinned this study are the cultural spill-over theory (Lysova and Straus, 2021) extending to theories related to access and control over resources. According to the cultural spill-over theory, where legitimate

violence is used and is socially accepted, there is a tendency for such violence to be repeated in other communities. Indeed, social stratification in northern Ghana coupled with traditions has worked against women in such a way that over time, there have been male dominance in all spheres of life including access and control over major productive resources such as land. This situation tends to make women more subservient to men because the extent of broad-based acceptability of the rule of men over women makes women view the decisions of their male counterparts as always right even to their detriment thereby predisposing them to perpetual violence (Schwarz et al., 2019). Resources will not always be available in equal measure to all. Those who have less than what they require to survive will have to depend on other people to satisfy their needs. In instances where a particular person or groups of persons have more access and control over resources, their dependence on other people is reduced drastically which intend reduces competition and violent conflicts (Rossi, 2019; Brown et al., 2021), especially in the case against women (Eggers Del Campo and Steinert, 2020). The study relied on these two theories as guides.

equation. Bandura (1997) cited in Marshall (1999), argued that psychological violence is the emotional form of Violence Against Women, which is more harmful and has longer-lasting consequences than physical violence. Whereas physical and sexual violence produces physical results that are visible and can heal within the shortest possible time, psychological violence leaves long-term emotional suffering on the victim, which is very difficult to correct because any time the incident is recollected, the pain of the victim appears to her as if it was a fresh one. Conversely, political violence relates to the lack of opportunity for women to participate in decision-making at various levels of society; from the family level to the social group level, community and the workplace resulting from the construction and enactment of hegemonic masculinity (Pini, 2005).

