

Research Article

Understanding Youth Violence in Kumasi: Does Community Socialization Matter? A Cross-Sectional Study

Asamani Jonas Barnie,¹ Ama Serwaa Nyarko,¹ Jonathan Mensah Dapaah,¹ Seth Christopher Yaw Appiah,^{1,2} and Kofi Awuviry-Newton¹

¹*Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana*

²*Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Centre for International Health, Munich, Germany*

Correspondence should be addressed to Seth Christopher Yaw Appiah; sychrist2007@gmail.com

Received 6 November 2016; Revised 6 February 2017; Accepted 23 February 2017; Published 14 March 2017

Academic Editor: Thomas Panagopoulos

Copyright © 2017 Asamani Jonas Barnie et al. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Violence by young people is one of the most visible forms of social disorder in urban settlements. This study assesses the causes and consequences of youth violence in the Kumasi metropolis. The study design was a nonexperimental cross-sectional survey. A mixed method approach facilitated the random sampling of 71 young people in the Kumasi metropolis through a stratified procedure between December 2014 and November 2015. Ten (10) participants were purposively selected and enrolled in a focus group discussion. Descriptive statistics formed the basis for the analysis. This was supported with a matched discourse analysis of the emerging themes. More than half of the youth (39, 54.9%) demonstrated history of ever engaging in violence in the past one year of whom 24 (61.5%) were without formal education. The frequency of the violence perpetuation ranged from daily engagement (3, 4%) to weekly engagement in violence (12, 17%). Principally, the categories of youth violence were manifested in noise making, rape, murder, stealing, drug addiction, obscene gestures, robbery, sexual abuse, and embarrassment. Peer pressure and street survival coping approaches emerged as the pivotal factors that induced youth violence. Addressing youth violence requires an integrative framework that incorporates youth perspectives, government, chiefs, and nongovernmental organizations in Ghana, and religious bodies.

1. Background

Social construction of reality and what is considered acceptable in society is critical in defining and shaping social norms, behaviors, and actions among younger generations. This to some extent defines thresholds levels beyond which communities may not be able to accommodate vices such as youth violence. Youth violence is a fact of social life. It is found in homes, wards, streets, schools, organizations, and institutions. It has received attention within academics or domains such as economics, political science, transport planning, architecture, and NGO community workers [1].

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines youth violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, by the youth, against oneself, against another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury,

death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation [2]. The youth is said to be a period where the individual becomes an active and responsible member of the society [3]. The definition of youth is fraught with difficulties. In one breath, it constitutes persons aged 10 to 29 years. In another breadth, it covers those aged 10–24 years as suggested by Appiah and colleagues [4] who reference Kesterton and Cabral De Mello [5].

The United Nations consider youth as a period between the ages of 15 and 24 [5]. The UN definition is however not consistent with the Ghanaian situation. In Ghana, “The National Youth Policy” classifies all persons of age 15 to 35 as youth [3, (p. 4)]. According to the Ghana 2010 Population and Housing Census, the youth are categorized into three age brackets (15–19, 20–24, and 25–35) with percentage of the total national population, respectively, as 10.6%, 9.4%, and 13.8%. Young people in Ghana cumulatively account for

33.8% of the national total population [6]. Studies on youth violence have increased our understanding of factors that predispose some populations to victimization and violence perpetration.

Ohene and others [7] report that, among researchers across the world, with particular reference to studies from Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Ghana, individual, family, peer, and community risk factors have been documented to account for the perpetration of youth violence [8–18]. Some studies have reported on the influence of violent communities on violent learning behaviors which manifest in later years of child's development into youthful stage [19, 20]. Such exposure to violence at an early stage causes children growing into youthful phase to potentially become violent. Though there is no direct causality, there is a higher risk of association between community exposure to violence and subsequent active or passive perpetuation of violence. In the United States, the immediate primary outcomes of child's early exposure to violence within a violent-prone community as demonstrated during youthful years are linked to suicide ideation [21–23] and stress and anxiety as reported by Seal et al. [24] (cf. O'Leary et al. [23]). Theoretically, Bronfenbrenner's [25] ecological systems theory has been applied extensively to explain how violence occurs within the social system.

In this theory, the interconnectedness of the individual to parts of the system has formed the basis for defining youth socialization of violence. The youth are considered being nested within proximal and distal settings of the community or system for which reason the interactions within these community settings affect how the youth develop and learn or unlearn violent behaviors. Seal et al. [24] (cf. Warner and Fowler [20]) explain that some researchers like Le and colleagues [26], Leff et al. [27], and Zimmerman and others have studied combined theory and practice to understand youth violence [28]. Yonas et al. [29] have explored the utility of employing the strain theory in explaining youth violence at the community level.

