



Research Article

Beyond Violence and Justice: The Transformative Role of Counselling for Survivors of Domestic Violence

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ABSTRACT

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Counselling service is essential for healing the emotional and psychological trauma of survivors of domestic violence (SDV). For this reason, the study explored the views of participants of the study on the transformative role of counselling for SDV. The instrumental case study was adopted. A theoretical sample was used to purposively select 23 participants which were made up of, three officials of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU), two counsellors and 18 SDVs. An interview guide was used to collect the data. The data was analysed using Open and selective coding and thematic content analysis. The findings indicated that counselling plays a transformative role for SDV through the use of counselling skills and techniques to heal psychological and emotional pain. Based on the findings, it is recommended that a counselling unit should be set up at all regional offices of DOVVSU, to provide counselling services to SDV for psychological and emotional recovery.

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1. Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) is a prevalent, deceptive, and dangerous crime. This is due to its frequent classification as a private family matter, yet it gives rise to a severe public health crisis that extends beyond the confines of the family unit. Domestic violence has been of national concern because of the effects it poses on the survivors and the nation at large (Aveli, 2022). Domestic violence is the occurrence of abuse within an intimate relationship, covering marriages, cohabitation, dating, and family connections, where one person is the perpetrator and the other is the survivor or victims (Martin, 2020). In addition to physical force, it also covers verbal and sexual threats that incite fear, anxiety, or discomfort, as well as stalking offenders. As seen, domestic violence has terrible effects on the sufferer as well as on society at large. In addition to causing people who are abused unimaginable anguish and suffering, it depletes the resources of the public, families, and businesses. Survivors of Domestic Violence (SDV) have been found to experience various negative emotions like post-victimization, trauma, and emotional and psychological distress. Victimization induces a lot of psychological and mental health issues (Gibbons, 2011; Raveesh et al., 2022).

The Ghanaian government passed the Domestic Violence Act (Act 732) on February 21, 2007, in response to the pervasiveness and deadly repercussions of domestic violence (Anang). This legislation has contributed to addressing domestic

violence in the county. Significantly, the Act recognizes that victims and offenders of domestic abuse do not have to be married or related by blood. In addition to the more traditional notions of sexual and physical violence, its definition of domestic violence encompasses a variety of kinds of economic abuse. The Act delineates a comprehensive legal framework for the prevention and protection against domestic violence, as well as offering a working definition of the term. The National Policy and Plan of Action (NPPOA), created by the former Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in 2008, came after the Domestic Violence Act 732. Under the guidance of the Domestic Violence Secretariat (Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection), the NPPOA outlines the precise roles of important players in the efficient implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. The government is making efforts with all of these steps to reduce or eliminate the DV (Yalley, 2022).

While government intervention in domestic violence (DV) cases through legal measures can provide a form of justice and protection for survivors, it's crucial to acknowledge that justice alone may not completely heal the psychological pain associated with DV (Cenk, 2019). When survivors are not cared for and provided with the required support, negative emotions are more likely to develop into post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health disorder which will affect the general well-being of the individuals. Again, when they are treated harshly by family members, friends and other systems, they become depressed, anxious, and lose faith in all support systems. This ultimately has

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negative implications for productive and national development. Providing professional counselling services to SDV may help guide against most of the negative effects of domestic violence (DV) and also facilitate the emotional and psychological well-being of SDV.

The role of Counselling services is to help in the healing process of SDV. The emotional and psychological well-being of the SDV is largely dependent on counselling services. In the absence of such service, what will be the emotional and psychological state of SDV?

Additionally, in instances where abusers face imprisonment as mandated by the law, what happens to the emotional and psychological distress of SDV? This study aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue by exploring the perspectives of officials from DOVVSU, counsellors, and SDV regarding the Transformative Role of Counselling for SDV. It aims to investigate the impact of counselling, beyond the realms of the incident of violence and justice, to identify its influence on the recovery of survivors.

In this study, all persons who have suffered from domestic abuse/ violence are referred to as Survivors of Domestic Violence (SDV) and not victims, because the fact that they still live mean they survived.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to explore the views of DOVVSU officials, counsellors and SDV on the role of counselling in the recovery process of SDV. The study seeks to explore:

The views of survivors of domestic violence, DOVVSU officials, counsellors on the role of counselling service in their recovery process of SDV.

1.2 Research questions

The study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How does survivors of domestic violence view the transformative role of for Survivors of Domestic Violence?
2. How do DOVVSU officers view the transformative role of for Survivors of Domestic Violence?
3. What are the views of counsellors on the transformative role of for Survivors of Domestic Violence?
4. What are the views of participants on counselling services being part of DOVVSU?