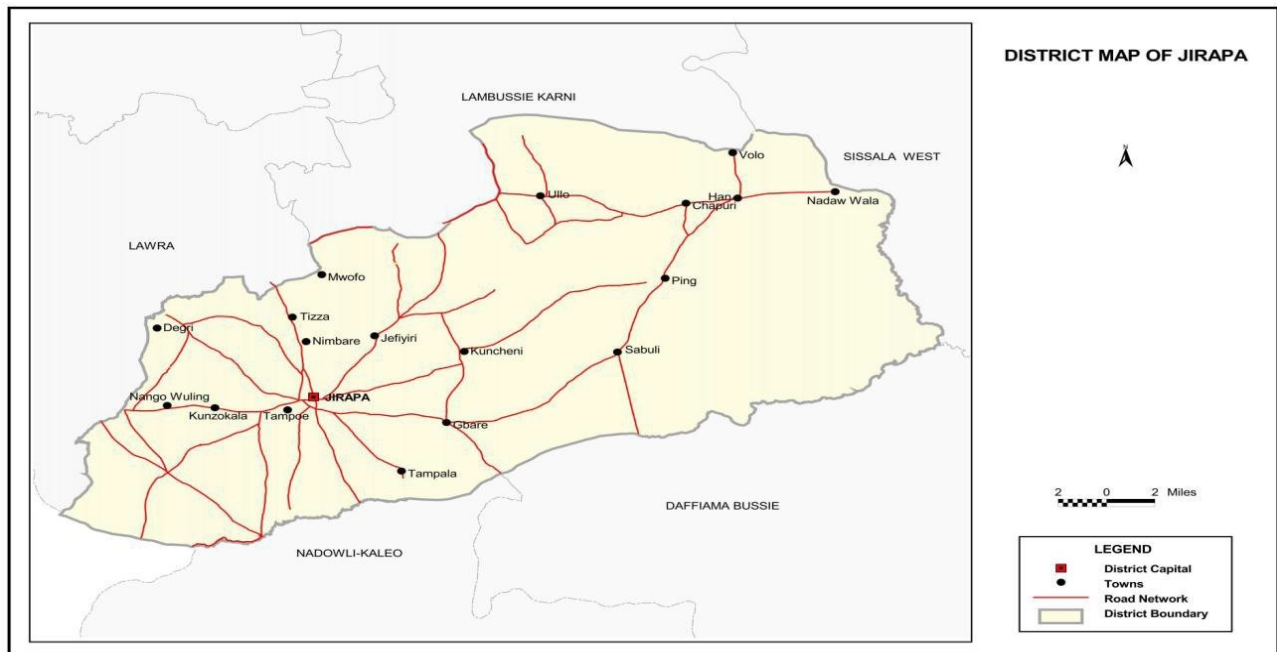


Figure 1. Location of Jirapa Municipal Area

## 2.1 Forms of gender-based violence

Four main forms of gender-based violence have been identified including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and political violence. Physical violence is the act of an intimate or a non-intimate partner or both inflicting physical pain and/or torture on an individual causing physical damage to the person (Kagou and Kamgno, 2015). While sexual violence is synonymous with assault (Allen, 2004). According to Kelly, (1998), sexual assault in most social circles takes place because of the power imbalance at play between both gender and the weaker side of the power play. In this instance, the woman, normally considered as the weaker side is at the receiving end of the

## 3.0 Research methodology

The Jirapa Municipality was chosen for this study. DOVVSU (2020) indicates that the incidence of violence against women was comparatively more pronounced in that area than in other districts of the Upper West Region. Even though no other district in the region experienced the same magnitude of interventions by civil society organizations towards combating the problem (ActionAid Ghana, 2019). Jirapa Municipality is located north of the Nadowli-Kaleo District, east of the Lawra Municipality and south of the Lambussie District (Figure 1). The area has a total population of 91,279 people with 48,258 females representing 52.9% and 43,021 males representing 47.1% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

### 3.1 Research design

The study employed the exploratory sequential mixed-method research design. This design was most appropriate because it enabled a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in collecting data to achieve the fundamental objectives of the study. More so, with the deep-seated nature of Violence Against Women concerning culture and geography, the mixed methods approach was very suitable as it created space for qualitative in-depth investigations while quantitatively explaining the linkage of the research problem with the well-being of the victims of violence.

### 3.2 Target population and sampling

Participants of the study included victims of Violence Against Women, the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the Social Welfare Department and relevant Non-Governmental Organizations in the area including Action Aid Ghana (AAG) and its partner Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD). Some community chiefs and elders, Health workers and the Gender Desk Officer of the Ghana Education Service were also selected. The primary respondents were victims of VAW. These included victims of abduction, victims in cases relating to widowhood inheritance, economic violence and women abused by alcoholics. The respondents were purposively selected and interviewed in-depth, depending on the issue at stake. A sample frame for the primary respondents was obtained from DOVVSU and other collaborators as well as the Community Based Anti-Violence Team (COMBAT) from which the lottery method was used in sampling them. The sample for each community was based on the population size of the community as well as the number of cases it recorded. Purposive sampling was used in the targeting of institutions working on issues of Violence Against Women in the Jirapa Municipal area. To facilitate access to the victims of Violence Against Women, a multistage sampling technique was adopted. Thirty communities fell within the list of 297 Victims of VAW data available. This constituted the sample frame at the community level, out of which seven communities were randomly selected. Preliminary investigations revealed that these communities selected had some community volunteer groups working in collaboration with government institutions to address the problems of Violence Against Women in the communities. A total of 142 cases were sampled and constituted the sample size derived from the sample frame of the primary respondents. Proportionate quota sampling was applied in distributing the sampled respondents to the seven communities. The house addresses of the victims in the seven respective communities were obtained from the volunteer groups, which facilitated the process of locating them (Table 1). The rest of the participants of the study were purposively selected based on the depth of knowledge they possess on the subject matter of the study.

**Table 1: Distribution of sampled respondents**

Community	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Tizza	35	25
Tampaala	27	19
Gbare	16	11
Sigri	14	10
Ulkpong	18	13
Zenpeni	20	14
Kogri	12	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Other Respondents:</b>		
Chiefs & elders	7	43.8
DOVVSU	1	6.3
CHRAJ	1	6.3
Social Welfare Ghana	1	6.3
Education Service	1	6.3
Ghana Health Service	3	18.8
Civil Society Organizations	2	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.3 Tools and methods used

The data collection methods that were employed included semi-structured questionnaire administration, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews. Officials of CHRAJ, social welfare, Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) were the key informants interviewed to solicit supporting information of technical nature to corroborate the data obtained from the Victims of Violence Against Women, who constituted the primary respondents. Several in-depth interviews were conducted with some of the victims to solicit more information. The semi-structured questionnaire was employed in obtaining responses from the sampled victims of violence against largely illiterate women. This offered us the opportunity to explain the questions to the respondents in their local dialect given their low level of education.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The data collected were sorted manually and checked for inconsistencies and completeness. The data were then analysed using SPSS version 20. In the quantitative methods, a Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) analysis was employed in examining the relationship between VAW and the socioeconomic well-being of the victims. This allowed testing the statistical significance of the variables to measure the extent to which Violence Against Women influences the socioeconomic well-being of rural women in the study area. The analysis was done using education, health, economic development, and political participation as the indicators of socioeconomic well-being measured against Violence Against Women. The null hypothesis was that Violence Against Women does not affect the socio-economic well-being of women in Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region, Ghana.

