PATRIARCHY AND WOMANHOOD: THE CASE OF THE KONKOMBA WOMAN OF THE NANUMBA NORTH MUCIPALITY IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

As with many other African communities, the Konkomba society is patriarchal and marked by unequal gender relations that place women in subservient roles. This study examined the patriarchal structures now in place among the Konkomba in the Nanumba North Municipality of the Northern Region of Ghana and how they affect the status of Konkomba women as women. The study included numerous methodologies, including descriptive survey research. For qualitative data collection, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were utilised, while a questionnaire was employed to obtain quantitative data. The study sampled a total of 177 participants using both probability and non-probability sampling methods. The primary outcome of the study was the concept of an ideal Konkomba woman as a wife and mother who was also submissive and obedient to her household responsibilities. The conclusion of the study was that the dogma of femininity, which defines women as mothers and wives, is institutionalised to identify women as perfect or incomplete. Several features of gender disparity and discrimination were also uncovered by the investigation. To combat this governing ideology, which is based on

patriarchal structures and gender-based discrimination, the study suggests reorienting societal perceptions of women through seminars, durbars, workshops, and adult education, as well as the introduction of gender studies in primary, secondary, and other tertiary institutions.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Womanhood, Traditions, Konkomba, Nanumba North Municipality*

INTRODUCTION

The significance of women's status is derived from the difference between it and men's standing. It is rated based on the extent of liberty and equality (Bala, 2004). Most African researchers concur that Africa is a patriarchal civilization with clearly defined gender roles. Gender relations are influenced by patriarchal dynamics, which relegate women to subordinate roles and compel individuals to conform to these norms. (Makama) 2013 (Makama).Azodo (2007) asserts that in traditional African societies, it is considered that a woman's place is in the home, where she is relegated to housework and childrearing, while the man roams the field in search of labour and conflict. Therefore, women have crucial roles in the domestic sphere and are responsible for the welfare of the members of this unit, but they lack the necessary tools, such as education, access to, and control over, resources for empowerment, to properly carry out these responsibilities (Daplah, 2013).

According to Kathewera Banda et al. (2011), women's rights and the enjoyment of certain benefits are contingent on their connections with men, and men typically enjoy more rights and privileges than women. In a number of patrilineal African cultures, for instance, Strobel (1982), writing about African women, notes that land was allotted to men and that women only had access to it as daughters and, more firmly, as wives. Several authors who have written on women in Ghana have discussed how parents socialise their children in a biassed manner and how these youngsters eventually assume superior and inferior roles as adults. All three authors, Adusah-Karikari (2008), Annin (2009), and Dadzie (2009), have commented on the socialisation processes occurring in Ghana, asserting that these processes nurture and maintain patriarchy. Tsikata et al. (1997) and Allah-Mensah (2005) have also attributed this difference between men and women to the extremely patriarchal nature of society. A system of authority known as patriarchy maintains male supremacy and female subservience (Goldberg, 1993).

In addition to attracting global attention, the lower standing of women relative to men has influenced laws and recommendations aimed at empowering women for improved gender relations at the global, national, local, and familial levels (European Commissions, 2012; UNDP, 2012a). This is because subordination and inequality of women are global problems (Neema, 2015). Therefore, women's empowerment is presented as a crucial intervention approach for reversing global gender inequality and discrimination against women (UNDP, 2012a). By granting men and women equal political, economic, and social rights, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana laid the groundwork for equal opportunity for both sexes (Article 17(2) of the Constitution, 1992). However, even after more than two decades, this strategy has not produced anywhere close to the required level of outcomes. In Ghana, women remain disproportionately oppressed and restricted to domestic responsibilities (Daplaah, 2013). The study identifies the exponential growth of women's populations as a global issue (Uchem and Ngwa, 2014).

According to United Nations facts and statistics, which place the world's population at 7.2 billion, women make up more than half of the population and perform three-quarters of the work, but they

earn only one-tenth of the global income and own one percent of the world's wealth, three-quarters of them are hungry, and most importantly, they account for more than two thirds of illiterate adults (UN, 2013 as cited in Uchem and Ngwa, 2014). According to this demographic study, "many developing countries, the bulk of which are on the United Nations' list of 49 least developed countries (LDCs)," experience rapid population increase (United Nations, 2013:9, as cited in Uchem and Ngwa, 2014). In accordance with this demographic trend, the global workforce is becoming increasingly female. It bolsters the claim that women are indispensable to the development of contemporary civilization. Unfortunately, this huge transformation in the workforce from an overreliance on men to the inclusion of women has not yet changed the way that many patriarchal societies, especially African ones, see womanhood (Uchem and Ngwa, 2014). Women continue to be portrayed as inferior, weak, submissive, mediocre, dependent, and subordinate in 21st-century stereotypes that are mostly rooted in cultural and religious beliefs (Ibid).

