

THE CRY OF TROKOSI GIRLS IN GHANA
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE TROKOSI PRACTICE IN
GHANA IN LIGHT OF DIAKONIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Children especially girls are under different types of oppression in Sub-Saharan Africa due to various practices, belief systems, values, and laws. In Ghana, one practice that seems to subjugate women and girls in particular is the troxorvi system. Troxorvi or trokosi is a practice that involves the acceptance of human being especially virgin girls for the atonement of real or alleged misconduct of a family member. The committed girl stays in the shrine as a “slave” and owes allegiance to the deity for the rest of her life. However, contemporary societies frown upon and make laws to eradicate any form of slavery due to its human right abuses. In 1998, Ghana amended her laws prohibiting the troxorvi practice as well as committing herself to human rights values by signing most of the international laws on human rights including those on children and women. After a decade of promulgation of the Law against the troxorvi practice, not even a single culprit has been arrested. The study explores the human rights abuses within the troxorvi system and efforts by diaconal actors. It further explores how diakonia could be employed as a multidimensional approach towards eradication of the troxorvi practice in Ghana.

The study used qualitative strategy coupled with a case study method. Interviews and document analysis were adopted during data collection process. In all ten (10) semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data collected was analyzed within the context of different theories such as functionalist approach, human rights perspective, feminist as well as diaconal approach.

The results of this study showed that: there is a national law which need to be enforced in order to eradicate the troxorvi system due to its human right abuses. However, dialogue and prophetic diakonia could also be employed coupled with disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power, as well as involvement of all the stakeholders within the troxorvi sector in order to annihilate the practice. This notwithstanding, the church (NGOs) could be seen as already making some efforts by organizing seminars and youth programs to educate it’s members about basic human rights and importance of education.

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God Bless you all

Palmah Abla Howusu

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DEDICATION

To the Almighty God, who is always faithful and awake to strengthen me during my study despite all the challenges.

To my parents King Palmas Howusu and Peace Afenu who were very supportive and always encouraging me to remain resolute and always go for the best in life because everything is achievable. I remember when I got this admission and did not have money for initial preparations, my parents tried everything under the heavens especially my mother who went for a loan with high interest just to enable me to travel and fulfilled my dream of being a graduate. To you both I remain grateful.

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Table 1: List of Troxorvi Shrines and their locations in Southern part of the Volta Region of Ghana.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency

CRC: Convention on the Right of the Child

CHRAJ: Commission on Human Right and Administrative Justice

fCUBE: free Compulsory Universal Basic Education

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IMF: International Monetary Fund

MoGCSP: Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

NCCE: National Commission for Civic Education

NGOs: Non Governmental Organizations

NSD: Norwegian Social Science Data Service

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Plan

UNESCO: United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organization

UNICEF: United Nations International Children Emergency Fund

US: United States

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Women and girls suffer inequality, maltreatment, and marginalization due to various practices, belief systems, values, and laws all over the world. In Ghana, one practice that seems to oppress, exploit and marginalize women and girls in particular is the troxovi system. *Troxorvi* means “a deity or god that accepts a child sacrifice [...]” (Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 1). The troxorvi system is a practice that involves the acceptance of human beings especially virgin girls in to shrines for the atonement of real or alleged misconduct of a family member. These deities or gods receive child sacrifice from families for any wrong doing especially crimes associated with sexual abuse and murder. The war against the troxorvi system in Ghana started in 1990s at the wake of some campaigns accusing the system of infringing on basic human rights. In view of this, some studies have been done by researchers in their attempt to expose the weaknesses of the system and educate Ghanaians in particular about the operations of the troxorvi system (Ababio, 2000; Akpabli-Honu, 2014; Akussah, 2009; Atitsogbi, 2010; Azumah, 1996; Dovlo&Adzoyi, 1995; Dovlo&Kufogbe, 1997; Glover, 1992; Kufogbe, 2008; Nukunya&Kufogbe, 1998; Tuamu, 2009).

The above mentioned research articles had different objectives and focuses; nevertheless during review of the literature, one can find human right abuses in each of the findings regardless of their different approaches. Despite the perceived abuses, the phenomenon continues to prevail not only in Ghana but within the Republic of Togo and Benin (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). In Ghana the troxovi practice is common in the Southern Volta and the Greater Accra Regions. While Tongu, Ketu, Akatsi and Keta districts are guilty of the practice in this 21st century, some communities within Dangbe East and West are equally culpable. In Dangbe East and West, the practice is referred to as “*woryokye*” (ibid).

This issue of accepting a child sacrifice especially virgin girls could be said to be very serious and worrying many people, a concern that can be found in local and international human right laws (CEDAW/GHA, 2006; Constitution of Ghana, 1992; CRC, 1989). These virgin girls are offered to shrines in order to prevent a curse that was invoked upon the

family by the said deity due to an alleged or real crime committed by a family member (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). These virgin girls have nothing to do with the crime but are offered by virtue of birth into the said family. The question is, why is this perceived abusive practice still prevailing publicly without any arrest at least in Ghana since 1998 where the Criminal Code Amendment Act was passed?

The troxorvi system could be said to be operating with fear of the “supernatural”. This is because most people associated with this practice have a kind of fear and feeling that is related to an external force which operates to sanction people when they commit a crime. This is due to the fact that most of the devotees believe in a force which they considered to play a role in crime detection and sanctions. History has it that a lot of people in the practicing communities and beyond see the troxorvi method of punishment as “effective” since it discourages many from committing sexually related crimes and murder.

However, the irony of the system is that while it prevents others from committing sexual abuse, the system itself is now noted for similar crimes against individuals in society especially those crimes against the committed virgin girls who are sexually abused by the chief priests. It is important therefore to adapt a different approach to correct the troxorvi system since the practice seems not to be capable of correcting its own abuses, exploitations and marginalization.

One approach which will involve everybody towards effective enforcement of the laws and commitment in order to eradicate the trokosi practice is a holistic or multidimensional approach. An approach that could bring contributions from all angles including suggestions from the troxorvi system itself. Diaconal strategies which will target both the top hierarchy and the marginalized themselves could be paramount in any attempt towards the eradication of the practice.

The point of departure of this study is therefore to explore how the church and other diaconal actors (individuals and NGOs) could help effectively contribute towards the fight against the supposed human right abuses and injustice associated with the trokosi system but at the same time promote peace. In addition, one could also be interested in knowing about the national policy on the rights of the girl child to be able to analyze the troxorvi system.

The continuity of the troxorvi system in spite of the allegations, contributed in shaping some of my research questions and its scope hence would wish to investigate in detail the possible reasons for the relatively stable nature of the troxorvi practice and how diakonia could be employed to eradicate the practice.