The model used is as follows:

$$\sum_{i=1}^k \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

Where:  $E_{ij}$  is the expected frequency of the cell in row  $i$  and column  $j$  and  $n$  is the sampled population.

$$E_{ij} = \frac{(\text{Row } i \text{ total}) \times (\text{column } j \text{ total})}{n}$$

The degree of freedom (df) =  $v = (r - 1) (c - 1)$  but from the table,  $r = 3$  and  $c = 4$

$df = (3 - 1) (4 - 1) = (2) (3) = 6$ . The confidence level was 0.95 while  $\chi^2$  was critical at 12.6.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

The study sought the consent of the respondents by allowing them to fill out an informed consent form. The aim/purpose of the research was disclosed in this form as well as issues of confidentiality regarding personal details in the research. Also, nothing material was given to the respondents to induce their responses to questions while allowing them to choose either to respond or not to respond. In the case of the institutions concerned, letters were written to the heads of the departments seeking their permission to interview their staff and they were only interviewed after clearance was given.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Demographic information of respondents

The background information of the respondents included but was not limited to the following: the age and sex distribution of the primary respondents, their educational background, household size, occupation, and income status, ethnicity, and religion (Table 2).

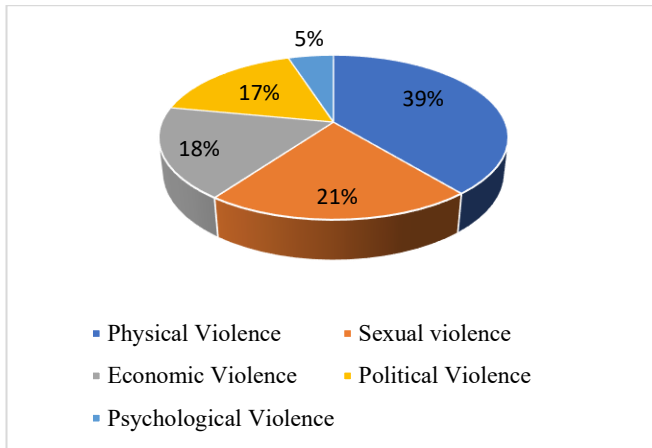
**Table 2: Demographic information on victims of VAW**

Characteristic	Frequencies	Percentages
<b>Age</b>		
15 – 25	17	12
26 – 35	98	69
36 – 45	27	19
<b>Total</b>	142	100
<b>Educational status</b>		
No formal education	99	69.72
Secondary education	35	24.65
Primary education	8	5.63
<b>Total</b>	142	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	132	93
Trading	10	7
<b>Total</b>	142	100
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Dagaaba	133	94
Others	9	6
<b>Total</b>	142	100
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	125	88
Islam	3	2
African traditional religion	14	10
<b>Total</b>	142	100

The household size of the respondents ranged from 5 to a maximum of 13 people. This gives an average household size of 9 people. Our interaction with the victims of Violence against Women showed that most of the household heads were males. In the absence of the father, the senior son was regarded as the household head. The women indicated that women only become the head of the household if the man is deceased and there is no adult male child in the household.

### 4.2 Forms of violence against women in the Jirapa Municipality

Out of the 142 victims of violence against women, 39 percent noted that they have suffered from physical violence, 21 percent reported sexual violence, 18 percent mentioned economic violence, and 17 percent reported political violence. The least of the respondents (5 percent) indicated that they have suffered from psychological violence (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Incidence of violence against women in Jirapa**

Confirming the findings from the women victims, the District Directors of CHRAJ, Social Welfare and the District Commander of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) gave statistics of violence on gender lines in the Municipality along the forms identified in Table 3. It was also confirmed that, among the reported cases of violence against women, physical violence was the highest while psychological violence was the least. The reasons given were that the reported cases of Violence Against Women were only physical and sexual violence. However, mostly, sexual violence cases are concealed and resolved at the community level without the knowledge of DOVVSU or CHIRAJ because the community leaders knew that the offenders were likely to face a jail term.

