

**KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK**

**KNUST**

**A STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED BROTHEL-BASED  
SEX WORKERS IN KUMASI**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND  
SOCIAL WORK, KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE AWARD OF  
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the M.A and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any institutio except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is proudly dedicated to my mother, **MADAM AGARTHA NKRUMAH.**

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Glory be to God first and foremost. Various personalities contributed in diverse ways towards the success of this thesis, to whom I am most grateful. I wholeheartedly appreciate the invaluable contributions of my supervisors, Dr. Kwaku Yeboah and Ms. Harriet Takyi of the College of Art and Social Sciences. Their insightful suggestions and comments helped to give the needed shape and substance to the thesis. I am also thankful to them for inspiring me and enhancing my academic training and capacity through their guidance and supportive roles.

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the lived experiences of selected sex workers in the Kumasi, in order to understand their overall experiences beginning from their childhood right through to adulthood, including their pathways into sex work and their experiences while living as sex workers. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the six participants in this study. The main tool for the data collection was the interview guide and the interview was recorded on a tape recorder to aid the transcription and analysis of the data. The interview guide contained information on the Socio-demographic profile of the sex workers, how she came to experience prostitution and what prostitution means to her in general. Among the key finding from the study included their exhibition of high knowledge of STIs and their unyielding determination to avoid contracting STDs through the non-negotiable insistence on condom use with their clients. However, 5 out of 6 participants in the study admitted a widespread incidence of condoms rupturing in their encounters or in the course of servicing the clients, thus putting them at risk of contracting STDs, the very risks they intended to avoid. In the light of this finding among others, a number of recommendations were made. A call on the government and other stakeholders to embark on rescue campaign to facilitate the exiting of many of the sex workers who wish to stop the work, was passionately made, in the light of the revelations which suggested that sex work was inherently harmful and also against the backdrop of the participants' indication that prostituting was only transient and a means



to accumulate capital to do start a legitimate business and then exit. The government can capitalise on this to meet such basic needs in order to rescue and properly integrate them into the society.

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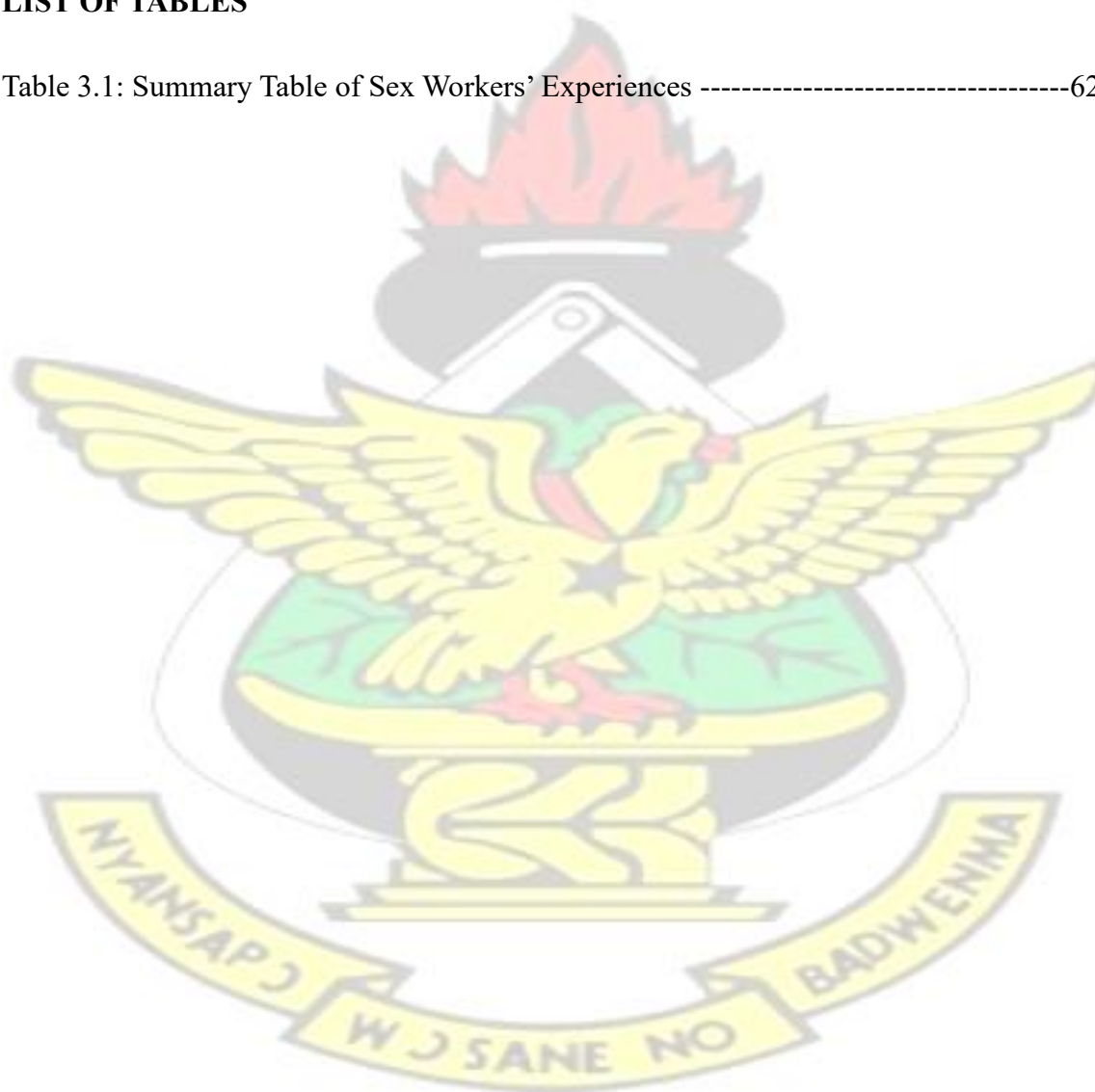


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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Prostitution is arguably one of the oldest human service professions. It is believed to have existed with us since the beginning of time (Cloud, 2000). Since time immemorial, man has felt the need to pay for services of a sexual nature, and prostitutes in our society have met the desire of men to satisfy their sexual cravings. They have offered sexual services to persons who are in need of companionship, for instance, travellers, tourist, visitors etc (Carr, 1995). Against this background, some social scientists have defined the predatory behaviours of men buying women in prostitution as normal, maintaining that prostitution is simply part of human nature (Ahmad, 2001; Fisher, 1992; Pheterson, 1996; Scambler & Scambler, 1995). This definition of normalcy is reflected in public policy that defines prostitution as a form of labour (sex work), where prostitution is considered an unpleasant job but not different from other kinds of unpleasant jobs, such as factory work. Prostituted women have been viewed as simply another category of workers with special problems and needs (Kinnell, 2001; Nairne, 2000). In line with the view of prostitution as work, the World Health Organization (WHO) has also defined prostitution as a dynamic and adaptive process that involves a transaction between seller and buyer of a sexual service (World Health Organization, 1988). Following this, WHO has recommended decriminalization of prostitution (Ahmad, 2001). Much of the health sciences literature has also viewed prostitution as a job choice (Deren, 1996; Farr, Castro, DiSantostefano, Claassen, & Olguin, 1996; Green, 1993; Romans, Potter, Martin, & Herbison, 2001; UN/AIDS, 2002). In actual fact, a large number of individuals make a living prostituting, as documented in

research studies in which the participants in the studies recognized prostitution as their work (e.g., Jackson, Bennett, & Sowinski, 2007; Kong, 2006; Thomson, Harred, & Burks, 2003).

Notwithstanding, It is not easy to find data regarding the scale of the prostitution market. Due to its illicit nature, the market is very opaque; debates and political decision with regards to the phenomenon are based on estimations. According to Havocscope estimates, prostitution generates around \$186.00 billion revenue worldwide, in just a year (<http://www.havocscope.com/prostitution-revenue-by-country>). In Germany, the trade union, Verdi puts the figure in a region of €14.5 billion per year nationally, and in the Netherlands the numbers range between €400 and €600 million and in Spain around €18 billion per year. (Speigel, 2013).

A report published in 2012 by Fondation Scelles asserts that prostitution is a global phenomenon and involves around 40-42 million people of which 90% are dependent on a procurer. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of them are between 13 and 25 years old. The prostitution market is a highly globalized and “industrialized” phenomenon where millions of women and children from deprived backgrounds all over the world are bought and sold by criminal circles to macro brothels which can exploit hundreds of victims at once (The Independent, 2010). Given its purported lucrative nature, it readily presents itself as a viable occupational option which provides livelihood to a segment of women in society who otherwise would have remained unemployed with no source of income.

As to whether prostitution can be defined as an occupation is a moot point. According to

Farley (1998), the notion that prostitution is work rather tends to make its harm invisible. “At best, prostitution might be called a means of survival, that is, if you want a place to sleep, food to eat and a way to get off the street, for a short time, then you have to allow yourself to be sexually assaulted. Whilst it is called the ‘oldest profession’, prostitution has rarely been treated as a profession by researchers; in the last two centuries, prostitution has instead been considered indicative of a host of pejorative afflictions - mental illness, deviancy, nymphomania, criminal minds, satanically influences, laziness and immorality. For the last 4,000 years, sex workers have been one of the most stigmatised and maligned figures in society (Church, 2003).

Sex workers are among those who are most vulnerable to STIs especially HIV infection in the world today. A Ghana AIDS Commission (2004) report states that among persons infected with sexually transmitted infections, the prevalence rate [of HIV] is estimated to be 76% and 82% among commercial sex workers in Accra and Kumasi respectively (Ghana Aids Commission, 2004). Many women in sex work also experience violence on the streets, on the job or in their personal lives, which increases their vulnerability to HIV and other health concerns. Sex workers, particularly those who work on the streets have often reported beaten, threatened with a weapon, slashed, choked, raped and coerced into sex (Mugugunyeki, 2014). The violence perpetrated against sex workers is a manifestation of the general stigma and discrimination experienced by sex workers.

In addition to being a highly stigmatized profession, sex workers have also been subjected to blame, labelling, disapproval and discriminatory treatment. To compound their problems, laws governing prostitution and law enforcement authorities have also played a key role in the violence experienced by sex workers. This is because in most countries, sex



work is either illegal or has an ambiguous legal status (e.g. prostitution is not illegal, but procurement of sex workers and soliciting in public is illegal). Sex workers, therefore, become easy targets for harassment and violence for several reasons. They are considered immoral and deserving of punishment. This criminalization of sex work contributes to an environment in which, violence against sex workers is tolerated, leaving them less likely to be protected from it. Consequently, many sex workers consider violence "normal" or "part of the job" and do not have information about their rights. Thus, they are often reluctant to report incidences of rapes, attempted (or actual) murders, beatings, molestation or sexual assault to the authorities. Even when they do report, their claims are often dismissed (W.H.O, 2005).

It has often been argued that legalising or decriminalising sex work would be beneficial to society by contributing to effort at curbing the HIV epidemic, and also because it would allow governments to monitor and regulate the sex trade. Through legalization, it is argued that sex workers could be empowered to negotiate condom use, improve their access to public services, and give them protection from violence and abuse. In an environment where sex workers are criminalised, they usually become difficult to reach or are unwilling to cooperate due to the fear of arrest. Thus, by removing legal restrictions, HIV prevention campaigns could arguably be carried out much more effectively. (<http://www.avert.org/sex-workers-and-hiv-aids.htm>). The counter argument to this debate, however, has been that legalisation of sex work would rather increase the number of individuals who enter sex work, and the demand for sex work. Another problem cited against legalization is that, even in countries where sex work is legal, such as the Netherlands and Australia, there are still sex workers who do not register with authorities,

and operate 'on the street', are therefore beyond the reach of HIV prevention campaigns.(Schulze, Canto, Mason, & Skalin, 2014).

High remuneration is said to be the main driving force of prostitution. In other words, prostitution is, relatively, an easy means to earn and save money, which could be invested in other activities. Indeed, many have remained in it because of the economic benefit rather than any other reason. Poverty and limited economic opportunities, in particular for women and young people, are key factors in entering sex work, either willingly or through coercion (Bindman & Doezeema, 1997). While some individuals choose sex work even though they have other equally profitable options, the vast majority have few other income sources, often because their education and marketable skills are limited. Individuals who have low-income jobs or other sources of partial support may supplement their income with part-time or short-term sex work (UNAIDS technical updates, 2002).

In developing countries such as Ghana where there is lack of governmental welfare and education for impoverished women and children, makes it imperative to analyse whether prostitution has actually ameliorated the status or condition of women in the country. By supposedly giving women opportunity to have a job that provides for them and their children, prostitution may be the only real way for a migrant, impoverished woman to better her status and live economically sufficient life. What begs the question however is that at what cost and risk does this economic relief that prostitution offers these women comes with? Notwithstanding, prostitution as a profession, also includes numerous individuals from not only poor and neglected backgrounds but also from affluent and successful backgrounds. It transcends class boundaries. Adolescent girls from wealthy families are also found in prostitution ( Bamgbose, 2002).