The research could be said to be divided into two main themes: diaconal perspective and human rights perspective. These themes may be related as there are some concepts in diakonia that could be found in human rights as well. However, their approaches may be slightly different.

1.2 Research questions and study design

The overall research problem of the study is formulated as:

What is the Role of Diakonia and Human Rights towards Eradication of Troxorvi/Trokosi Practice (ritual servitude) among the people of Tongu from the Southern part of the Volta Region of Ghana?

The research questions are stated as follows:

- What is the national policy on the rights of the girl child in Ghana?
- What are some suggested reasons for the continuity of the troxorvi practice in Ghana?
- In what ways are the rights of the kosi's affected within the Trokosi shrines in the practicing areas of Ghana?
- How has the church been involved in efforts towards eradicating the Trokosi system in the practicing communities?
- How do the participants consider diaconal approach as an alternative towards the eradication of the trokosi practice?

The first four questions dealt with the role of the church and human rights in the trokosi practice. The last question further asked the participants of their views or alternative ways of approaching the system and thus required their normative statements.

A qualitative study coupled with a case study approach is employed to be able to do an in-depth investigation of the troxorvi system in order to answer the research questions. Ten people were involved in the study within a period of six weeks in Ghana. In addition, some documents such as other research literature in the troxorvi sector, both local and international policies as well as laws concerning the girl child were also considered. These are dealt with into detail in the methodology chapter.

1.3 Significance of the study

The study is important in several ways especially during this modern day slavery in Ghana. Firstly, it will contribute to the debate that is currently on going in Ghana about the troxorvi system. It will also help in exposing some of the human right abuses and other weaknesses associated with the practice hence creating awareness in the Ghanaian society. More so, it will add to the literature within the troxorvi sector and educate a lot of people about the system. Furthermore, the study will explore issues connecting to the right of the girl child in general, and also examine the rights of the trokosi girls and the various laws that protect them. It will also consider what the church has been doing and how participants in the church consider alternative ways to work towards eradication of the troxorvi practice. The study finally perhaps can be a small contribution to a new practice.

1.4 Operationalization

The following terms are explained as they were used in the research question and this chapter of the study:

Church: Any time the church is referred to, it means a local congregation located at the study environment in Ghana.

Troxorvi: As already mentioned, troxorvi means a deity that accepts human sacrifices especially girls and it is used throughout the text.

Trokosi/Fiasidi: This is the name given to girls who are captives of the deity. They are also considered as the wives of the gods or the deities. However, it is also referred to as the practice itself. In this study, the term trokosi and troxorvi are used interchangeably.

Kosi: It is use as the short form of trokosi.

1.5 Content of thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 consists of the background of the study, research questions and design, significance of the study, operationalization of some words, and content of the study as well as chapter conclusion. Chapter 2 presents a brief history about the trokosi system and its related practices within the practicing communities in Ghana as well as chapter summary.

Chapter 3 identifies the methodology for the study. Section 3.1 focuses on design, sampling technique and instruments used. Section 3.2 presents data collection (finding) and the various methods employed during data collection. Section 3.3 discusses the methods used in analyzing the findings from the interviews as well as documents. Section 3.4 exposes how trustworthiness is assured in the study. Section 3.5 reflects on the analytical framework. Section 3.6 considers ethical issues within the scope of the study while section 3.7 sums up the vital points within the chapter.

Chapter 4 discusses the theory for analytical framework of the study. Section 4.1 examines various concepts under human rights such as freedom, education, and dignity of the individual. Section 4.2 consisting with 4.2.1; 4.2.1 and 4.2.3 provides information on main diaconal concepts. Section 4.3 elaborates on functionalist perspective. Section 4.4 provides an insight into feminist theory with emphasis on the ideas by P.H Collins. Section 4.5 summarizes and presents the analytical framework for this study. Section 4.6 considers the conclusion of the chapter

In addition, chapter 5 presents the descriptive analysis of both interviews and documents. Section 5.1 considers the findings from the trokosi girls and the chief priests while the subdivisions (5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.1.3 and 5.1.4) elaborates on some specifications based on the views of the trokosi girls and the chief priest within the troxorvi system. Section 5.2 outlines the

views from the opinion leaders/parents and the church. Sub-sections (5.2.; 5.2.2 and 5.2.3) present the possible negative conducts; how the troxorvi system could be seen and probable reasons why the system still exist despite all the human rights laws. Section 5.3 considers some efforts by the church while 5.3.1 explains how the liberated trokosi girls are integrated back into society. Section 5.4 presents the chapter summary.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the study. Section 6.1 reflects on dignity, freedom and education within the troxorvi system. Section 6.2 scrutinizes issues concerning empowerment within the troxorvi system. Section 6.3 examines transformation in relation to the troxorvi system. Section 6.4 ponders on other possible alternative approaches. Section 6.5 reflects upon the important points within the chapter.

Chapter 7 covers conclusion, implications, limitations and outlook of the study. Section 7.1 sum-up important points of the various issues arising from chapters 5 and 6. The sub-sections 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.3; 7.1.4 presents specific findings from the research. Section 7.2 identifies some implications of the study for Ghana while section 7.3 reflects upon the limitations. Section 7.4 presents other means (outlook) through which pressure may be mounted on the country to take concrete steps towards finding a lasting solution that will be acceptable by all. Section 7.5 considers possible future studies.

1.6 Chapter conclusion

In sum, girls could be identified as the worse group of people who suffer from different kinds of maltreatment, exploitation and marginalization within the troxorvi system in Ghana. This mistreatment could result into poverty and inequality in society. Deferent practices, belief systems, values and sometimes the legal system could be guilty as these treatments may gradually become “normal”. The troxorvi system among the people of Southern Volta Region in Ghana is one practice through which virgin girls are offered to deities or gods for the atonement of real or alleged crime of a family member. It could be seen as a permanent servitude in modern times despite all the local and international human right laws. One may be concerned about why the practice is still in existence hence this study seeks to explore the possible reasons for the continual existence of the troxorvi

practice, the possible abuses in the system, and how diakonia could be employed towards its eradication.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF THE TROXORVI SYSTEM

This chapter presents a brief history of the troxorvi system among the Ewe's of the Southern Part of Ghana. The troxorvi according to Akpabli (2014 p.1) means "*a deity or god that accepts child sacrifice especially virgin girls*". The troxorvi practice received a lot of criticisms in the 1990s due to its perceived associated human right abuses (ibid).

It must be noted that the bases of all the documentation on the history of the trokosi practice is oral tradition(history) which is mostly the origin of most well written historical events today. However, oral history has its short falls since it is based on human memory hence sometimes comes with distortions. The troxorvi system is of no exception. In view of this, some writers believe the practice belong to ancient origin (Kufogbe, 2008). According to Kufogbe, the deities were considered within families since "Hogbetsotso" (migration of Ewes to their present settlement). Other writers such as Glover accounted that the practice was connected with one of the prominent gods or deities among the Ewes where young girls were socialized in order to be refine morally (Glover, 1992).