#### 4.3 Drivers of violence against women

Several factors drive violence against women in the Jirapa area. These drivers vary concerning the location of the individual, social and economic circumstances as well as culture. From the study, 60 percent of female victims of VAW cited traditional and cultural practices relating to marriage as the main drivers of the violence that they experienced from males in their households or families. Also, 35 percent of the victims noted drunkenness on the part of their male counterparts while only 5 percent of the respondents attributed violence towards them to their poverty status. According to some of the chiefs and elders interviewed, the traditional marriage practices among the Dagaaba, where women are taken by their prospective husbands on market days and the traditional marriage ceremony done afterwards are now being misapplied. Young girls of school-going age are now taken out of schools as wives, which is criminalized under the Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732).

To DOVVSU, the factors propelling violence against women are not different from those mentioned earlier. However, there was little difference in the rankings because, to them, most of the cases that come forth are always cases of abuse by alcoholics. On this score the highest factor influencing Violence Against Women according to DOVVSU is alcoholism. The difference is reconciled in the sense that, to them, not all cases are reported, especially issues of tradition and culture are normally handled by the chiefs and the farthest such incidents may travel is the District House of Chiefs. This

explains the difference in the rankings of the victims and the response from DOVVSU.

A girl abducted for marriage from Jirapa Tappaala but rescued by the Community-based Anti-violence team (COMBAT) narrated her ordeal:

*"... it was a market day in our neighbouring community, I visited the market and later in the evening, I was returning home, three boys, whom I knew very well, met me and offered me a lift on a motorbike. I declined the offer, but they insisted. They rode to a local 'pito' drinking spot where we took some 'pito'. Later, we took off from the spot and halfway through our journey, the motor stopped. There was no one or any on - coming vehicles. By then, it was already getting dark. The boys' community was nearby so, they asked that we should go there and take a rest while they call my parents to send someone for me. Little did I know that they were taking me as a wife. I went with them, and they detained me for three days in the house of one of them, who was said to have taken me as his wife. I was forced to perform the wifely duties in the night for the three nights that I spent with him. Due to the intervention of COMBAT, I was rescued afterwards. I heard that they were fined to pay Ghc600 as compensation. This fine has since been instituted as a law in the community to guard against the abduction of girls. I wish to recommend to the chiefs and elders in the community that the punishment is not deterrent enough so the perpetrators should be handed over to the police for imprisonment" (In-depth Interview, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021).*

While a majority (60 percent) of the respondents stated that, the tradition was the leading factor influencing violence against women, 35 percent of them also indicated that alcoholism to them has been the main factor influencing violence against women. To them any time they are subjected to any form of violence, the perpetrators (husbands) are always drunk. Where they are not drunk, the violent nature of the partner does not surface in their homes.

Hence, to them, the only source of violence against women in the Jirapa municipality is alcoholism among the men. So, if that is addressed, it will go a long way to reduce the recorded cases of violence. This assertion was corroborated by the Social Welfare Department, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service as in almost all the cases brought to their attention in one way or the other always have the perpetrators drunk. This attitude of the men cannot be separated from the traditional beliefs of the people which makes the men think that women once married become the property of their husbands, who can command them left- right and centre (Nukunye, 2008). Most alcoholics, as the respondents indicated, are perpetrators of physical violence and a hand full of them are involved in other forms of violence against women. One of the victims abused by an alcoholic had this to say when interviewed:

*"His attitude always changes when he goes out with friends and returns home drunk. You dare not talk to*

him about anything. If you do, you are doing that at your own risk. Sometimes I cannot even ask for money for food for the house and the children must sleep in hunger. There were a few instances in that I received some beatings because I asked for some food for the children. It took the intervention of COMBAT to resolve the issue and brought us back together. After he beat me, I left him and went to my father's house. Why should I remain married to a man who will always have me beaten at the least provocation, whenever he is drunk?" (In-depth interview, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021).