According to Agnew [30], the focus of the strain theory has been how the straining of communities from resources disposes community residents and causes loss of self-power leading to generation of self-anger and retaliatory response to the structures of society. These structures are often perceived to have conditioned such neighborhoods state of deprivation. Such continued negative emotions disillusion members to retaliate against the dominant cultural norms. This is often met with resistance either at the individual or at the collective level resulting in violence. Thus, the type of community one lives in could be a major risk factor for violence involvement.

Violence risk factors increase the likelihood that a young person will become violent. However, risk factors are not direct causes of youth violence; instead, risk factors contribute to youth violence [8, 31]. The individual risk factors include history of violent victimization, attention deficits, hyperactivity or learning disorders, history of early aggressive behavior, involvement with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, low IQ, poor behavioral control, deficits in social cognitive or information-processing abilities, high emotional distress, history of treatment for emotional problems, antisocial beliefs and attitudes, and exposure to violence and conflict in the

family [31]. Straining from community resources is critical to understanding community level violence.

The inability of young people to be gainfully employed may serve as a motivation to engage in some form of violent behavior in an attempt to survive. Coupled with this, absence of social support systems embedded in weak family and attachment structures exacerbates the problem [32]. There is clear evidence that young people find it difficult to get employment especially in the public sector due to job unavailability and lower skills and practical experience [3]. This may compel some to resort to unorthodox ways of making a living. Little resource is provided by state as out-of-school-support mechanisms to assist the youth in apprenticeship or entrepreneurial training in Ghana. The estimated 27 million Ghanaians have 11% of their populace aged 15–19 years [33, 34] with the economically active population dispersed across 54.7% and 53.7% male and female's population, respectively. Only a little over half of the population is economically engaged. This raises an economic deprivation challenge.

Though Ghana upholds violence-free society in principle as enshrined in its laws such as the 1992 constitution and the flagship Domestic Violence (DV) Act 732 [35], there exists a continued perpetuation of violence often spearheaded by young people across many parts of the country. Fueling this development is the high unemployment rate, imbalances in gendered roles, and a prevalent cultural norm of male chauvinism, a socialized and a tolerating atmosphere that supports violence [36]. These societal characterizations of violence have continued over years with little attention to violence that is mainly perpetuated by the youth outside the confines of domestic relations.

In recent times, interest among researchers in violence has increased but with a more organized focus around election violence. Notwithstanding, steady but growing research attention on youth violence has been witnessed among academia and advocacy groups [11, 13, 22]. The new quest to explore youth violence cannot be said to be untimed as some violent activities end in death. According to the Ghana Statistical Service [3], there is higher proportion of death among the adolescents and youth group resulting from accidents, violence, homicide, and suicide which were associated with youth exuberance. Thus, the youth being energetic indulge in risky ventures which lead to loss of life. Anecdotal report from the Ghana Police Service demonstrates that, in the recent past, people in urban areas such as Kumasi have expressed concern about youth violence of varied types. In a midyear police report in the Ashanti region for 2013, crime and violence decreased only by 314 in 2013 from a reported 19,092 in 2012 to 18,778 in 2013, an indication that the menace is ever present, notwithstanding the reduction. The reported violence ranged from bullying and physical fighting through to a more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide.

Many studies have addressed several issues on violence such as definitions, categories, trends [7, 8, 13, 29], and measurements but from other perspectives, without situating them in a sociological milieu and as a social learning process. These studies failed to look at youth violence from the ecological perspective or studied violence without defining it within a youthful population. In Ghana, there is no current

existing national policy that seeks to address youth violence. This calls for baseline comprehensive data that could spur the drive for interventions to reduce youth violence [2, 7]. Any intervention short of empirical data in addressing the menace that youth violence poses especially during moments of parliamentary and presidential election is unlikely to yield the necessary impact. Understanding the factors that drive youth violence and the nature of the violence is a progressive approach to addressing the phenomenon by characterizing it so that informed decisions and interventions could be made. The study aims to understand youth violence in Kumasi by analyzing it within a sociological context and analyzing how it is constructed, redefined, perpetuated, justified, and contextualized among youthful perpetrators.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Setting and Population. The study was conducted in the Kumasi metropolis. The Kumasi metropolis can be found in the forest zone of Ghana. The metropolis has a total land cover of 254 square kilometers (25,415 hectares). It has a resident population of over 2 million people with an intercensal growth rate of 5.4% [33, 34]. The metropolis had ten submetros until the Asawasi submetro was elevated to a municipality status.

The existing submetros are Asokwa, Bantama, Suame, Manhyia, Oforikrom, Tafo, Nhyiaeso, Subin, and Kwadaso. The study was conducted in three of the submetros for which the Asawasi submetro has presently been elevated to the status of a municipality and named the Asokore Mampong Municipal Assembly. The study was conducted in Asawasi, Suame, and Oforikrom. The choice of the study setting was informed by the submetros' known identity as areas with mixed cultural living arrangements and crime-prone and violence-prone sublocation (ghettos). Young people aged 13–35 years [3] who had lived in the selected communities for the past 12 months preceding the conduct of the study formed the study population.

