

Wife Battery and Islam: An Empirical Study on Married Moslim Women in Ghana

**Adam Andani Mohammed¹, Abdallah Mpawenimana Saidi²,
Yussif Abdallah³**

¹(PhD) University for Development Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Department of Sociology and Social Work
ORCID: 0000-0001-9715-4353

²(PhD) Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research, Zanzibar University

³Head of the Main Registry, University for Development Studies, Tamale Ghana

Abstract

Wife battery has been around since time immemorial, and people are wondering if this kind of behavior is acceptable in Islam. The conceptions about Islam, for that matter Muslim community are often that Islam is supportive of wife battery. These assertions are based on some literal interpretations of verses from the Qur'an and sections of the Hadith and Sunnah. Therefore, a better understanding of Islam and wife battery may be useful for the general public, female victims, gender advocates, attorneys, and non-governmental organizations working with victims of domestic violence. This paper measures the extent of Islam's support or otherwise for wife battery and the consequences of battery on the social status of Muslim married women. As such, the study presents a comprehensive discussion of Islamic interpretations of wife battery. A qualitative research approach that is particularly useful in eliciting information about sensitive issues was used. The study also adopted an explanatory case study. The country has a large non-Muslim population, so out of sixty respondents were interviewed only ten were Muslims who qualified to be part of this study. The study revealed that the women had varied socioeconomic backgrounds and characteristics. Their socioeconomic status was affected as most of them were isolated, divorced, head single-parent families, or lived with one parent.

Keyword: human rights, violence, emotional torture, religion, isolation, socialization

Background

Islam is one of the major religions widely practiced in Ghana and its presence dates back to the 10th century¹. The majority of Muslims in Ghana are Sunnis which became widespread, particularly in the northern region, through the Afa Ajura's reformist activities in the 1960s. The Tijaniyah and the Qadiriyyah brotherhoods are represented among Ghana's traditionalist Muslims (Mohammad 2011). The population of Muslim is concentrated in Northern Ghana and in Zongo communities scattered across the country.

¹ See details at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Ghana Ortabag, T., Ozdemir, S., Bebis, H., & Ceylan, S. (2014). Perspectives of young adult men regarding violence against women: A cross-sectional study from Turkey. *Journal of family violence*, 29(6), 665-674.

These Zongo communities are predominantly immigrants from Sahelian areas of West Africa who have adopted Hausa language as a lingua franca and are mistakenly but commonly regarded as Northerners. The Ghana Statistical Service official census reports 24% of the population as being Muslims although that figure is being protested by the Coalition of Muslim Organizations to contained serious flaws (Amos 2002; International Religious Freedom Report 2006). Besides, the CIA statistics put the population of Muslims in Ghana at 30 percent while others put the figure at 45 percent (Hashim, 2013; Amos 2002; Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosques around the World, 2008). Muslims and Christians in Ghana have had excellent relations, thus religious, social and economic matters have often been redressed through negotiations by the Muslim Representative Council.

Domestic violence is widespread in Ghana and worldwide which is considered a serious human rights issue (Almutairi et al. 2012). Wife battery affects women of all ages, religions, racial and socioeconomic groups, as such some countries, including Ghana, have acknowledged this violence as a problem. Wife battery takes many forms like physical, sexual, emotional, and economic which most of the time results in acute medical conditions where the woman sustain injuries to the face, head, neck, breasts or abdomen and in chronic conditions thus with headaches, abdominal pain, pelvic pain and sexual dysfunction (Ortabag, Ozdemir, Bebis, & Ceylan, 2014; Kimuna and Djamba 2008; Langford 2009; Stickley et al. 2008; Montero et al. 2011). For battery in Islam, most Muslims tried to explain the word *daraba* in Qur'an 4:34 an attempt to translate and interpret the word in a way that is different from many of the pre-modern interpretations. The word *daraba* 'to strike' or 'to hit' is acknowledged but argues that both the circumstances of a marital dispute situation and the context of the Qur'anic text need to be taken into consideration to understand its implications. In this case, the example of the Prophet is often invoked to soften the meaning and restrict the applicability of the verse. Studies indicate that the word itself need to be explored and that the verse is far too ambiguous to be followed literally (Barlas, 2003; Wadud, 2013).

Wife battery is present in all cultures and affecting up to 70% of women across the globe. In corroboration, multiple countries study by WHO indicates that the percentage of married women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence (or both) perpetrated by the husband in their lifetime ranged from 15 to 71% (Ortabag et al., 2014; WHO, 2005). There are more than 1.2 billion Muslims whose source of practice of Islam is the Qur'an, thus the sayings and traditions of the Prophet (hadith and sunnah) as well as the shari'a jurists' legal derivations and decisions. According to Ammar (2007), these sources are hierarchically put into practice in the everyday life of the Muslims. For instance in legal derivations and decisions, the first contact by jurists is the Qur'an, then to the exegetical works related to the hadith and sunnah and finally to the shari'a. These sources are the basis for understanding the issues of marriage and for that matter issue of wife battery in Islam.