The statement above is one of several testimonies received from the interviews conducted with the victims of VAW as confirmed by DOVVSU as well as CHRAJ in the Jirapa Municipality. The above, however, relates to drunkenness as a driver of violence against women. The violence perpetuated under the influence of alcohol is mostly sexual or physical. Physical violence, according to DOVVSU, is manifested more than sexual violence; even though some cases of sexual harassment finally end up in a form of physical violence.

Again, according to a woman interviewee:

"When I was a child and lived in my father's house growing to an adolescent girl, all I had to do was to follow my mother to my father's farm and where my mother wanted to farm, she had to do intercropping. I never got any opportunity to farm in my father's house just like my mother who was said to be a 'stranger'. If my mother was treated this way because she was considered a stranger, what about me, who was also prevented from farming on my father's lands? Now that I am married, I am also going through what my mother went through in my father's house. Just like any other woman in this village, I am regarded as a 'stranger'. This makes us strangers in both our fathers' houses and in our husbands' houses" (In-depth interview, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2021).

The interviewee in her passionate narration revealed how women are marginalized economically in the study area. This is more pronounced especially in the ownership of land as an economic resource for farming and other farm-related activities. This singular act contravenes the UN 1957 convention on the right of married women as well as the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW 1979).

Furthermore, the Girls' Desk Officer of the Ghana Education Service of the Jirapa Municipal area stated that most families are forced to pull their children out of school because of their inability to support their basic needs (school uniform, books, and other supporting materials). The education of the girl-child is worse, as the need for sanitary pads becomes paramount to avoid being humiliated in class. The victims of violence against women confirmed this statement while explaining that all this is happening because what the men can provide is not even adequate for feeding the household, especially once the woman is left with no land to engage in any serious production to earn additional income to support the family. Out of the 142 victims of violence against women who participated in this study, 24 percent of

them noted that their experiences of violence impacted negatively on their education, 37 percent mentioned impacts on their health, 28 percent noted that it affected their access and control over resources while 11 percent of them complained that it impacted negatively on their political participation and decision-making.

#### 4.4 Gender-based violence and socio-economic wellbeing of the victims

Using the Chi-square analysis, a relationship between gender-based violence and the socio-economic well-being of victims has been established. Education, health, economic development, and political participation were the indicators of socioeconomic well-being measured against Violence Against Women in the Jirapa Municipal area. The null hypothesis was that: *Violence Against Women does not affect their socioeconomic well-being in the Jirapa Municipal area of the Upper West Region*. The Chi-square analysis was done using a sample population of one hundred and forty-two (142) respondents (Table 3).

**Table 3: Chi-square rankings**

Socio-economic indicator	Ranking			Total
	High	Low	Indifferent	
<b>Health</b>	13 (15.7)	11 (10.9)	12 (9.4)	36
<b>Education</b>	17 (17.0)	10 (11.8)	12 (4)	39
<b>Economic development</b>	21 (17.9)	13 (12.4)	7 (10.7)	41
<b>Political participation</b>	11 (11.4)	9 (7.9)	6 (6.8)	26
<b>Total</b>	62	43	37	142

Since the Chi-square value is 19.5474 ( $\chi^2 = 19.5474$ ), the hypothesis is rejected indicating that Violence Against Women influences or affects the socio-economic well-being of women in the Jirapa area of the Upper West Region. This means that the state of socio-economic well-being of women in the area today is attributable to the violence that is perpetrated against them by their male counterparts including their husbands, close partners, and relatives.

Inferring from the results, the outcome of the research is in line with the cultural spill over theory (Lysova and Straus, 2021) as many of the violence recorded are seen to have been normalized by society. This is more pronounced with economic and sexual violence as a society seems not to prescribe much punishment against the perpetrators.

#### 5.0 Discussion

Age is an important determinant of the kind of violence a

woman suffers from the hands of close relations. According to the women, more of those between the ages of 25-35 years suffer a lot more physical (Kagou and Kamgno, 2015), economic (Pini, 2005) and political violence (Bandura, 1997 as cited in Marshall, 1999) perpetrated by their husbands or intimate close relations. From the narration of the women, it is difficult separating the occurrence of these forms of violence. Economically, the affected age group constitutes the active labour force in need of basic productive resources such as land. This deprivation stems from the prevailing patrilineal land tenure arrangements which completely diminishes their chances of income generation and economic empowerment and by extension their exclusion in major decision-making processes. This further accentuates the skewed power relations and the tendency for broad-based acceptance of the status quo (Schwarz et al. 2019). Thus, gender violence in the study area is much more complex than it is perceived by others who have not experienced it.