2. Literature review

2.1 Domestic Violence (DV)

Domestic violence is any action or conduct that is intended to obtain control and influence on a close relation (Kiani et al., 2021; Raveesh et al., 2022). For an act of abuse or violence to be referred to as domestic there should be a close relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Usually, there is a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim with the victims being reliant on the perpetrator. The violence can be physical, sexual economical, emotional, and psychological (Kiani et al., 2021; Raveesh et al., 2022). The literature suggests that women experience more abuse from their male counterparts than men do from their female counterparts, it is viewed that even pregnancy does not protect women from abuse (Matlin, 2011). DV can result in a lot of personality disorders such as anxiety, depression, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, antisocial behavior, suicidal behavior low self-esteem, and emotional and psychological distress. However, women who have been abused are of the view that the emotional and psychological distress from abuse is the most

destructive component of the abusive experience (Gibbons, 2011; Matlin, 2011). The role of counselling is to assist in the healing process or reduce the emotional and psychological distress resulting from the violence and increase the state of well-being and self-esteem. But the issues are whether or not SDV shares the same view of counsellors is readily available and whether accessing the services.

Domestic violence is said to be a cycle of four phases which are building tension, an incident of abuse, reconciliation, and calmness (Both et al., 2019; Radford et al., 2019). In the first phase, disagreement may occur which may result in the building of tension. The next stage which is the incident, is where the abuser commits the actual act. The acts may include, hitting, slapping, and many more. These acts may result in physical, emotional, or psychological distress. The incident phase is often the most dangerous phase of the cycle where perpetrators try to dominate. "The excuse stage" is another term for the reconciliation phase, which is the third stage of the cycle. In this stage, the abuser may express regret for their actions. At this point, the incident may have been forgiven, and for a while, everything appeared to be returning to normal or even better than it had been. Nevertheless, this stage's serenity is fleeting. After a while, the tension starts to rise once more. The abuser stops being sincere in their apologies and makes no more promises. Soon after, there is another violent episode, and so on, in an endless loop (Fife & Schrager, 2012). The continual stay of survivors in abusive relationships could be attributed to the cyclic nature of DV which gives false hopes to both survivors and perpetrators. The survivors feel and think that because there is always a period of reconciliation and calmness, there is a likelihood of extinction of the abuse. The perpetrators, on the other hand, feel it is normal part and usual for people in a relationship to commit or experience some form of DV. These misconceptions could be transformed through counselling.

The Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) is tasked with a number of duties, including offering the general public free services; defending the rights of the weak against all types of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, socioeconomic, or harmful cultural practices; and preventing and prosecuting abuse. The Unit also refers victims to other agencies for specialized assistance and medical care. The Department of Social Welfare's social workers, clinical psychologists, and counsellors receive the majority of referrals (Akonor & Okorley, 2021; Mutari, 2018). A successful execution of this mandate is dependent on both material and human resources. The human resources should not only be police officers who have been trained to combat crime and offer support but counsellors who can also assist in the area of emotional and psychological stability of SDV. To offer emotional and psychological support needs professional training, skills and techniques to be efficient and effective. In the study Counselling Sexually Abused Children: Lessons from Ghana and Zambia (Edoh-Torgah & Matafwala, 2022). According to the survey, some victims expressed relief that their abuses were being recorded and taken seriously. However, power disparities and a lack of formal counselling training impede police officers' attempts to both prevent domestic violence and rehabilitate sexually violent individuals. According to the study's findings, additional work is required in the areas of individual and group therapy in order to provide comprehensive and successful counselling, even though officers employ specific skills and offer a particular type of trauma counselling. The study was unable to demonstrate how counselling fits into any of these. Once more, Agbitor (2012) discovered that a number of factors, including the DOVVSU's practice of conducting multiple interviews with clients, violating client confidentiality, interviewing child victims

of violence in front of their parents, the unit's insignificant effort to address the victims' psychosocial needs, and inadequate training and skill development, are all having an impact on the unit's ability to provide high-quality services. Professional counsellors, when, introduced can help take care of most of the factors listed by Agbitor, (2012) as factors affecting DOVSSU in carrying out its constitutional mandate. Hence the need for the study. The literature on DV centres on causes, effects, perpetrators, reasons for the violence/ abuse, challenges, DOVSSU's role and lack of resources to address issues of DV (Azhar et al., 2012; Chhabra, 2018; Hajnasiri et al., 2016; Naz & Malik, 2018; Özcan et al., 2016). The role of counselling in the transformative process of SDV cannot be overemphasised. Some researchers such as - Edoh-Torgah & Matafwala, 2022 and Agbitor, (2012) have contributed to the concept but it appears it has not received much attention by researchers.