On the African continent, women are oppressed because they can't own land or other property, they have to work low-paying jobs, and their children and widows can't inherit from them (Uchem and Ngwa, 2014). If women's marginalisation is still a topic of discussion in contemporary Africa, it is because social, theological, psychological, and cultural institutions continue to serve as the basis for women's perpetual enslavement. To continue these acts of injustice against women, many have hidden under the saying "a man's culture is his identity" under the pretence of identifying with their culture. Some victims of injustice have resigned themselves to their plight and regard the harsh culture they were born into as sacred (Ibid.). Women have been denied rights, such as the right to own property, throughout history (Uchem and Ngwa, 2014). Some partners have continuously denied African women the right to gainful employment, which is another kind of male oppression (Uchem and Ngwa, 2014). Politically, democracy is founded on the participation of all citizens in the management of public affairs. In the majority of African nations, men continue to dominate the political landscape (Uchem and Ngwa, 2014).

Very few and extremely rare exceptions exist for women to express their opinions at political gatherings, occupy leadership positions, or participate in the decision-making process regarding critical community issues (Author, 2002:19). All of them are the result of consistently preserving traditional norms and ideas that prohibit women from public management. For instance, a common misperception about women in the majority of African civilizations is that they serve exclusively as homemakers and reproductive agents. Consequently, women continue to bear a disproportionate share of domestic and family responsibilities, which usually prevent them from attending political activities (Norris and Inglehart, 2001). The previously published literature on women's empowerment in Ghana has also addressed the challenges women face and how these challenges affect their place in society (Agarwal, 1997; GDHS, 2008). According to Tayne, sociocultural or traditional obstacles, such as societal conventions, regulations, rules, beliefs, and practises, impede women's access to education (2008).

The socio-traditional milieu, which is deeply rooted in culture, erects obstacles that restrict women's social and political rights. According to Akita (2010), when a woman gives birth in Ghana, men usually ask if the baby is a boy or a "animal" (girl). The comparison of one gender to an "animal" reveals the depths to which a dominant group may descend in order to diminish the presence of another gender. Despite the awful orientation of the expression, it expresses or illustrates the overall manifestation of the "domination-subordination" paradox. This mentality

continually introduces and prepares women for subordinate positions in society, with no possibility of escape from the domestic realm.

As is typical of most African societies, women in the konkombas of the Nanumba North Municipality (NNM) are discriminated against, abused, and kept as housewives, while men are in charge of assigning authority and resources. Due to exclusion, women have been marginalised and subordinated. This has resulted in a severe distortion of women, beginning at home and extending down to the level of circular society. Moreover, this strategy has hindered efforts to advance gender equality and socioeconomic development. Male dominance and the exploitation of women are obstacles to development, but they also endanger marriage and family connections among the Konkombas of the Nanumba North Municipality (NNM). This study's primary objective was to determine how the Konkomba patriarchal systems in the Nanumba North Municipality of the Northern Region affect the status of Konkomba women as women.

The study also sought to;

1. To establish how womanhood is defined among the Konkombas in the Nanumba North Municipality.
2. To analyze the socio-cultural factors that influence women's positions in the Municipality.

EMPIRICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

Patriarchy

The word "patriarchy" derives from the Latin word "pater," which means "father." It most often refers to the political power and influence of men (Akita, 2010). Patriarchy has traditionally been practised in a manner that makes it appear natural, as opposed to as a social order that evolves and changes. "Patriarchy is the intimate power of men over women," writes Ehrenreich (1995:284). "This power has historically been exercised within the family by the male as breadwinner, property owner, or armed defender of women and children, as well as by the rule of the father, including the rule of older men over younger men, fathers over daughters, and husbands over wives." According to Goldberg (1993:25), a patriarchal system of governance or organisation is "any system of organisation (political, economic, religious, or social) in which the vast majority of authority and leadership posts are held by men." In both ancient and contemporary societies, patriarchy is the most pervasive and powerful force. It is reinforced by societal, cultural, and religious norms, as well as by media portrayals of gender roles.

Numerous patriarchal social structures, including the family, the community, and the state, serve as the foundation for power and control systems (Walby, 1990; Sultana, 2012). These institutions promote patriarchy and propagate its tenets in all aspects of society. Its structure and ideology are the two components of patriarchy (Akita, 2010). The hierarchical structure of institutions and social relationships exemplifies the structural element of patriarchy. Acceptance of such a hierarchical system by the majority is required for its maintenance and, to some extent, for the survival of the authority of the few (Ibid). This acceptance is enhanced by the patriarchal mindset (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This is because it impacts every aspect of human endeavour. Feminism and patriarchy have become partners, much like capitalism and socialism, and a society is patriarchal if it benefits men by being male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered (Johnson, 2005).

Often employed as a theoretical explanation for women's enslavement, the term "patriarchy" refers to men's political and social dominance over women. The defining characteristics of patriarchy are ingrained sex and gender role definitions and attributions, a classification system that separates men and women, and a pervasive subjection of women (Mohammed, 2004; Nukunya, 2003). In general, patriarchy is a social structure founded on the systematic oppression of women through institutional and societal norms and events that permanently deny women their rights and are closely linked to power and control issues (Akita, 2010). When a community regards "maleness" as the norm for human cognition and behaviour in general, men are considered superior, desirable, and of greater value than women (Johnson, 2005). In the political, economic, legal, religious, educational, and even domestic sectors, men often hold positions of authority, reflecting the male-dominated character of patriarchy.