Marriage in Islam is a legal contract in which women are granted full rights under the shari'a to negotiate and insist on favorable terms. Most people consider marriage as a solution to anxiety, stress, depression and cure for loneliness through understanding, harmony and empathy in marital relationship to attain mental and emotional unity. As indicated, the women have the right to determine, collect and keep her dowry (mahr), as a source of comfort (Okon, 2013). It is revealed that marital unity in Islam is categorized as physical, spiritual, mental and emotional unity. The physical unity can be seen in the oneness that "He (Allah) it is who created you from a single soul; and there from did make his mate that he might take rest in her" (surah 7: 189). The spiritual unity involves the worship and prayer at home and in the mosque as well as studying the Holy Quran and the hadith together. The purpose of marriage in Islam includes promotion of the moral and spiritual upliftment of society and for the couples to cope with the realities of

human existence. The Islamic viewpoint has been clarified in the hadith this way “He who is able to marry should marry, for it keeps the eyes cast down and keeps a man chaste; and he who cannot, should take to fasting...” (Okon, 2013). Therefore, this paper intends to examine the extent to which Islam support or otherwise for wife battery and the consequences of battery on the social status of Muslim married women.

Methods

The study employed the qualitative method for it is useful when conducting causal studies on a culturally sensitive issue. A qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the inhabited individuals. Creswell (2013) indicates that a qualitative research approach is to answer the questions of how and what happens, exploration and research topics that require answers in detail. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), qualitative inquiry is often used to explore areas about which little is known and to understand human behaviour that is affected by the meanings that people construct through their personal experiences.

The explanatory case study was considered for it is useful when conducting causal studies which involve in-depth data collection from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). This case study provides explanations to why battery occurs and to evaluate the individual to open the way for discoveries.

Population and Sample

The population should be the first consideration prior to searching for the sampling frame, which is a list of the elements composing the study population (Barbie, 2010). The sample comprised of ten informants who met the research selection criteria. All of them were Muslim married women, who have experienced battery or have been abused by their husbands. They were interviewed at different confidential locations which included the office of Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) at the Tamale police station. Based on the snowball technique some respondents were interviewed outside DOVVSU at different confidential locations.

Unit of Analysis

The study focused on battered Muslim married women, thus women who have experienced battery and can speak English/Dagbani. The respondents were above 18 years, able to articulate their experience and report battery at the office of Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) at the Tamale police station.

Procedure and Instruments

The researcher used interview protocols to take notes during the interview. The protocol is a predetermined sheet on which one logs information learned during the observation or interview. A tape recorder was also used by the researcher during the interview.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed for data obtained from the field. The researcher ensured that the interviews were transcribed verbatim for the analysis of the data. Walcott (1994) recommends three aspects of data transformation: description, analysis and interpretation of the culture-sharing group. The method of qualitative thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-cases analysis or assertion was used.

Results

The themes emerged were based on the respondents' experience and interview. Wife battery is an issue in all the regions in the country but has only slowly been acknowledged as a social problem in this patrilineal society. The informants' descriptions of the effects of domestic violence on the social status of married women were initially categorized into 6 themes – social isolation, breakage of family and friendship ties, strained relationship, increasing divorce, abandonment of wife and children as well as single parenthood - to explain the social status of married Muslim women in relation to battery.

Social Isolation

The intention of most husbands is to ensure compliance of the wives so they employ certain methods to keep them away from any possible contact or sources of support from the family, relatives, friends and the community. The study shows that the women faced discrimination and rejection from the members of the community if the battery is reported to outsiders and the cause borders on traditional duties rather than religious prescribed duties. For fear of this isolation, some of them cannot leave the husbands because they are made to think that nobody loves them. The study identifies a wide range of isolation behaviour like denying the wife permission to go out, to see friends or family members. They are also prevented from having social contacts with outsider through violence or threats even with the husbands' consent Sanka (38) revealed that:

... I asked for permission to go and treat myself but he did not mind so I left I went for three weeks he came and asked my brother's wife but they told him they that I was in, ...when I followed him home, he asked 'who give you the permission to go' he slapped me [chaap] and I asked him what was my offense to deserve such a slap ...

They also revealed of husbands monitoring their phone calls or confiscating their phones. Such actions are used as strategies to isolate and control the wife and to limit their freedom of movement and association with others which in the long run affect their social well-being. Some isolation tactics used to trap women in battery relationship include threats, degradation, deprivation and burdening them with responsibilities to the extent that women lose confidence and belief in themselves.