Prostitution as a social phenomenon is rampant and thriving in Ghana (“Child Labour Prevails in Ghana,” 2001). Unfortunately the phenomenon seems to have attracted less attention in the public and in the government circles. Brothels and hideout where sex workers operate remain open secret. This is against the backdrop that the laws of the country frown on soliciting, yet, sex workers in Ghana operate in the full glare of the public and the law in a brazen fashion and in a manner that smacks of impunity, and we hardly hear of swoop by the security agencies or any comprehensive measures instituted by the government to clamp the phenomenon down. In consequence of this fact, some Ghanaians have expressed disgust at its [prostitution] ascendancy and the careless and audacious manner with which current prostitutes now carry out their job. The situation has degenerated to the extent that even primary school children are being drawn into it (Boyefio, 2012,). What is particularly disturbing about this development is that some parents and guardians of the young girls involved in this illicit trade are quite aware of this problem, and also the fact that some parents and guardians actually offer or encourage their children and wards to indulge in such acts (Bamgbose, 2002).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Prostitution itself is not illegal in Ghana, but soliciting in a public place incurs a small fine on first offence, and is a misdemeanour on subsequent occasions. Brothel-keeping is an offence, and sex workers have also apparently been charged with causing a nuisance. Nevertheless, women soliciting are clearly visible in the public places of the capital, Accra and other parts of the country and many Ghanaians are surprised to hear that any prohibition exists. The sex industry is believed to be growing in response to current economic pressures. The agricultural and informal sectors which traditionally provided female employment have been affected by the Structural Adjustment Programme. The sex

industry which is perceived as having low entry qualifications and high returns provide economic opportunity for segment of women in our society. Prostitutes are able to earn as much or even more than the minimum wage without taking very many clients. A quarter of workers in Ghana receive the minimum wage or less and women's incomes tend to be at the lower end of the scale (Bindman, 1997). In effect, the sex work industry seems to be growing, even though, the laws of Ghana frown on soliciting. The police who ought to enforce the law by arresting and charging our women who brazenly solicit or operate brothels have apparently abdicated their duties. Thus according to AppiahGyamfi (2003), criminologists have recorded very low levels of police reported sexrelated crimes in Ghana. One reason is that, while the police want to enforce the law, most believe that workers need to survive their harsh economic reality (Appiahene- Gyamfi, 2003). In other words, there seems to be a tacit acceptance of the sex work industry. The Ghanaian attitude generally, towards prostitution has been characterised by an apparent apathy or ambivalence, as if the society considers it as a necessary social evil, for which, it should be allowed to thrive, or simply glossed over its existence.

In their quest to survive these harsh economic realities, the fact however, remains that sex workers do experience some of the most challenging lives. The industry is beset with a lot of problems. With little money, basic education and often unsupportive home lives, they are at high risk of physical violence, sexually transmitted disease and low sexual and reproductive health (TfaC,2013). Sex workers contract 2.4% of all new HIV infections and have been identified by the United Nations and the Ghana AIDS Commission as one of the populations most at risk of contracting HIV, with several interventions targeted at this vulnerable group. The Ghana AIDS



Commission (2011) estimated that sex workers have the second highest HIV prevalence of any group in Ghana at 11.1%, compared to a national average of 1.5%. More importantly, sex workers have also been identified as a high prevalence core group, playing an important role in the dissemination of HIV, especially in urban centres. A study conducted in Accra estimated that approximately four-fifths of prevalent cases of HIV in adult males were acquired from sex workers (Ghana Aids Commission, 2004). These problems coupled with the stigmatisation they have to confront daily in their life should have served as enough deterrent but that is not the case. More and more girls are getting recruited into the industry and society is acting oblivious to their plight. Instead of treating the phenomenon as a social problem, it has rather been approached as if it is their private problem. Meanwhile, these women and young girls who work in the sex industry belong or come from our society and therefore are integral figures of our community. Their problems should be deemed a social problem generally because the implications of their actions affect our society. Thus, they need to be understood, protected and if possibly emancipated and rehabilitated to be integrated into the mainstream society. Our inadequate knowledge of the prostitutes' experiences and the ambivalence posture of societies are counter-productive in dealing with prostitution as social problem and attending to the gender needs and welfare of the women in prostitution. It was against this background that the researcher sought to document the lived experience of prostitutes in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly.

This work attempts to interrogate the experiences of the prostitutes in Kumasi and endeavours to understand them from their perspective in terms of their sociodemography, relationship with society, encounters with the clients and how all these interactions affect their well-being.



### 1.3 Research Questions

In view of the above discussion, three questions are posed which the study will seek to address:

- What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the selected prostitutes?
- How did the prostitutes come to experience prostitution?
- What does prostitution mean in their everyday life?

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study was to examine and understand the lived experiences of the sex workers with the focus on their developmental paths, entry into the sex work and their everyday experiences and struggles in their work of prostitution as well as inform debate on the phenomenon of sex work.

Specifically the study sought to:

- Document the socio demographic background of the prostitutes.
- Explore how the prostitutes came to experience prostitution.
- Examine what prostitution means in the everyday lives of the prostitutes in terms of their:
  - relationship with family members, significant others and the community
  - living conditions ( health, income)
  - coping with stigma attached to prostitution.

### 1.5 The Assumptions are:

The researcher was guided by the following assumptions.

- Poverty and low level of education conspire to create prostitution
- Sex workers are potential transmitters of STIs

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of study is defined by spatial and conceptual dimensions. The spatial dimension in this study is limited to the local level- the Kumasi Metropolitan Area in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Kumasi is located centrally in the Ashanti region, forming an important transport and commercial hub for both domestic and international traffic. It is the key transportation link between the south and north of Ghana as well with the surrounding countries. The region occupies a total land area of 24,389 km<sup>2</sup> (approximately 10 percent of total land in Ghana). The unique centrality of the city makes it a special place for many to migrate to. Kumasi has attracted such a large population because it is the regional capital and the most commercialised centre in the region (KPMG, 2008). For the purpose of the study, the research will specifically be focused on two selected areas in Kumasi. These are Adum, and Tafo. These localities are notorious for commercial sex trade in the Kumasi metropolis.

Conceptually the study was limited to exploring and seeking to understand the lived experiences of six selected brothel-based sex workers in the Kumasi Metropolis. The sample of six sex workers in the study may not be a representative of full spectrum of sex workers in Kumasi. However the purpose of the study was to extrapolate from the indepth interview rather than a large quantitative sample.

This study however, did not attempt to generalise findings but to identify issues that may form the basis of large scale quantitative studies.

## 1.7 Challenges

1. The study of prostitution in itself is a hazardous occupation, as it risks violence, threats and abuse, and is often associated either socially or geographically with other criminal activities such as robbery, theft and drug abuse. Undertaking a research in this terrain was a risky endeavour. To overcome this, the researcher visited the participants in the study only during the day for the interview.
2. Due to both criminalisation and stigmatisation, those involved in prostitution hardly avail themselves to a study of this nature. It was thus difficult at the outset to find voluntary participants for the purpose of research. Again due to the elicited nature of their practice and the stigma, it became difficult convincing them to allow for the recording of the interview. Their apprehensions were borne from the fear that it may be leaked to the media and subsequently to the security agencies for them to be raided. As a matter of fact, many of them turned the researcher away. The researcher made strenuous effort at convincing and assuring the respondents in this work of the protection of confidentiality and anonymity. To achieve these, alphabets and pseudonyms were used to represent each participant and key leading information were omitted in the interview and transcription. The researcher also assured them that the tapes will be destroyed once the transcription had occurred. This helped in gaining their cooperation.
3. Also initial attempts to visit the brothels of the sex workers proved quite difficult. This was due to the fear of the public perception and possible tagging of those seen loitering around the premises of these brothels and hotels or in the company of the prostitutes. Overcoming the possibility of being negatively labeled as one of their client was a huge task for the researcher. The researcher however derived huge impetus from his conscience in the face of the possible negative tagging that

association with prostitution attracts and also from the importance of the study to him.

4. The respondents demanded monetary inducement before participating in the study. They argued that 'time is money' and for that matter granting interviews which will take away their precious time would come at cost. The researcher took the trouble to explain the purpose and aim of the study as being solely for academic purpose and this helped in eliciting their cooperation. The researcher assured them of a token after the interview. This was subsequently honoured.
5. Last but not least, seductive overtures were employed by some of the respondents the researcher approached for the interview. The researcher, however, showed resolve and resilience by not allowing himself to be seduced by a constant reminder of the potential repercussion of such action and strong adherence to his personal moral values. As much as possible, the researcher ensured that the interview was conducted in the open to avoid any potential risk and eventuality.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The study on the lived experiences of selected prostitutes in Kumasi is significant and expected to be invaluable useful to various stake holders such as the family, administrators and managers of the social services; the government departments concerned with the execution of policy on prostitution; the NGOs dealing with the youth; researchers and academicians. The study on the lived experiences of the sex workers with focus on their developmental paths, entry into the sex work and their everyday experiences and struggles in their work of prostitution is also necessary because the practice has severe negative consequences such as STIs especially HIV/AIDS spread and other STDs as well as other ramifications. The research on prostitution from the prostitute's definition of her situation,



will best inform policies that will address the concerns associated with the phenomenon. It will also enable the prostitute to contribute to the effort at the emancipation and empowerment of the female gender in society, as well as contributing to the way forward in addressing the factors that push the vulnerable girls into prostitution.

### **1.9 Justification of the Study**

Although a lot of research has been conducted on prostitution, there is still a paucity of information on prostitution in respect of their lived experiences in the Ghanaian society. Existing literatures suggest dramatic increase in the phenomenon and that prostitution has become rampant in the Ghanaian society (Appiah-Gyamfi, 2000), but up till recently, their experiences have not been adequately studied, documented and advocated. The Lack of an in-depth study of the experiences of individual sex workers means that we are unable to empathise with sex workers who may largely be victims of circumstances, even though this assertion is not true for all sex workers. Some may have entered the sex trade as a matter of choice. This has also culminated in the neglect of the problems that confront the prostitutes who ought to be protected as any other Ghanaians. Prostitution has received less attention and a little public discourse in Ghana. But the phenomenon is a reality and has an implication for our society especially the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STIs, given the fact that segment of men in our society patronise their services. This work particularly seeks to take holistic look into the experiences of prostitutes in Kumasi. The findings of this study can be used to tailor social and health services for the prostitutes, as well as inform policy to regulate their work. Again, findings of the study will serve as a reference point for academic purposes, as recommendations made may be taken up and built upon. This work is also intended to fill the knowledge gap in respect of the lived experiences of the prostitutes. Given the resilience nature of prostitution, and the fact that the phenomenon



will continue to live with us, makes it imperative to undertake continuous research on the subject.

### **1.10 Definition of Concepts**

Before one can efficiently treat the topic, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of all key concepts in the topic. This identifies and explores the technical terminologies used in relation to the topic as they operate in this study.

#### **1.10.1 Prostitutes**

An everyday definition of a prostitute suggests that it is a person who engages in sex for money. But according to Davis (1937), this definition however, falls short in pointing to other critical parameters like - the duration of relationship, mode of exchange, nature of exchange and a host of other issues that compound prostitution. We cannot, therefore define human prostitution simply as the use of sexual responses for an ulterior purpose. This would include a great portion of all social behaviour, especially that of women. It would include marriage, for example, wherein women trade their sexual favours for an economic and social status supplied by men. But looking at the subject in this way reveals one thing. The basic element in what we actually call prostitution- the employment of sex for non-sexual ends within a competitive-authoritative system characterizes not simply prostitution itself but all of our institutions in which sex is involved, notably courtship and wedlock. Prostitution therefore resembles, from one point of view, behaviour found in our most respectable institutions. What, then, is the difference between prostitution and these other institutions involving sex? In commercial prostitution both parties use sex for an end not socially functional, the one for pleasure, the other for money. Pure prostitution is promiscuous, impersonal. The sexual response of the prostitute does not hinge upon the

personality of the other party, but upon the reward. The response of the customer likewise does not depend upon the particular identity of the prostitute, but upon the bodily gratification. On both sides the relationship is merely a means to a private end, a contractual rather than a personal association. These features sharply distinguish prostitution from the procreative sexual institutions. It is distinguished by the elements of hire, promiscuity, and emotional indifference. Commercial prostitution shares with other sexual institutions a basic feature, namely the employment of sex for an ulterior end in a system of differential advantages, but it differs from them in being mercenary, promiscuous, and emotionally indifferent.

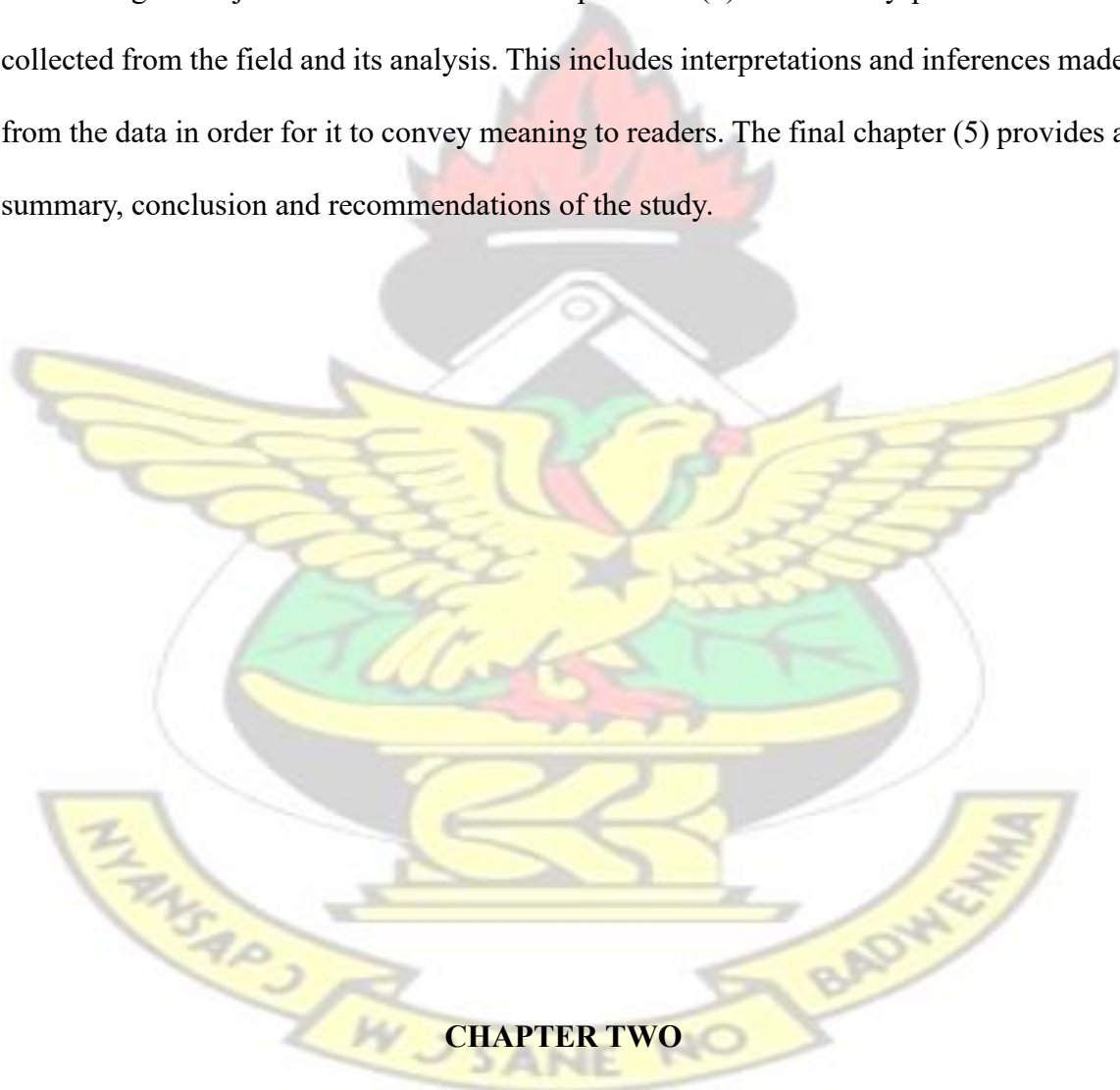
In this study a female prostitute or commercial sex worker refers to a woman who engages in sexual acts, on a more or less regular basis, with individuals of the opposite sex other than an established partner, such as a husband or boyfriend, for a consideration which has a pre-defined monetary value. The terms prostitute and sex worker are used synonymously in this study.