2.2 Psychological and emotional Violence

The primary goal of all forms of violence and abuse appears to violate the integrity and dignity of another person, these actions include psychological and emotional components as well. Even while psychosocial and emotional abuse don't physically harm, they can nevertheless be upsetting and hurtful. It has an indirect impact on productivity and has an impact on the SDV's overall well-being (Both et al., 2019). Once more, verbal or physical violence can coexist with psychological violence (Cenk, 2019). The harm inflicted upon an individual who has experienced sexual assault or other forms of abuse may extend beyond the physical injuries sustained. The act of violence can cause psychological damage. The best people to handle this kind of damage are licensed counsellors. As previously mentioned, counselling's transforming purpose is to lessen the psychological and emotional pain brought on by violence while also boosting self-esteem and a sense of empowerment. According to Dokkedahl et al. (2019), psychological violence is thought to be the most prevalent type of intimate partner violence (IPV). This was revealed in their study, The Psychological Subtype of Intimate Partner Violence and Its Effect on Mental Health: Protocol for a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Again, Dokkedahl et al. (2022) found that psychological violence had strong correlations with mental health issues like PTSD, depression, and anxiety. They proposed that psychological abuse ought to be recognized as a serious kind of violence against one's intimate partner on par with physical and sexual abuse. The idea that psychologically painful experiences are significant risk factors for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is supported by their findings. Once more, the study discovered that, for female victims, coercive control was especially linked to PTSD, whereas emotional/verbal and dominance/isolation were more strongly correlated with sadness. Through counselling, all of these physiological dislocations can be managed.

2.3 The transformative role of counselling for SDV

Counselling is a support service that provides planned and goal -directed interventions that assist survivors to deal with the effects of harms caused by their involvement or exposure to domestic violence (Lai, 2011). Assisting survivors in realizing that the abusers have some of the responsibility for the violence they have experienced is among the most advantageous features of counselling. Survivors of domestic abuse may hold themselves responsible for the abuser's behavior. Actually, abusers fabricate this image in order to gain what they desire and protect themselves. Abusers are skilled at making their victims feel horrible about themselves. They try to make you feel as though you are so flawed that you are deserving of the mistreatment. This sometimes leads to negative self-talk. Changing that self-talk can be done through counselling (Chibanda et al., 2011). Through talking therapy, SDV can be assisted to be change

negative self-talk to a positive one (Bor, 2002; Chowdhary et al., 2016; Weingardt et al., 2009). Through the use of cognitive behaviour therapy, the individual could be taught to understand the fact that humans cannot control every aspect of the world around them, but they can take control of how they interpret and deal with things in their environment. Counselling, therefore, can make SDV live and walk freely after seeking redress (Aspland et al., 2008). Counselling service can also empower individuals to be assertive and be comfortable to seek legal redress. For most domestic violence survivors, it is important to find counselling services to talk through the impact of the violence or abuse and regain confidence in themselves. Most domestic violence can be prevented or stopped when survivors become assertive (Davies et al., 1995). The counsellor can help the survivor to talk about their feelings as part of the emotional and psychological recovery process. The counsellor can help them open up and talk more about their experiences. When survivors open up to discuss their experiences, the root cause could be identified and managed.

2.4 Theoretical framework

One subtype of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) created by psychologist Albert Ellis is called rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) (David et al., 2005; Ellis, 1995). The goal of REBT, an action-oriented strategy, is to assist individuals in addressing their faulty cognition. Counsellors employ cognitive restructuring approaches to assist clients identify and modify their illogical ideas and negative thinking, as well as discover more realistic and healthy ways to control their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. According to Ellis, everyone occasionally engages in negative thought patterns, but occasionally these patterns get so ingrained that they impede relationships, success, and even general well-being. Counsellors can assist individuals in recognizing and altering their negative thought patterns by using the cognitive restructuring technique (Larsson et al., 2016; Schmidt, 1976). It's a good idea to look into techniques for interrupting and redirecting thought patterns when they start to become harmful and counterproductive. SDV develops negative thinking patterns such as blaming themselves for being abused and also consider abuse to be normal in every relationship which needs to be restructured to reflect positive feeling. Perpetrators, on the other hand, think that it is normal for people in power to show abuse to people under their authority to signify their presence and relevance. The theory is important and relevant for its ability to: lower stress and alleviate anxiety, identify and change negative thought patterns, strengthen communication skills and build healthier relationships, replace unhealthy coping mechanisms, and rebuild self-confidence and self-esteem (Chretien et al., 2017; DiBartolo et al., 2001; Larsen & Christenfeld, 2011).