2.2. Study Design and Sampling. A cross-sectional nonexperimental survey with mixed method approach was employed. The sequential exploratory mixed method strategy was used. Thus, the qualitative data was gathered through focus group discussion and this was followed with the collection of the quantitative data. The preliminary emerging themes assisted the researchers in situating the study within a more fitting theoretical perspective. On the basis of police records/reports of the dominant violence-prone areas, three high violence-prone submetros were selected as the study setting with their inhabitants as the target population. The study's unit of analysis was male and female young people in the selected submetros in Kumasi who were aged 15–35 years. This definition met the classification of "youth" as proposed by the Ghana youth policy. The study employed purposive and stratified sampling techniques. Three submetros, namely, Asawasi, Oforikrom, and Suame, were purposely selected. The decision to sample these submetro districts was informed by informal section reports from the Ghana Police Service

in Ashanti region citing the three submetros as the highest violence-prone subdistricts.

Stratified sampling technique was used to delineate respondents according to their enumeration areas. A list of the submetros with information on the towns (suburbs) and electoral areas was used. The electoral area was used as compared to enumeration area because it was deemed the most convenient. Proportional allocation of sample size was given to each submetro and electoral area. The focus group discussions were held within two of the study locations: Asawasi and Suame. This was to allow for a better representation of study locations due to the fact that the Oforikrom submetro district shared closer boundary with the Asawasi submetro (Asokore Mampong Municipal). Due to the elevation of the Asawasi submetro to a municipal status, the sample was larger than those recruited from Suame and Oforikrom.

In all, 81 persons were enrolled in the study out of whom 32 (five FGD participants), 27 (five FGD discussants), and 22 were enrolled from Asokore Mampong Municipal, Suame, and Oforikrom submetro districts, respectively. Within the submetro districts, the electoral areas were used as guides from within which participants were selected systematically paying attention to gender representation. Starting from a high street location as reference point in each of the enumeration areas within the submetros, each young person met in the fifth house count who met the inclusion criteria and provided consent was enrolled. Thus, a maximum of 2 persons were deemed to be eligible for enrollment in each house, ensuring gender parity. This process continued until the determined sample size was achieved in each district sampling proportionally from the enumeration areas within each submetro district. The same approach to data collection was used until the data collection phase was completed. The data collection began from January 2015 to March 2015.

2.3. Data Collection. An interviewer administered questionnaires and a structured focus group discussion guide was used to collect data. The questionnaires were interviewer-administered due to the uncertainty in the educational level of the study population prior to the conduct of the study in terms of understanding the questionnaire. The data was not collected among young people in institutional arrangement or persons gathered in identifiable groups. The data was collected from young people on the street and in homes. The primary outcome was involvement in physical violence. Physical violence was measured by asking the question, "During the past 12 months, were you engaged in any form of violence physically?" Engaging in violence once or more was counted as involvement in violent behavior. All forms of youth violence were considered.

2.4. Data Analysis. Statistical tools were used in analyzing the quantitative data. The descriptive results have been presented in tables using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Sociological analysis and inferences were drawn from the response using content description of the emerging themes which informs the qualitative data analysis.

2.5. *Ethical Approval.* High level confidentiality and anonymity was ensured. The research was devoid of the names of the prospective participants. Informed consent was sought through verbal approval. Ethical approval was sought from the Department of Sociology and Social Work of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

3. Results

The study participants were youth who lived in Suame, Oforikrom, and Asawasi submetros. The Suame submetro is predominantly dwelt by Christian faith adherents of Akan tribe descent, while Asawasi (Asokore Mampong) is a predominantly Muslim and northern tribe's settlement. The location of the Oforikrom submetro where the study participants were recruited is a mixed settlement of different tribes and faiths. The study was conducted from December 2014 to November 2015. More males (64.8%) were enrolled in the study (Table 1). In terms of the age, a high number of respondents were in the age range 25–35 (49.0%) with the majority being Muslims (53.5%). Of the total study population, close to a third (32.4%) were without formal education. Majority of the respondents were either students or unemployed with a large proportion being single (76.1%). Participants with no formal education and with formal education up to the primary level were from Asawasi followed by Oforikrom and Suame submetros.

3.1. *Young People's Construction of Violence.* Two focus group discussions of five memberships each were conducted. There were six males and four females who formed the discussion group. Focusing on how young people constructed violence, the participants explained violence from different perspectives despite the commonness of their social construction of violence. Generally, violence was defined and understood within the context of physical violence compared to other forms of violence. A male respondent's noted the following:

Violence "simply means engaging in fighting, stealing and forming gangs to rob and rape people."
(Male focus group discussant)

Another attributed violence to fighting and noise making while a third female respondent corroborated earlier submissions that violence refers to the following:

Engaging in fighting with knives and hurting other people physically as well as robbing [sic] people of their possessions. (Choruses from FG discussants)

In the opinion of some other members, violence was a component of physical abuse. Others explained the following:

Violence is seen as any behaviour where human beings abuse each other.