THEORIES OF PATRIARCHY

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism, sometimes referred to as "the mother of all feminist views," was developed in the wake of the social contract theories of Rousseau and Locke and popularised by thinkers like John Stuart Mill, who stressed the importance of respecting each person's unique identity and liberties (Leach, 1997). By positing that women and men have roughly the same thinking power, the idea argues that they should have similar access to political and social rights. Several assumptions underpin liberal feminism. These suppositions rest on the recognition that a lack of knowledge on the part of the afflicted person has aided in the development of gender predisposition and that this lack of knowledge necessitates action on the part of the affected person. Therefore, education is considered a factor that can be employed to remedy the issue.

The goals of liberal feminists are more nuanced. Their goal is a slow but steady transformation of the political, economic, and social order rather than a radical rejection of the status quo. Liberal feminism is still widely recognised and recommended by the public, maybe more so than any other feminist theory. It's also the idea least likely to be deemed "offensive to men." Liberal feminism has mostly advanced the cause by illuminating the extent to which women continue to face bias in the contemporary world. It has been effective in achieving pay equity for women and the legalisation of some reproductive rights, as well as in removing numerous barriers that had previously prevented women from entering fields that were traditionally dominated by men. The widespread notion that the sexes are inherently different persists despite liberal feminism's best efforts. Only the fact that women are not less than men despite their differences has been demonstrated (Leach, 1997).

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a prominent gender ideology. The notion arose from the realisation that society was constructed to the harm of women, for their submission and the accompanying empowerment of men, while promoting the elimination of domination and elitism in all human interactions (Egan, 1999). From the standpoint of radical feminists, the state is male because it treats women like men do (MacKinnon, 1989). Patriarchy, according to the theory, is sustained not by physical force but by male-dominated system structures (Millett, 1970). Catharine MacKinnon, a famous radical feminist, sought to criminalise female supremacy (Egan, 1999). She asserts that women are socially seen as distinct from men and that men define their existence. She feels that seeing gender as a differentiation obscure and legitimises the coercive nature of gender assignment (Mackinnon, 1987).

Radical feminists think that every woman has more in common with other women than with men, regardless of race, age, class, ethnicity, or nationality. This position is supported by feminist philosopher, theologian, and author Mary Daly (1984). The patriarchal system, a collection of structures and organisations established by men to perpetuate male dominance and female subordination, is viewed by radical feminism as the primary oppressor of women (Bell & Klein, 1996). In this view, women are weak, meek, irrational, average, and less intelligent. Men are viewed as "natural" leaders and thinkers (Bell & Klein 1996:15). Radical feminists argue that reproduction and sexuality are the origins of women's subordination. According to them, housework produces rather than generates labour. Unlike economic class, sex-class arose directly from biological fact, and men and women were differentiated rather than made equal (Firestone, 1972). Radical feminist theory has been criticised for focusing too much on women's sexuality, which supports the current image of women as men's fantasies and stifles research into how women can and do construct themselves, and how honouring this can serve as the foundation for freedom and equality (Cornell, 1990). The emphasis on reproduction by radical feminists has also been criticised. It implies that women are subordinate due to reproduction. The oppression of women extends beyond reproduction, though.

Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminists focus on class and gender to criticise women's social and economic situation. Marxist feminism is neither reformist nor revolutionary in its attitude toward the state; it requires a revolutionary reaction to capitalism and concentrates on women's labour (paid and unpaid). Women's oppression is claimed to arise from their status in the family within capitalism's political, social, and economic frameworks (Hennessy, 2002). Under capitalism, women's homework is underpaid or devalued. Marx's explanation of capitalism's social structure was meant to be universal. If you owned the means of production, you were a capitalist; otherwise, you were a proletariat. This also applies to women, whose economic dependence on their husbands underlies their despotism. This theoretical framework promotes revolutionary consciousness among working women to challenge capitalism and the state.

Marxist feminists have previously linked the state, family, and women's oppression. They highlighted contradictions between capitalism's production needs and the necessity to reproduce the workforce (Siim 1990). The welfare state resolves this paradox, allowing the next generation of workers Due to the family wage system reinforcing women's economic dependency, Marxist ideology views the family as the locus of women's oppression (German, 1981). Eisenstein (1979), a famous Marxist feminist thinker, equates patriarchy with capitalism. This interconnectivity is viewed as patriarchy, and the process of production alters patriarchy. This theory is considered by scholars to be the best explanation for Konkomba patriarchy and how it affects women.