#### **1.10.2 Lived Experiences**

Lived experiences is used in the study to connote the entirety of living conditions and circumstances that have prevailed in the life of the prostitute in retrospect as well as her current peculiar circumstances as sex worker. In other words it connotes the peculiar challenges or circumstances she faced during childhood that may have and continues to inform the decision to resort to sex work as a means of livelihood, and those prevailing now in her life even as a sex worker.

### **1.11 Organisation of the study**

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one (1) is the introduction. This consists of the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, justification and significant of the study. Chapter two (2) reviews relevant literatures and related theories to the study. Chapter three (3) outlines the research method adopted in undertaking the study. This includes the sampling procedures, data collection methods, data management just to mention a few. Chapter four (4) of the study presents the data collected from the field and its analysis. This includes interpretations and inferences made from the data in order for it to convey meaning to readers. The final chapter (5) provides a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

## Introduction

In this chapter, relevant and related literature to the study was reviewed. The chapter discussed the writings by researchers and authors in relation to the phenomenon of prostitution. The chapter was sub-headed in accordance with the specific objectives of the study.

Sex workers are generally perceived as 'victims or villains'. A range of discourses, from some feminisms, state that sex workers are women who have no real 'choice', since no woman could really 'choose' sex work ( Kempadoo & Mellon, 1998). Rather, female sex workers are seen to deserve sympathy, legal protection, or moral forgiveness because they are forced by poverty, or the effects of previous abuse on their self-esteem, or tricked by unscrupulous third parties, into entering a demeaning, dangerous, and damaging commercial activity. Sex workers themselves sometimes confirm this view, stressing that they entered the sex industry as a last financial resort( Personal conversations with sex workers Kempadoo and Mellon, 1998).

Invariably, the sex workers migrate from rural areas or small towns to an urban setting, either because they were procured by brothels or pimps or as job seekers. They generally lack the skills to meet the challenges of urban life or to establish new social networks. The majority of these sex workers are also expected to contribute to family incomes; indeed, they are commonly the sole supporters of their family. In addition to this 'voluntary,' economically-driven migration to urban centres, in regions such as Asia and Eastern Europe, girls and women are increasingly trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation(UNAIDS, 2002) .



## 2.1 Theories of prostitution

While theoretical conceptions of deviant behaviour range from role, strain to psychoanalytic theory, orientations to the study of the prostitute have shown considerable homogeneity. Twentieth century theorizing concerning this occupational group has employed, almost exclusively, a Freudian psychiatric model. The prostitute has thus been variously described as masochistic, of infantile mentality, unable to form mature interpersonal relationships, regressed, emotionally dangerous to males and as normal as the average women. (Vanwesenbeek, 1994). Psychological approach to the study of the prostitutes which pertained in the 1930s concentrated on the personalities of the women. Prostitutes were seen as different from non-prostitutes, because of marginal mental ability and abnormal sexual proclivities. Ellis (1937) stated that prostitutes act against the public order. They do not act in accordance with societies expectations, namely to be receptive and monogamous. Gluecks (1934) studied five hundred females in Massachusetts and came to the conclusion that prostitutes, in contrast with other females, are not able to control their sexual impulses. Kemp (1936) studied 530 street prostitutes in Copenhagen (Denmark) and focused on the hereditary dimension. According to him the women's entrance in the world of prostitution can be explained by the fact that their mothers were already "abnormal". The strength of the psychological approach lies in the fact that attention is paid to the background characteristics of the women involved. The weakness, however, is that the psychological tests used were not well developed, and no research among control groups was done.

The psychoanalytic approach, subsequently dominated in the 1960s and 1970s, and was rooted in Freud's theory about "infantile sexuality. The scientists supporting this approach, state that the prostitutes' adult sexual behaviour is related to their early stages of sexual development. According to them, prostitutes frequently reported that as small children they



were raised in situations in which traditional family love was lacking. These psychoanalytic studies were based upon a small number of participants, varying from two to twenty, who were very often patients of the researchers. Limited studies such as these do not lend themselves to generalization. The exclusive use of psychoanalytic models in attempting to predict behaviour, and the consequent neglect of situational and cognitive processes, has been steadily lessening in the field of psychology.

The focus is now on the interpersonal processes which help define the deviant role, the surroundings in which the role is learned, and limits upon the enactment of the role. In other words, in studying prostitution, one must not only consider the personality structure of the participants, but also the structure of their community and the path-ways and routes into the learning and enactment of the behaviour. Social scientists with this inclination started emphasizing the impact of social relationships, social processes and subcultures on the process of decision making. In this interdisciplinary approach multiple factors were seen as underlying the women's entrance into "the Life". In the study by James (1976), Rosenbaum (1981) and Miller (1986) multiple motives were reported as reason for prostitution of which financial concerns were the most important, followed by early negative sexual experiences (incest) and peer pressure. The financial reasons very often tied in with drug addiction which becomes very clear in Rosenbaum's study among 100 heroin-using women of who more than half were involved in prostitution activities.

Social class was also considered an important explanatory variable for women entering the world of commercial vice. In this so-called structuralist approach, social stratification and money were key issues. Prostitutes were seen as innovative persons who turn to illegitimate means like commercial vice in order to earn money when legitimate means were insufficient or blocked (Merton, 1957). Davis (1937) called this "social

utilitarianism". He suggested that prostitution created a possibility for affectional and non-threatening outlets for the desires of men. He saw prostitution as functional in a family oriented society and as a way to prevent divorce. Those supporting this structuralist approach view the organization of society and its influence on individuals as critical, but the ideas, views and values of the individuals involved are ignored.

Systemic theory also looks at the relationship between individuals and their environment and the manner in which the environment impacts on their lives. Mathews (2008) created a three-stage model to map a woman's path into sex work. The first stage is labelled predisposition stage in which childhood deprivation and family disintegration occurred. The second stage is called marginalization where the child is separated from her family either through her own accord such as running away or through forced removal, for example being taken into child care, the final stage is facilitation which occurs when the child is lured or groomed by people such as peers and pimps eventually leading into prostitution. Mathews (2008) finding indicate that at least most women will pass through at least two of the three stages along their path toward entering into prostitution.

Drift Theory focuses on the woman without giving sufficient cognisance to the relationship between her and her environment. There are several explanations for the drift theory. Phterson(1996) describe the whore stigma in terms of which it is believed that the psychological consequences of sexual abuse have little to do with entry into prostitution. Rather prostitution, unchastity, sexual abuse and badness' all fall under common denominator of stigmatization. In this situation, the girl who has been sexually abused either has to repress her experiences or give away her reputation (Vanwesenbeek, 1994). It is argued that for women who are already branded as whores as a result of sexual abuse,

it is simply a small shift into prostitution as opposed to other women who hold the status of decent women. The deviant stigma attached to sexual abuse is internalised by the women concerned due to labelling, public branding and subsequent victimisation (Vanwesenbeek, 1994). This theory is supported by Dalla (2006) who reports that sexual abuse victims begin to view herself as debased, also referred to as mortification of self. The debased self is internalised and the behaviour is then simply congruent with the label the woman has given herself (Dalla, 2006).

The criticism of the drift theory is that not all girls who are isolated or display deviant behaviour enter into prostitution. Rather these factors should be seen as stepping stones or incidents that potentially when combined with other factors lead to entry into sex work.

There is a correlation between childhood victimisation and entry into prostitution. Earlier research in this area revealed a high incidence of childhood victimisation among sex workers in comparison to a normative sample (Hwang & Bedford, 2003; Lane, 2003; Phoenix, 2000). The abuse was both sexual and physical and was perpetrated mainly by a family member. Sexual abuse carried out by a close family relative over a long period and involving a severe act such as penetration appeared to create the greatest psychological and social long term damage (Dalla, 2006, O'Neill, 2001). Parents and family members who indulged in emotional and verbal abuse often elicited psychological consequences similar to those of physical and sexual abuse (Dalla, 2006). Simons and Whitbeck (1991) report that specific experiences of child sexual abuse creates attitudes about oneself and sexual acts that promote the exchange of sexual favours for financial rewards. The findings were supported by Kidd and Kral (2002) whose respondents reported that their feeling about prostitution were linked to earlier feeling of sexual abuse.

The cognitive repercussions of childhood sexual abuse include learnt behaviour where the child may have learnt to associate sexual acts with reward, this is particularly so in the case of a child who is rewarded for sexual activity with an adult ( O'Neill, 2001). In adulthood, this interaction plays out in the negotiation between the sex worker and the client on payment for a sexual activity ( O'Neill, 2001).

Research findings show that 95% of street sex workers interviewed reported experiencing some form of literal or symbolic abandonment as children (Dalla, 2006). Literal abandonment is experienced as physical abandonment while symbolic abandonment is experienced as emotional psychological abandonment. Many sex workers also reported that their parents died when they were children or that their parents literally left them to fend for themselves( O'Neil, 2001). Just as several forms of physical abandonment were reported, so were many forms of symbolic abandonment. The most significant and damaging form of symbolic abandonment was a parent failure to recognise and prevent sexual abuse. Others did report the abuse to their mothers and were subsequently blamed for provoking the perpetrator(s) of the abuse( Dalla, 2006).

## **2.2 Stigmatization**

In his classic work on the psychology of stigma, Goffman (1963/1986) noted that occupation is an element that is closely related to a person's social identity. Individuals are stigmatized because they exhibit socially undesirable attributes that taint, spoil, or blemish their identities. The meanings attached to the stigmatized individual is that he or she is abnormal, imperfect, defective, or handicapped and therefore, inferior to the people who stigmatize the person. Moreover, the stigmatized individual is "dangerous" and "to be



avoided” which leads to the disapproved person being rejected by society. Consequently, the stigmatized individual becomes marginalized and ostracized, which makes the person a social outcast( ). Prostitutes have been underrepresented in psychological research, and their subjective psychological experiences have been especially overlooked.

For a person dealing with being identified with a stigmatized group distressed is increased by the anticipated stigma and negative treatment they will receive caused by the stereotypes of their identity. This shows that just the identification, outside of what the person may have yet to experience, is a strong predictor of psychological distress especially depression and anxiety (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). These anticipations often come to life through experiencing overt discrimination or enacted stigma, which can be as subtle as social avoidance, distancing, and devaluing (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013).

Hiding and lying about her prostitution identity result in stress, anxiety, and exhaustion. Having to hide her identity engenders unwanted psychological stress. In addition, having to constantly assess the social situations the participant is in requires her to be vigilant about whom she can interact with and what she can say. Continual vigilance, with its concern about the possibility of being condemned, generates anxiety and fear of exposure, which greatly limits her social activities. As a result, she experiences significant stress and exhaustion. Living in deception, or what Goffman (1963/1986) called “modes of double living” (p. 76) not only affects her emotionally, but also becomes an obstacle for establishing a non-stigmatized career path. Because prostitution is heavily stigmatized due to its illegality and counter-cultural nature, disclosing a history of prostitution is likely to put individuals with a history of prostitution in a gravely disadvantaged position, which

leads former prostitutes to hide their prostitution history and thus to lie about their career history (Tomura, 2009).

### **2.3 The hazards of working as a sex worker**

Sex workers, along with other marginalised groups such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and injecting drug users (IDUs), are often considered at risk of HIV. However, although sex workers are severely affected by HIV in many parts of the world, they are also one of the groups most likely to respond well to HIV prevention campaigns.

Prevention campaigns aimed at sex workers not only reduce HIV transmissions that result from paid sex; they can also play a vital role in restricting the overall spread of HIV in a country. Proof of this can be seen in countries such as Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, India and Thailand, where general reductions in the national HIV prevalence have been largely attributed to HIV prevention initiatives aimed at sex workers and their clients.

It is difficult to talk about sex workers as a single 'group', because those involved in the sex industry come from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. As a result, the levels of risk that they face in terms of HIV infection varies greatly depending on the country that they live in, whether they work from a brothel or 'on the street', and whether they have access to condoms, among other factors (UNAIDS, 2009). A wealthy sex worker supplying services to businessmen in London, for instance, may face a very different level of risk to that of an impoverished girl who is being forced to sell sex in a red-light district in Thailand. There can also be significant variance within countries. For example, in India, HIV prevalence is 4.6 percent among sex workers in Mumbai compared with 24 percent

among street-based, and 29 percent among brothel-based, sex workers in Maharashtra (Suryawanshi, , Bhatnagar, Deshpande, Zhou, Singh, & Collumbien, 2013 ).