Unless specifically specified and probed as to whether it formed a component of violence, none of the discussants mentioned sexual violence (operationalized as engaging in violent forms of sexual intercourse with the partner) as a form of violence. However, other related forms of violence

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Variable (N = 71)	FGD discussants	N (%)
Location		
Asawasi (Asokore Mampong Municipal)	5	32 39.5
Suame submetro district	5	27 33.3
Oforikrom submetro	—	22 27.2
Sex		
Male		46 64.8
Female		25 35.2
Age		
15–19		9 12.7
20–24		27 38.0
25–35		35 49.3
Religion		
(i) Islam		38 53.5
(ii) Christianity		33 46.5
Level of education		
None		23 32.4
Primary		15 21.1
JHS		16 22.5
Vocational		1 1.4
Tertiary		16 22.5
Occupation type		
Trader		19 26.8
Civil servant		1 1.4
Business executive		1 1.4
Public servant		4 5.6
Others (student and unemployed)		46 64.8
Marital status		
Single		54 76.1
Married		13 18.3
Separated		3 4.2
Divorced		1 1.4

in intimate relationships like battering and pushing were mentioned when probed.

3.2. *Nature of Youth Violence.* From Table 2, physical fighting (83.1%) was the most frequently perpetuated form of violence. This was followed by robbery, stealing, threatening, bullying, hitting, and obscene gestures. Other forms of violent behavior demonstrated to have been engaged by the youth were swearing, yelling, sexual abuse, and embarrassment as the prevalent forms of youth violence they have engaged in before. Majority of the youth in violence had no formal education and this may compel them to resort to violence. Violence of any sort occurs once a week (16.9%) with most youth indulging in violence with peers (59.2%).

3.3. *Causes of Youth Violence.* The discussants shared the varying causes of youth violence within the submetro. Central

TABLE 2: Nature of youth violence in the study location.

Variables	N (%)
Participant's active engagement in violent behavior in the past 12 months	
Yes	39 (54.9)
No	32 (45.1)
Educational level of the youth engaged in violence in the past year	
No formal education	24 (61.5)
Primary	4 (10.1)
JHS	9 (23.2)
Vocational or technical	2 (5.1)
Common categories of violence ever experienced by the youth in the society	
(i) Physical fighting	59 (83.1)
(ii) Robbery	50 (70.4)
(iii) Stealing	50 (70.4)
(iv) Threatening	47 (66.2)
(v) Bullying	46 (64.8)
(vi) Hitting	46 (64.8)
(vii) Obscene gestures	43 (60.6)
(viii) Swearing	42 (59.2)
(ix) Yelling	40 (56.3)
(x) Sexual abuse	40 (56.3)
(xi) Embarrassing	39 (54.9)
(xii) Shoving/pushing	34 (47.9)
(xiii) Lynching	13 (18.3)
(xiv) Kidnapping	10 (14.1)
Frequency/witness of violent activities by the youth in the community	
Every day	3 (4.2)
Once a week	22 (16.9)
Every fortnight	2 (2.8)
Monthly	4 (5.6)
Once in a while	4 (5.6)
Occasionally	4 (5.6)
Nonapplicable	32 (59.2)
Common people's violent behaviors are perpetuated against in the community	
Peers	42 (59.2)
Parents	20 (28.2)
Neighbor	3 (4.2)
Stranger	3 (4.2)
Nonapplicable	3 (4.2)

among the emerging themes were youth unemployment and illiteracy. Unemployment among young people caused young people to become lazy and jealous resulting in the breakdown in social norms and values and illiteracy.

Unemployment and Stealing as a Survival and Coping Strategy. From the focus group discussions, participants were of the view that unemployment is one of the causes of violence among the youth. The youth see stealing as a means of survival. This according to the discussant causes young people to easily become swayed by political parties who may engage them indirectly to cause disturbance to public peace.

Violence resulting from ownership of sexual partners as property to protect and defend from others. (Male 16, FGD discussants)

Some discussants noted that one of the factors that predisposes the youth to engage in violence is promiscuity. This is because of the following:

Those who are promiscuous think someone might take their loved one away from them and this could induce violent behaviours. They cannot stand the sight of their partners mingling with other people and will go at all length including

TABLE 3: Causes of youth violence.

Variables	N (%)	N (%)
Predisposing factors to youth violence	Yes	No
Peer pressure	70 (98.6)	1 (1.4)
Curiosity	66 (93.0)	5 (7.0)
Lack of parental guidance	60 (84.5)	36 (50.7)
Influence of the media	49 (69.0)	22 (31.0)
Frustration	42 (59.2)	29 (40.8)

the use of violence to guard against that. (FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3)

In addition, participants explained that promiscuous people appear aggressive and will resort to threats and abuse to achieve their sexual desires.