We are ...yes I am to go out...yes so I was kept away from the entire community... cannot honour invitation...yes wedding, funerals...even outdooing and he will not spare me... allow me some... all the time insults, castigations and made unbearable remarks against me... I cannot go... see friends and there is no peace in the house either. My religion yes Muslims are encourage to visit visiting relative is good in yes in Islam yet I cannot

This means restriction on the social space which limits the opportunities available for any realistic socialization and network that might enhance their social relations. The aim of this domestic imprisonment by the husbands is to increase the dependence of the wives and to control them so that they cannot maneuver to freedom.

Breakage of Family and Friendship Ties

Social interaction has a positive effect on the social well-being of married women as such deficiency in social support, interaction and social isolation can result in poor family and friendship ties. Social interaction and social networking may produce positive influence in making available guidance for help seeking by Muslim battered women from members of the community. This may directly bring about positive sense of purpose, sense of belongingness and recognition of self-worth which enhances the

personality of those women. This is also likely to motivate self-care, help respond adequately to stress and depression which in turn enhance the social status of women. Maliyama (27) stated that:

... no he said I need to be disciplined, life is so difficult for me because I do not I cannot even make calls to friends, even my relatives he monitors my moves and calls if I call it means I'm either calling my relative to complain or my boy friends ... yes the men ... the imaginary men.

The women are able to conserve social cohesion through diverse social activities like festivities, cultural events and meetings of members of community based associations in the area. As Muslims traditions, the family solidarity networks and friendship ties produce social unity through sharing and participating in community activities like weddings and outdooing of new born babies. This is a deeply rooted in actions and activities that maintain social relationships as a means to social survival in a Muslim community. However, data suggest that husbands are able to break these social interactions and networks by preventing or restricting the movement of their wives. It is further revealed that marriage agreements are broken and harmonious relationships among in-laws disrupted thereby creating problems of child custody and support.

Strained Relationship

The research reveals strained relationships after battery causes deep and long lasting bitter feelings in families, crumbling family and friendship cohesion as well as limiting women's social associations. As indicated by informants, even the rich and cherished Ghanaian cultural and traditional marriage and naming ceremonies are affected. Some married women are unable to participate due to either nursing wounds or being barred by the husbands with the excuse that they might join bad group or company in the process. This attitude loosens the social cohesion and bond of the Muslim *ummah* which serve as the focal point from which women in the community gather to help and sometimes get useful ideas for business and social network. A battered woman is unable to attend these social gatherings due to either ill health or just to hide the injuries and bruises sustained from battery. Pagwuni (42) shared with the researcher that:

The sound of his voice yes my husband scares me terribly, life is difficult for me as I sustain injuries and sometimes I feel shy to go out or to the market because I normally don't want to give the same reasons for my injuries means that I cannot meet or ...inter yes with my customers serve with fresh vegetable or attend traditional gathering ...

The divorced respondents indicated that battery has led to mistrust and total neglect from the husband and kin, leading to their separation. A few of the informants experienced intermittent cordial relationship with their husbands but complained bitterly about the behaviour of the relatives of the husband during and after battery. They also constantly suffer social isolation from the husbands' family, relatives and some of their friends if they complain to people considered as outsiders. A married woman is not supposed to share her marital problems with any person other than the husband, not even family members as such battery is treated privately. Boyatu (33) mentioned to the researcher that:

... it (battery) is supposed to be discussed secretly in the family between us ... yes wife and husband ... we do not talk for the sake of the dignity of the family ... do not want to shame the family and also about the children so we do not complain or talk to people about the battery we live in it alone, family name and dignity is more paramount than that of the individual members.

Lukaya (37) also expressed her frustrations at length about the private nature of married life in the following manner:

I could not talk to anybody because he accused me of discussing our marital issues with people which he thinks ... it's secret and not to be discussed with outsiders. Outsiders are not supposed to know what happens between husband and wife even abuses or battery are not to be discussed, not even with family members let alone outside the family. Family members except ... yes the family head are even sometimes supposed to pretend that battery takes place because it is private ... is not anybody's issue but spouses.

On the above issue, Boyatu shared her experience of mistrust as the biggest problem of battery on her marriage and family which often causes her a lot of pain. Some of the informants also mentioned that their families receive threats like husbands willingness to leave or abandon their wives if the family members interfere in their marital affair or try to help or when they are seen talking to the wife. Dangana shared with the researcher that she was compelled by her husband's action to drive her sister and brother away because he (husband) thought the siblings were discussing his cruel behaviour. In corroboration, Lukaya (37) revealed her embarrassing moments the following way:

... very embarrassing, my husband threatened to divorce ... to make way for ... yes, just because my brother came to visit me ... my family? Very difficult, so in order to reduce enmity I asked my brother to leave and not to visit me anymore because I want to keep my marriage. ... divorce and my children...