He linked this accession to "education" and to him, Ewes (Tongus) were so much concerned about the important of education and hence instituted a "kind" of education at the clan level through the shrines. Thus troxorvi is a clan god. Children were brought into these shrines to be educated about basic ethics, good morals, virtue, philosophy (sofia), music, dance, poetry, child care and vocational skills. Excited as they were, parents sent their best and lovely children to be trained in these shrines. A typical example is the Adzemu cult house of Agave where such "education" was given (ibid).

Though Glover was not explicit about the category of children sent, the following sentences could give a clue: During marriage, the girls who were perceived as "well behaved and highly educated" at the time normally marry prominent people in society (ibid). Hence the troxorvi institution to him, was initially established to train virgin girls in cultic schools to produce "women of substance". The system as claimed by Glover later became adulterated at the wake of formal education. Parents preferred to send their children to these "westernize" schools instead of the cultic ones (ibid).

The cultic schools in order to sustain their system, device a new way of getting virgin girls. They were able to succeed by punishing any man who seduce or defile any of the girls they had trained. The offender must pay with a virgin girl for the atonement of any wrong doing. However, this gradually changed as the troxorvi now accepts girls for atonement for serious crimes committed by other relations as well as cure of barrenness, promotion at work place and cure of strange diseases among others (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). This assertion of parents sending their children to cultic schools is problematic due to the inability of the writer to explain certain issues such as the sex of the children who were sent to the shrines for training.

The writer could also not give any reason why parents suddenly preferred westernized (formal) schools to the cultic ones. Is there something new in the westernized schools that could not be found in the cultic school? Why are only girls sent for training in the cultic schools? If boys are sent, what actually happen to them? One could see a reverse in parent's behavior if these cultic schools are to be compared to modern day formal education. Boys are the preferred children to be sent for formal education rather than girls in most societies today.

On the other hand, Nkunya and Kwafo identified that these gods are owned by individuals, families as well as a whole lineage and therefore could not be limited only to clans. Adzima of Klikor and Nyigbla of Anlo are some examples given by them (Nukunya, 2003; Nukunya & Kuafo, 1998). Nukunya and Kwafo acknowledged that, the system is surrounded with some secrecy hence the distorted information. This notwithstanding, they were able to trace the origin of troxorvi to ancient days where people were happily paying for the services of these deities in appreciation of the protection they had from them. Cash payment as well as goats, ram, cattle and poultry birds were offered.

However, these modes of payment change to children especially virgin girls with time. A lot of people have so much hope in the deities such that they made personal promises to offer their girl children if the deity is able to deliver results concerning any problem they faced. Apart from these offerings, female captives from wars were equally given to these deities

known by some as “war gods”. Since many believed the deities are responsible for their victory in wars hence they paid special homage to these gods (ibid).

In addition, some couples who had difficulty in child birth also approach these gods and made pledges of donating their children out of confusion and frustration. In the process, if they were able to give birth which is mostly the case, then they have to go back and fulfill their promise as many regarded these deities also as fertility gods. These children that were received through consultation do not stay in the shrines but own allegiance to these gods. Such children have special names such as Klu, and Kosi or Dzatugbi for male and females respectively.

Some of the problems the deities were believed to solve include; still birth, barrenness, continues miscarriage, as well as preventing frequent death of children (Nukunya &Kwafo, 1998; Nukunya, 2008). The Kosi and Dzatugbi just like the trokosi girls need the consent of the chief priests before marrying. However, the boys are free to choose anybody they like as life partner (ibid). Gradually, the voluntary offering of children changed to involuntary hence anybody who approaches the deities for any manner of help should be able to pay with a virgin girl (Nukunya &Kwafo, 1998 p. 7).

Apart from circumstances leading to the emergence of the troxovi practice, some writers were able to trace the date and place where it all began. The troxovi practice started in the 16th century during the time the Tongus were migrating from the Niger Delta in Nigeria (Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995, pp. 6-9; Roberson, 2006 pp. 1-3). These deities were deemed to have protected and lead them to their present abode. One of such deities called Tsaduma is instituted by people of Bakpa (Torgbi Mortor, July 6-7 1995 cited by Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995). They believed that the deity was responsible for their safe arrival and also gave them good environment. However, one wonders about the proliferation of these deities in the Tongu Traditional area if some of these stories was anything to go by.

Other accounts however, noted that some of the deities did not come from “hogbe” where the people of Tungu migrated from but may be instituted by the people for different reasons. For example the Awakpe deity near Adidome is associated with a mystery rock close to the town. Sowah identified that etymologically, this deity might had been a war god since

“awa” means war and “kpe” means rock hence awakpe which is the name of the deity simply means war-rock (Dovlo & Adzoyi, 1995; Sowah, 1993 p.82). The deities are respected some time even more than the chieftaincy institution in the practicing areas because people believed they see and give direction to the people.

This assertion could be backed by a story of a hunter called “Aga” of the Agave traditional area who was the founder of the area. He was said to have shot an elephant in the ancient days. This elephant reportedly vomited a miniature stool and a deity. Aga made his son the chief while he became the chief priest of the deity because to him the chief priest possess a superior power than the chief (his son) and therefore he (Aga) could control the kindom (Gadri, 1978 p.18 cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

Similarly, Massiata (1999 cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 40) linked the origin of fiasidi (trokosi) to religion. He identified that religious shrines were purposively established along the coastal areas of Togo and Ghana (the then Gold Coast) in order to protect the dignity of slaves at that time. In these shrines, slave masters or people who go contrary to the traditional rule on slavery by reselling their slaves were punished. In addition the said shrines were also responsible in reforming the behavior of criminals and other deviants in society. A case in study is a young man who is supposed to face execution of manslaughter but could seek refuge in the shrine for rituals, education, ordeals and confinement in order to change his behavior. This young man is therefore free from any accusations after staying in the shrine for a period of time (Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

One needs to acknowledge the fact that not all of these view points were confirmed by this researcher. This might have being due to the gap in oral history. The troxorvi practice which is considered by many currently as a harmful practice is still in operation despite all the local and international human right laws (CEDAW, 1979; Constitution of Ghana, 1992; CRC, 1989). The concern of many including this writer is why the practice is still taking place without any arrest at least in Ghana where an additional law was passed in 1998 to criminalized the practice.