2.5 Client-Centred Theory

The founder of contemporary counselling was Sigmund Freud's student Carl Rogers. His theory is founded on client-centred therapy, in which the therapist assists the client in identifying their issue through self-treatment (Kirimi, 2005; Kramer, 1995; Rogers & Wood, 1974). Rogers places a strong emphasis on helping clients better understand and recognize their issues. He also fosters an environment that allows for personal growth and helps people recognize their own potential. According to Rogers (Rogers & Wood, 1974), people have the power to govern, direct, and control their own lives. They may also choose their own fate. Additionally, he contends that everyone is constantly working toward the positive objective of self-actualization and cultivating a constructive, positive self-image. As a result, a counsellor who provides the client with a strong sense of understanding is able to relate to them and build a relationship. The approach is unusual in that it "here and now situation emphasizes the client's feelings, where the client is

supposed to interpret and make decisions," according to Rogers (1967). Counsellors view their clients as "persons of worth, equals, and capable individuals capable of making the right decisions for themselves." The fundamental goal of therapy is to create an environment that supports the client's development into a fully functional individual. The notion is predicated on the idea that self-actualization is fundamental to human nature. According to this notion, the therapist's role is to be available and present to the client at all times. The role of the Rogerian counsellor is to make use of the four core conditions (unconditional positive regard, genuineness, empathetic understanding, and dwelling on the here and now) for SDV to make their decisions in terms of strategies for complete healing or transformation.

3. Research Approach and Design

The qualitative research approach was used in this study. Specifically, the study used the instrumental case study design. An approach that aids in comprehending a specific occurrence is the instrumental case study (Lucas et al., 2018). Stated differently, an instrumental case study is the examination of a case, an individual, a particular group, a profession, a department, or an organization with the goal of shedding light on a particular problem, revising generalizations, or developing a theory (Creswell, 2007; Ridder, 2014; Taber, 2014; Tenny et al., 2017). The instrumental case study was appropriate because the researchers wanted to get an in-depth understanding from the participant perspectives of the transformative role of counselling for SDV. Specifically, from the perspectives of SDV, Counsellors and officers from DOVVSU.

3.1 Population

The target population for the study was all SDV who have gone through counselling, police officers of DOVVSU in the Cape Coast Metropolis, and temporary counsellors who had worked at DOVVSU for attachments and community services.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques

In relation to sample size, a theoretical sample was used to purposively select 23 participants. The study used purposive sampling technique in order to handpick all the respondents. The participants were selected purposively because the researchers were interested in only SDV who have gone through counselling, police officers of DOVVSU in the Cape Coast Metropolis, and temporary counsellors who have worked at DOVVSU for attachments and community services. When a researcher employs judgment to choose instances with a particular goal in mind, this is known as purposeful sampling (Campbell et al., 2020; Sharma, 2017). Specifically, 18 SDV, three police officers of the Unit and two counsellors were used for the study.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Data were gathered using a self-developed interview guide that was influenced by the goals of the study and refined by the advice of subject-matter experts. Three themes were carved to create the guides, each one appropriate to the study's goals. The tools made it possible to have frank conversations and get comprehensive information about the problems. In all, the instrument was sub-divided into four sections each based on the specific objectives of the study. The sections were; the views of survivors of domestic violence on the transformative role of counselling for SDV; the views of DOVVSU officers on the transformative role of counselling for SDV; the views of counsellors on the transformative role for SDV; and whether or not they will recommend counselling to be part of DOVVSU.

3.4 Quality Assurance

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for proving rigor within qualitative research—true value, consistency and neutrality, and applicability—were followed in order to establish the reliability and authenticity of the data. All participants were asked for their informed consent before discussing the topic of true value, and their willingness to provide detailed accounts of their experiences throughout time allowed the conclusions to be made clear. Because the interviews were audio recorded, it was possible to go back over the data again and confirm that the themes that emerged were accurate in reflecting the participants' perspectives on their SDV experiences. Participants' verbatim extracts were described as rich and dense. This will help readers decide whether the final themes accurately reflected the accounts of the participants. In addition, comments on the topics and research findings were welcomed from the participants. A clear and accurate explanation of the study procedure was made sure of at every stage in the case of neutrality and consistency. To keep the goal, design, and techniques of the study cohesive, a research journal was also kept to record difficulties and problems. Members of the research team with experience in qualitative research debated emerging themes in an open process where presumptions were questioned and an agreement was established. To guarantee that the study could be applied to other parts of the nation, extensive context details, conclusions, and suggestions were given (McGinley et al., 2021).