Increasing Divorce

The extended family system is practised as a result the Metropolis becomes a very stable society in terms of marriage however battery and high divorce rate has started to increase. Increasing rates of divorce is an indication of family disintegration and change which has negative social and emotional repercussions. This is indicated by the informants where most of them are divorced as a result of battery. One divorcee, Kalugi (38) revealed in the interview that:

I was so scared and traumatized although this was not the first time he has beaten me. But this time, he was so abusive that I could not take it anymore... I ... I talked to myself ... this will be the last he will... I am going to divorce ask for ... yes divorce. So I run to my...

Furthermore, one respondent revealed to the researcher that battery and eventual divorce happen because she has built a house, sent the mother to perform hajj which the husband and family members were jealous and curious of her. The successes of married women are envied by some jealous husbands who, pick a fight with them and then beat them. Thus, the wife who reacts is beaten, insulted or receives all sorts of remarks as well as names intended to shame them. Kalugi (38) who spoke at length affirmed that:

Yes my husband and his people are jealous, pick fight with me then when I react my husband will act violently and ends up beating, insulting and making all sorts of derogatory remarks that will shame one sometimes insults me and call me names like rich woman [legiri lana, azi gurunpaga²] but I I don't care just to make me slow my economic activity... see the down fall of my business relation with others.

Most of the informants complained about the spate of growing battery and the incessant mistrust and suspicion before and during marriage that destroy the social fiber of married women and the community at large. The controlling behaviour of some husbands creates mistrust and suspicion which in the end leads to divorce. The respondents revealed that the rate of battery related divorce has increased in the Metropolis

² Hajia Gurunpaga, pronounced locally as Azi Gurunpaga is a popular rich market woman in the study community

in recent times. One of the informants, Boyatu, indicated that she witnessed several battery that results in divorce in her area. Any battered woman who reports the husband will experience this kind of treatment, will get divorced. For instance, Boyatu (33) said:

... who send their husbands to WAJU/DOVVSU if a Muslim send or a [dagban paga] Dagomba woman send your husband there then that is all for you even if he the husband still loves you his people will send you packing that is divorce that if this problem is ... and tradition you report to your parent it is supposed to be discussed secretly in the family between the wife and husband.

With regards to divorce, she also told the researcher that it was more rampant than before if the numbers she witness is taken into consideration. The increasing divorce will undermine the Islamic family system in the country particularly Tamale where marriages are arranged or contracted by the elders of the two families. Most of the informants disclosed that divorce widens the scope of violence to include the two families that contracted the marriage under Islam thus for both kin of husbands and wives, which is not a good thing in Islam. It is not surprising that many informants stated that they reported their husbands and this had led to their divorce. In Ghana, especially the study community, nobody discusses the issues concerning the husband and wife so if a wife takes his husband to [zishee] the police or chief's palace then she has tarnished the image of the husband and family. The woman losses the sympathy of the husband and kin, and even some members of the neighbourhood might not sympathize with such a wife should the husband pronounced divorce. Kalugi (38) reveal that:

There are a lot of women ... who are abused by their husband. Even open cuts on the body which is visible are covered up let alone insult and name calling like my case I only follow tradition our tradition does not allow women to report what is happening between man and his wife to other members of the society it is considered secrete and must be treated with the secrecy it deserve.

The story narrated above indicates that marriages and matters of divorces, in Ghana have links to battery which the husband perpetrates. While some of these women view divorce as the last resort when difficulties arise within the marriage, others considered divorce as an ideal option in the current violence leading to inevitable tensions in their married life. The women opined that if nothing is done, either spouse can employ mischievous acts like poisoning, spiritually attacking and humiliating acts or to bring him/her down to satisfy their personal ego. Most informants complained about husbands not eating their meals, no copulation and being completely ignored making them feel insecure and abandoned; divorce is the only option, as Pagwuni (42) shared with the researcher:

... a wife is worthless [jilma] a wife's worth is measured by her involvement in the activity of the marital home, paramount of which is taking charge of preparation of the main meals for the family... a woman feel useless if the husband does not eat the meal she prepares ... most importantly refusal to copulate is a big issue ... so based on this I thought the wise, the best thing for me was to move for a while or for good.

Bonsudung (54) also faced the same problem: He does not eat when I cook he said I will poison him, ... he said I can kill him.