Despite this diversity, sex workers often share several common factors in their lives, regardless of their background. Some of these factors can increase their exposure to HIV. In general, sex workers have comparatively high numbers of sexual partners. This in itself does not necessarily increase their likelihood of becoming infected with HIV if they use condoms consistently and correctly. The reality, however, is that sex workers and their clients do not always use condoms. The 2010 UNAIDS global report found only a third of the 86 countries surveyed reported 90 percent of sex workers using a condom with their last client, while more than half reported condom use by 78 percent of sex workers( UNAIDS, 2011 ). In 2012, 44 countries reported higher median condom use; 85 percent, up from 78 percent in 2009.

In some cases, sex workers have no access to condoms, or are not aware of their importance. In other cases, sex workers are simply powerless to negotiate safer sex.

Clients may refuse to pay for sex if they have to use a condom, and use intimidation or violence to force unprotected sex. They may also offer more money for unprotected sex – a proposal that can be hard to refuse if the sex worker in question is in desperate need of an income. “Sex workers have told us that when they ask a client to use a condom, he offers double the price to have sex without the condom. These women are trying to provide for their children and families, so they take the offer.” - Ndeye Astou Diop, Aboya (an organisation that works with HIV-positive women in Senegal).

The clients of sex workers are fuelling HIV transmission, because they act as a link between sex workers and the general population. Many women do not report using condoms with their husbands and may therefore be at risk of HIV infection if their partners frequent sex workers. This is particularly true for wives of migrant workers who travel long distances and spend extended periods of time away from home. High HIV prevalence among the male clients of sex workers has been detected in studies globally ( Jin, 2010 ).

#### **2.4 HIV/AIDS and Association with Sex Work in Ghana**

At 13% HIV prevalence among FSW, the Ashanti region mirrors the national median and has the second highest FSW prevalence following Accra (16.3%) (2). New recruits to sex work have increasingly been seen as a group highly vulnerable to HIV infection due to biological and behavioral risk factors. Asamoah-Adu et al. found in 2001 that one fourth of roamers, who work from bars and hotels and on the streets, and one half of seaters, who work from home, acquired HIV within the first six months of sex work

In 2010, over 225,000 adults in Ghana were HIV positive with an overall prevalence of 1.31% (1). The Ashanti region has the fourth highest prevalence at 3.1%. Because prevalence is over 1%, the epidemic is considered to be generalized but it is also concentrated within high risk populations. Among sex workers, 2011 prevalence was 12.9%, compared to 2.1% among pregnant women and 2.2% in the general female population.

Knowledge of condoms and lubricant as a form of HIV prevention was relatively high at 81% in both groups, but HIV testing was much higher among seaters at 70.7% compared to 55% of roamers ( Asamoah-Adu, 2001).



## **2.5 Discrimination against Sex Workers**

Virtually throughout Africa, FSW experience intense stigma, discrimination and consequent social marginalization, which in turn deepen their vulnerability to HIV acquisition, among other health risks (Izugbara, 2005). They face numerous barriers to accessing health and social services, including STI and HIV testing and treatment, postexposure prophylaxis following rape, and access to condoms (Richter, 2010). These barriers are further entrenched where sex work is illegal, as it is virtually continent-wide, with the sole exception of Senegal. Criminalization of sex work prevents FSW from reporting violence to the police or seeking legal recourse after rape or sexual assault (Gould, 2008). Indeed, violence is a pervasive theme in the lives of FSW virtually across the region, with long-term consequences including stress, depression and low self-esteem (Wojcicki & Malala, 2001). In a survey of sex work in urban and rural Kenya, a significant portion reported being raped (35%) or physically assaulted (17%) by a client. (Elmore-Meegan, et. Al, 2004). A Namibian study found that 72% of FSW interviewed had experienced abuse, including by clients (18%), intimate partners (16%), and the police (9%). There is increasing documentation of police harassment and brutality against sex workers across Africa, which involves assault, unlawful arrest, rape, extortion, and demands for sex or money as bribes (Agha & Nchima, 2004).

## **2.6 Factors Promoting Entry to Sex Work**

Sex workers reported that financial gain was a primary motivating factor for their entry into sex work (Bucardo et al., 2004). In South Africa and other third world countries, the women in research studies reported a shortage of jobs available to them because they were often uneducated- they were therefore forced to enter into sex work in order to alleviate their financial hardship (Lane, 2003; Stilwell, 2002). Although a lack of alternative work

was given as their reason for entering into sex work, it was also listed as factors that prevented them from exiting the sex work industry. Once women entered into the sex industry, it became increasingly difficult to find alternative forms of work (Stilwell, 2006). Entry into sex was often initiated as a means of supplementing their income, however it frequently became a full-time work (Weiner, 1996; Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). Sex workers listed several benefits they associated with financial gain including their ability to support their family and children. Specifically, in third world countries, sex workers reported earning more money from sex work than from alternative source of unskilled work( Bucardo, et al., 2004). The sex workers reported that their financial gain outweighed the risk involved in practising sex work ( Bucardo et al, 2004).

Many young African women who trade sex for money come from disadvantaged backgrounds, are poorly educated, divorced, and lack the skills required for other types of formal or informal employment. A startling proportion of FSW in West and East Africa have received no formal education—well more than 10% in most of these studies and above a third in several. Economic and food insecurity may make sex work the sole survival option for women, particularly those with dependents or whose parents have died. The effect of poverty on the decision to sell sex is not altogether straightforward, however. Some FSW, more accurately described as ‘entrepreneurs’, have sought financial independence from men by saving and investing money from selling sex to buy their own bars, from which they obtain additional income.

FSW in sub-Saharan Africa very commonly have a background of marital disruption. Most studies reported that between one and two-thirds of FSW were divorced or separated. In a large study in Senegal, 63% of sex workers were divorced and cited consequent economic

factors and lack of occupational choice as reasons for entering sex work. A study in Kenya found that half of the FSW interviewed who had ever moved residence had done so following divorce, either looking for work as a single woman, or trying to escape divorce-related stigma.

Although only reported by a handful of studies (mainly in east and southern Africa), the evidence suggests that typically more than two-thirds of FSW have children and sometimes also adult dependents. Additional children may be born in the course of sex work—contraception use among sex workers is by no means universal. More than 90% in a Kenyan survey had one or more children, and 61% of sex workers working in bars and other drinking venues were supporting one or more family members. A Ugandan qualitative study found that FSW ascribed their choice of sex work to limited options following teenage pregnancy, school dropout and relationship

According to a study conducted by Boston University's Center for Global and Health and Development (CGHD) and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Girls and young women who engage in sex work in Kumasi face multiple levels of vulnerability. Most of the young women engaged in sex work lacked education and income-earning opportunities and many perceived leaving school early as a significant turning point in their lives. When they arrived in Kumasi, they quickly fell in with other girls and young women already involved in sex work. Numerous factors and actors contributed to the processes and circumstances on their pathway into sex work. The ones who are fortunate and strategic earn a relatively high income, save money, and achieve financial stability. Sex work can provide girls and young women with a path to greater financial stability than they may have found as *kayayei* transporting goods on their head

(also known as “head porters”) or domestic workers. But that income comes at the cost of high risk of assault, pregnancy, STIs, and HIV/AIDS. Once these young recruits start selling sex, their most frequent and important contacts in Kumasi become other sex workers, boyfriends, clients, law enforcement officers, and health care providers (Onyango, Sylvester, Agyarko-Poku, Akuoko, Opoku, Adu-Sarkodie, & Beard, 2012).

## **2.7 Sex work and drugs**

Prostitution and drug use have long been synonymous with one another ( Mathews, 2008). It is often debated whether drug addiction leads to prostitution or whether prostitution leads to drug addiction (Dalla, 2006). The relationship between sex work and substance abuse is a complex one and is described in two ways. In the first instance, drug use and abuse may lead to financial loss and finally to prostitution. Conversely, financial hardship leads to prostitution which then introduces sex workers to drug use (Dalla, 2006). Initial research finding shows that in the vast majority of cases, drug use precedes prostitution and more specifically precedes sexual activity. Contradictory evidence, however, indicates that drugs are used as coping mechanisms than as precursor to entry into sex work (Dalla, 2006; Young, Boyd & Hubell, 2000). Young et, al(2000) found that drugs were used to cope with the psychological and emotional distress of sex work, which might increase sex workers dependency on drugs.

Global opinion is gradually accepting the view that patterns of drinking have independent effects on sexual decision-making, and on condom-negotiation skills and correct condom-use. Studies have shown that women with heavy episodic drinking patterns (more than five drinks on one occasion) are more likely to use condoms inconsistently and incorrectly;



experience sexual violence; and acquire an STI, including HIV. The links between substance abuse and sex work may, however, be difficult to disentangle, since in some instances the former may explain women's entry to the sex industry itself. Use of alcohol among clients and sex workers at the time of purchasing sex is common, though only few studies have adequately measured this association. Research in three cities in South Africa found that alcohol and other drugs are commonly used by FSW to lower inhibitions, increase courage to approach clients and help them cope. A study in Nairobi, Kenya, found that while 35.3% of home-based FSW consumed alcohol daily, much higher percentages of FSW who were club-based (53.3%) and barbased (60%) did so. As these examples suggest, the nature of the sex work locale itself may, in part, predict the drinking patterns of FSW and consequently, their HIV risk behavior. In some settings, such as Lusaka, Zambia, FSW have been found to deliberately eschew alcohol while working, however, in order to "maintain control over themselves" (Agha, & Chulu Nchima, 2004).

## **2.8 The Prostitute's Relationship with the Client**

In the lived experience of the sex worker, once a client is selected and accepted based on the criteria of the sex worker, the nature of relationship is short term if the visits are infrequent. Alternatively, if the client begins to visit the worker more frequently, a long term relationship develops. Often long term clients are preferred as they pay above the going rate and are considered safer. Negative consequences of long term clients are that they frequently request bizarre sexual acts as they became more familiar with the sex worker. Many sex workers do not require a long term client to use a condom as they believe that knowing him as they do, he can be considered safe ( Dalla, 2006).

## 2.9 Satisfaction with Sex Work

The literatures provide a conflicting finding on whether prostitutes were satisfied with their work. According to some findings, sex workers reported being happy in their work, not wanting to leave the profession and enjoying their lifestyle. Other finding report them feeling trapped and not being able to leave the profession. The results suggest that there is little difference in job satisfaction between sex workers and women working in other industry, however, this appears to be scantily researched area of sex work (O'Neill, 2001)

The relationship between level of sex worker and job satisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors such as the environment in which sex work occurs. Prostitutes who work on the street are more vulnerable to victimisation and abuse. Sex workers in brothels report being less vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse but are often controlled by managers of the brothel. Many report that they have to share half their pay with the owners of the brothel who also dictates their working hours and fines them when they transgress the rules. It appears that the ability to negotiate the factors in their environment determine largely sex workers level of job satisfaction ( Fick, 2005).

It is likely that the low rape incidence reported in some studies is a result of unclear definitions of rape. We found in our research that even women in prostitution themselves assume that rape cannot occur in prostitution when, in fact, it occurs constantly. Future research on prostitution should behaviorally define rape. For example, if rape is defined as any unwanted sex act, then prostitution has an extremely high rate of rape because many survivors view prostitution as almost entirely consisting of unwanted sex acts or even, in one person's words, paid rape.

Plumridge and Abel in NZ, we (Farley, Baral, et al., 1998) found more physical violence in street prostitution compared to brothel prostitution in South Africa. However, we found no difference in the incidence of PTSD in these two types of prostitution, suggesting that the emotional experience of prostitution is intrinsically traumatizing regardless of its indoor or outdoor location. Boyer, Chapman, & Marshall (1993) suggested that women in indoor prostitution (such as strip clubs, massage brothels, and pornography) had *less* control of the conditions of their lives and probably faced greater risks of exploitation, enslavement, and physical harm than women prostituting on the street. Some women have said that they felt safer in street prostitution as compared to brothels (in the United States and in NZ) where they were not permitted to reject customers. They explained that on the street they could refuse dangerous appearing or intoxicated customers. On the street, they reported, friends could make a show of writing down the john's car license plate number, which they considered a deterrent to customer violence. A john could be easily traced using such methods, whereas a brothel customer's identity would likely be protected by the brothel owners, making it difficult to prosecute him for violent. Women in brothels or clubs are not encouraged to complain about violence to pimps/owners. Sometimes, they are fired for these protests, even after being raped.

Violence is one of sex workers' greatest occupational hazards. As well as being vulnerable to sexual violence from non-clients, including the police, sex workers can face violence and abuse from clients if they try to insist on condom use. Alternatively some clients offer more money for sex without a condom (Karim et al, 1995; Bastow, 1995). This raises the important question of clients' equal responsibility for practicing safer sex. Clients of sex workers may act as transmitters of HIV, to the sex worker or to the clients' other sexual partners. In fact, given that transmission of HIV is more likely from male to female partners

than the other way round, sex workers (particularly female sex workers) are more at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, than are their clients. In almost all instances, regardless of whether the sex worker is male or female, it is the client who should be wearing the condom. There is obviously a need for intervention targeted at clients. However, clients constitute an extremely hard-to-reach population especially when sex work is criminalised (Distiller, 2001).