3.5 Ethical Consideration

When doing research on human beings, ethics is a crucial factor to take into account (Friedman & Kahn Jr, 2007). The Deputy Commissioner of the Ghana Police Service in the Cape Coast Metropolis, in the country's center, granted ethical permission. By adhering to established guidelines and protocols for research ethics, the study's volunteers were shielded from any unfavorable outcomes. The right to privacy, voluntary involvement, no participant injury, anonymity and confidentiality, no deceit, and scientific misconduct were among the ethical problems taken into consideration in this study. Preserving the respondents' identities during research was the clearest issue in guaranteeing their interest and welfare. To defend themselves in this way, the researchers chose anonymity and confidentiality. The respondents were informed of the study's goal and given the assurance that any information they submitted would only be used for academic research and would be treated in the strictest confidence.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

In the data collection process, the researchers fell on the assistance the station officer of DOVVSU to contact SDV who had received counselling. A visit to DOVVSU before the data collection revealed that professional counsellors were not available or recruited. SDV only enjoyed the services of temporal counsellors who come for internship or voluntary. The station officer provided the researchers with the contacts of all SDV who had enjoy counselling services as well as the names and contact of the Counsellors who had done internship to contact them. Counselors and SDV were contacted by phone calls and in-person meetings to obtain their informed consent to participate in the research. Before collecting any data, the researchers paid the subjects a visit to build a solid rapport. In order to build relationships with people who could not meet in person, video calls were also utilized. The aim of the study and its intended outcomes were communicated to every participant. The only people present for the one-time interviews were the interviewers and the interviewees. Every interview was conducted by two researchers, who both took interview notes. The interviews were captured on audio. The participants choose the

date and time of the interview, which lasted anywhere from thirty to sixty minutes. The interviewing process continued until no new themes or codes emerge, indicating that saturation or comprehensiveness in understanding the data was achieved.

3.7 Analytical Procedure

The data analysis process employed both theme content analysis and open and selective coding. The participant interviews that were recorded were transcribed. Emerging ideas and concepts, along with preliminary codes or categories, were compiled into distinct lists of coding. Merriam and Tisdell's analytical coding process (Gentles et al., 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019) was used for the coding. Three main themes emerged from the process: open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding is the process of alternating between the concepts and the data while applying inductive and deductive reasoning to find recurring patterns, such as the ability to deal with trauma and despair. The technique of linking (categories and concepts) to one another in order to find correlations among the open codes is called axial coding. The process of reading the transcript and choosing any code that connects to the fundamental variables found, for instance, adaptive coping techniques for psychological healing is known as selective coding.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the participants' demographics

Pseudo Names	Age	Type of abuse
Ean	23	Physical
Tan	14	defilement
Gan	43	Neglect /physical /emotional
San	31	Physical
Van	17	Sexual
Man	31	physical
Zan	32	Verbal/ physical/emotional
Ban	80	Verbal/ physical/emotional
Pan	24	physical /emotional
Can	41	Emotional/psychological
Dan	15	Neglect /physical /emotional
Fan	22	emotional
Lan	32	Emotional/psychological
Han	34	physical /emotional
Jan	33	physical /emotional
Kan	21	Sexual
Ean	19	Sexual / physical /emotional
Xan	33	physical /emotional/ psychological

Filed data: 2022

The section seeks to discuss the results and findings of the study. Table 1 shows the participants' demographics. In all, there were 18 survivors who had gone counselling at the time of data collection, with the youngest being 14 and the oldest being 80 years. The age range of 14 to 80 years indeed highlights that DV knows no boundaries and can affect individuals from various age groups. However, the frequency is higher among ages 30 – 40. The higher frequency of DV among ages 30-40 is concerning and may warrant further investigation into potential contributing factors faced or societal challenges during that age range. Physical violence was prevalent form of DV. It was observed that all participants who had suffered from physical violence had experience emotional violence as well. The finding suggests a strong correlation between the two forms of violence.