Increasing Abandonment of Wife and Children

The traditional and Islamic values coupled with expectations determine parenthood in this part of Ghana. With these values, family relations are represented clearly by kinship and this serves as one of the most basic principles for organizing individuals into social groups, role and categories. However, the degree of

relationship has been affected greatly, bringing about decline in Islamic defined roles of parents because the bond of kinship that creates obligations between parents and children no longer exists due to domestic violence. As a result, there is decline in child up-bringing due to increasing abandonment as the embattled husband and wife no longer coordinate efforts towards the care of their children. The women sometime have to struggle to care for their children especially the younger ones that they cannot leave behind in their marital homes in the event of divorce or separation. Zaliya (39) said:

There are so many women who are battered or beaten by their husband but they are quite because they do not want to drag the image of their husbands and family in the mud bring disgrace to her own family ... this can lead to being expelled from your marital home I'm still with my husband because I have four children so I cannot go ... leave them ... yes, they will be become useless and that will be a big lose to me after all my husband does not care about what at all happens to them ohoo ...

Andara (40) also shared similar sentiments:

It has not been easy being in abusive marriage I am fed up and tired of myself I don't know what to do with myself nowadays, the man has no time for ... the ...no even the children let alone myself even though I am married and the man is supposed to carry out certain fatherly responsibilities but he shakes them as well making me the sole ...yes the one in charge of everything.

The recent change in expectations about the role of couples has created concomitant changes in the role of women as Muslims; some respondents indicated that men reluctantly participate in caring for their children which is described as appalling. Islamically, the husbands take care of the children even in times of divorce. The mothers are beaten, overburdened, angered and depressed which makes them irritable to the behaviour of their equally distressed children and worsens the behaviour they are trying to quell. But according to the informants, this responsibility is ignored and is shifted to women after battery and eventual divorce. Maliya (39) told the researcher:

What I can say of our relationship is wife neglect my husband staying away from me and the children I feel that way under this situation I and my kids do not get proper care the children's education is also neglected and this circumstances putting the burden on me the mother.

A single mother stated how her former husband had neglected her children after the divorce which brought untold hardships on them as it was difficult to meet their daily bread. This resulted in a role crisis as a single parent which led to her daughter moving to the South (Accra, Tema or Kumasi) to engage in head-porting (kaayaye). This happened at a time the husband neglected them and she could not provide for their needs. The majority of the informants asserted that the incessant wife battery might be the reason for the current break-ups in marriages in the area.

When a male Muslim has custody of his children without a wife in the Tamale Metropolis, he is viewed as not being capable of providing care for them and is pressured to remarry for the sake of the children. This assertion turns out to be real because the respondents said that some men have neglected their children under the care of the women. This suggests those husbands are not living up to expected Islamic parenting roles because of the way children are socialized. One respondent revealed that men are not capable of providing tender love and care for the emotional and psychological needs of their wives and children, forcing women to take charge to shoulder the responsibility alone when there is violence in the house. Lagfu (40) stated that:

My husband doesn't even care about the children leaving the burden on me I don't get any support ... yes not even in guidance or counseling even if he does, it is only once in a while not even enough for their upkeep, which... this affects their future carrier and skills development and I the mother as well.

To make her experience clear, Lagfu told the researcher that the failure of her husband to meet religious expectations in parenting resulted in negative consequences. She further opined that the macro networks can affect the behaviour of household members. The period of wife battery extends over years and is usually mixed harmonious times with periods of anger creating poor upbringing of children. Most of the respondents indicated of being in violent relationships for three years or more. The informants narrated that caring for children by a single parent, usually mothers, can be difficult especially when the socialization of children in the area is considered. Thus the mother alone cannot properly care for the children.

Increasing Single Parenthood

Being a single parent is the most difficult role anyone, particularly women can play in situations of divorce or separation after battery. Apart from developing their skills as caretakers, a big challenge for most newly single women is how to train the children to cope with feelings such as anger, guilt, abandonment and sadness that are problematic which the former spouse ignores. Some of the informants said the most challenging role for them as single mothers are ensuring the educational, emotional and spiritual development of the children which are supposed to be the responsibility of the husband in Islam. The women reported about performing their motherly role as single parents by providing the basic needs of the children. The respondents revealed that there is no support or guidance from anywhere for their new role as single mothers. Despite that, the majority of them have performed considerably well, especially in explaining the divorce and reassuring their children the love they have for them and how they would always be cared for. Most of the informants indicated that they perform their role as single mothers in terms of education, guidance and counseling and sometimes marriage. Sanka reported that it was not easy for her new role as a single mother but she coped with everything including full-time parenting and homemaker. She mentioned the sensitive nature of her children as well as their emotional strain due to the stress experienced by the divorce and inability to show the children the same affection and tolerance they had once displayed. Chendiba (32) also mentioned that:

Those who suffer this I know are are our children they witness us shou shouting and sometime he does the hitting bea bea beating in their presence... yes in the presence of my children sometimes you see the small one crying and cling to my legs and crying and calling [mma mma] mother, mother.