Marxism has been criticised for failing to understand gender and for adopting capitalist and patriarchal norms such as prioritising food and possessions over human needs. Marxism is often criticised for not respecting gender relations, a vital social feature. Marxism focuses too much on material concerns and class analysis, says another critic. For most Marxists, the idea that working-class men could be oppressors in their own households, or that "bourgeois" women might be oppressed was unfathomable (Delphy and Leonard, 1992).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Dependency Theory served as a conceptual foundation for this study. Andre Gunder Frank's Dependency Theory is a socioeconomic development concept that connects historical exploitation

of developing nations by wealthy ones to current global inequality. The idea is described as an explanation of how external (political, economic, and cultural) impacts on national development policies affect a state's economic development. A historical circumstance has shaped the structure of the global economy in a way that favours some nations over others and restricts the potential for growth of the dependent economies, placing the economy of a particular group of nations under the influence of the growth and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subject (Dos Santos, 1971). Even though capitalism and the idea of state dependency are connected with Western economic models like dependency theory, it is appropriate to examine power dynamics in the context of African family structures, where patriarchy predominates in a hierarchical structure. The family is an organisation similar to a state where there are relationships, hence interactions take place between these relations, so this model has been used to describe the phenomenon of patriarchy. The adoption of this theory in this study to explain patriarchal systems among the Konkombas in the NNM is since the cycle of dominancy is visible everywhere (from nation to country, city to city, village to village, region to region, and relation to relation).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
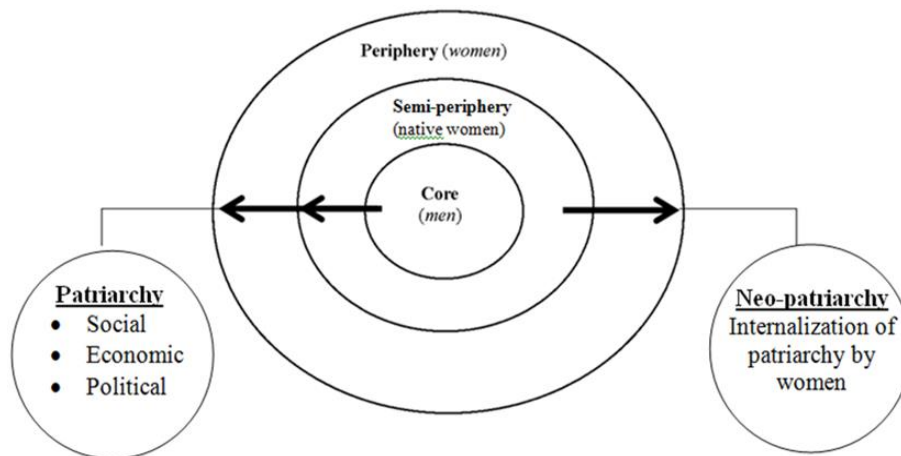
Source: adapted and modified from Gunder Frank's (1966) concept of dependency theory.

The wives and native women (mothers and sisters) in the model have been historically and culturally socialised to be wholly dependent on men (socially, economically and politically). This dependency creates a situation that favours men over women and limits women's prospects for growth. As a result of the family wage system sustaining women's economic dependence, the house is regarded to be the primary site of women's oppression (German, 1981). Neo-patriarchy is the word used to explain how semi-peripheral relations (mothers/sisters-in-law) exploit and exclude peripheral relations (daughters-in-law). The families of the Konkomba are organised according to a system of authority and control, with the male as the central figure. Any close female relative of the male, such as the mother or sister, can exert some influence over the mother-in-law or sister-in-law.

The Concept of Womanhood

Due to historical and contemporary discourses of womanhood, women today are being propelled into a destiny that has little to do with who they are (Hancock, 1990). Like race or ethnicity, the cultural significance of being male or female functions as a social organising force. The gendered division of labour clearly demonstrates this. Most societies have established conventions about "women's work" and "men's labour," both in the home and the greater community. Patterns and their rationales differ throughout cultures and across history. Even though the dynamics between the sexes vary from culture to culture, there is a constant pattern in which women have less control over their lives, fewer opportunities, and a smaller voice in cultural and political decisions. However, characteristics such as subservience, tenderness, and motherhood are commonly regarded as typical of women. This internal battle pits women in patriarchal societies against the attributes that make them feminine. Therefore, in traditional African society, the concept of "womanhood" is treated very seriously and carries significant weight.

According to Hey, "wifehood" and "womanhood" are synonymous (Hey, 1989). By assuming the duties of wife and mother, a woman reaches her zenith as a woman. Additionally, she becomes an economic and social benefit to her family and community. Womanhood in this context refers to cultural representations of women in which gender roles are identified and maintained by cultural meanings. According to this perspective, due to the inherent differences between the sexes, women are relegated to lower roles in society. According to this perspective, due to the inherent differences between the sexes, women are relegated to lower roles in society. Thus, femininity can be viewed as a cultural artefact that shapes the interactions between men and women. This implies that conceptions about what it means to be a woman influence how everyone, men and women equally, views women and their position in society. As a means of comprehension, society projects conceptions of womanhood to define what women are and what they can and cannot accomplish.