There are about 33 shrines which are located in the southern part of the Volta Region of Ghana. Despite all the laws, it is reported by Akpabli-Honu (2014) that 24 of these shrines

are still actively operating. The following tables show the location of these shrines as well as the active ones

Table 1

List of Troxorvi Shrines and their Locations in the Southern Part of the Volta Region of Ghana

District	Location	Name of shrine	Name of deity	Status of shrine
NorthTongu	Dorfo	Koklofu	Koklofu	Liberated
	Dorfo	Aduma	Badzi	Liberated
	Mepe	Adido	Adido	Liberated
	Torgome/Fodzoku	Gva	Gava	Dormant
	Torgome/Fodzoku	Axava	Axava	Dormant
	Bator	Tsimor	Tsimor	Active
	Bator	Ba	Ba	Liberated
	Bator	Atigo	Atigo	Leberated
	Bator	Me	Me	Active
	Volo	Lomo	Lomo	Liberated
Central Tongu	Mafidugame	Korlie	Korlie	Active
	Dovekpogadzi	Kolie	Kolie	Active
	Dovekpogadzi	Dove/Akrobo	Dove/Akrobo	Active
	Old Bakpa	Venor	Venor	Active
	Kebenu	Venor	Vena	Active

	Kebenu	Tsaduma	Tsaduma	Active
	Mafi Awakpedome	Awakpe I	Awakpe	Active
	Mafi Awakpedome	Awakpe II	Awakpe	Active
South Tongu	Fievie	Kaklopor	Kalo	Liberated
	Tefle	Fodjeh	Korti	Liberated
	Tefle	Foyi	Korti	Liberated
	Agave	Adzemu	Adzemu	Active
	Agave	Dzadza	Ddadza	Active
	Agave	Adevor	Adevor	Active
	Agave	Gborgble	Gborgble	Active
	Dalive	Kayoli	Kayoli	Active
Keta	Anloga	Sui	Sui	Active
	Anloga	Nyigbla	Nyigbla	Active
Ketu South	Klikor	Vena I	Vena	Active
	Klikor	Vena II	Vena	Active
Ketu North	Afife	Nyigbla	Nyigbla	Active
	Afife	Glaku	Glaku	Active
Akatsi	Avenorpeme	Dzoli	Dzoli	Active

Source: Adopted from Akpabli-Honu and modify (Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 69).

2.1 Chapter conclusion

The history about the troxorvi or trokosi practice is generally based on oral tradition or oral history. In view of this, there are disparities among the various view points. The trokosi practice is believed to have come from different origins such as hogbe, a practice of the 16th century, ancient practice as well as some writers linking it to traditional African religion. Despite different positions and views, the overview gave some information about the origin of troxorvi system. The focus of this writer was not to trace the history; hence little was confirmed based on the empirical data of this study. Nevertheless, it seems to be linked to some kind of religious practice where the deities or the gods are given the upper hand as almost everything is interpreted by the "supernatural or the unseen". These deities were known as war gods or fertility gods depending upon the kind of problem they are believed to be capable of solving or the result they are able to produce according to the devotees. The deities also are believed to be capable of solving problems concerning bareness, still birth, miscarriage, and general protection.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology including the study design. Section 3.1 discusses in detail the study design with a focus on sampling techniques; instruments employed in the study; and the motivation for using them; how the study was introduced to the respondents; and development of the interview questions. Section 3.2 presents data collection methods with special focus on interviews; policy documents; and reflexivity and assurance of confidentiality. Section 3.3 provides an account of methods employed in analyzing data with attention on unitizing data; coding; categorization and discovering patterns and identifying themes. Section 3.4 (3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.4.3; 3.4.4) presents how trustworthiness in the study is assured with respect to credibility; dependability; confirmability and transferability of the study. Section 3.5 consists of the analytical framework of the study. The chapter would not have been completed without saying anything about ethical considerations during the study. Hence 3.6 briefly stated what was done within the scope of the law and also about respect of the individual. Section 3.7 presented the summary of the chapter

3.1 Study design

A qualitative approach has been employed to investigate the Trokosi practice in relation to human right abuses and the involvement of diakonia towards its eradication within the practicing communities in Ghana. Qualitative research is normally an interpretative approach employed to understand and explain a social phenomenon (in this case the Trokosi practice and its eradication) in a particular environment (Bryman, 2008 p.366). In other words, one needs to consider the meaning or the interpretation of the phenomenon under study also from the perspective of the participants since they are selected from the study environment. At the same time, it is difficult for the researcher to only *mirror* what is being studied. Instead he or she is equally engaged in the construction of the social world and its interpretation (Hammersley cited in Bryman 2008 p. 382). In view of these, this study should be understood from a hermeneutical perspective or tradition.

A case study approach can be considered as an in-depth and orderly way of studying events, collecting data, analyzing data or information, and reporting findings within a particular

setting. It involves an intensive analysis of a single or multiple cases at a time (Bryman, 2008 p.52). This study employed a single case study method because of the time limit of the study. Meanwhile a case study has its own limitations. Some critiques consider it not effective because it involves a single case, making it difficult to crosscheck findings (Bell, 2005). This is because, case studies mostly rely on descriptive information provided by different people and this can create problems since there is always room for important details to be left out (ibid). Knowledge derived from a case study approach could be considered as context-specific or case specific. Nonetheless, it is a technique that helps a lot in the field of social sciences.

This study took some steps to minimize some of the problems associated with case study as identified above. It uses semi-structured interviews during data collection process. In addition, multiple sources of data collection such as document analysis and interviews were adapted. The use of multiple sources increases confidence in the interpretation of data; it helps to confirm the validity or otherwise of the study process and reduces bias that may arise from using one method of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The study also employed a purposive sampling technique which is a non-probability method of choosing respondents. According to Gay and Airasian (2000) qualitative studies mostly rely on purposive selection of respondents to enrich data. This type of sampling or selection helps the researcher to experience multiple points of views on an issue being studied (Manning, 2000). However, to have such an experience the researcher normally begins with an assumption that contextual study is vital and therefore purposely selects a sample(s) which can provide rich information. Nevertheless, O’Leary (2004) argued that, purposive sampling has two major limitations or weaknesses:

- Non-representativeness; and
- Unintentional bias

In an attempt to address the above named problems by O’Leary, this study selected respondents with different views and experiences, at the same time the selection was intended to collect rich data on the Trokosi practice among the Tongu’s from the Southern part of the Volta Region in Ghana. Ten people were interviewed. Four church members

from two churches were involved (two from each church). These churches were involved because they are located in the study environment. Four people from the shrine also participated (three were victims of the Trokosi practice while one priest who was in charge of the shrine took part).

Since the Trokosi practice takes place within communities, two opinion leaders and parents (the assembly man and the District Chief Executive) were considered as part of this study. Also, they were involved in order to help cross check issues concerning human rights abuses and whether there is any political involvement towards the eradication or otherwise of the traditional practice. The research was conducted in Ghana within six weeks from 27 January to 10 March 2014. All interview related arrangements and subsequent interviews were done during this period because the researcher returned to Norway so as to complete other academic tasks.