## **2.10 Summary of Literature Review**

The exercise of reviewing the topic in the light of what is already known or as has been researched into and written by other authors is one that has been very beneficial and given room for a broader perspective of the topic under consideration to be seen. From the literature review, the following emerged as findings:

That the prostitute suffers from stigmatization and stereotype that lead to negative treatment by the public. According to the literatures, in order to understanding prostitution, there is the need to take into account both the situational and cognitive process. In other words one must not seek explanation of prostitution from only the personality structure of the prostitute but also the structure of the community or the interpersonal processes which help define deviant role. It also came to light that most of the young women engaged in sex work lack education or drop out of school early which marked a turning point in their life. Again in the literatures findings revealed that most of the sex workers have a high knowledge about HIV/AIDS and STIs and how to avoid it. That is the sex worker will ordinarily insist on condom under normal circumstances and if not physically forced on unprotected sex. Correlation was established between sex work and drug use and that most sex workers abuse drugs in order to muster courage to approach clients and also to help



them cope. With regards to long term clients, there is always a high propensity to have sex with them without a condom, thereby predisposing themselves or clients to health dangers. Last but not least violence was found to be rife and a common feature in prostitution.

With the above findings, the next thing to be done is to critically look at the area of study to determine the actual situation on the ground in the light of what is presently known from literature. This is necessary to find out whether the findings deviate from what pertains in other areas or whether the situation is the same. The needed actions or recommendations will then be made to improve situations of female sex workers in general.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The study sought to document the lived experiences of selected sex workers. This perspective, therefore, demands an open and in-depth approach that enables participants to speak for themselves about their 'lived' experiences as it relates to them but not as the world wishes or thinks it to be. It is based on this that the qualitative research method, due to its open-ended and in-depth characteristics lends itself as the appropriate methodology in conducting this research. This chapter deals with the research design, sources of data sampling procedure, data collection procedure, data analysis as well as ethical considerations.

### 3.2 Research design

The research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation; so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. A research design includes an outline of what the investigator will do from untying the hypothesis, or research questions, and their operational implications to the final analysis of data (Polit & Beck, 2006).

The study used qualitative research design to address the problem. The rationale for using this design is that it mostly takes interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Using qualitative design, the researcher ‘explores a social or human problem, builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural settings’ (Creswell, 1998). The researcher, in attempting to find answers to the research questions on the lived experience of prostitutes and also analyze answers as well as build a holistic picture of their situation adopted the qualitative research design rather than a quantitative approach. The characteristics of qualitative study are first, more appropriate in unveiling and understanding “the nature of a person's experiences with a phenomenon about which little is known” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19). According to Sherman and Webb (as cited by Akplu, 1998) qualitatively, subjects selected for a study are permitted to “speak for themselves” rather than respond to close-ended questions with predetermined responses set by the researcher. Akplu (1998) quoted Edson, Glesne and Peshkin, and Wilson as having posited that in qualitative research “ideas, people, and events cannot be understood if isolated from their contexts” and that the “social scientist cannot understand human behaviour without understanding the framework within which the subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings and actions” (p. 41). Second, Rossman and Rallis (as cited by Creswell, 2003), suggested that a qualitative study should take place in a natural setting. In this case, the researcher needs to personally go to

the site of the participants to conduct the research in order to gather detailed information on the expression of the participants and the place.

There are varied classifications of qualitative research depending upon the purpose, types and approaches to analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). According to Strauss and Corbin, there are five types of qualitative traditions of inquiry. These are: (1) Phenomenology which describes the meanings of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept; (2) Grounded Theory which seeks to describe the meanings of the lived experiences for several individuals in order to generate or discover a theory. It is an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon that relates to a particular situation; (3)

Ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural or a social group or a system; (4) Case study is an exploration of a system or a case over a period of time; and (5) Biography explores the life of an individual. Thus, the qualitative approach was basically designed to find out the existing situation of a particular phenomenon or practice. The approach the researcher employed was a case study. Case study is a form of qualitative research, which is widely used by researchers in social sciences. Gall et al (2007) provide a definition which is based on the characteristics of the case study. To them, a case study is ‘(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon’. Punch (2005) gives a prescriptive definition of the approach. He indicates that:

The case study aims to understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context. It also has a holistic focus, aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case (Punch, 2005).

Although these definitions differ, they agree that a case study explores an instance or a few instances of a phenomenon by interacting with the participants in their socio-cultural setting. Typically, case study researchers neither aim at discovering generalizable truth, nor look for cause-effect relations as quantitative researchers do (Cohen, et al, 2000); instead they focus on describing, explaining and evaluating a phenomenon (Gall et al, 2007). The study was aimed at eliciting responses from the life situation of the respondents (prostitutes) and for this reason all questions asked were detailed enough with a relative smaller sample size.

The case study approach has many advantages. Firstly, it is able to capture and explore the complexity of phenomenon for a better understanding (Verma and Mallick, 1999; Denscombe, 2003). This is what a large scale study like survey fails to achieve since it gathers superficial information about a phenomenon for the purpose of generalisation (Muijs, 2004). Secondly, using the case study approach requires the use of multiple methods to collect data, enabling it to be validated through triangulation (Denscombe, 2003; Yin, 2003).

The type of study is an exploratory study. Exploratory research design refers to social research which explores a certain phenomenon with the primary aim of understanding the phenomenon or situation (Bless & Hingson-Smith, 2001).

### **3.3 Sources of data**

The study used both secondary and primary sources of data.



### **3.3.1 Secondary source of data**

The secondary source of data was obtained from the existing literature on the research topic. This was obtained from newspapers, journals, textbook, internet as well as specific research works of some authors in the topic area.

### **3.3.2 Primary source of data**

The primary source of data was acquired from the fieldwork of the researcher. This was collected qualitatively using the in-depth interview method. Interviews enable a researcher to access various stories and narratives through which people describe their world (Silverman 2005; Creswell 2009). The respondents in the interview were allowed to freely recount their lived experiences in relation to the objectives of the study. The benefit of using in-depth interview was to enable the researcher glean very rich information in the words of the respondents. The researcher was also able to broach certain sensitive issues. Again it was adopted due to its flexibility.

It however came with various challenges. Using the in-depth interview was time consuming, taking one to several hours. It also relied solely on verbal statements which were liable to distortions; people may lie or exaggerate and there may be discrepancy between what they say and actually do.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher over the periods spanning through 2013 to 2014 made a programme whereby he occasionally visited the premises namely Tafo brothel and Adum brothels, where prostitution is practised. He was thus able to acquaint himself with the environment and through that established rapport with some of the sex workers who made overtures to him, by sometimes giving them little amount of money and used that opportunity seek their

permission to come at a later time for an interview sessions with those who wanted to volunteer. Through this occasional visits and regular calls on their phones to find out their well-being, friendship with the participants was established, thus it became easy for the participants to willingly grant him the permission for the interview whenever the researcher was ready, on condition that the interview will come at a cost, and also because they cannot give out information about themselves just like that. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview but agreed to give them a little token for their time.

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

In this study six brothel-based sex workers were purposefully selected at their places of work from the population of sex workers in Kumasi Metropolis. The researcher visited them during the day to request for their individual participation in an interview and explain the nature and essence of the work to them. The main criteria for the selection was the identification of their status as sex workers. In this case sex workers who operate at the Adum and Tafo brothels as seater-based sex workers were purposively selected and the choice of these places were convenient since it suited the purpose of the study.

According to Creswell (2002), Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), and Koul (2003), population is the complete set of individuals (subjects and or events) which have similar observable characteristics which are of interest to the researcher. In addition, Fink (2001), Hummerlbrunner, Rak and Gray (1996) were also of the view that population refers to the collection of specified group of human or non-human entities in which the researcher is interested. Participants in this study were drawn mainly from sex workers who operate in the Kumasi Metropolis.

Patton suggest that the logic of qualitative sampling is to obtain thick, rich accounts of a phenomenon rather than to seek to include a large, representative sample. Mason (1996) cautioned researchers to work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth. The qualitative samples tend to be purposive rather than random. In the opinion of Creswell (2002), Fink (2001), Hummerlbrunner et al (1996), Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), and Koul (2003) the yardstick for the inclusion of a unit into a study must be based on the characteristics of participants who are eligible to partake in the study.

According to Creswell (2003), the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. This does not necessarily suggest random sampling or selection of a large number of participants and Sites. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to seek out those participants with the most direct experience with the phenomenon under study in order to elicit the most pertinent and information-rich data (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Padgett, 2004; Patton, 1990). The purposive sampling, according to Creswell (2002), is a qualitative sampling procedure in which researchers consciously select participants or sites to learn about or understand the central phenomenon. The aim of purposive sampling is not necessarily to get the average opinion that would correspond with the average opinion of the population of interest, but the aim might be to tap the special experience and competence of the people or events selected: their categories, properties and dimensions.

### **3.6 Instrument of Data Collection**

The data collection instrument used in this study was mainly the interview guide. The interview guide is one data collection instrument that enables the researcher to have a face-to-face encounter with respondents in order to find answers to a research problem. One of

the conditions for the use of interviews is that the respondents must be prepared to talk. It is important to note however, that in interviews, some questions arise from the field discussion, especially when the interviews are semi-structured (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991; Twumasi, 2001). Again, Yin (1994) posited that one of the best sources of information in research is through the interview due to its flexibility. He further stated that in studies about human affairs, interviews must constitute an essential source of data collection. It is, therefore, important to consider interviews in research because it is through interviews that human affairs can be “reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees” (Akplu, 1998, p. 44) who are well-informed and therefore can provide important insights into a situation

The interview guide contained information on:

- What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the selected prostitutes
- How did the prostitutes come to experience prostitution?
- How did the prostitutes come to experience prostitution?

Data was collected from respondents through in-depth interviews using open-ended questions and tape recording. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to express themselves freely and enabled the researchers and participants to discuss emerging issues in much detail. Additionally, the data collection method allowed the researchers to probe participants’ responses for elaboration and to explore key issues raised by respondents, which were useful for the study. The consent of the respondents was sought before the in-depth interviews were conducted especially the recording of the interview. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality regarding the information they provided.



### **3.7 Data management**

The data gathered from the interviews using a voice recorder was played and listened to several times before the actual transcription was done. Also, because most of the indepth interviews were conducted in Twi (local language) the data was translated into English language by the researcher. The transcribed data was categorized into themes by looking for fits and recurring patterns in the data. The researchers analyzed specific statements and searched for possible meanings that made the information more meaningful (Creswell, 1998). The most illustrative quotations were extracted and used to support important points that emerged from the data gathered from respondents. This was evident quite often because of the relative smaller sample size (6) of the study.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

Ethics refers to the systematic thinking about the moral consequences of decisions (John & Sack, 2001). Privacy is the freedom an individual has to determine the time, extent and general circumstances under which private information will be shared with or withheld from others (Burns & Grove, 2001). Privacy involves the obligation of the researcher to protect information from respondents from undesirable or any other interactions or sharing.

Confidentiality refers to the management of information gathered from respondents while anonymity refers to the principle that the identity of research respondents is kept secret (Mouton, 2001). Confidentiality can also indicate a way of not making information given by respondents known to anyone who is not directly involved in the study (Trochim, 2006).

Anonymity is prevention of disclosure of the information that leads to the identification of the study subject or patient in a report verbal or written. In this research study the researcher reassured and maintained the respondent's anonymity and confidentiality. No

names or telephones numbers were used in an interview schedule. A number of measures were put in place by the researcher to protect the anonymity of research participants, such as use of pseudonyms and paying careful attention to data storage. Alphabets were given to individual respondents. The researcher also respected the respondents' rights to self-determination, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, fair treatment and protection from discomfort and harm, and importantly obtained their informed consent.

Social research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study or not (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Whichever means of access and sampling is used research on prostitution is inherently of a sensitive nature since it involves illegal and personal behaviours. As such, particular attention was paid to designing questions and more so the tact employed in asking the questions, in order to reduce embarrassment and difficulty for the respondent as well as to enhance the accuracy of response. It cannot be assumed from the nature of sex work that female prostitutes are comfortable talking freely about sexual issues and behaviours.

The researcher therefore guarded against psychological or emotional harm to the participants. The researcher was alert and on the lookout for signs of emotional, or psychological discomfort which might be experienced by respondents. The researcher also assured respondents that no harm will come to them during and after their participation in the research. This reassurance was important due to the sensitive and emotional nature of some of the research questions in specific and the issue of prostitution in general.

# KNUST

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of sex workers in the Kumasi Metropolis using qualitative study. Data was collected from six (6) sex workers who were in the business of prostituting to earn their living. One-on-one in-depth interview were conducted with participants to find answers to the following research questions:

- What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the prostitute?
- How did the prostitute come to experience prostitute?
- What does prostitution mean in the everyday life of the prostitutes?

Results of data collected and analysed are presented in this chapter beginning with the socio-demographic data of participants', issues relating to the public attitude towards the sex worker, stigmatization and its effect of these on the prostitute, the sex workers' relationship with the family, risks factors associated with prostitution, the prostitute encounters with the law, among others.

The following gives a detailed account of the respective lived experiences of the sex workers in this study:

#### **Respondent A - Akosua**

The first participant, respondent 'A' otherwise known as Akosua, told the researcher that she was twenty-eight years (28) old when she was asked about her age and also indicated she comes from Manya Krobo in the Eastern region of Ghana. When she was interrogated on her socio-demographic background including the nature of parent/s she had as well as her childhood and growing up experiences, Akosua narrated this to the researcher:

*I was born at Manya Krobo and was raised up by my grandmother. I initially didn't even know my mother until recently. My father is around but he didn't take care of me. I attended school up to class five. I have one child who is staying with my mother in Tema. I have been doing this 'preman' (sex work) job for the past one year to enable me raise money to support my sister who is serving a jail term in the prisons.*

When the researcher asked the respondent to describe how she became a sex worker, her answer was:

*My decision to become a prostitute was made on the advice of a colleague friend who was able to convince me that engaging in prostitution will enable me raise enough money, which I can use to procure foods and extra money to give to my jailed sister on my occasional visits to her. When the researcher asked her whether she expresses any acceptance about the work she is doing, her answer was:*

*This work is such a humiliating work that even going outside is usually a difficult task for me. Nobody respects you but they don't do that overtly. I avoid going out lest I am seen by someone who knows me and take the news of my activities here to my hometown. The fear of getting caught by my people prevents me from going out. For this reason I am mostly indoor.*



Akosua told the researcher she does not have any friend apart from her colleague who introduced her to the profession relative to the question of whether she has been able to make friends outside her colleagues in the prostitution business.