5. The views of SDV on the transformative role of counselling

Generally, the SDV had something positive to say about the role of counselling in supporting their recovery process. All the SDV had gone through counselling services so they were asked to comment on their experiences. All the SDV indicated that their experiences with counselling helped them with psychological and emotional recovery as the literature suggest.

SDV listed the following support from the counselling, the strength to cope with trauma and depression, empathic understanding and encouragement, alternative coping strategies, developing confidence, assistance to stay calm by making use of positive self -talks. These were some of the comments made by the SDV on their views on the transformative role of counselling. The finding is in line with the assertion of (Chibanda et al., 2011) who posited that negative self-talk could change through counselling. Again, the finding confirms the assumptions of the Persons -Centred theory by Rogers. Rogers places a strong emphasis on helping clients better understand and recognize their issues. He also fosters an environment that allows for personal growth and helps people recognize their own potential. According to Rogers (Rogers & Wood, 1974), people can choose their own fate and are capable of regulating, guiding, and controlling their own behavior—all they need is a therapist's assistance. The finding is not surprising at all because the above stated experiences are the intended role of counselling

5.1 Strength to cope with trauma and depression

Gan had this to say in her own words about the transformative role of counselling in supporting her. Gan had reported her husband to DOVVSU for neglecting her and the children as well as psychically assaulting her. The law had provided Justice and the husband is force by law to provide maintenance to them. But she was still not of herself not because of physical pain but psychological distress of how things have unfolded.

It appears the counselor was the only one who understood me. aftermath of reporting my husband's neglect and physical assault to DOVVSU, the legal procedures brought a form of justice, compelling him to provide maintenance. However, despite this resolution, I found myself wrestling with continuous emotional distress that overshadowed any physical pain. The counsellor was the only one who felt my pain. If only I had seen her earlier. After my interaction with her I felt good about myself and walk freely without and guilt of reporting the case. Counselling has really helped me. How much explanation could I have given when every word was recorded at DOVVSU. My interaction with the counsellor was so refreshing.

Another survivor of domestic violence (SDV) also shared her perspective and journey concerning the transformative impact of counselling. Having been falsely accused of witchcraft, she endured severe physical harm. Her granddaughter reported the incident to DOVVSU, leading to the perpetrator being held accountable. Despite this, she continued to struggle with eating and sleeping until she was referred to a counsellor.

She re-counts her experience:

The shame and embarrassment of being accused of witchcraft were just indescribable so much such that the thought of it gave me nothing but pain and sorrow. I was not able to sleep or eat. At a point, I wished I could have vanished from the community. My meeting with the counsellor was such a relief. I'll remember how I was made to understand that I cannot change people's attitudes towards me but I can change how I react to it. It was my decision to accept what he said or not. We had about three sessions and

by the end of the third section, life had returned to normal. Counselling really helped me. But for counselling, I would have died by now (Ban).

5.2 Assistance to stay calm by making use of positive self-talks

Tan a 14-year-old girl who was defiled by a barber and got pregnant also narrated how beneficial her interaction with a counsellor was.

I was thinking my whole life had come to an end when it was discovered that I was pregnant. My parents upon getting to know that it was the barber who faced me to have sex with me got so mad and reported the case to DDOVVSU. He was arrested processed to court. But my life and schooling and the pain in my heart was left out. Until I meet the counsellor, I thought I was done with schooling and that all my dreams had come to an end. The counsellor helped me to calm down by taking me through some activities including telling myself that I am not done with schooling and that I can still become the nurse I wanted to be. Telling myself this repeatedly among others things was very helpful.

Interaction with SDV indicates that most of the time they feared that the perpetrators could be jailed and so kept some of the vital information from DOVVSU. Some SDV also did not return to DOVVSU when they were referred to hospitals in the case of physical abuse. It was also realised that SDV were too careful in speaking and this prevented officers from getting the root cause of the abuse. Their fears were intensified during the documentation stage. This claim is consistent with the research conducted by Agbitor (2012), who discovered that, among other things, conducting multiple interviews as part of the DOVVSU process increased clients' trauma; violating client confidentiality; and interviewing child victims of violence in front of their parents all had an impact on the unit's ability to provide high-quality services.