Womanhood in the Ghanaian Society

It's crucial to understand how women are seen in Ghanaian culture. Such views are crucial because they influence how people view women and, inevitably, how women view themselves. Women's lives in Ghana, as in the rest of Africa, are a complex mixture of happiness and suffering, strength and weakness (ISSER, 2016). In Ghana's domestic and socioeconomic environments, women play highly important roles. Women have been portrayed in a variety of fields over the years, including politics, business, commencement, science, poetry, music, and theatre, to name a few. Women are supposed to work hard, but they are also expected not to threaten men's dominance (Manuh and Anyidoho, 2010). In a recent nationwide study, more women (28%) than men (13%) said a guy might beat his wife for any of the following reasons: if she argued with him, burned the food, left without notifying him, neglected their kids, or refused to have sex with him (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Even though it is no longer state-sanctioned, violence against women persists intolerably in the home. Beyond the occasional physical assaults that make the news, women continue to experience regular forms of violence, including sexual harassment and psychological abuse (ISSER, 2016). It must be acknowledged that men's behaviours and attitudes are not the only causes of violence against women; rather, both men and women's conceptions of violence against women as a normal aspect of gender relations are influenced by the larger culture (Cole et al., 2007).

Although they have been mostly left out of Ghanaian nation-building narratives, women have significantly impacted the growth of the country's state and economy. In the informal economy,

women have carved out niches for themselves mostly as traders and cultivators of food crops. They have also made advancements in a number of other fields, including governance, business, education, literature, and entertainment. According to Tsikata (2009), as the political space for self-expression grew along with a stronger commitment to democratic governance, women's organisations changed from being apolitical welfare organisations to putting more of an emphasis on power disparities and rights. These women's movements include, for instance, the group that created the Women's Manifesto and the National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation, which vigorously pushed for the 2007 Domestic Violence Act to be passed. Individuals and civil society organisations that support women's rights are included in these coalitions. However, their efforts are hampered by governments that are frequently reluctant to address women's issues as well as by the general public, which includes both men and women, who may view these activists and their views on gender equality as foreign and dangerous to Ghanaian "culture" (Ibid).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study's research design was a descriptive survey. This design was chosen since it was suitable for the study and helped to produce the necessary results. It was also because, in accordance with Best and Khan (1995), a study of this kind that tried to identify the parameters of relationships that already exist—for example, by identifying the nature of prevalent conditions, practises, attitudes, and opinions—fits best in a descriptive survey. For the investigation, a mixed method technique was adopted.

Selection of Study Area

The research was conducted in three NNM communities. Using a basic random sample procedure, all three communities were selected. A random number generator was used to sample the communities such that each community had an equal chance of getting selected. The many Municipality communities' names were scribbled on sheets of paper and placed in a single container. The research team then selected three papers sequentially, and the final communities chosen were Bincheratanga, Bakpaba, and Dipah.

Target Population of the Study

Women of all marital statuses were included in the analysis, although the primary population was single women. Because they are the ones who have suffered most under the patriarchal systems and traditions practised by the Konkombas, they were selected as the subjects of this research. Households were the major sampling units used in identifying the intended respondents. Leaders of opinion and men were also sought out for interviews.

Sample Size

A sample is a subset of a research population that is chosen to participate in a study to represent the research population as a whole (Cohen et al, 2007). A statistical technique was utilised to establish the study's sample size.

$$n = N/1+N (\alpha)^2$$

Where;

n = sample size,

N = sample population and

α = alpha= the confidence level that provides best outcome when the value of α is 0.1According to Mahama (2014), there are 5,658 households in the Municipality. According to the formula given above, 98 (n) houses were selected at random from a possible pool of 5,658. Thus, 98 female respondents were surveyed. In addition to males (15 from each village), 21 older women (7 from each of the three communities), 8 opinion leaders, 3 chiefs, the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), and the Municipal Gender Desk Officer (MGDO). In total, 177 people answered the survey.

Sampling Techniques

Data for this research study were gathered using both probability and non-probability methodologies. 98 women and 45 men were chosen at random as part of the probability sampling technique for the study. On pieces of paper, the numbers of each household in the chosen communities were recorded before being placed in a container. The researchers then took their time selecting the papers that represented the homes one at a time. In the end, a lady was questioned from each of the families whose numbers were chosen. For the male respondents, the identical procedure was followed. Purposive sampling was used in the non-probability sample to choose study participants. The researchers were able to choose a particular group of respondents thanks to the purposive sample, including senior women, opinion leaders, chiefs, the MCE, and GDOs. Purposive sampling for this study made logical and effective sense since it allowed researchers to gain a deeper knowledge of the problems at hand and to appreciate how women and men with different backgrounds and levels of education approach solving them. The MCE, the GDO, the 8 opinion leaders and chiefs, and the 21 senior women—seven from each of the three communities— were sampled using this method.

Sources of Data Collection

While questionnaires and interviews conducted in the field provided the bulk of the primary data used in this study, it was necessary to consult secondary sources in order to fully grasp the underlying concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings. Therefore, numerous secondary sources including books, research literatures, articles, journals, and other materials were used by the researchers.

Questionnaire

Both open-ended and closed-ended surveys were used in this study. The respondents have the option to reply to the questions on an open-ended questionnaire on their own. The questions were written in English when they were created. However, when it was administered, Likpakpaln (the local dialect) was used. A total of 143 respondents (98 women and 45 men) completed the self-administered surveys. Because most of the research participants were illiterate, this form of data collection was chosen. As a result, the strategy gave the researchers the chance to explain concepts they would not have been able to grasp without him. In the questionnaire's designated spaces, the researchers typed in the responses that the respondents had provided.