On the issue of whether she has ever checked to know her health status, she told the researcher she use to go for check-up but indicated it has been a long time since she did.

When she was asked whether she has met a client without a condom before, her response was in the negative. The researcher probed further by asking her under what condition she will permit sex without condom, upon which she revealed she drives away costumers who demand sex without condom. Still, the researcher interrogated her further to determine whether a person's aura and personality and appearance could inform or influence her decision to sleep with her without condom, and also whether making her a very good offer, say GHC500 could achieve this, to which she responded:

*'no amount of money can buy me life and I do not know what disease you may be carrying'.*

On the question regarding whether she provides other form of sex, she answered:

*I don't do blowjob, do I know whether you have any disease? I don't even permit fondling of my breast and other parts of my body. You only have permission to my sexual part. It's the money I want not satisfaction from you.*

When the researcher asked whether she had experienced a condom tearing in the process of servicing a client, she said

*yes, it happens occasionally. Before starting sex with a client, I put gel into my vaginal to lubricate and prevent the condom from bursting. But once a while the condom does burst.*

Another finding unravelled in this respondent was that the encounter with a client was termed 'short time' in reference to the limited time that was allotted to clients. According to her:

*You have to be quick with your session with me or if you mind pay extra say GHc30 or GHc40. It is called short time. If a client proves stubborn I will raise alarm and my colleague workers will come to my rescue or our volunteers*

She revealed to the researcher that they meet weekly at the behest of their queen-mother and occasionally in town to take stock and deliberate about their well-being and how best to avoid contracting disease. Resource persons from the health sector also come to address them on such occasions, according to her.

The researcher asked her about the kind of alcoholic drinks she takes regularly, and she mentioned JOY DADDY BITTERS, a locally brewed gin and smokes king size. On the reasons for taking them, she cited that it boost her appetite and enables her to have regular menstrual cycle. She told the researcher her reason for taking alcohol is not related in any way to the prostitution.

On the question of violence, she told the researcher she has not encountered any violent client since she began working as commercial sex worker at the brothel.

On the question of encountering the police in the course of working as prostitute, she told the researcher that so far she has not had any brush with the security agencies. According to her the police have not carried a raid on them at their brothel but added

*I believe the police don't prosecute cases involving a prostitute justly.*

*They will do the case a foolish case.*

## **Respondent B - BLESSING**

The second participant, Respondent B otherwise referred to as Blessing, when she was asked to describe herself and family background, she told the researcher that:

*Both of my parents are dead and I do not have any financial support and any work. I am 25years and I was raised up by only my mother until she passed away. I attended school up to JSS ONE. I was not sexually abuse during my childhood. I originated from Somanya in the Eastern region to Kumasi to practice prostitution here. I have been in the prostitution work for only three weeks. I have a child who I am taking care of from the money I make.*

When the researcher asked her to describe how she came to experience prostitution, she indicated that:

*I was brought to Kumasi by the courtesy of a woman for the purpose of prostitution. She initiated me into the prostitution.*

When she was asked whether the work of prostitution is fulfilling to her and meets her needs, she said

*I will leave the work very soon, it is because of financial exigencies that pushed me into it, and I would not be prostituting after I have made enough money I will then go back to my hometown. I am very cool with the work so long as it meets my needs. I regard prostitution as work just like any other work.*

When the researcher asked her to describe her relationship with the neighbours, she indicated the community respects her, and that she was living in harmony with her neighbours.

On the question regarding the nature of relationship existing between her and her family relatives, she answered that

*I only have a sister who I occasionally call on phone, but nobody knows I am in Kumasi. I keep my activities in Kumasi secret from them. If I find myself in any kind of difficulty or distress, my first point of contact is the woman who brought me here to do prostitution in Kumasi.*

When asked to tell about some of the challenges in the prostitution, this was her response:

*STDS are major risk of which the idea of ever contracting haunts me, many clients who come to me sometimes insist on not using condom. In most cases too the condom tear in the process of having sex.*

On the question regarding safety of condom, she said she always checked the expiry date on all condoms. Apart from vaginal sex, she does not allow any form of sex.

She revealed to the researcher that she takes only JOY DADDY bitters, a local liquor to boost her appetite. She indicated she has only checked for her health status once. On her encounter with the law and the police, she said she has not witnessed a clamp down by the police on their activities before. On the question of their security, she said: *When anyone of us confronts a recalcitrant customer we have our own watchdogs who will come to our rescue and confront such clients. I have however not encountered violent client so far.*

### **Respondent C - Comfort**

The third participant, Respondent C otherwise known as Comfort gave her age as 30years and told the researcher he has been doing the prostitution business for almost one year.

When she was asked to describe her life history in detail, this was her narration:

*I have two children from a previous marriage which hit the rocks or failed.  
Both of my parents died during my childhood and so I had to stay with my*



*aunt. I went through hardship and difficult moments during childhood. I only attended school to class 4 and dropped out.*

When she was further asked to describe how she came to experience prostitution, her account was this:

*I took loan to trade in onions. Unfortunately the business did not thrive and I ran into a loss and could not service the loan. I had no one to support me too. A friend then recommended prostitution to me that it was a very lucrative business. I came from Koforidua in the Eastern region to engage in prostitution in Kumasi.*

When the researcher demanded to know whether she expresses any acceptance of her work, this was her explanation:

*I am not proud of this work. People who pass by this place look at me with a judging eyes and that makes me feel bad and useless. For such people they may be lucky in the sense that they may have a financially sound and a supporting family unlike in my situation.* On the question regarding her relationship with the family, she revealed to the researcher that,

*None of my family members knows I am into prostitution work. I tell them I am into selling second-hand clothing. I receive advice from my family that I should come home and settle as soon as I make money. I am prepared to trade in the sale of 'pure water' if I am able to make enough money.*

Her prayer is that she is able to accumulate enough money so that she will exit the prostitution work.

On the question regarding her health status, she told the researcher that in every three months health personnel come to test their blood and check their health for them. On the challenges associated with the work, she told the researcher that:

*It is the fear of condom tearing in the process and also fear of the client who I cannot guarantee whether he is coming to harm me. My only precaution against such risk is to be careful, alert and pray that the client enjoys the service and leaves peaceful.*

She revealed that she does not take any alcoholic drink and smoke, when the researcher demanded to know the kind of drugs she takes to urge her on in her work.

According to her under no circumstances will she allow for sex without a condom. She told the researcher that from time to time an organization from Accra comes there to educate them on how to stay healthy and avoid contracting disease in their work. Likewise health personnel from South Suntreso come there to also educate us occasionally.

*I also visit the hospital because of the side effect of using condoms and gel lubricant excessively.*

On relationship with the security services especially the police whether she will report a case to them, she answered in the affirmative that she trust them to deal with her case without prejudice.

#### **Respondent D - Dorcas**

The Fourth participant, Respondent D otherwise known as Dorcas gave her age to the researcher as 55. She indicated to the researcher

*I didn't have any formal education in my life since childhood. At my very young age during childhood, I was adopted by my mother's sister who was barren. I was taken to Cote d'voire to stay with my aunt. At Cote d'voire I*

*was betrothed to a man in my teen age and I subsequently became the man's third wife with whom I have five children, who are all adult now.*

When the researcher asked her about how she came to experience prostitution, this was her account:

*I had little issue with my husband and her family which led to a separation in my marriage. Due to the marital disruption, I relocated to Krobo Odumase in the Eastern region of Ghana, from where I originate, hoping the man will come back for us to patch up and reunite. After some five years the man was not coming back and I also needed to fend for myself since all my siblings and relatives have their families and I couldn't burden them with my upkeep. So I made the decision myself to come to Kumasi to see some friends who were engaged in prostitution to give me a place to start the practice, since there were no other jobs readily available.*

Besides, she indicated she would not be doing prostitution if she was young. She hoped to quit prostitution very soon when she had accumulated enough money, thousands of Cedis, through prostitution so that she can save half at the bank and use half to start a trade.

When asked whether prostitution is a good job, this was Dorcas' reply:

*I will generally advise that this job is done temporary.*

On the question of whether the members in the community accord her any respect, she answered in the affirmative saying:

*My neighbours admire me because I am very old and had given birth to all my children before starting this work.*

When she was again asked by the researcher to find out whether her relatives including her children know about her work in Kumasi, she said

*I tell them I am into 'chop bar' business and I visit home frequently so that they do not wonder my where about for them to come searching for me and discover my business in Kumasi.*

She further confided in the researcher by revealing:

*The prostitution job I am into is a very dangerous and humiliating enterprise that you must do all it takes to hide it from significant others.* When the researcher asked her about the challenges in the practice, she said they are regularly attended to by doctors who come every two or three months to check their blood. The doctors supply them with durable condoms. When she was further asked about those who insist on not using condoms, she vehemently said

*My brother that is not possible, avoiding disease is very important.*

When probed to see whether she will permit sex without a condom if she was induce with a very attractive offer, she said no, she would not bulge.

*She said such a person is a suspicious character if he comes insisting on not using condom.*

On question regarding safety of condoms, she insisted that:

*At all times I am very alert on ensuring that the condom does not rupture.*

On the question of alcoholic beverages and smoking, she told the researcher she takes none.

When the researcher inquired to know whether she encounters violent client, she said for the six years she has been practising prostitution, she has not encountered any such characters.

She told the researcher they meet occasionally at Adum to have discussions on their work and their general well-beings.



On the question of whether the police occasionally hunt them because their job is illegal, she said:

*We are in good accord with the police. The only occasion we go to the police is when a client is attacked by robbers and we are called in as witnesses.*

#### **Respondent E – Esi**

The fifth participant, Respondent E otherwise known as Esi gave her age as 41 years from Somanya in the Eastern region. She narrated her background in a more detailed fashion as follows;

*I have been in the prostitution for about a month and it's my first time of selling sex. I was raised up by my grandmother due to ill health of my mother at the time of my birth and I did not know my father as well.*

*I schooled up to class 6 and have never been trained or acquired any skills through apprenticeship. I come from a family with a very weak financial standing and because of that I lack any form of financial support from my relatives.*

When the researcher interrogated her on her marital status, she revealed that

*I once lived with a man who promised to marry me. I later found out the man was married already to another woman. Because of that I quit the relationship with the man and returned to my village in the Eastern region. Whilst at my village, I got married to another man with whom I settled at Kade. All of a sudden, the man's family started being hostile to me and this eventually resulted in the marital breakdown between me and the man. I have four children who are living in Somanya.*

On the question regarding her pathway to prostitution her account was

*After my divorce I became financially distressed leading to taking a loan to trade in sandals. The sandals business did not do well. I ran into a lost. In my desperation, I was advised by a cousin who is in the business of prostitution that it was very viable and lucrative enterprise which can earn me enough money to pay off my debt.*

On the question of whether or not prostitution was satisfying and fulfilling, she explained that:

*even though it is an avenue which fetches a lot of cash given that for each 5 minutes encounter with a client the charge is 10cedis and I can service at least twenty customers on a good day, it is a very distressing, humiliating and demeaning enterprise and prostitution is a sin against God and fellow human being. I will not recommend it to anyone. I am doing this work temporary to raise money to service the loan and then exit the prostitution business*

When she was asked to describe her relationship with her neighbours, whether they accord her respect, she said she does not mingle with the neighbours but was living in harmony with her immediate neighbours who are not in the profession. She further stated:

*Deep down, I knows the public do not regard me, but it is even more damaging when news of my dealings in Kumasi get leaked in the town I come from. I am doing everything possible to avoid such occurrence. On that score I mostly decline answering telephone calls from my relatives who consistently call me to inquire what I am doing and when I am returning from Sefwi. I lied to them I am living in sefwi. I refuse to pick their calls because I don't know what to tell them again. My everyday's prayer is that*

*no acquaintance or town folk from my village catch me in this work and send the news of my affairs back home.*

She wishes to earn enough money quickly so that she can exit and do not intend to make prostitution her regular work.

On the question of knowing her health status, she confessed that she has not checked for any disease upon starting this work. When she was asked about her awareness on hepatitis, syphilis, she showed ignorance in the knowledge of these diseases but revealed

*I only have problem with only candidiasis and high blood pressure.*

On the question of the risks involved in her work, she showed the researcher a stock of condoms and gels as lubricant which she said she religiously use to avoid getting hurt and contracting disease. With regards to condom rupturing, she however confessed:

*Condom bursting is very common and I have experienced it on numerous occasions. Some clients deliberately burst it in the act. What I do under such circumstances when I discover the condom is burst is to immediately push the customer aside. Yet other customers come offering more to have unprotected intercourse but I don't agree because no amount of money can save me if contract AIDS.*

When pressed by the researcher to reveal the condition in which she will permit unprotected sex with a customer, she was persistent in her answer;

*the only way would be knowing the health status of the customer by going for a STDs test with him.*

On the issue of drugs that she takes in the course of her work, she revealed she only takes soft drinks.