She explained that the children sometimes express these difficulties in many ways. With the disruption to the family routine, combined with a sense of powerlessness, battered women display their grief by demonstrating anger directed toward others like their children and even to themselves. In such situations, children often break rules and sometimes are unable to acknowledge responsibility of facing the problems with defiance and being withdrawn from friends and family. The respondents revealed that some of their children especially the female ones run to the southern part of Ghana because of either lack of adequate parental attention or basic needs. The informants also expressed their fear of negative consequences as single parents as some children whine and become clingy which require greater attention and understanding of their behaviour and moods. They described this stage as challenging because they are

unable to handle it as single mothers and it also requires greater emotional nurturance during the traumatic experience of battery and divorce.

Discussion

The discussion on the relationship between couples for that matter wife battery in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) is very important. As most husbands claim they want to ensure compliance of the wives to some religious obligation. Based on this, they employ certain methods to keep the women away from any possible contact or sources of support from the family, relatives, friends and the community which make them vulnerable. It is very clear that the central concept in the Qur'an is Tawhid, the belief in the Oneness of God. For that matter, Islam is defined as way of life of Muslims which permeates in the Qur'an as such the sanctity of human life and behaviour is fundamentally cherished and protected. Hence, these types of treatment thus wife battery by husband in light of this may be regarded as disbelief and rejection of Islam. The value of mutual respect amongst humans is a keynote to the Islamic moral code. With this, wife battery becomes a negation of the inalienable right of women which is against the principles and teaching of Islam. On the question of gender thus husband and wife relation, Rabbani et al. (2008) refer to the Qur'anic ayah 21 of Surat Al-Rum: *"And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, so that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your –hearts: Verily in that are signs for those who ponder"*.

For Muslims, there are directives from the Qur'an on issues like equality, identity, functions, needs, rights and responsibility, sexual relations and interactions. Besides, chapters like al-Nisa', al-Nur, al-Talaq and al-Mujadilah deliberate on several gender issues, for that matter issues concerning women. It might not be Islamic to deliberately isolate ones wife socially with the claim of fulfilling religious obligation to foster obedience or compliance.

Family and friendship is very important in Islam as such any attempt to break family and friendship ties is unacceptable. Islam encourages social interaction as it enhances social well-being and social status of married women so deficiency in social support and interaction can result in poor family and friendship ties. Social interaction and social networking make it possible for battered Muslim women to seek for help from members of the community. Islam grants men and women equal rights in aspects of life as mentioned in An Nisa (4: 1) *"...fear that Allah in whose name you demand your rights over one another and abstain from violating relations between kinsfolk..."* Besides, Al Baqara (2:228) emphasize mutual rights in family relations, *Wives have the same rights as the husbands have on them in accordance with the generally known principles. Of course, men are a degree above them in status, and above all is Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.* The Prophet (SAW) talked about rights in his last sermon. "It is incumbent upon every individual to respect the right to life, possessions, dignity and honor of each other and there is no discrimination between man and woman in this regard". It is clear that the freedom to lawful association and rights to bond family ties are accorded every Muslim (women and men) in Islam without any discrimination on the basis of genders.

Wife battery strained relationships between couples which lead to deep and long lasting bitter feelings in families which invariably destroy marriages hence limiting women's social associations. As indicated by informants, even the rich and cherished Islamic marriage and naming ceremonies in the area are affected as some husbands do not allow their wives to attend such gathering. As demonstrated, this treatment is often tolerated and legitimated base on history and misinterpretation of some verses. This has persisted despite repeated condemnation by scholars who have fairer interpretation of those Islamic texts.

It is clear that Islam guides the behavior of Muslims. For instance, chapters such as al-Baqarah and al-Ahzab contain many verses on gender issues. Al-Khisht (1984) discusses the Qur'an about gender issues such as the value of humanity (57:39), dignity and honour (49:13), good deed and its rewards (3:159), personal and public responsibilities (4:32, 16:97, 4:124, 9:71), punishment for extra-marital relationship (5:38, 24:2), civil rights in learning, teaching and selection of a partner for marriage. Al-Ghazali talks about general equality between men and women as indicated in the Qur'an and suggest that man is given certain rights as a sign of heavy responsibility but not preference. The position of a man to a woman and vice versa is clear in verse 2:187: *'They are your garments and ye are their garments.'* There are limits prescribed by Allah (Hudud Allah) in Muslim homes; this appears six times in two verses of al-Baqarah 2:229-230. Al-Ghazali condemns the traditional interpretation and superficial understanding of the Qur'an of wife beating which contradicts the Qur'anic and sound hadith directives on mutual respect and coexistence between couples (al-Gazali, 1990; Mir-Hosseini, 2009). For instance, the Qur'an 4:19 says: *... Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may take away part of the dower ye have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity... (Qur'an 4:1)*