Interview

To learn more in-depth information about the ideas of women and patriarchy, an interview guide was employed. In doing so, the researchers asked a series of pre-planned questions and recorded the respondents' responses. The interviewing procedures were casual and unstructured. This gave the research subjects the freedom to choose times and places that worked best for the researchers to communicate with them. The face-to-face interviews involved thirteen people. Included in this were three chiefs, the municipal chief executive, and the municipal gender desk officer, in addition

to eight opinion leaders. The interview question lists were created in the English language. While interviews with the 8 opinion leaders and the 3 chiefs were conducted in the local people's dialect, interviews with the municipal chief executive and the municipal gender desk officer were conducted in English (Likpakpaln). The researcher had the chance to use this approach to ask follow-up questions to create a deeper understanding of the subject's experiences related to the research theme. Broad topical areas were addressed in the interviews through lists of open-ended questions to collect complete data for the study.

Focus Group Discussion

The researchers didn't just rely on questionnaires and interviews; they also had focus group discussions (FGD). Twenty-one mature women participated in three FGDs. In all cases, the FGDs were held in quiet, distraction-free settings that promoted open discussion. There were seven ladies over the age of 65 in each of the study groups. Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) suggestion that a focus group discussion (FGD) should include between six and ten people provides support for this. The average length of a FGD was two hours. All focus group discussions were held in the participants' native language (Likpakpaaln).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Cultural definition/Understanding of Womanhood among the Konkombas

According to interviews and focus groups with respondents, women in the Konkombas are seen as being both wives and mothers. This supports Hey's (1989) claim that "wifehood" is the language that defines womanhood. It also reiterates Chukwuma's (1989) assertions in her paper "Positivism and the Female Crisis" that marriage remains the fundamental measure of a woman's character and that by getting married, a woman achieves a status praised by society and satisfies her biological urge for companionship and procreation. Participants in focus groups revealed that marriage conveys a status of "belongingness" among the Konkombas, so being married or someone's wife for that matter gives the woman decency because there is a strong presumption that a married woman is necessarily guarded in her behaviour because she "belongs to," whereas a single woman living alone is perceived as a "freelancer" who does whatever pleases her.

An elderly woman is quoted as saying in a focus group that "a single woman is viewed as a dam or river where everyone goes to swim." Therefore, it is believed that if a woman is single, she is available to any man who wants to make a sexual advance. The study also showed that among the Konkombas, mothering is a strong characteristic that enhances womanhood. According to the respondents, a woman is only considered to be a woman if she is a mother, because childbearing is the conventional way to define a woman's position. According to the respondents, a childless wife may easily be expelled from her husband's home by the husband, his mother-in-law, his sister-in-laws, or any other close family of his. They added that if a childless wife's competition is successful in giving birth to a child or children for the husband, the situation will only get worse. Aliber et al. (2004) have found that childless women are therefore more likely to be subjected to eviction and destitution following the passing of their husbands.

Within the discourse of typical womanhood among the Konkombas therefore, wifehood and motherhood are adored as the 'purpose of a woman's being'.

An elderly woman from one of the FGDs had this to say; *"marriage and child-birth are occasions of fulfilling one's biological and it is every woman's dream to experience it"*.

The study also revealed that apart from being a wife and a mother, other prevailing ideologies that define the boundaries of an ideal woman are submissiveness and domesticity. Women were to be passive participants, submitting to destiny, to duty, and to men.

A key informant had this to say on the submissiveness of women: *"An attitude of obedience, submission and humility of character are all times required of a woman".*

The research also revealed that the woman's place was in the home. A woman's role was to be busy at those tasks directed at preserving and accomplishing her domestic roles. Women were regarded as managers of the home, busy about their tasks of wifely duties and childcare.

Socio-cultural Factors Affecting Konkomba Women

Early/Child Marriage

According to the interviewees, one important sociocultural aspect that affects Konkomba women and girls in the NNM is early marriage, which is frequently accompanied by an element of coercion. In this study, the term "early/child marriage" refers to any marriage that occurs before a child reaches the age of 18, with or without the agreement of both parties. The Ghana Marriage Ordinance Act 127 of 1985 establishes the legal marriage age as 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. However, among the Konkombas of the NNM, customary behaviours result in early marriage (usually through exchanges and in some cases through early betrothal). The survey indicated that the practise of girls marrying before the age of eighteen was still prevalent, even though it was on a declining trend.

This confirms the research finding of Eliasu (2013), on *"early marriage of young females and poverty in the Northern Region".*

Early marriage was a prevalent practise among adherents of the African Traditional Religion (ATR). 49 of the 67 women who identified as ATR believers said they had been married off before turning 18 years old. As stated by one of the FGD discussants in the following statement, although some discussed the suffering they endured because of child marriage, others saw nothing wrong with the custom:

"It is the duty of every parent as tradition demands to bring up her daughter in a responsible way to the status of a woman. So as a girl grows up, you are required to find her a husband".