The researcher asked her to know whether she expresses any acceptance about her work, her answer was this:

*Brother, occasionally I gets depressed and melancholic a lot and sometimes cry because for all the years that I have lived, if this is the kind of work I have to resort to for a financial relief at this time, then you will agree it is very depressing for me. (Her eyes were full of tears at this point when the researcher asked the question )*

When asked whether she has ever suffered violence in the hands of customers, her answer was that:

*From time to time, there come customers who try to outwit us with counterfeit money and when we protest, it sometimes results in scuffle. Yet, others come who are very drunk or reeking of wee and this makes them take very long time in ejaculating. When such persons are told their time is up, it sometimes leads to scuffles between us and such clients. On the relationship with the police, she said she can confidently report cases of assault to the police without any constraint. She revealed that the police rarely carry out raid on them because they do not publicly solicit.*

#### **Respondent F – Fransisca**

Respondent F otherwise known as Fransisca told the researcher that she was 27 years old and originates from Nigeria. He was born into a family of three siblings. Both of his parents are alive and living in Nigeria. When the researcher asked her to tell him about her childhood experiences, this was her narration:

*During my childhood days, my father's elder sister who didn't have any child of her own, requested for me to be given to her for training. I was very little when she adopted me. During my stay with her in another town, she died. Meanwhile they didn't inform my parents in the village. After her death another woman from the compound adopted me to train me but she*



*didn't take me to school. She used to fry fish and she will give it to me to hawk. I was then selling sachet water. I stayed on the street and know everything on the street. Later my parents heard of her death and came to pick me back to the village. They enrolled me into basic school at a very late age. Gradually I was able to complete secondary school.*

*After my completion of secondary school I realise my parents could not further my education beyond that level since they were very poor. But I was a little matured so didn't want to bother them. I told them I wanted to go to Lagos to start life and I was given the permission. So I went to Lagos to work at a beer parlour. When I had saved little money working as bartender I came back to my village. It was there I met one of my 'area sister' (friend) who told me of a certain 'connection' woman who can help me travel outside to work. So she linked me to this 'connection' woman who organized my trip to Togo which was the initial destination I was supposed to work. I came to Togo with the promise to work in a bar but upon arrival I was convinced to come to Ghana with her. I was excited about the idea of travelling outside Nigeria. Once I arrived in Ghana with her, I realised this is the kind of work (hustling) my mates do for a living. When you start narrating your unfortunate circumstances in life your colleagues will tell you theirs and you realise your condition is even better. Out of desperation I realise there was nothing that I can do. Meanwhile I needed to pay off the woman for the cost she has incurred in bringing me here.*

*All of us here, I can tell you we are never happy. Some of us here are orphans. This is not a permanent job. This job is a means to an end.*

*The community within which we live relate normal with us, there is no discrimination against us. I once went to do my NHIS and when the woman realised I was a Nigerian she gave me a special protocol over the other Ghanaians. Here in Ghana everyone knows the Nigerians here this the kind of work we do, yet I was given a special treatment.*

When the researcher asked to know the kind of relationship existing between her and the family, she revealed she is in constant touch with them in Nigeria. On the question of whether her family know this the work she does, she responded:

*How can they know, in Nigeria we forbid this kind of work. If you go back home and you dress provocatively they will suspect this is the kind of work you came to do in Ghana.*

She revealed that she support home regularly from her earning especially during festive seasons. On the question of her motivation, she said:

*If you haven't reached your destination and you are in a boat you don't stop, but you keep going. I want to open a big shop from my saving in this work, that even when my future husband hears this is the kind of work I used to do, he will understand or when my people hear I came to do this they will know I didn't come to Ghana for nothing.*

The Table 3.1 below presents the summary of the respective lived experiences of the selected sex workers in the study.

**Table 3.1: Summary Table of Sex Workers' Experiences**  
**Socio-demographic characteristics**

<i><b>NAME</b></i>	<i><b>Akosua</b></i>	<i><b>Blessing</b></i>	<i><b>Comfort</b></i>	<i><b>Dorcas</b></i>	<i><b>Esi</b></i>	<i><b>Fransisca</b></i>
<i><b>AGE</b></i>	28	25	30	55	41	27
<i><b>ORIGIN</b></i>	<i>Manya Krobo</i>	<i>Somanya</i>	<i>Koforidua</i>	<i>Odumasi krobo</i>	<i>Somany</i>	<i>Nigeria</i>
<i><b>GUARDIANSHIP</b></i>	<i>Raised by grandmother</i>	<i>Both parents dead. Raised up by grandmother</i>	<i>Both parents dead. Stayed with the aunt during childhood</i>	<i>Adopted by her aunt at childhood</i>	<i>Raise up by the grandmother due the ill-health of the mother</i>	<i>Adopted and raised up by aunt at childhood</i>
<i><b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b></i>	<i>Class 5</i>	<i>JSS 1</i>	<i>Class 4</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Class 6</i>	<i>Completed SSS</i>

## LIVED EXPERIENCES

<b>REASON FOR ENTERING PROSTITUTION</b>	<i>Financial problems, support her sister in jail, on a recommendation by a friend.</i>	<i>Initiated into sex work by the woman who brought her to Kumasi</i>	<i>Poverty, financial indebtedness, recommendation by a friend</i>	<i>Failed marriage. Poverty and the quest to be self-dependent</i>	<i>Deep financial difficulty resulting from failed sandals business</i>	<i>Poverty at home, the quest to start be independent. Trafficked to Ghana.</i>
<b>SOCIETAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SEX WORKER</b>	<i>Nobody respect you, I do not mix with the community</i>	<i>Live in harmony with the neighbour</i>	<i>People look at me with judging eyes and it makes me feel worthless</i>	<i>Lives in harmony with her neighbours</i>	<i>I have Cordial relationship with my neighbours but I know they don't respect me</i>	<i>Live in harmony and enjoy the hospitality of the public</i>
<b>FAMILY RELATIONSHIP/ AWARENESS</b>	<i>Nobody knows. I have child with my aunt who I send occasionally</i>	<i>Nobody knows. I have a child I am taking care of from this</i>	<i>Nobody knows</i>	<i>Nobody knows</i>	<i>Nobody knows</i>	<i>Nobody knows. I support my family occasionally</i>
<b>INCIDENCE OF CONDOM TEAR/RISK</b>	<i>Condom tear is common occurrence</i>	<i>Condom tear is Common occurrence</i>	<i>Condom burst is Common occurrence</i>	<i>Have not experienced condom tear</i>	<i>Condom tear is Common occurrence</i>	<i>Condom tear is Common occurrence</i>



<b>INCIDENCE OF SEX WITHOUT CONDOM</b>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>never</i>	<i>never</i>	<i>never</i>	<i>Never</i>
<b>CLIENT VIOLENCE</b>	<i>Not yet</i>	<i>Not yet</i>	<i>Not yet</i>	<i>Not yet</i>	<i>Not yet</i>	<i>not yet</i>
<b>INCIDENCE OF POLICE RAID/ HARASSMENT</b>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>never</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>never</i>	<i>Never</i>
<b>ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROFESSION</b>	<i>Humiliating, demeaning</i>	<i>I accept the work since it helps me meet my needs</i>	<i>I am not proud of the work</i>	<i>Prostitution is very dangerous job and humiliating. It should be done temporarily</i>	<i>I feel sad that this is the work</i>	

*SOURCE: Author's summary of sex workers experiences, April 2015*

#### **4.1 DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDING**

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the themes that emerged relative to the lived experiences of the sex workers who participated in the study. The key findings will be integrated with the literatures in order to create contextualised picture and a background to enhance a deeper understanding of the issues. The themes that will be discussed have been organized under two broad concepts: Socio-demographic background and General experiences of the Sex worker.

#### **4.2 Socio-demographic background of the sex workers**

The responses captured under the socio-demographic characteristics adequately addressed how they came to experience prostitution. Thus, in exploring their sociodemographic characteristics' the emergent patterns in the various responses were useful in the overall appreciation of the demographic data of the participants and their general life history as well as their pathway into prostitution:

The ages of the women interviewed ranged from 25 to 55 years. Only one of the participant was a Nigerian with the remaining five (5) being Ghanaians. Time spent working as sex workers ranged from three weeks to six years, revealing that the women experience's in prostitution varied dramatically. Low level of education was very conspicuous in the lives of the sex workers interviewed. All but one of the respondents had completed secondary level education. The educational level for the respondents, were on the average, at the basic level. In other words, four of them dropped out of at the upper primary, only one completed secondary education and one respondent did not have any formal classroom education in her life. It also emerged from the findings that the respondent lacked any form of skills acquired through apprenticeship to make them employable. The limited education coupled with their lack of skills through apprenticeship, have placed them in difficult situation to

meet the challenge of urban life or establish social network for these sex workers. This finding is line with the study conducted by Boston University's Center for Global and Health and Development (CGHD) and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and confirms the position that most of the young women engaged in sex work lacked education and income\_earning opportunities and many perceived leaving school early as a significant turning point in their lives.

Another intriguing finding on their socio-demographic background was the fact that five of the respondents revealed that they had migrated from the eastern part of the Ghana, to Kumasi under the auspices of a facilitator for the purpose of prostitution. It is very intriguing in the sense that there must be certain peculiar conditions within their home environment which probable predisposed them to prostitution. This finding corroborates UNAIDS(2009) report that, these sex workers migrate from rural areas or small towns to an urban setting, either because they were procured by brothels or pimps or as job seekers. In addition to this 'voluntary,' economically-driven migration to urban centres, girls and women are increasingly trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.

None of the sex workers interviewed however revealed that their family or relations in their hometown from where they migrated are aware of their deeds in Kumasi or supports them in their work and this tells how sex work is frowned on in our society such that those engaged in actually do everything possible to keep it a secret. The findings revealed that they all have managed to keep their activities secret from their people. These migrant female sex workers were mostly concerned about their friends and family members knowing about their work, and the shame this would bring.

Again the study also revealed that majority of them did not grow up in homes with their biological parents and therefore may have been deprived proper parental upbringing. This was either due to death of one or both parents or the neglect of a parent at childhood. This became evident during the interview in which some respondents said: *“At a very young age in my childhood, I was adopted by my mother’s sister who was barren. She took me to Cote d’voire to stay with the her. In Cote d’voire I was betrothed to a man at my teen age and subsequently became the man’s third wife”- Dorcas*

*“Both parents passed away during my childhood and so I had to stay with my aunt. I went through hardship during my childhood. Life was not easy for me at all’ - Blessing*

*I was brought up by my grandmother and that I did not know my mother nor father until recently. My father neglected her responsibilities towards me. - Akosua*

These unfortunate situations of the prostitutes confirms Mathews’(2008) three-stage model in which he labelled the first the predisposition and marginalization and facilitation where childhood deprivation and family disintegration accounted for the girls’ entry into prostitution. In the interviews, all the six respondents did not have the benefit of parental upbringing which was due mostly to a death of parents or/and were raised by their grandmother. Effectively this can be termed family disintegration. Because of their circumstances they were in effect deprived of the proper care, traditional family love, values and training biological parents inculcate into their children. The researcher’s finding was also in consonance with the abandonment theory ( Dalla, 2006) in which children experienced either literal abandonment which is manifested in physical abandonment where children are left to fend for themselves at an early age or symbolic abandonment which is experienced as emotional and psychological neglect. According to O’Neil (2001)



many sex workers report that their parents died when they were children or that their parents literally left them to fend for themselves. On the socio-economic front, the findings on their background revealed that the participants were all brought up in poverty-stricken families which accounted for them becoming school dropped outs along the line, mostly at the upper primary. Same economic reasons dominated or were given as reason for entry into prostitution. All of the sex workers alluded to their difficult financial family background and the fact that they had no other source of financial support in their life and that prostitution satisfied their desire to raise capital to start a legitimate business or to pay off their debt. This is illustrated by the statements below:

*With the death of both parents, I don't have any source of financial support.*

*I am in prostitution so that I can raise enough capital to start a legitimate business and leave prostitution. I fend for my child from prostitution.*

*I come from a very poor family background and went through very difficult childhood days. Both of my parents died when I was very young. I took a loan to go into trading onion which did not thrive. With no source of financial support I was advised by a friend to do this work to raise money and pay my debt, and also to start my business*

*My sister is serving term in jail and I was advised by a colleague sex worker that engaging in commercial sex work will enable me raise enough money to support her.*

This finding also agrees with the study by Bucardo (2004), in which sex workers reported that financial gain was a primary motivating factor for their entry into sex work (Bucardo et al., 2004). Prostitutes are seen as innovative persons who turn to illegitimate means like commercial vice in order to earn money when legitimate means are insufficient or blocked (Merton, 1957).

The findings from the interview also showed that five of the respondents have child/children thus bringing additional responsibilities on them in terms of catering for their children and themselves, and thereby confirming UNAIDS(2009) report that majority of these sex workers are expected to contribute to family income or are commonly the sole supporters of their family.

According to the researcher's finding prostituting was very lucrative business; the sex workers made very good money from their activities on a daily basis. A respondent revealed that an encounter with a client generally goes for a rate of Ten (10) Ghana Cedis which usually lasted less than ten minutes. According to the respondents' account usually clients who wished to enjoy good sexual encounter will have to pay extra more. The GHC10 which last for less than ten minutes is to enable them solicit for more customers because for them time is money. She revealed that on a good day she usually gets about twenty customers and even now that there is slight economic hardship in the country, even though it has affected her earning, notwithstanding, she makes good earnings from her activities.

On the marital status, three (3) of the participants out six (6) had suffered marital breakdown or separation and were faced with the realities of having to survive the difficulty of living without the financial support of partner. Five(5) out the six(6) of the same participants had child/children but only one participant was staying with her child with another indicating her aunt had adopted her child but she occasionally send home some money for her upkeep. This finding is in line with literature in which studies reported that between one and two-thirds of FSW were divorced or separated. In a large study in

Senegal, 63% of sex workers were divorced and cited consequent economic factors and lack of occupational choice as reasons for entering sex work. Although only reported by a handful of studies (mainly in east and southern Africa), the evidence suggests that typically more than two-thirds of FSW have children and sometimes also adult dependents. Additional children may be born in the course of sex.

### **4.3 General experiences of the Sex Worker**

The findings also revealed that sex workers are confronted with major challenges and risks in their quest to eke a living from their activities. The findings of their experiences are subsumed under the following headings

#### **4.3.1 Risk factors associated with prostitution**

##### **4.3.1.1 Incidence of condom rupturing**

In the interview the researcher made a very profound revelation from the sex workers. The respondents demonstrated a high awareness and knowledge of STIs and showed determination to avoid contracting disease in the course of their work. The use of condoms including gel lubricants was very high among them and they were not ever willing to compromise the use of condom under any form of inducement. When the researcher asked, 'have you ever done a sex with a client without a condom', the answers were in the nay for all the respondents in the separate interviews.