The main instrument used during the study was data collection (gathering of information). Lincoln and Guba (1985 pp. 44-45) classified data collection as instrument of both human and non-human. The human aspect refers to the person conducting the study (researcher) while the non-human components include questionnaires, interview protocol, recorders, checklists, computers among others. According to them, '*only the human instrument*' is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of the interaction between various instruments (ibid).

This is because, the intrusion of instruments helps in mutual shaping of other elements and that shaping can be appreciated and evaluated by only humans. Since all instruments are value-based and can interact with local values, it is only the human (researcher) who is in a position to identify and take into account those resulting 'biases'. The researcher therefore has an enormous responsibility of grasping and evaluating the meaning of information gathered and how the perceived biases are dealt with. In view of this, the researcher in this study:

- Guided the interviews; and

- Contacted appropriate authorities such as the District Chief Executive and the Assembly man of the area to clarify issues connected mainly to human rights abuses that were not very clear during some of the interview sections.

Interview guide/Protocol: Specific interviews (questions and sections) were designed to obtain important information on the Trokosi practice and its related issues among the Tongu's of the Volta Region in Ghana.

3.2 Data collection (Gathering of information)

This section discusses more about how the data collection instruments described above has been used during the study:

Interviews were conducted using semi-structured approach. A semi-structured interview is an interview schedule that involves general form of questions in which the interviewer can vary the sequence of questioning and ask for more clarification (Bryman, 2008 p.196). This approach of interviewing made the researcher to be:

- Flexible in conducting the interviews;
- Able to control the direction of questioning and length of the interview period; and
- Observe non-verbal communication or behavior of the respondents.

Spradley (1980) identified that the above advantages of interviews are necessary and important in any study that they can be used to obtain rich information. It is worth noting that permission was obtained before interviews were conducted. Prior to the interview, the researcher went to the shrine with some bottles of dry gin as custom demand in order to ask permission and book appointment before speaking to the girls or women and the priest in charge of the shrine. Appointments with the various respondents were made and all respondents were given the interview schedules. Some interviews were held in the shrine and each section lasted for about one hour thirty minutes (1:30). Other interview such as those concerning opinion leaders and church members were held either in the church premises or homes as agreed upon by the participants.

Confidentiality is important in any scientific study. This is a process of assuring respondents to give information freely because they will be kept anonymous and their information will be used only for the purpose for which it was sought. In view of this, respondents were informed that the study was purely for academic work. Each respondent was identified by a code and sensitive details were omitted in order to protect some of the participants. Interviews were conducted in both English and the local language (Ewe). This is because, some respondents could not communicate in English hence the local language was an alternative in order to help them communicate fluently. All proceedings were audio-taped with the consent of the interviewees. Short notes were also taken manually to supplement for any unintentional gaps.

However, there were a few challenges regarding the interviews. Some respondents have to change the date at the eleventh hour. The issue of getting them to sit continuously for the whole section was a challenge. Nonetheless these were addressed through consultation and therefore some interviews were held at different times instead of the initial schedule.

Apart from the interviews, some documents/records were analyzed. O'Leary (2004) defines document analysis as the 'collection, review, interrogation and analysis of various forms of text as a primary source of data'. Jarvis (1999 p.111) agreed and said the use of documents enables researchers to understand practice and the situation in which it occurs. The documents serve as a check list (guide) during the interviews. They help the researcher to come out with certain questions that would have otherwise not being asked. In general, the documents assisted in putting the interview in perspective. Meanwhile the interviews are given more space during data analysis.

3.3 Data analysis

Manual analysis was adapted because of the limited size data. This was done through transcribing, coding, categorization into themes and sub-themes before arriving at conclusions. Transcriptions were done by unitizing and coding. Unitizing data according to Erlandson et.al (1993 p.117) is a crucial step in transforming interview data into the smallest pieces of information that stand as independent thought in the absence of additional information other than broad understanding of the context. Data was unitized on cards that

were coded to facilitate locating the original source. Codes act as devices to label, separate, compile and organize data (Charmaze 1983 p.186).

Categorization of data into themes and sub-themes was done after unitizing and coding. Categorization helps to bring together provisional categories, for example those cards that relate to the same content were put together (Lincoln and Guba 1985 p.347). Similarly Bryman (2008 p.554) identifies that categorization helps to reach central themes and sub-themes which could be represented as a matrix that is similar to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) spreadsheet with its display of cases and variables. The following themes were used for the purpose of this study:

- National policy on the rights of the girl child;
- Freedom of movement;
- Freedom to marry anybody;
- Freedom of worship;
- Right to education;
- Take part in decision making process
- Church involvement

Each of these broad themes had a sub-theme. After detailed categorization, preliminary writings were made; and interpretations and conclusions were also drawn.

3.4 Ensuring trustworthiness in the study

According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), a case study usually suffers external validity because of the small sample size associated with it. The solution is to assess the quality of a case study on trustworthiness and authenticity instead of validity and reliability since these two are vital in any scientific study (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Dealing with external validity, Bryman (2008 p.377) identified that trustworthiness comprises four criteria:

- Credibility (similar to internal validity): The tool for collecting data needs to measure (gather information) what it is intended to within the study setting (s);
- Transferability (similar to external validity) The interview protocol (tool) should be able to gather similar information or data in other comparable situations;
- Dependability (similar to reliability): The tool must be able to collect equivalent information at different times in similar situations; and
- Confirmability (similar to objectivity) A research finding need to be value free hence the instrument used during data collection should be able to detach the researcher as much as possible from the finding.

These four (internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity) are very important and are dear to researchers in modern and scientific world. Bryman in the same 2008 book cited above, illuminate's authenticity as criteria which address the following issues in a scientific study:

- Fairness of the study: representing different opinion among members of a social setting;
- Ontological authenticity: thus whether the study helps members to arrive at a better understanding of their social setting;
- Educative authenticity: refers to whether the study helps members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting;
- Catalytic authenticity: whether the study acts as an impetus to members to engage in actions to change their circumstances (Bryman, 2008 p. 379).

The following sections talk about how trustworthiness was assured during this study:

3.4.1 Credibility

The researcher took the following steps to ensure credibility: respondents' views were occasionally rephrased to be sure of the correct capturing of their views; participants were contacted in some cases to authenticate their views on emerging issues. For example, one respondent mentioned "they are allowed to marry anybody if they are able to finish serving the deity per the agreed number of years", others who did not mention this were contacted if they know anything about it; findings from documents were compared with data from interviews to ensure that information is similar before conclusions were drawn; each respondent was given the opportunity to listen to the audio recorder in order to validate their information or provide additional information.