5.3 Views of counsellors on the transformative role of counselling for SDV

The counsellors were of the view that counselling enabled SDV to recover from the trauma associated with abuse. They were of the view that with the use of counselling skills such as empathetic understanding, reflection of feelings, unconditional positive regards, and listening as postulated by Rogers (1967). SDV counselling may be able to assist in recovering from any emotional or psychological suffering. Once more, counselling strategies like relaxation, counter-conditioning, positive self-talk, cognitive restructuring, and assertiveness training were employed. Counselling methods and skills are therefore essential to helping clients recover from trauma and disasters. Through counselling, SDV has been able to face their challenges and come to terms with their worth. Additionally, it has helped them recognize other options and ways to get involved so they are not continuously moaning over their problems. The way that clients viewed and felt about abusive circumstances had altered. It was discovered that they were content and well-adjusted. They focused on more important things, made wise decisions to deal with their issues, and made better use of their time. In addition to helping them to become more self-assured and well-groomed, counselling led them to suggest counselling to everyone who has ever experienced domestic abuse of any kind. Without counselling, SDV felt they could not have overcome abuse and made improvements in their life. The finding is in agreement with the views of Lai (2011). Lai is of the view that, counselling is a support service that provides planned and goal-directed interventions that assist survivors to deal with the effects of harms caused by their involvement or exposure to domestic violence.

5.4 Alternative coping strategies

A counsellor had this to say on the role of counselling in the recovery of SDV in her own words:

I am just wondering what those whom I have attended to would have done without any counselling intervention, for example in the case of non-maintenance where the couples are still leaving together how would they have peaceful co-existence after DOVVSU directives. Counselling has really equipped them to developed a lot of coping strategies to come out of their emotional and psychological distress. Most of my clients now use what is referred to as personas in their everyday life. DC1

5.5 Empathic understanding and encouragement

Another Counsellor also had this to say on the transformative role of counselling specifically the use of empathic understanding and encouragement in his own words:

Counselling is very helpful; they really need it. With understanding and encouragement clients open up and share detailed information with me. It been a while since I left the place. There are some of the client I have even forgotten about but the joy with which they call my name any time we meet is very amazing. The gratitude they express is enough indication that counselling has really transformed them DC2.

5.6 Views of DOVVSU officers on the transformative role of counselling for SDV

All the officers were of the view that counselling has contributed significantly to the recovery process of SDV. Counselling helped SDV to open up more with counsellors than with DOVVSU officials. Once they open up with counsellors the root cause of the violence is identified and dealt with. Normally, SDV are not sincere with DOVVSU for fear of the perpetrators being jailed or punished severely. In most cases the perpetrators are close relations which the SDV want to protect. With counselling SDV become calm and stable enough to go through the intervention in order to transform from psychological distress. They were also of the view that is because of the transformative role of counselling for SDV that is why there is a counselling unit at the national level.

5.7 Healing of psychological distress

This is what some officials at DOVVSU had to say:

Counselling can really play a significant role in the healing process because sometimes they come here to report their cases but with cases of physical abuse when they are given hospital form to the various government hospitals, they do not return either for fear of their offenders being punished or they cannot pay for the fee charged at the hospital. They are denied justice and they live with the emotional and psychological problems. If counsellors come on board most of these problems will be solved. Again, because the unit has an idea of the important role of counselling that is why we have a counselling unit at the national level. They do come to the aid of the regions when the need be. So, I have a strong view that counselling can assist in SDV to heal DF1

Again, DF2 had this to say:

Counselling is really helpful because DOVVSU deals with the lawlessness. For example, the why the various issues happened are not sometimes important, how they will also manage the situation is normally not addressed by DOVVSU but counselling is interested in all these things. For example, when a teenager is defiled and gets pregnant, DOVVSU will process the perpetrator for court. But that would not be enough who handles the emotional distress of both the teenager and the

parents, the way forward for both parents and the girl, fellow ups to find out if intervention have been successful or not. All these are done by counsellors. Counselling can transform SDV psychologically and socially. **DF2**

5.8 Counselling unit to be part of DOVVSU

All respondents unanimously recommended integrating a counselling services unit into DOVVSU, citing several compelling reasons. One significant reason is the provision of a safe and confidential space for SDVs to express their emotions, fears, and concerns. Counsellors offer a non-judgmental environment where SDVs can openly discuss their experiences, which is crucial for their emotional catharsis and mental well-being. By providing a safe and non-treating environment, counsellors encouraged open communication and understanding, focusing on peaceful co-existence.

Furthermore, counsellors possess specialized training in empathy, emotional support and trauma-informed care, allowing them to help SDVs navigate the aftermath of domestic violence with sensitivity and understanding. By addressing the root causes of trauma and assisting in developing coping strategies. Participants emphasized that counsellors could help SDVs explore alternative solutions to the challenges they faced, fostering a sense of hope and confidence in them.