Another participant noted that the issues of alcoholism, smoking, and drug addiction were the behavioral patterns that could induce violent behaviors among the youth. This could be likened to the *Mertonian theory of anomie*. The word “anomie” refers to a state of “normlessness” or “rootlessness” created by the breakdown of common standards of behavior and morality. The term often refers to situations where social order appears to have collapsed. All respondents agreed that illiteracy was also another potent factor which predisposes the youth to indulge in violent behaviors. According to respondents, the following was obtained:

The higher the educational level the lesser the propensity of the youth to indulge in violence and vice versa. (Female 23, FGD)

The quantitative data showed several predisposing factors that predispose the youth to violence as presented in Table 3. Accordingly, respondents believed that peer pressure, curiosity, lack of parental guidance, influence of social media, and frustration all predispose the youth to violence.

3.4. Consequence of Youth Violence. Experience of physical assault in the past was reported among almost a third (32.4%) of the youth out of whom only 12.7% reported to the police. Among the major outcomes of violence that the youth have engaged in, behaving violently (84.5%), becoming physically ill (64.8%), and sometimes becoming apprehensive were the major outcomes (Table 4).

3.5. Violence Reducing Strategy. Table 5 demonstrates that majority of young people admit to the inadequacy of security (85.9%) personnel in helping minimize youth violence. This calls for public education on security tips as a measure to curb the menace. There was almost a unanimous affirmation that students who engaged in violent activities in schools should be expelled from school (90.1%) while at the same time meting out effective penalties for deviants (88.1%) amidst government providing correctional facilities for punishment (84.5%). These would serve as effective strategies for reducing youth violence. The discussants through the interviews shared that chiefs should be empowered and directly tasked

to explore how they can collaborate in creating jobs for the youth in their community since they have ownerships of resources such as lands. This will keep them busy and will avoid their indulgence in violent behaviors. This was reiterated in the following statement:

The chiefs should desist from illegal sale of stool lands and focus on investing in the education of the youth.

This is because they believed the following:

Illiteracy was one of the predisposing factors of violence.

4. Discussion

This cross-sectional study of young people sought to find out the factors that predispose participants to engage in violence. Majority of the respondents were single and unmarried which meant that they had time and relatively lesser responsibilities to indulge in violence perpetuation. Hirschi and Stark [32] espoused that unmarried or people who are single have weak family attachments and therefore are more prone to delinquent behaviors. The finding in this study that unemployment causes young people to perpetuate violence as a coping strategy and as a means of survival is consistent with the existing literature suggestive of how the exclusion of young people from the labour force is associated with crime and violence among the idle youth [36]. Young people out of desperation and searching for something to lay hold of amidst hunger are easily susceptible to anger and violence.

Tolerable skills of young people to accommodate the least provocation become absent as their daily adventure is a “survival of the fittest” approach to livelihood. This study’s finding corroborates the classical conflict theorist’s explanation of conflict origins as emanating from the inequity in societal resource distribution and allocation. This perspective stresses on the importance of power and conflict on social relationship as well as the problems resulting from social and economic inequalities among people and societies. According to Robertson (1987), conflict in this sense is caused by violence which results from the struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals [37]. The strain theory as conceptualised in this study, a theory grounded in the conflict orientation, is useful in explaining how out-of-school youth are left under-resourced and rendered almost noncompetitive in securing livelihood. A case in point is the earlier confirmatory findings of the positive relationship between unskilled young people (who do not get entry into the public sector) amidst high unemployment levels in the country and youth violence as reported finding supported by the Ghana Statistical Service [3]. In the opinion of Saewyc and Tonkin [38], when there are positive peer supports, it mediates the extent to which young people could become engaged in violent behavior. In a rather opposite finding, although peer support was found to exist within the catchments that our study participants dwelt in, their support was rather negative.

TABLE 4: Consequences of youth violence.

Variables	N (%)
Have you ever sustained physical injury due to an assault?	
Yes	23 (32.9)
No	47 (67.1)
If yes, did you report to the police?	
Yes	9 (12.7)
No	14 (87.3)
Opinion on how the participant has been affected directly or indirectly by violence in the past**	
Became vagrants	16 (22.5)
Developed mental illness	26 (36.6)
Became physically ill	46 (64.8)
Behaved violently	60 (84.5)
Experience of violence has made me apprehensive about walking at night	
Never	19 (26.8)
Seldom	4 (5.6)
Sometimes	32 (45.1)
Often	10 (14.1)
Always	6 (8.5)
Violence in the community has limited my outdoor movements during dark times to cope against violent attacks	
Never	1 (1.4)
Seldom	1 (1.4)
Sometimes	3 (4.2)
Often	3 (4.2)
Always	5 (7.0)

** Multiple responses possible; therefore, the sample is more than the total population.

TABLE 5: Violence reducing strategy.