Violence against women in the community is manifestly reinforced by the existing cultural undercurrents such as payment of the bride price, which by the culture entitles the husband to do as he wishes with the woman he married (Lysova and Straus, 2021). Where persistent demands are made for land, physical abuse is the result because the culture does not emphasise women ownership of land (Aasoglenang, et al., 2014), especially where they are less enlightened through various forms of exposure including education. More so, more sexual violence (Allen, 2004) is visited by women due to the misapplication of traditional marriage practices. The spate of sexual violence in the area is on the ascendancy under the guise of the indigenous marriage culture. More young girls are abducted and sexually assaulted leading to increased incidences of teenage pregnancy and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) over the years. Incidentally, this situation in Jirapa has no links to the polygamous status of many of such perpetrators who are slightly older than the abductees and are yet to marry. This is at variance with the reportage of Ahenkorah (2021), who noted that the polygamous status of men in Africa is an explanatory factor for the perpetration of violent acts against women.

The findings show that the level of education of a woman has a direct bearing on her pre-disposition to violence. This is because most of the victims were persons who have either never been to school or dropped out of school leading them into choosing life partners either accidentally or forced into unplanned marriage. According to some of the women interviewed, their education was cut short due to the in-school violence they had to face from colleagues and male teachers alike. While some stopped schooling due to pregnancy, others had to drop out due to lack of funding. After all, they could not bear the pressure visited on them and the physical punishment meted out to them because they refused male advances. It is even more worrying when the woman has not had any form of formal education. The study suggested that there is a direct correlation between the level of education of a woman and her exposure to violence of any kind. Study participants, especially key informants, lamented that the situation of the victims of VAW would have been otherwise, if they were educated because on that count, they would have been placed in better stead to assert their positions or

negotiate better with their husbands or better still acquire their lands, perhaps outside the Jirapa Municipality for productive work. Hence, the higher the level of education of a woman, the less prone she is to violence of any form from any man. More especially when it comes to political violence, most women who fall, victim, were uneducated. Five of the women who were interviewed were members of the Municipal Assembly and had all received secondary education and those women who were economically empowered had in one way or the other experienced some level of formal education. Moreover, in the selection of queen mothers in specific clans, educated women are now preferred over non-educated women, according to the respondents. These findings confirm Itegi and Njuguna (2013), who observed that on the academic ladder, women are always at the bottom compared to their male counterparts, which widens the inequality gap thereby making women more vulnerable and susceptible to violence from men. This low level of education in the long run serves as a weakness on the side of women as they are less empowered to match with men.

The findings also revealed that economic empowerment reduces the chances of women facing any form of violence from close relations. All the women interacted with indicated that they were into farming which is their main economic activity. Some of the primary study participants who were privileged to have had other minor economic activities indicated that they were very comfortable living with their partners and less prone to any form of violence. They further indicated that, even though they do not get to inherit any family land for farming, they were able to acquire their lands for farming from people who were willing to sell their lands out. Furthermore, they are mostly consulted by their husbands in the house before major family decisions are made because whoever wields economic power in the house, is revered. On the contrary, most of the women who had no additional skill to engage in any extra income-generating activity besides farming were those who said they were most prone to all forms of violence, more especially physical, economic, and political violence. This category of women indicated that their inability to earn an adequate income from their farming because of its subsistence nature and lack additional income generation activities experienced deeper dimensions of inequality and poverty leaving them in the subordinating position in the family.

This is a clear indication that ownership and control over productive resources and being economically empowered have the tendency of reducing Violence Against Women in the Jirapa District. Where women are given the freedom to choose what to produce, where to produce and how to produce, they stand a better chance of being empowered economically thereby reducing their vulnerability to violence from male partners. However, Aasoglenang et al. (2013) revealed that the gender gap between men and women affects women in the agriculture sector, not only in terms of the output level but the sustainability of agriculture production as well. This is because the women are not able to carry out long-term investments to enhance soil fertility, because of the status of ownership of the lands on which they cultivate, even if they had access to credit. This is in synchrony with Mehra (2008), who noted that women are only able to access one



percent of credit in the agricultural sector and this adds to their vulnerability to economic violence.