Those households which do not practice early marriage were mostly Christians. All the 47 Christians (16 men and 31 women) who were interviewed spoke strongly against the practice of child marriage. This finding is evident in this statement of one of the Christians in an interview. *"Churches like mine are putting up schools. So how will I get returns from the contributions I make towards building these schools if I give out my daughter in marriage at an early age? I have to send her to school so that she can look after me at my old age".*

The research discovered that women who were betrothed dropped out of school or were never sent to school at all because they were meant for marriage. This deprived a lot of girls/women the opportunity to acquire formal education. This was revealed by a respondent in the statement below: *"I dropped out of school because I was given out in marriage in my childhood and when I started growing up, my betrothed husband came to marry me and so I had to stop schooling".*

Parents' Perceptions on Girl-Child Education

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions (benefits and barriers) of parents about girl-child education and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Parents' (Men and Women) Perception on Girl-Child Education

	M	N	SD
Pair 1 Benefit	4.3643	143	.54716
Barrier	1.9268	143	.83163

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

According to Table 1, a paired samples t-test reveals a significant difference between the mean scores for the advantages of girls' education (M = 4.36, SD =.55) and its disadvantages (M = 1.93, SD =.83). The findings showed that parents' mean scores for the advantages of girls' education were greater, both for men and women. Therefore, it can be claimed that parents prioritised the advantages of girls' education even though they saw certain obstacles to it. The respondents had relatively favourable opinions of girl-child education despite being forced into early marriage and being illiterate.

Table 2: Results of Paired Samples T-Test for Comparing Perceptions of Parents on Girl Child Education

	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pair 1 benefit-barrier	34.333	142	.000

The P-value from the t-test is .000 hence the result of parents' perception of girl-child education is statistically significant.

Polygyny

The sort of marriage known as polygyny is one in which a man marries more than one wife. It is a custom that is permitted by the customary law that regulates marriage and the family. According to the study, polygyny is still a prevalent occurrence among Konkombas. 75 percent of the men who were interviewed gave the conventional justifications for polygyny. They stated that this form of marriage system had greater advantages because the institution of the family had historically been polygynous. They listed a large family size and the possibility to have children even if the first wife was childless or had passed away as the advantages. Therefore, polygyny appears to be a mechanism for men to fulfil their desire for procreation.

One of the opinion leaders narrated that *"if you are married to more than one and unfortunately one of your wives should pass on, you would not have to worry about not having a woman to cook for you. It is with this understanding that our elders say that [to have one wife is like having one eye]"*.

Inheritance Rights

Even though Ghana's constitution protects the rights of people of all genders to own and inherit property, traditional Konkomba rules make it difficult for women to take possession of the estates of their deceased husbands and fathers. According to the respected elders and top officials of the Konkombas, the line of descent from a father is unbroken, and his children automatically become heirs to his estate. Patriarchal families are institutionalised social structures that deny women the right to own property. Culture and social norms are major influences on the inheritance rules that families follow. Because of this, women have no voice in matters of property ownership.

A widow stated in this quote, *"I did not get any share of my late husband's properties even though I contributed money for him to buy yam sets to make a farm. Our tradition is such that women don't have any contribution to make in the distribution of their husbands' properties".*

If a man dies without a son or other male heir, the customary law dictates that his land and marital residence pass to his eldest male relative, who acts as a trustee on behalf of the beneficiaries. While being interviewed, one of the women revealed that,

"here, when a man passes on, brothers and male children are invited to a meeting after the final funeral rites are performed. At the meeting, a brother of the deceased then shares the properties among the children of the deceased".

It is made clear that widows do not inherit any assets from their husbands. Typically, the widow is only considered if there are male offspring. This means that if a widow has no male children with her deceased husband, she will only have access to his assets through her female children. The widows are even treated as "property" that is shared among the deceased father's brothers and, occasionally, his ageing sons. Thus, the Konkombas continue to respect the institution of spouses' inheritance. "widow/levirate inheritance" is applicable here.

Widowhood Rites

Widowhood ceremonies were mentioned by the respondents as another socio-cultural aspect that has an impact on women. The way widows are treated serves as a vehicle or instrument for the perpetuation of numerous offensive cultural behaviours, traditional beliefs, and rituals. Among them are widow cleansing rituals and widowhood rites. Among ATR adherents, this sociocultural practise was widespread. Out of the sixty-seven (67) women who were ATR believers, 56 ladies said that they did not feel comfortable with widowhood customs. They questioned why a woman would lose her spouse, and they observed several rites, taboos, and observances for the widow during her period of mourning until her final burial, but a man who loses his wife is not subjected to the same rites. An older woman lamented as she narrated the following story at a FGD.

"Early in the morning of the fifth day of the final funeral rite, the widow led by a female leader is made to visit several homesteads. The widow, dressed in white attire, holds in her right hand a calabash containing shea butter. The shea butter is used to 'anoint' any baby she comes across against heart-related sickness as if to say that an unpurified widow has some 'spirits' with her that can inflict diseases on babies".