Even when the researcher probed, to determine conditions under which they would allow sex with a client without condom they answered by saying nothing will ever let them compromise the use of condom in their encounters with a client. When the researcher tried to probe still further by asking whether a healthy looking person who continuously

patronised their services came pleading to have sex without condom with huge payment, the answer from two of the respondent were:

*No amount of payment can save my life if I contracted a disease and my life is more important;- Akosua*

*I am in this work temporary for a financial relief to enable me my loan and so I don't*

*want to go home any disease, besides money cannot buy my life. -Esi*

But one respondent however revealed that some sex workers intentionally ensured that the condom is ruptured

*I know of a sex worker who will intentionally let the condom rupture so she can demand from you extra money for putting her life at risk but me nothing will ever let me agree to a sex without condom- Esi*

However, when the researcher asked whether, they have ever experienced condom rupturing in the course of servicing a client, all the sex workers answered that it was not an uncommon incident and that it happens once a while in their encounters. This is illustrated in the quotes below:

*Yes it has happen to me but I am always alert and usually touch the penis so that the moment it burst, I won't allow u to ejaculate into me. I ll immediately push you off me.*

*Some clients will demand to do you from the back and will intentionally remove it. But I am always alert.*

Their general fallacies were that once the client did not ejaculate, it means the semens did not come into contact with them during the rupturing, or either they are helpless under that inevitable situation and so careless about the consequence of that. A little contact with the semens of a client is all it takes to contract a disease a client may be carrying. It is evidently



clear that they are conscious of STIs and will insist on condom use but from their responses that alone do not insulate them from the dangers of getting infected from clients since they generally admitted that incidence of condom rupturing was rife and a hazard in their job.

The findings give credence to the reported cases of HIV incidence in Ghana. For example, it supports the study finding that the Ashanti region has the fourth highest prevalence at 3.1%. Because prevalence is over 1%, the epidemic is considered to be generalized but it is also concentrated within high risk populations. Among sex workers, 2011 prevalence was 12.9%, compared to 2.1% among pregnant women and 2.2% in the general female population. At 13% HIV prevalence among FSW, the Ashanti region mirrors the national median and has the second highest prevalence among FSW following Accra.

#### **4.3.1.2 Violence against the sex worker**

No cases of violence by clients were reported by the respondents. Instances of clients trying to short-change them by giving counterfeits money and also scuffles resulting from customers who take long in ejaculating, and refuse to pay more when they are reminded their time is up, was reported. One respondent reported that mostly clients who come for their services reek of alcohol and smoke (weed) and this makes them last in ejaculating. According to two of the respondents, these clients normally demanded their money back insisting they have not ejaculated forgetting that the encounter is termed 'short-time'. One respondent also reported that some unscrupulous clients also tend to steal their personal stuffs when they are not vigilant. Notwithstanding, none reported any cases of violence perpetrated by clients to herself. This finding reveals that sex workers operate under a potentially violent environment, and may be predisposed to dangers as all sorts of clients including those with dubious and criminal characters visit them and there are no proven

security mechanisms in place to screen these clients. Notwithstanding, the findings confirms Fick( 2005) sex workers in brothels report being less vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse but are often controlled by managers of the brothel. Rather, prostitutes who work on the street are more vulnerable to victimisation and abuse.

#### **4.3.2 The sex worker, the police and the law**

The respondents reported no instances of police harassment or clampdown on them at the brothels but rather indicated they will feel no impediments to report cases of crime or assault on them to the police. The sex workers had their own interim security measures. The community watchdogs provided them security in cases of problems with their clients.

#### **4.3.3 Stigmatization and its effect on the sex workers**

Three of the sex workers revealed in their responses that they do not feel stigmatized by their neighbours. They told the researcher that they were actually living in harmony with their neighbours in the community. The remaining three however told the researcher that they hardly go out or mingle with the members of the community except the clients.

Indeed one revealed that deep down her heart she knew the community did not respect her. Apart from responses of the three participants who indicated they were living in harmony with their neighbours, the researcher really went through a lot of difficulty before getting the participants for the interview. A lot of the sex workers that were approached for the study declined participation and it was obvious the reason had to do with stigmatization. The issues of stigmatization reared its head again when the participants indicated they do not want their family relation and friends from their hometown to know the kind of work they do in Kumasi. Indeed issue of stigmatization manifested when one respondent began

to wipe her tears in the course of the interview. The sex workers admitted to the researcher that indeed prostitution was very dehumanising and humiliating but were in it temporary to raise money to enable them come out of their economic predicament. This is captured by the respondents' quotes:

*I told my people I am in Sefwi and they keep calling me to know when I am coming back home. Now I don't pick the calls again because I don't know what to say.*

*I told my family that I am in Kumasi and I am into chop bar business. I visit home frequently because I don't want them to think I am lost so that they will come searching for me and find out what I do. Sex work is very humiliating enterprise and demeaning.*

*I avoid going out too much to avoid been seen by an acquaintance or my town folks*

According to Goffman(1986) hiding and Lying About Her Prostitution Identity Result in Stress, Anxiety, and Exhaustion(Having to hide her identity engenders unwanted psychological stress. In addition, having to constantly assess the social situations the participant is in requires her to be vigilant about whom she can interact with and what she can say. Continual vigilance, with its concern about the possibility of being condemned, generates anxiety and fear of exposure, which greatly limits her social activities.

#### **4.3.4 Relationship between Sex Work and Drug Abuse**

In the findings by the researcher, no correlation was established between prostitution and drug abuse. Apart from two of the participants who indicated that they take 'Joy Daddy' as appetizers and to aid their regular menstrual cycle, the remaining four indicated they do

not take any form of alcoholic beverage. This finding is at variance with the claim that prostitution and drug use have long been synonymous with one another (Mathews, 2008) probably due to the sample size of this study. It agrees however with the suggestion that, the nature of the sex work locale itself may, in part, predict the drinking patterns of FSW and consequently, their HIV risk behaviour. Indeed some studies FSW have been found to deliberately eschew alcohol while working, however, in order to “maintain control over themselves”.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter presents summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research, beginning with an overview of the research methodology.

#### **5.1 Overview of the Research Method**

The main purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the lived experiences of selected prostitutes in the Kumasi. In other words the study sought to describe their childhood experiences through to adulthood including their pathway into sex work and their experiences while living as sex workers. The purposive sampling technique was used



to select the six participants in this study. The main tool for data collection data was the interview guide the interview was also recorder with a tape recorder for later transcription and analysis of the data.

## **5.2 Summary of key Findings**

The women in the study had all experienced challenging circumstances in their life. Economic exigencies and desperation were attributed and cited as reason for their entry into sex work. The researcher found out that the reasons adduced for resorting to sex work included the desire to be self-dependent given the fact that they needed to survive on their own since according to them, they lacked any support from their families. Two of the participants had experienced divorced in their life which ultimately meant they found their own means of survival.

On their educational background, apart from one participant who was able to complete secondary education, four of the participant, had their education ending at the basic level, whilst one did not have the benefit of classroom education. Their low level of education generally meant that their employability were limited. The predicament of the sex workers was compounded by the fact that they had not also acquired any skills through apprenticeship of any form. As a result, prostitution became a readily viable option to help them meet their needs as well as in some instances, that of their family.

The peculiar and difficult circumstance in terms of their life chances at becoming successful economically, as given in the above-mentioned reasons, made the sex workers become vulnerable to exploitation by third parties or traffickers, as it were. Four of the sex workers were actually brought to Kumasi courtesy some unnamed women, to actually

practise prostitution. They were actually expected to pay off the cost of their transportation and more. The remaining two were convinced to join the industry by their friends about the lucrative nature of sex work. They all considered being in prostitution as transient or a temporary measure for them to accumulate enough capital to set up their own business and then quit the prostitution work.

From the study, it became evident that the prostitutes are not stigmatised by the community. One plausible reason is that they do not even mingle or mix with the community within which they operated. Apart from their clients and traders who sell to them, they only mingle and mix with their colleague sex workers and so did not have a broad social life. However, in the study, the participants made various admissions and allusions to the effect that sex work was a very humiliating and dehumanizing enterprise. Because of the issues of stigma in their work, they made every conscious effort that news of their deeds in Kumasi do not leak to their hometowns and places from where they came.

Apparently, five of the participants had migrated from the Eastern Region of Ghana specifically around Somanya and Manya Krobo to Kumasi for the purpose of prostitution. The remaining one had been brought from Nigeria by a third party for same. In the study, it came to light that not using condom use was non-negotiable option for the sex workers as far as clients' demands were concerned. In fact they indicated that no amount of inducement could compromise their determination to avoid contracting diseases through the non-use of condom. However, even though this might prove to be true, the very nature of their work is such that they are not insulated from contracting disease as they admitted that condom rupturing was not an uncommon incidence in prostitution. It takes just a contact with a little semen of a client in case of a of condom rupturing, to contract disease from a client.

The study established from the participants that none of them was raised by biological parents. In other words, all the participants in this study did not have the benefit of growing through the care of their own parents. This point is critical in understanding why most of them alluded to difficult experiences including having no assistance from their family. It also may explain their limited educational status since they were deprived of the needed parental care and investment in their life as they were deprived of parental care early in their life.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

The research recommends the following based on the findings uncovered:

There is the need for a concerted effort by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare as well as NGOs to fashion out and implement targeted educational policy or scholarship for the deprived communities in Ghana especially in the Eastern region. The government must intensify action on free compulsory education up to secondary and vocational level to keep the vulnerable young girls in school in order to equip the knowledge and vocational skills to enhance their employability.

Social and welfare programmes such as Livelihood empowerment accelerated programmes (LEAP) must be overhauled and made accessible to deserving economically disadvantaged persons in deprived communities in Ghana. It must be intensified specifically in Somanya

and Manya Krobo to stem the tide of migration of vulnerable young women who are being trafficked to Kumasi to engage in sex work.

It is hoped that the study will galvanised the government to institute agencies to regulate the activities of these prostitutes with the aim of improving the safety, health and wellbeing of these vulnerable women. For this to be effective, sex work must be decriminalized. These agencies including the Ghana Aids Commission must reach-out to the sex workers with education on how to stay healthy and proper way of using condoms to prevent cases of rupturing which were reported widely.

The government and other stakeholders must embark on rescue campaign to facilitate the exit of many of the sex workers who wish to stop the work. This is against the backdrop that many of the participants' indication that prostituting was only a temporary means to accumulate capital to do start a legitimate business. The government ought to help them to resettle and integrated into the society by meeting their need for jobs and income and for livelihood as oppose to working as a prostitute.

Last but not least, through the publication of this work, it is expected to shed more light on the experiences and plights of sex workers and instigate further studies in the living experiences of sex workers.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, sex work is inherently risky given the widespread reported incidence of condom tearing in the course of providing service to clients. The women involved in this business are largely victims of circumstance as the finding revealed that all them have indeed gone through challenges moments in their upbringing thus resorted to living as sex service provider as a means to escapes from dire life situation. Poverty and lacked of higher education do really conspire in creating prostitutes out these otherwise innocent women.



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# KNUST

## **APPENDIX**

**KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,**

**KUMASI**

**COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**A STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED BROTHEL BASED**

**SEX WORKERS IN THE KUMASI METROPOLITAN ASSEMBLY IN**

**ASHANTI REGION, GHANA**

**By**

**BRIGHT OWUSU- ANSAH (B.A HONS. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK)**

**SUPERVISORS:**

**DR. KWAKU YEBOAH**

**MS. HARRIET TAKYI**

I am Bright Owusu Ansah, a Postgraduate student of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, KNUST. I am conducting this research as part of requirement for the award of a Master of Art Degree. Your participation is key to the success of this work since the study involves you and your work, it will go a long way to increase the understanding and the awareness of your plight. As such I would appreciate your indulgence and voluntary cooperation to interview you. Your responses will not be disclosed to any person. I do appreciate your permission for this interview with you.

“Thank you for participating in this research interview. I am interested in your lived experience as a sexual service provider and how it means to you. The interviews will cover issues such as how prostitution is experienced, how client encounters are managed, and the effect prostitution has on relationships with your significant others, the community as well as your encounters with social health service provider and the police, and to know how these relationships affect you.

## **A STUDY OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED PROSTITUTES IN**

### **KUMASI**

#### **Interview Guide**

##### ***Socio demographic profile of participant***

1. Participant(anonymous)
2. Age
3. Place of birth
4. Years in sex work
5. Family background(probe and discuss)
6. Level of education
7. Skills acquisition

8. Nationality
9. Marital status
10. No. of children

***Section A: Life history of the sexual service provider***

11. Explore

- The life history of the sex worker up until she became sex worker
- When and how she became a sexual service provider( initiation and reasons for entry)
- Whether she in any positive way express acceptance or pride in their work

***Section B: Public attitude, Stigmatization, and effects***

12. Discuss with participant

- What are their actual experiences with social stigma against them?
- What does it mean to be stigmatised?
- How do they manage presence of stigmatisation in their interaction with others?

***Section C: The sex worker and the family***

13. Discuss with participant

- The nature of relationship existing between the family and her
- The level of support she enjoy from family relations
- Whether she supports her family from her work

***Section D: Potential health risks in Sex work***



14. Find out from the participant

- Whether she knows her health status
- The inherent risks and challenges involved any in sex work
- The precaution she adopts to guard against these risks if any
- Whether she has ever done sex with a customer without condom
- Conditions under which she allows sex without a condom with client
- If she uses drugs, the kind of drugs she uses, frequency relative to her work
- Existing relation if any, that exist between her and social and health service providers in relation to her work

***Section E: Encounter with the law***

Find out from participant

- Her encounter with the law and security forces
- Whether the law protects her in the case of abuse

**Thank you for sharing your story with me.**

**IN CASE OF QUERIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE DO NOT  
HESITATE TO CONTACT THE RESEARCHER 0243636171 OR**

**[apuzzykool1@gmail.com](mailto:apuzzykool1@gmail.com)**