Variables	Frequency (%)
Availability of adequate security?	
Yes	10 (14.1)
No	61 (85.9)
Best possible security measures to address violence	
Education on security tips	61 (85.9)
Equipping the police with logistics	6 (8.5)
Activities of volunteer	4 (5.6)
Strategies for reducing violent behaviors	
Grounded by parent	35 (49.3)
Expelled from school	64 (90.1)
Effective penalties for deviants	63 (88.7)
Correctional facilities for punishments	60 (84.5)

In this study, peer support was reported to contribute to the scales of youth involvement in violence. Its utility in rather preventing young people's involvement in violence has not much been demonstrated as opined by study participants. Admittedly, when peer support becomes positive, it minimizes violent behavior. In a study in British Columbia [39], Saewyc et al. reported that young people with a history of lifetime abuse experience a reduction in subsequent violence

perpetration due to prosocial behavior and norms in character shown by their peers. Our study established different findings. The variation in peer influence on youth violent predisposition and subsequent perpetration could have its explanations rooted in the difference in study approach, design, and uniqueness in cultural setting. The Columbian study was an interventional study while our present study was a cross-sectional design with mixed method approach. The proportion of young people who admitted to the potency of peers influence to predisposing them to violent behavior was almost certain (98.6%). Peer influence was reported to be generally negative towards perpetuating violence rather than reducing violence compared to peers in the Columbian study where peers demonstrated affront and disapproval to beating someone up and alcohol and drug use as reported by Saewyc et al. [39]. Further randomization study may be needed to test the efficacy of positive peer support in reducing violence perpetuation among young people with a history of violence perpetuation within the Ghanaian setting.

In this study, through the qualitative FGDs, participants were prompt to point out the fact that, risk factors like peer influence do not directly cause youth violence; instead, they contribute to youth violence, a view already advanced by Mercy et al. [31] and the DHHS [8]. Expanding on the notion of association without direct causality, Merton [40] notes that when students are without supervision, not all the unsupervised young people will get involved in violence and wrongdoing because they have been influenced by their peers. The

breakdown in societal norms appears to be a central underpinning to the growing engagement of the youth in violent behaviors. The finding shows similar boundaries with Mertonian analysis of anomie. The Ghanaian society shows signs of normlessness as the hitherto praised and cherished values or respect is being challenged by secularism, individualism, and universalistic worldviews. Robert Merton describes anomie “as a breakdown in the cultural structure due to disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them” [40]. All respondents agreed that illiteracy was also a potent factor which predisposed the youth to indulge in violent behaviors. According to respondents, higher educational level was likely to mediate the propensity of the young people to indulge in violence and vice versa. This finding agrees with earlier studies where risk factors increase the likelihood of a young person becoming violent [8, 31, 39].

Consistent with researchers who associate youth violence with individual, family, peer, and community risk factors [8–10], youth conflict within the Kumasi metropolis is driven by multiple factors. Anger and frustration on the part of the youth can propel behaviors of aggression and rage. Moreover, a majority (84.5%) indicate the insufficiency of parental guidance as a cause of youth violence. The youth who receive insufficient supervision by their parents or parental figures are prone to engaging in aggressive behaviors or criminal activity because they make poor choices. The study revealed that parental and family interventions like being grounded by parents on good social values can help reduce violent behaviors. However, the proportion is not too significant as it represents the views of less than half of the sample. Ninety-eight (98%) of respondents confirmed that school based interventions like expulsion from school can reduce violent behaviors.

Mobilizing and forming community groups and peer support groups in Ghana comes as the short-term approach to addressing the increasing spate of youth violence. The country level expectation is the development of a national legislation to address youth violence. This reiterates similar calls that have been made by Saewyc and Tonkin [38].

5. Limitation

The cross-sectional nature of the design makes it very difficult to establish causality and directionality of the risk to the factors that were mentioned as the causes of youth violence. However, the triangulation of the results strengthens the results as confirmatory responses were elicited through the focus group discussions with the youth. The study is limited by the fact that the variables analyzed were based on participants' self-report, without any means of verifying. This poses the challenge of reporter and recall bias especially in relation to experience of violence in the last one year [41]. The context did not allow for the measurement of the direct health related effect of youth violence on its victims. Moreover, a larger sample however would have provided a better comprehension of how violence occurs across other parts of the metropolis. The inclusion of the police nonetheless could also have offered more insights into possible preventive measures and interventions to reduce

the risk of youth violence perpetration. The content of the available questionnaire to some extent limited the scope of the range of independent variables that could have been analyzed.

The situation of the study within the strain theory is saddled with some limitations. Though this study acknowledges the independent role of individual choices in determining the course of action, the focus of this study is on how community level socialization and resource straining contribute to perpetuating of youth violence. In interpretation of the findings of this study, care should be taken as there exist some societies that are strained of resources and are socialized or radicalized to be violent; nonetheless, many individuals make a choice to be nonviolent or aggressive.