3.4.2 Transferability

Transferability can be likened to future studies; however, it is worth noting that this study addresses issues on the Trokosi practice solely related to the Ghanaian setting; influences created by respondents' positions; respondents' attitudes, opinions and emotions during the interview period; and personal biases detected by the researcher.

3.4.3 Dependability

To ensure dependability, the researcher asked four people to read and later held discussion with them. These people criticized and evaluated the methods employed in this study. Their feedback was considered and used to improve the methodology and style. In addition, my supervisor played an important role during the whole study process.

3.4.4 Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability helps assure that, findings and interpretation of data are grounded in the context from which they came. Confirmability was assured by taking note of very little observations during the study. Also a study diary was kept where interview schedules, dates and other important information were kept. Audio recordings, transcripts and also detaching oneself as much as possible from some activities were some of the steps taken during the study.

3.5 Analytical framework

The study considered functionalist perspective, human rights and diaconal perspectives as well as Black feminist theory as the basis for the analysis. This is because; functionalist and part of feminist approach will help to understand why the troxorvi practice still exists. Human rights, diaconal as well as feminist perspectives will be used to see the way forward.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The researcher contacted the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) through phone call to be updated about what to do and what the laws of the state does not permit. In connection to this, the NSD educated the researcher about email and skype strategies for data collection and anonymity. In view of the fact that the participants were anonymous during the study, the researcher was advised to contact the individuals in the study. Since the study was done in Ghana, it also took the laws concerning research in Ghana into consideration. The researcher is supposed to seek permission from the individual participants before the study. The researcher therefore, explained to the participants (who were all older than 18years) the reasons for the study, issues about anonymity and confidentiality and was able to have their oral consent before the study.

The risk of respondents been confronted as “enemies” of the troxorvi system was reduced through anonymity. Participants were identified by codes instead of their names. In addition, there was an agreement between the researcher and the respondents that, the audio tapes should not be released neither should they be listened to by any other person apart from the researcher. In view of this, transcription was done only by the researcher. It is also important to mention that, permission was asked from the chief priests of the deities as customs demanded.

3.7 Chapter summary

In conclusion, qualitative method is considered due to the in-depth nature of the studies. A case study approach was adapted despite its perceived weaknesses. However, some steps such as multiple sources of data collection and semi-structured interview technique were considered by this researcher to minimize any bias while increasing the credibility

trustworthiness, dependability and confirmability of the study. To be able to get a rich data, purposive sampling strategy was employed. The analytical frame work consists of arguments from different theories in order to have a holistic understanding of the troxorvi practice as well as consider the plight of the trokosi girls. Ethical consideration is important in every scientific study hence the researcher contacted various agencies responsible for permission at national levels before conducting the research. The individual participants were also consulted to give their consent before taking part in the study.

CHAPTER 4: THEORY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter presents the various concepts making the theory and the analytical framework of this study. Section 4.1 discusses the concepts of human rights (freedom, education and dignity). Section 4.2 presents some concepts from diakonia, while 4.2.1; 4.2.2; 4.2.3 explain into detail empowerment, transformation as well as prophetic and political diakonia. Section 4.3 elaborates on functionalism. Section 4.4 considers feminist theory by Collins. Section 4.5 summarizes and presents the analytical framework of this study. Lastly 4.6 considered the chapter summary

4.1 Human Rights Concepts (Dignity, Freedom, Education)

The interrelationship between dignity, freedom and education are explored in order to see how one may influence the other. Human dignity is rooted in freedom (Schmidt, 2010 p.13). Every human being deserves freedom in order to make some basic choices in life as equal rights are important for self-determination, respect and human right values (Vetvik, 2011 p.99). Freedom in this sense could be related to autonomy. Immanuel Kant grounds dignity in autonomy and identified that it is “*the capacity to act on principles given by the moral law contained in rationality*” (Schmidt, 2010 p.14). The more autonomy one has, the less vulnerable he or she is (Haugen, 2010 pp.210-211). It could be argued therefore that the trokosi girls or women are more vulnerable because their level of autonomy (freedom of worship, movement, right to study as well as to choose and decide about basic issues affecting themselves) is limited so long as they remain in these shrines or are considered as slaves for these ‘gods’. This could affect their self worth hence their dignity in general.

Dignity is normally used in relation to human rights, ethical issues, and political discussions to indicate an innate right to respect and ethical treatment (Addy, 2011p.10). Since it resides in the individual, it could be regarded as a precondition for the person’s freedom. Thus these trokosi girls also have dignity hence they need freedom. Nonetheless, the trokosi girls can

only operate to a certain extent. People, who are vulnerable due to limited autonomy, are normally excluded from the lime light of society.

Formal education in recent times is seen globally as an effective way of promoting autonomy and building confident in people. In most cases the elite in every society are the most autonomous, respectable and even the most dignified in almost all aspects of life. In short education is vital in promoting self-worth, autonomy and dignity while freedom and ability to choose and decide about basic necessities in life cannot be over emphasized. Notwithstanding these concerns, some national laws do not enhance freedom hence infringing upon people's fundamental human rights. In view of this, the international human right laws and conventions are increasingly becoming the bench mark for promoting basic human rights all over the world in order to preserve people's rights and dignity.

One such legislation is the Convention on the Right of the Child. As noted earlier, freedom is very important for human development in general and especially in the case of children and women, it's of special concern due to their vulnerability. In Article 14 paragraph 1 of the Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC), it states: *States parties shall respect the right of the child's freedom of thought, conscience and religion* (CRC, 1989 p. 3). One therefore can say per this aspect of the law that, children are free to express their thoughts and religion without any interference. However, the urgent question is whether the girls or women in the trokosi shrines are really expressing their thoughts and individual religion?

It is also important to note that freedom according to human rights perspective does not end only with freedom of expression but include issues concerning health, education among others. Every human being including children and women are entitled to good health and treatment of all kinds of illnesses, sickness and rehabilitation as well as having the right to education as in Article 29 of the CRC. Thus, *“education should be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”* (CRC, 1989 p. 6).

In order to preserve children for good development through education, the convention frowns on any type of abuse involving children. Articles 19 and 34 are clear on how nations are to protect children from all forms of mental or physical violence, injury or abuse,

maltreatment or exploitation, neglect, economic exploitation, sexual abuse, unlawful sexual practice and even “*exploitative use of children in pornographic performance and materials*” (ibid, p. 7). In other words the inherent nature of human dignity is the prerequisite or the foundation for freedom which will intern promote human autonomy, peace, justice, dignity and development. Thus, education is currently a necessary evil for human development and dignity but cannot take place without good health and free movement hence one needs to promote education, free movement and good health of children in order to help develop and encourage their self-worth, autonomy and dignity.