In addition to trauma and emotional support, counsellors can play a crucial role in empowering SDVs to make informed decisions about their future. By providing guidance and information on available resources, rights, and legal options, counsellors enable SDVs to regain a sense of control over their lives.

The fact that counselling services at DOVVSU would be offered at no cost to clients was also highlighted as a crucial advantage, making it accessible to all in need. This affordability factor was viewed as a significant benefit in ensuring that no SDV would be left without support due to financial constraints.

Overall, participants were of the view that, the inclusion of a counselling unit within DOVVSU at the regional level would reinforce the organization's commitment to providing comprehensive and compassionate support to survivors of domestic violence. By addressing not only the legal and immediate safety aspects but also the emotional and psychological well-being of SDV, DOVVSU can as well enhance its ability to foster lasting change and promote a violence-free society. The counselling services unit would be a crucial pillar in fostering healing, breaking the cycle of violence, and creating a safer and more supportive environment for all SDV. Here are excerpts from participants:

*It should be part because some clients after I had left wanted to continue counselling but had no money to travel to my office. If it becomes part of DOVVSU the service will be available at no cost to clients. It is very important a counselling unit is established at DOVVSU. **DC2***

An official at DOVSUU also had this to say:

*Sometimes people walk in here at DOVVSU and request to speak with a counsellor, only to be told the unit does not have counsellors. With depression, emotional instability So, I will recommend counselling to be part of DOVVSU. We really need it. **DF2***

5.9 Contribution to theory

The study's findings have contributed to two counseling theories. The theories are Albert Elis's Rational Emotional Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and Carl Roger's person-centered Theory. The findings confirm the assumptions of Carl Rogers that say that the individual is capable of making their own decisions, the counsellor or therapist only needs to create a

conducive environment. The conducive environment includes listening, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding. SDVs in the study attested to the fact that the counsellors were empathetic and listened without judgment which helped to relieve them.

Additionally. The assumptions of Albert Ellis were also confirmed by the findings of the study. Albert Ellis is of the view that individuals think in irrationally to disturb themselves, and that these negative thinking patterns can cause inappropriate emotions such as depression and other personality dislocations. Counsellors play a pivotal role in assisting SDVs to change their distorted cognition and replace them with healthy ones. For instance, the abusers made the SDVs believe that they were the cause of the abuse. Counsellors, therefore, helped them to replace those thoughts with the fact the abusers were responsible for their actions. The study therefore confirms the efficiency and practicability of of the assumptions of both theories

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study's contributions offer valuable insights into counselling theories, particularly REBT and Person-Centered Therapy, and underscore the importance of skilled counsellors in facilitating positive change and growth for survivors of domestic violence. Moreover, it emphasizes the potential benefits of incorporating the transformative role of counselling for SDV. Psychosocial and emotional abuse is associated with all forms of DV which has the ability to course pain and discomfort like the other forms of DV. The study found that through the use of counselling skills and techniques SDV were transformed. The transformative role of counselling lies not just in addressing the external ramifications but in fostering internal healing and empowering survivors to rewrite their narratives. All participants recommended counselling to be part of DOVSSU because of the transformative role it plays for SDV.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of study, the following recommendations are hereby made: Counselling units should be set up at all regional offices of DOVVSU staffed with professionals such as counsellors and clinical psychologists to provide counselling for SDV to take care of psychological and emotional distress associated with all forms of abuse. Integrating a counselling unit into DOVVSU at the regional level will enhance the organization's ability to provide holistic care and support to survivors of domestic violence. By addressing the emotional, psychological, and preventive aspects of domestic violence, DOVVSU should team up with universities which offer counselling programmes and services to assist in offering counselling services to SDV. Empowerment workshops and sessions can also be organized by these counsellors to equip SDV with skills for building self-confidence and promoting self-sufficiency.

6.2 Limitations and Suggested Areas for Further Studies

The use of a singular unit within Ghana poses challenges for generalizing the findings of the study due to contextual differences in cultural diversity. Moreover, the qualitative nature of the research introduces a potential bias, where the researchers' preconceptions may shape their interpretation of participant behaviors. Despite, the researchers employing a rigorous data collection technique. To address these limitations, it is recommended that future researchers should replicate the study across multiple regions in Ghana. This may enhance the external validity of the findings and also cater for cultural differences. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach could be considered to complement qualitative insights with quantitative data, providing a more comprehensive

understanding of the phenomenon. The qualitative findings of the current study, while limited in scope, can serve as a foundational baseline for subsequent quantitative research.

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