6. Conclusion

This study has added to the evidence of the multidimensional risk factors to violence perpetuation among young adults. This study offers a different perspective to youth violence at the community level other than the overly focused youth electioneering violence, a domain that has received much research attention. In Ghana, our study makes a significant finding on the hitherto lay argument advanced between youth violence and religion. In our present study, we advance the argument on the basis of the findings that young people who engage in violent behaviors are mostly those who have been strained of either family level, community level, or at far national level resources. The attempt to cope and remain significant is to defy social norms and values due to the absence of skills to compete with the larger society. In the more particular finding, young people who live in violent-prone communities like Asawasi and parts of Oforikrom within the metropolis are more likely to continue in violence because of the interpretations that have been given to their violent activities. These young people have often than not been labeled with unscientifically supported explanation given to their violent tendencies.

We argue that the central issue to look at in source reducing youth violence in the prone communities is improving the levels of education and providing skills to such young population. Unskilled, uneducated young people not only present as an economic albatross, but also present a public health and national security threat as such young people stand a greater risk of being radicalized. Reducing youth violence is multidimensional requiring the direct engagement of the youth in national discourse and policy formulation. On the part of the government, the government should endeavor to create many skilled and unskilled jobs for the youth. Political parties are entreated to desist from enticing the youth with money and other incentives to engage in violent behaviors. Parental responsibility over children will go miles to minimize youth violence.