4.2 Diakonia

The following sections present more diaconal related concepts and discussions from diaconal perspective by drawing ideas from Kjell Nordstokke’s books (Nordstokke, 2011; Nordstokke, 2009; Nordstokke, 2004 and the Holy Bible).

4.2.1 Empowerment

Every human being is created in the image of God with capabilities and abilities, independent of their current social situation (Nordstokke, 2009 pp.45-46). In addition, just as the disciples were given power on the day of Pentecost, it is believed that God will continually give power to all mankind (ibid). Thus, we are all continually empowered by God. These convictions are to shape diaconal activities, its methodology and priorities. Why then should the church be involved in physical diaconal activities if God is already empowering humanity?

The answer is that, the church needs to intervene due to societal structures which persistently suppress and leads to human rights abuses and exclusion. The inspiration here is that, as much as the church does diaconal work, it has to bear in mind that, the very foundation of diakonia is built on respect for others by God himself (Nordstokke, 2011 p.49). Thus, the abilities and other personal capabilities of even the marginalized must be explored. Respect for the other makes empowerment processes participatory by involving the marginalized in decision making process. Thus, build the capacity of the vulnerable to be able to defend themselves in most cases. It involves guiding and exposing them to know their rights and hence fighting their own cost as much as possible. Generally, diaconal

actions dignify humanity by establishing practices that improve the lives of people and giving them the ability to become subjects both in the church and society.

During the empowerment process, imbalances of power may be dealt with and that, respect for all is paramount. Since diakonia is a service to all, it needs to persevere to see ahead of one's own immediate assumptions and stereotypes by going beyond first impression when confronted with different abilities, capabilities and faith (Nordstokke 2009, p.89). To help build a healthy civil society through individual empowerment, and community empowerment sometimes means coming in collaboration with others, strengthening the local community through respect in order to deal with injustices in society as well as bringing the marginalized themselves actively on board (ibid).

4.2.2 Transformation

Transformation is “an ongoing process” that considers all aspects of life including aspirations, structures, ideologies and values. It normally rejects dehumanization but agrees with a dignifying life which is a gift in everybody. It also promotes justice and peace in society (Nordstokke, 2009 p.43: Nordstokke, 2004 p.32). Transformation involves all who are part of a transforming system hence limiting the *'helper's syndrome'*. In transformation, everybody is vulnerable to an extent and therefore need diakonia as a mutual care (ibid). So there is nothing like donors (we), and beneficiaries (they). Though a process, it also has achievable goals towards promoting human dignity, peace and justice as well as rejects conformism (ibid).

Transformational diakonia in a way affirms that, individuals have their personal ideologies and values which must be respected. One can therefore argue and challenge the brain behind changing or improving people's situations through diaconal act if people's values are highly respected then how can they be changed. Nevertheless, it must be noted that diaconal activities are not meant to change people's original stands. Rather, it expose them to other alternatives by increasing their scope of understanding of issues hence helping them to improve upon their very lives by making them aware of their basic human rights and to enable them take part in day to day activities of society. In short, the marginalized for that matter the trokosi girls should be involve in everything that affects their lives. This in itself

is dignifying enough since diakonia implies fundamental respect for personal views, different denominations, faiths and world view (Nordstokke, 2009).

4.2.3 Prophetic and Political Diakonia

Injustice and unjust structures are increasingly becoming part of modern society. Many people including "the powerful" in society use inhumane approach or oppressive style due to greediness in order to get riches, fame and power resulting in marginalization and social exclusion of the less privileged in society. The question is how could these problems be solved using diakonia if diakonia is considered as a humble service? Diakonia which is often referred to as a humble service does not necessarily mean so. Prophetic witness (prophetic diakonia) which is obedience to God's word involves confrontation with certain social values such as injustice in societies. Prophetic diakonia could be defined as a radical option which speaks on behalf of the marginalized by following Jesus who healed, dignified and empowered the excluded of His time (Nordstokke, 2011) It is a service commission by God, linked to the theological nature of diakonia which takes prophetic features into consideration and empowered by God's spirit with the aim of lifting the downtrodden (Nordstokke, 2009 p, 81). It denounces abuse of power and confronts "the powerful others" in order to change unjust structures coupled with their practices.

Prophetic diakonia promotes justice, build bridges, and could be considered as intervention towards transformation and empowerment of individuals. In view of this, prophetic diakonia listens to the suffering voices and the marginalized in society just as God said: "*I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard the cry of my people [...]*" when the Israelites were suffering (Exodus 3:7). Thus the church has to decide and act together with the marginalized by witnessing God's unconditional love and His ever embracing grace to humanity. In other words, prophetic diakonia's authority is not "over the people" but is an "authority "for the "people". Thus people are empowered to take action towards changing their own destinies by involving them in decision making process. This process enable the marginalized to be seen as "subjects" rather than "objects", they are to be "talked with" instead of being "talk to".

The church should therefore be able to speak out and speak against injustices in society not forgetting to involve the marginalized themselves. Sometimes prophetic diakonia and political diakonia are considered to be the same but they are slightly different. While prophetic diakonia could be considered as a radical approach towards societal change, political structures that govern people in general sometimes set boundaries. Diaconal actions have political implication since diakonia takes place in public sphere. People are governed by rules, laws as well as political authorities hence political diakonia is a subject to be considered in any diaconal approach. In other words it could be said that, while prophetic diakonia aims at advocacy, empowering and dignifying the excluded, political diakonia is mindful of social structures coupled with laws (Nordstokke, 2011; Nordstokke, 2009). Political diakonia could therefore be said sometimes to restrict diaconal actions (prophetic diakonia). Although diaconal actors are encouraged to be mindful of the socio-political structures and the role they play, the actors should be ready to speak out when necessary (Nordstokke, 2011 p. 51).

4.3 Functionalist perspective

Functionalist such as August Comte, Talcott Parson, Robert Merton, Emile Durkheim among others agreed that every society is held together by common norms and values from its members though they have slight differences based on their individual views. Each aspect of society is dependent and contributes to stability in the whole society (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). To them, society is held together by consensus building in order to work towards the achievement of societal goals (Abrahamson, 1986 cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014). In other words each part of society is functional towards the stability of the whole society.

Considering the fact that each institution in society help in shaping society, any disorganization in one could affect all the others hence bringing social change. Deviant behavior which could be responsible for social change causes various components or institutions in society to adjust to achieve stability which is the primary aim of functionalism. In view of this, functionalism does not encourage members of a society to

play active roles in changing their lives even if the changes will bring improvement in their personal lives hence the possibility for them to resist any social change is high.