The extended family system operating in the Metropolis creates stable society in terms of marriage. The Qur'an advises the husband to *'... lives with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and God brings about through it a great deal of good (Qur'an 4:19)*. However, divorce rate has started to increase due to wife battery which is an indication of family disintegration and change resulting in negative social and emotional consequences. Again, al-Baqarah and al-Ahzab contain several verses on issues about husband and wife. Al-Khisht (1984) deliberate issues on expression of opinion (58:1) and the rights to the termination of a marriage (talaq for a husband and Khul' for a wife involving different procedures) (see also Rosemary 2010). The Qur'an states clearly and in various verses that [husband and wife] were created from the same nafs soul as stated in the first ayah in Sural Al-Nisa that: *O people! Reverence God –show piety towards God- who created you from one nafs and created from –the nafs- her mate and spread from them many men and women; and reverence God, through whom you demand your mutual rights, and the wombs –that bore you-, for God watches you (Qur'an 4:1)*. The Qur'anic principles and general spirit protect the status of women, support family values and promote spousal equity as opposed to the act of violence that leads to divorce. In this light women are considered as full partners in the devotional rights of Islam. The Qur'an declares in Al Imran; 195, Al-Mu'minum: 35; Al-Nahl: 97; Al-Nisa: 124; At-Tawbah: 71-72 that they will be judged equally as men in the afterlife. So in Islam, there are restrictions on wife battery to the extent of divorce as a result. The Prophet (SAW) stressed that the believers who have the best manners are those who have the most perfect faith. The best amongst you are the best towards their wives' [Tirmidhi] (Rosemary 2010; Rabbani et al., 2008; Amina, 1999). The Prophet (SAW) also said: *whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbours. And I command you to take good care of the women. [Bukhari]*.

Invariably, all the actions considered as violence against women -rape, assault, female infanticide, sexual harassment, sex tourism, forced pregnancy, compulsory heterosexuality, genital mutilation, sexual slavery, marital rape, forced prostitutions as captured in the international human rights and humanitarian law have all been dealt with in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet SAW (Okon, 2013).

Islam guides the behavior of Muslims so those who perpetrate violence against their wives based their argument on Ayah verse 34 of the Surah Al Nisa of the Qur'an. The verse states, as to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill conduct (nushuz), admonish them, refuse to share their beds, and

beat them. As a result some Muslims argue that wife battery in Islam is permissible but not desirable. For those who uphold the interpretation of verse 34 of the Al Nisa, seem not consistent with the general principles expressed about women in other Qur'anic verses and other sources of Islam. For instance, the Prophet directly discouraged the practices of wife battery as narrated in several hadiths. Men who beat their wives were considered as lacking in character, as indiscriminate in their behavior and as unethical (Okon, 2013). Despite the fact that wife battery is discouraged in Islam, this Verse 34 of Surah Al Nisa is misunderstood and considered as a license for violent action against woman. The verse prohibits man to hit his wife for no other reason than the one stated. He is admonished or encouraged to go through peaceful steps of anger management. If the steps fail, the husband is allowed to beat the wife lightly to express his anger and frustration. The woman is obliged to seek for divorce if there is any harm done to her after the violent action. The Sunnah indicates that the Prophet did not promote wife battery as desirable. It is clear that Islam has great and expansive respect for women as demonstrated in both the Quran and Sunnar. The Qur'an 4:34 which addresses management and maintenance or *qawamah* by men on the affairs of women in the family generates debate on wife battery (Dunn, 2012; Rosemary 2010). It is explained that the verse about beating the wife is conditional and complex with subjective interpretations. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2001) translated English version of the Qur'anic verse says: Men are the protectors and maintainer [qawammun] of women, because Allah has given the one more [strength] than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, first admonish them, next refuse to share their beds and then beat them lightly; but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means [annoyance]: for Allah is Most High, Great (Quran 4:34) (Rosemary 2010).

In Islam, marriage is considered an agreement between two adults Muslims of opposite sex who live together in a relationship with the approval of their social groups. As such couples are expected to live together in unity and consensus to uphold permanent bond of mutual loyalty and parity of dignity in parenthood. The Islamic values determine parenthood in this part of Ghana. With these values, family relations are represented clearly by kinship to serve as the basic principles for organizing individuals into social groups, role and categories. However, relationships have been affected greatly, leading to decline in roles of parents as prescribed in Islam because the bond of kinship that creates obligations between parents and children no longer exists due to domestic violence. What happens in the event of unacceptable behavior is that, tolerance not battery is recommended to deal with the situation. On this, the Prophet (SAW) said: "hates one of her manners, he should be satisfied with another" [Muslim]. For example, Aisha, the Prophet's wife said, 'the Prophet never hit a servant or a woman' (Sahih Al-Bukhari, in Hadith Al Islam 87355). This is an indication that the Prophet never resorted to beating his wives, regardless of the circumstances. So under no circumstance should a Muslim beat or neglect his wife and children. The Qur'an repeatedly describes the relationship between husband and wife as one of tranquility, affection and mercy and enjoins husbands to live with their wives in kindness, or leave them peacefully. In the light of these and other similar verses, it may be concluded that the Qur'an articulates the basic general principles about proper relationship between husband and wife to enforce good parenting. Such principles leave no room for gendered strife, subordination and oppression in Islam therefore, tranquil marital relations are thus unconditional.