Ethnicity lends itself to various practices in any given geographical location in Ghana and the Jirapa is no exception. Women in this part of the region are exposed to economic violence in terms of ownership and utilization of land for economic purposes due largely to the land tenure system among the Dagaaba where women have no hereditary rights over customary lands. This is grounded in Dery and Diedong (2010) and Aasoglenang, et al. (2014). Again, some marriage practices that are customarily allowed are being abused in the Jirapa area leading to the abduction of girls of school-going age for marriage in contravention of the laws of Ghana, particularly the Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Lithur, 2012) and international child rights laws. The practice of abduction of girls for marriage in Jirapa constitutes an obnoxious marriage practice. This, in addition to alcoholism, the prevailing dowry system and the patriarchy contribute to the abuse of girls and women sexually thereby negatively impacting their development prospects. Jirapa Municipal area is predominantly a Christian and some of the social activities are governed by the Christian faith as indicated by the respondents. Men in the communities are automatic family heads as enshrined in the teachings of the three main religions. This implies that women are expected to be submissive to their male partners. This form of socialization and orientation tends comparatively to project the men to higher heights at the expense of the women. This, according to the women victims of violence, becomes a license ordained by culture for violence to be perpetuated against the weaker sex (females). This is a common feature of a polarized patriarchal society, such as Jirapa.

The victims of violence gave a clear indication that the commonest form of Violence Against Women is physical violence while the least of them all is psychological violence. It must be noted that the responses were given per the experiences of the respondents regarding the kind of violence they had ever suffered. Psychological violence was regarded to be low because the respondents had a hard time drawing a definite conclusion about it. This is because the manifestations of psychological violence are not normally readily visible unless the situation is protracted. Inferring from the above, if the saying that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation is anything to go by, with the high incidence of physical violence which ultimately culminates into permanent or temporary disability, it reduces productivity, as the health of victims deteriorates and makes increased output or crop yield impossible. Socially, the reputation of the victim of physical violence is damaged because of the form of disability she suffered. This affects her educational carrier and political ambitions.

Socioeconomic well-being of women is dependent on their educational outcomes, the extent of their ability to participate in decision-making and politics as well as within the economic realms of their existence. However, given the rate of violence against women in Jirapa, efforts to develop women socio-economically might remain a dream, if not a myth, unless steps are taken to address this social canker (Violence Against Women). Affirming these findings, the

Municipal Directors of CHRAJ, Social Welfare and the District Commander DOVVSU gave statistics of violence on gender lines in the area. It was also confirmed that, among the reported cases of violence against women, physical violence was the highest while psychological violence was the least. The reasons given for this situation were that the reported cases of violence against women are only physical and sexual violence but more of the physical violence cases are brought forth for resolution while most cases of sexual violence are concealed and resolved at the community level without the knowledge of DOVVSU or CHIRAJ because of the fear that the offender is likely to face a jail term. In addition, being a religious community, most people shy away from any public discussion on matters of sexual nature.

It has been discovered that traditional practices during the marriage process (the dowry system) make the men think that the women, who they seek to marry have become commodities on sale and once they marry her, she has become their property. This statement is grounded in Nukonye (2008). Related findings of the study regarding marriage processes confirmed reports in previous studies including Ahenkorah (2021), Adewale (2021) and Poudel (2011), who said among others that socio-cultural factors such as poverty, social inequality and inadequate social support are some of the contributing factors that combine to determine the magnitude and seriousness of Violence Against Women. This study affirmed Ankrah (2020), who stated that access to resources such as land, credit, technical know-how, and technology transfer is strongly determined along gender lines with men having disproportionate access to resources than women. Furthermore, FAO (2010) and Aasoglenang et al. (2013) intimated that women are more into production, processing, and distribution than men but unfair to them is the accessibility to land for farming through their parents and brothers when not married and their husbands' farms when married. The case of women in Jirapa demonstrates the level of unfairness in terms of accessibility, ownership and control of resources, especially cultivable land because of double patriarchal discrimination before and after marriage. This affirms Mehra and Rojas (2008), who said that women in agriculture are only able to access one percent of agriculture credit while the remaining went to men in the agriculture value chain.