The 31 Christian women who were interviewed, on the other hand, all stated that they were unable to participate in such traditional cleansing rituals because of their faith (Christianity). However, they noted that the custom was humiliating because they had witnessed numerous women being subjected to widowhood procedures.

Household Work

Observations made in the field indicated that women and girls disproportionately shoulder the responsibility of caring for children and running the family. Women made up 100% of those surveyed, and they all claimed to be completely responsible for various domestic tasks such as childcare, cooking, laundry, collecting firewood, and collecting water (sometimes several kilometres away). In addition, just 23 of them said their spouses regularly assisted them with baby care so they could focus on other tasks around the house. Thirty-two of the men reported that they typically leave for their farms before dawn and don't return until far after dark, leaving them with little time for anything save gardening in the backyard. Three of the chiefs and eight of the most influential people in the community agreed that it is now socially acceptable for men to be found cooking alongside women, whereas in the past this was frowned upon. Women still did the bulk of housework, but not because of any kind of rigid cultural expectation but rather for practical or economic reasons.

Wife Beating

Additionally, it became clear that one sociocultural element affecting women in the research area is wife battering. It was evident from the interviews and focus group discussions that wife-beating was   widespread.
A key informant claimed *"A woman may be thrashed viciously with little or no provocation"*. Men are consequently permitted to physically correct their spouses in Konkomba society. This supports Issahaku's (2012) research on male partner violence, which found that wife-beating was a frequent and acceptable occurrence in the Northern Region. The study found that women were told not to fight back when they were being abused, not just because their strengths were uneven but also because doing so would "offend culture."

A key informant responded to this instruction by stating: *"When a woman was beaten, she would not fight back. She was expected to either keep silent, flee for her life, or run to an elderly family member for assistance"*.

The majority of FGD participants stated that a married woman's quiet was anticipated as a symbol of her capitulation to prevent her husband's fury and violent clashes. The wives' haughtiness or nagging personality, lack of domestic work, sexual denials, and rumourmongering were cited as causes of wife-beating.

Strategies to Address the Gender-Based Inequalities in the Nanumba North Municipality

Respondents recommended challenging harmful cultural norms through a variety of engagements to solve the difficulties facing women in the municipality. Regular public awareness campaigns, promoting girl-child education, financially motivating and assisting women, and raising public awareness of women's potential, among other measures, are practical responses to the problems that women in the municipality face. They contend that the state must play a part in the formulation and execution of plans for the social and economic empowerment of women. Regarding the topic of sensitization, respondents proposed ongoing public education campaigns on the significant roles women may play in local politics. They added that women's advocacy groups and municipal government agencies, including Action-Aid, Songtaba, Resilience in Northern Ghana (RING), the Integrated Democracy Centre (IDC), the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and other donor societies, should influence support for women to run for office during elections, particularly local ones. In order to lessen their vulnerability to poverty,

they argued for extremely explicit programmes on the economic front. According to respondents, the government should take action to start programmes that promote women through agricultural and economic policies that are very specialised. Additionally, they requested that district assemblies expand their present poverty alleviation programmes (such as the LEAP). Another suggested tactic is allocating a portion of the municipal budget to programmes or projects that support rural women.

Both men and women (respondents) suggested that additional media (local radio) outlets should be made available to women to discuss current events that have an impact on their lives. It is crucial that the media take proactive action on the issues brought up or on any other subject that has the potential to promote the process of increasing the number, presence, and influence of women in politics and public agencies. Additionally, the traditional authority should create and enforce community bylaws to encourage women-friendly projects and turn them into active social actors. It has been suggested that women's role modeling should be encouraged to instil the spirit of determination in women and girls in order to stop the poor self-esteem and get women engaged in the social development process. The importance of formal education as a development tool for enhancing women's status was a standout suggestion made by all respondents. Liberal feminists have always supported this suggested course of action because they view education as a factor that can be used to further the emancipation of women.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings and theoretical assertions found in linked literature led the researchers to the following conclusions: Due to the lack of representation, lack of access to school, excessive male dominance, poverty, and other general inequities linked with the partial treatment of the women in their entirety, the Konkomba women's misery has been characterised by the study area's educational backwardness. Institutions classify untypical and perfect/complete women using the ideology of femininity, which idealises women as mothers and wives. Women are portrayed as nurturers and carers in accordance with tradition and culture when the expected roles of family life, young girls' gender roles, and women's passive position are combined. These characteristics were not created based on a person's preferences. They are, nevertheless, created within the dynamics of power in the regular interactions and experiences of women as spouses and mothers. These concepts were created as symbols of authority that sought to limit the role of women. This prevailing mentality, which was created by patriarchal structures, is evident throughout all facets of social interactions. Men and women both suffer from the prejudices, marginalisation, and discrimination that are based on gender. It is necessary to reconsider what constitutes being male or female. When men and women could live without these restrictions, humanity would be in a better position. Men must work with women to recognise how damaging gender norms are to both sexes and take steps to renounce patriarchal honours and privileges.

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