Conclusion

There are numerous publications and reports about the poor treatment of women in Islam. On the contrary, it is clear that Islam revered Marriage and describes it as a sacred covenant as such the treatment of women is detailed in both the Quran and the sunnah of the prophet (SAW). The most important basic unit of any society is the family which explains why it is considered a divine establishment in Islam with set of religious principles for its survival. The Qur'an is considered by Muslims as the highest religious source on several issues including wife battery. Other sources include the Prophet's sayings (hadiths) and fatwas used to render opinions. As demonstrated, the Quran describe the unique relationship between husband and wife as garment and entreat couples to be kind and respectable to each other. The rights and duties of husband and wife have been prescribed clearly in both the Quran and the Sunnah of the prophet (SAW) for cordial relationship between husband and wife. In the study area, the acceptability of wife battery is based on tradition and custom of the people rather than on principles of Islam. To draw conclusions from these findings, it would be that wife battery is somewhat acceptable traditionally rather than islamically although the trend is weak. There is a clear separation of patriarchal readings of Islam's sacred texts from the objectives of the Shari'ah.

References

1. Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosques Around the World (2008). A Pictorial Presentation. USA: Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. p. 352. ISBN 9781882494514
2. Amos Safo (2002). "Muslims cry foul over population figures". Ghana. NewsFromAfrica. Archived from the original on May 2, 2014. Retrieved December 17, 2014.
3. Barbie, E. (2010). The Practice of Social Research. Belmont, Wadsworth Thomson Learning. CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc
4. Barlas, A. (2004). Amina Wadud's Hermeneutics of the Qur'an: Women Rereading Sacred Texts. Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an, 97-123.
5. Barlas, A. (2003). "Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an. University of Texas Press.
6. Chaudhry, A. S. (2006). The Problems of Conscience and Hermeneutics: A Few Contemporary Approaches. Comparative Islamic Studies, 2(2).
7. Creswell, J. W. (2013). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage publications.
8. Hashim, M. Ali Mahdi (2013). "A Journey Through Islam: Muslims have come up well in Ghana". Arab News. Saudi Arabia. Retrieved December 17, 2016.
9. International Religious Freedom Report 2006 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor". US State Department. Retrieved December 17, 2014.
10. Kimuna, S. R., & Djamba, Y. K. (2008). Gender based violence: correlates of physical and sexual wife abuse in Kenya. *Journal of Family Violence*, 23, 333-342.
11. Langford, D.R. (2009) Violence: A social and family problem. In Maurer, F.A. & Smith, C. M. (Eds), Community health nursing practice health for families and populations, (4th eds., pp. 580-604). Missouri, Saunders: Elsevier Inc.
12. Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

13. Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2009). Towards Gender Equality: Muslim Family Laws and the Shari 'ah. Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family, 23-63.
14. Mohammad Saani, Ibrahim (2011). The decline of Sufism in West Africa: Some factor contributing to the political and social ascendancy of Wahhabist Islam in Northern Ghana. Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies - McGill University.
15. Montero, I., Escriba, V., Ruiz-Perez, I., Vives-Cases, C., Marti'n-Baena, D., Talavera, M., et al. (2011). Interpersonal violence and women's psychological well-being. *Journal of Women's Health*, 20, 295–301.
16. Ortabag, T., Ozdemir, S., Bebis, H., & Ceylan, S. (2014). Perspectives of young adult men regarding violence against women: A cross-sectional study from Turkey. *Journal of family violence*, 29(6), 665-674.
17. Rosemary B. Kellison. (2010) 'At the Intersection of Scripture and Law: Qur'an 4:34 and Violence against Women' *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26(2), 17
18. Stickley, A., Kislitsyna, O., Timofeeva, I., & Vågerö, D. (2008). Attitudes toward intimate partner violence against women in Moscow, Russia. *Journal of Family Violence*, 23, 447–456.
19. Wadud, A. (2013). Inside the gender Jihad: women's reform in Islam. oneworld Publications.
20. World Health Organization (2005). García-Moreno, C., Jansen, H. A. F. M., Ellsberg, M., Heise, L. & Watts, C. (Eds) WHO Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: Prevalence of violence by intimate partners responses module, Geneva, Retrieved November 10, 2011 from <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2005/4915781356211>