The victims of gender-based violence in Jirapa, the majority of whom were agrarians noted with concern how they are restricted to cultivating only groundnuts, soya beans and beans because, any other crop besides these either requires the person to apply fertilizer or use the service of a tractor, which are not easily available for them. After harvest, whilst the men are allowed to sell more than half of their farm produce, the little that is harvested by the women is stored for household consumption. This affected the women in their efforts to move out of poverty thereby deepening their economic violence and widening the inequality gap and their continuous subordination to men. This revelation goes contrary to the united nation declaration of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1979 as a human right (CEDAW).

## 6.0 Conclusion

The paper set out to investigate the nature of violence against women in the Jirapa Municipality, which recorded the highest number of cases in the Upper West Region in 2020. The study adopted an exploratory sequential mixed-method research design and sampled 142 victims of violence against women in the area out of 297 reported cases. It is clear from the results that violence against women in the Jirapa area has been an affront to the socio-economic well-being of women, who dominate the Municipality's population. The study found that even though several efforts have been made to address the situation of gender-based violence, it keeps worsening as males in the area get more economically empowered and engage in excessive alcoholism and flagrantly abuse the rights of girls of school-going age and women generally. The study also revealed that gender-based violence in the area is multifaceted and deeply engrained in the prevailing culture. This made the problem intractable for a long time, despite the efforts to address it so far.

If strenuous efforts are made by local government authorities, through the creation of opportunities for women to gain better access to productive resources, it will enhance their livelihood activities, and increase their income levels and economic well-being. An intensive public education using role plays and drama in the local dialects at the community level and through the local mass media is also required so that the whole municipality comes to terms with the problem. This can lead to positive out-turns, where women and girls would be rated as equals of men and boys in terms of access and control over opportunities and productive resources in the development process. Law enforcement agencies could also step-up enforcement of the law in concert with the traditional authorities. The chieftaincy institution of the area needs to ensure that deliberate actions are taken towards refining cultural practices that relegate women to the background in the Jirapa Municipality. We are upbeat that when these suggestions are adopted, violence against women in Jirapa will be extensively addressed, the future of women in the area will become brighter while the Municipality will transform into a reference point for others to learn from and make violence against women history in Ghana. We recommend further studies concerning the emergence of queen mothers "Pogna mine" as a new creation in the patriarchal system of the Jirapa chieftaincy institution.

## 7.0 References

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## 8.0 Appendix: Chi-square analysis

$$\sum_{i=1}^k = \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

Where: Eij is the expected frequency of the cell in row i and column j and n is the sampled population.

$$E_{ij} = \frac{(\text{Row I total}) \times (\text{column j total})}{n}$$

The degree of freedom (df) = v = (r - 1) (c-1) but from the table, r = 3 and c = 4

df = (3-1) (4-1) = (2) (3) = 6. The confidence level was 0.95 while  $\chi^2$  was critical at 12.6.

$$E_{11} = \frac{36 \times 62}{142} = 15.7, E_{12} = \frac{36 \times 43}{142} = 10.9, E_{13} = \frac{36 \times 37}{142} = 9.4,$$

$$E_{21} = \frac{39 \times 62}{142} = 17.0, E_{22} = \frac{39 \times 43}{142} = 11.8, E_{23} = \frac{39 \times 37}{142} = 10.1$$

$$E_{31} = \frac{41 \times 62}{142} = 17.9, E_{32} = \frac{41 \times 43}{142} = 12.4, E_{33} = \frac{41 \times 37}{142} = 10.7$$

$$E_{41} = \frac{26 \times 62}{142} = 11.4, E_{42} = \frac{26 \times 43}{142} = 7.9, E_{43} = \frac{26 \times 37}{142} = 6.8$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(13-15.7)^2}{15.7} + \frac{(11-10.9)^2}{10.9} + \frac{(12-9.4)^2}{9.4} + \frac{(17-17)^2}{17} + \frac{(10-11.8)^2}{11.8} + \frac{(12-4)^2}{4} + \frac{(21-17.9)^2}{17.9} + \frac{(3-12.4)^2}{12.4} + \frac{(7-10.7)^2}{10.7} + \frac{(11-11.4)^2}{11.4} + \frac{(9-7.9)^2}{7.9} + \frac{(6-6.8)^2}{6.8}$$

$$\chi^2 = 0.4464 + 0.0009 + 0.7191 + 0.2746 + 16 + 0.5369 + 0.0290 + 1.2794 + 0.0140 + 0.1531 + 0.0941$$

$$\chi^2 = 19$$