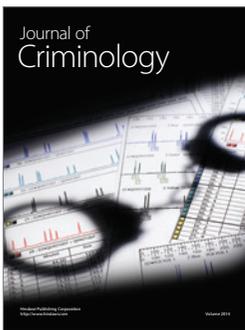
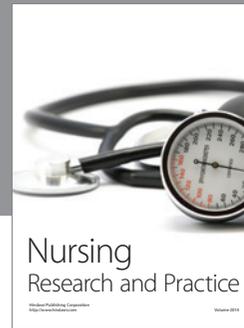
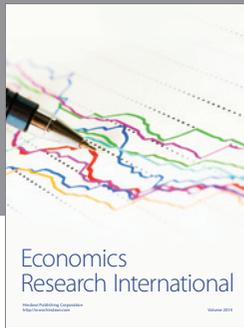
Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] C. O. Moser and C. McIlwaine, *Encounters with Violence in Latin America: Urban Poor Perceptions from Columbia and Guatemala*, Psychology Press, 2004.
- [2] WHO, *World Health Organization. World Report on Violence and Health*, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 2002.
- [3] Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), *2010 Population and Housing Census: National Analytical Report*, GSS, Accra, Ghana, 2013.
- [4] S. C. Y. Appiah, E. Badu, J. M. Dapaah, T. Harriet, and M. Abubakar, "Youth friendliness of sexual and reproductive health service delivery and reproductive health service utilization in Ghana," *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 716–725, 2015.
- [5] A. J. Kesterton and M. Cabral De Mello, "Generating demand and community support for sexual and reproductive health services for young people: a review of the literature and programs," *Reproductive Health*, vol. 7, article 25, 2010.
- [6] Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census: Summary Report of Final Results*, Ghana Statistical Service, Accra, Ghana, 2012.
- [7] S.-A. Ohene, K. Johnson, S. Atunah-Jay, A. Owusu, and I. W. Borowsky, "Sexual and physical violence victimization among senior high school students in Ghana: risk and protective factors," *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 146, pp. 266–275, 2015.
- [8] Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*, DHHS, 2001.
- [9] M. W. Lipsey and J. H. Derzon, "Predictors of violent and serious delinquency in adolescence and early adulthood: a synthesis of longitudinal research," in *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*, R. Loeber and D. P. Farrington, Eds., pp. 86–105, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Calif, USA, 1998.
- [10] M. D. Resnick, M. Ireland, and I. Borowsky, "Youth violence perpetration: what protects? what predicts? findings from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 35, no. 5, pp. 424.e1–424.e10, 2004.
- [11] A. S. Erulkar, "The experience of sexual coercion among young people in Kenya," *International Family Planning Perspectives*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 182–189, 2004.
- [12] E. Rudatsikira, S. Siziya, L. N. Kazembe, and A. S. Muula, "Prevalence and associated factors of physical fighting among school-going adolescents in Namibia," *Annals of General Psychiatry*, vol. 6, article 18, 2007.
- [13] D. W. Brown, L. Riley, A. Butchart, D. R. Meddings, L. Kann, and A. P. Harvey, "Exposure to physical and sexual violence and adverse health behaviours in African children: Results from the Global School-based Student Health Survey," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol. 87, no. 6, pp. 447–455, 2009.
- [14] M. J. Breiding, A. Reza, J. Gulaid et al., "Risk factors associated with sexual violence towards girls in Swaziland," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol. 89, no. 3, pp. 203–210, 2011.
- [15] M. H. Swahn, L. Gressard, J. B. Palmier, R. Kasirye, C. Lynch, and H. Yao, "Serious violence victimization and perpetration among youth living in the slums of Kampala, Uganda," *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 253–259, 2012.
- [16] M. L. Ybarra, S. S. Bull, J. Kiwanuka, D. R. Bangsberg, and J. Korchmaros, "Prevalence rates of sexual coercion victimization and perpetration among Uganda adolescents," *AIDS Care - Psychological and Socio-Medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV*, vol. 24, no. 11, pp. 1392–1400, 2012.
- [17] M. Sommer, S. Likindikoki, and S. Kaaya, "Boys' and young men's perspectives on violence in Northern Tanzania," *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 15, no. 6, pp. 695–709, 2013.
- [18] K. L. Celedonia, M. L. Wilson, H. A. El Gammal, and A. M. Hagraas, "Physical fighting among Egyptian adolescents: social and demographic correlates among a nationally representative sample," *PeerJ*, vol. 1, article e125, 2013.
- [19] R. J. Sampson, S. W. Raudenbush, and F. Earls, "Neighborhoods and violent crime: a multilevel study of collective efficacy," *Science*, vol. 277, no. 5328, pp. 918–924, 1997.
- [20] B. D. Warner and S. K. Fowler, "Strain and violence: testing a general strain theory model of community violence," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 511–521, 2003.
- [21] D. Gorman-Smith and P. Tolan, "The role of exposure to community violence and developmental problems among inner-city youth," *Development and Psychopathology*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 101–116, 1998.
- [22] S. F. Lambert, R. C. Boyd, N. L. Cammack, and N. S. Ialongo, "Relationship proximity to victims of witnessed community violence: associations with adolescent internalizing and externalizing behaviors," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 82, no. 1, pp. 1–9, 2012.
- [23] C. C. O'Leary, D. A. Frank, W. Grant-Knight et al., "Suicidal ideation among urban nine and ten year olds," *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 33–39, 2006.
- [24] D. Seal, A. Nguyen, and K. Beyer, "Youth exposure to violence in an urban setting," *Urban Studies Research*, vol. 2014, Article ID 368047, 11 pages, 2014.
- [25] U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, USA, 1979.
- [26] T. N. Le, I. Arifuku, L. Vuong, G. Tran, D. F. Lustig, and F. Zimring, "Community mobilization and community-based participatory research to prevent youth violence among Asian and immigrant populations," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 48, no. 1-2, pp. 77–88, 2011.
- [27] S. S. Leff, D. E. Thomas, N. A. Vaughn et al., "Using community-based participatory research to develop the PARTNERS youth violence prevention program," *Progress in community health partnerships : research, education, and action*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 207–216, 2010.
- [28] M. A. Zimmerman, S. E. Stewart, S. Morrel-Samuels, S. Franzen, and T. M. Reischl, "Youth empowerment solutions for peaceful communities: combining theory and practice in a community level violence prevention curriculum," *Health Promotion Practice*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 425–439, 2011.
- [29] M. A. Yonas, P. O'Campo, J. G. Burke, and A. C. Gielen, "Exploring local perceptions of and responses to urban youth violence," *Health Promotion Practice*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 62–70, 2010.
- [30] R. Agnew, "A general strain theory of community differences in crime rates," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 123–155, 1999.
- [31] J. Mercy, A. Butchart, D. Farrington, and M. Cerdá, "Youth violence," in *World Report on Violence and Health*, E. Krug, L. L. Dahlberg, J. A. Mercy, A. B. Zwi, and R. Lozano, Eds., pp. 25–56, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 2002, http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap2.pdf.
- [32] T. Hirschi and R. Stark, "Hellfire and delinquency," *Social Problems*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 202–213, 1969.

- [33] GSS, *Census 2010 Summary Report of Final Results*, Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2012.
- [34] Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Ghana Health Service (GHS), and ICF Macro, Ghana, 2009.
- [35] J. N. Morris, "The domestic violence act: Ghana's bright future," 2012, <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/19643>.
- [36] J. Warner, "Understanding cyber-crime in Ghana: a view from below," *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 736–749, 2011.
- [37] ILO, *World of Work Report 2012: Better Jobs for a Better Economy*, International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland, 2012.
- [38] E. M. Saewyc and R. Tonkin, "Surveying adolescents: focusing on positive development," *Paediatrics and Child Health*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 43–47, 2008.
- [39] E. Saewyc, N. Wang, M. Chittenden, and A. Murphy, *Building Resilience in Vulnerable Youth*, McCreary Centre Society, 2006, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/vulnerable_youth_report.pdf?Documentijpromoting_healthy_bodies_web.pdf.
- [40] R. K. Merton, "Social structure and anomie," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 672–682, 1938.
- [41] J. B. Bingenheimer and E. Reed, "Risk for coerced sex among female youth in Ghana: roles of family context, school enrollment and relationship experience," *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 184–195, 2014.



Hindawi

Submit your manuscripts at
<https://www.hindawi.com>