However, Talcott Parson and Robert Merton who reformulated functionalism have slightly different position. Parson for example identified society as having interrelated institutions such as economic, education, health, religious, marriage, family, and political institutions (Parson, 1951 cited in Akpabli-Honu). To him, the extent of stability of society is determined by how effectively each of these institutions functions. The individual functions perform by the institutions depend on the “needs” of society. For example, while provision of food and shelter is linked to the economic institution, goal attainment and allocation of resources are reserved for the political institution.

Sometimes conflict could result as Parson concur that adjustment of conflicts is important for proper integration of the parts. One institution which could help in conflict resolution and hence set standardized or acceptable behavior of both individual and other institutions is the Judiciary or Law institution. The judicial service needs to protect basic structural values which are acceptable and institutionalized in order to avoid disintegration in society. Other institutions such as religious, family and educational institutions are supposed to see to it that social order is maintained by socializing individuals to keep social values. To Parson, a society is in a state of equilibrium if all its institutions perform their roles (goal attainment, adaptation, maintenance, and integration)

Agreeing with Parson, Haralmbos and Holborn (1995 p.873) also identified religious beliefs as providing final justification for the values in society but stated that, sometimes the functional unity is problematic as a dysfunction in one could affect the other. In short social system has a tendency to seek balance or equilibrium whenever society is able to minimize disruptive forces which may occur as a result of radical change because conservatives who believe in certain cultural patterns like shared values and norms resist change (Robertson, 1987 cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

Nevertheless, according to Robertson (1987), social change does not disrupt social equilibrium but only alters it. This is because, social change brings a new equilibrium which “forces” the whole society to re-organize or adjust itself due to the disequilibrium brought

by social change. A successful attainment of a new equilibrium normally comes with better social and cultural arrangement (Robertson, 1987).

4.4 Feminist perspectives

Feminist perspective according to P.H Collins could be considered as a response to male domination in all aspects of life within society where women are mostly considered as second class citizens and therefore exploited and denied of certain basic rights (Collins, 2000). Collins identified three interdependent dimensions of exploitation and oppression. These are:

Economic Exploitation: It includes the exploitation of black women's labor in the capitalist economy within the US where black women are engaged in long hours of work. This was accompanied with the "free" wage labor in the rural South;

Political Exploitation: It is a strategy that denied African-American women of all privileges and rights that were enjoyed by white male citizens at the time. African-American women were not allowed to vote, acquired public status among others.

Ideological dimension: It is a body of ideas reflecting the interest of a group of people. This could be considered as a deep sited believe, planted within black women through the use of controlling images such that sexism, racism as were permeated through the social structure to the extent that certain qualities of black women could be used to justify oppression (Collins, 2000 p. 4).

Apart from these three classifications, Collins agreed with other feminist writers such as Hamilton and Wollstonecraft that marginalized women fertility and sexuality is always exploited (Hamilton & Wollstonecraft cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014). Women are mostly considered as private commodity and can willfully be maltreated and manipulated by men for their popularity and status in society since wealth is sometimes measured by the number of wives a man has. This could be associated with power and domination where people try to obtain whatever they desire in society even at the resistance of others (Lenski, 1984). Tuan (1984), concur that people use power and domination to reduce some others into animals in order to exploit them economically, physically, politically and sexually. Thus,

every part of their body is always exploited. In this vain, the marginalized group is considered as a “*fragmented commodity whose feelings and choices were rarely considered*” (Omolade, 1994 p. 7).

In other words, some problems that women face such as poverty could be linked to race, class and gender discrimination and oppression (Collins, 2000). The marginalized group sometimes adopt the language and style of the oppressors such that they may be considered as actors because the oppressed may have “double” or “dual” personality. Thus, according to Lorde, the marginalized behave in a particular manner in front of the dominant group but have a different opinion that could be considered as their inner self which could sometimes resist oppressive acts. This attitude called “watchers” normally helps them in order to survive (Gwaltney, 1980; Lorde, 1984 p. 114). Additionally, the marginalized have private relationships that are informal within themselves as it was during slavery period. Their friends are mostly found among themselves and also they relate well with their mothers as they are the first to impart knowledge to everybody within African-American society. “*Black feminist thought emphasizes the important of knowledge for empowerment*” (Collins, 2000 p. 273). In short the marginalized have mutual recognition of themselves which could be considered as an asset, as group solidarity, grass root involvement coupled with legal system are all important for resisting oppression (Collins, 2000; Gilkes, 1985; Higginbotham, 1993; Myers, 1980; Whites, 1985). According to Collins, the disciplinary domain, interpersonal domain and group action are vital to changing the behavior of a dominant group (Collins, 2000)

The aim of feminist writers is to understand the general experience of women as well as gender inequality in order to empower women to live a dignified life. In other words, feminist perspective could be considered as a movement which seeks to empower women worldwide by recognizing the superiority of patriarchy in societies with the aim of changing it hence regardless of where the study took place, one could employ it in other settings. Feminist perspective combines different ideas from diverse disciplines (Hamilton, 2007).

Patriarchal basis of marriage is sometime likened to the quest for inheritance where men turn women into objects of labor and for sexual relations. In other words, women have a

lifetime responsibility of personal service to men which is supported by several religious traditions in the world. In view of this, feminist perspective according to Hamilton identified that capital and class relations are responsible for oppression of women. This means that equality is more likely to be achieved in absence of classification in society. However, Marx observed that oppression is not simply due to class and will continue to exist even in the absence of capitalism (Hamilton, 2007).

4.5 Adopting analytical framework

One needs to understand why the troxorvi system still continues to operate in this 21st century with all the local and international laws. Functionalist, and feminist perspectives will be employed for better understanding of the troxorvi operations and its continual existence in this contemporary world. It is important to explore other theories to see the way forward hence the human rights and the diaconal concepts as well as part of feminist perspective will be used.

Consequently, the use of these concepts (Freedom, Education, Empowerment, and Transformation) in the discussion chapter is mainly to argue in case there are human right abuses within the troxorvi system.

4.6 Chapter summary

From the foregoing, there is a relationship between dignity, freedom and education though one does not necessarily result to the other. Different presumptions such as functionalist, feminist, human rights and diaconal perspectives were adopted at various stages for diverse reasons. Thus functionalist perspective and part of feminist perspective for example could help understand the mystery behind the troxorvi system and why it continues to persevere in spite of all the local and international laws while the rest are used to argue for the plights of the affected girls.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENTS

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from interviews and those from some documents. Information from documents especially other research literature within the troxorvi practice is only compared with the results from interviews to help relate different perceptions from participants' point of view in the study. The chapter is divided based on the three main categories of people that were involved in the study (the trokosi girls and priests; the opinion leaders/parents; and the church). Also, their views are linked to the main themes of the study by which analyses and discussions will be made later for the purpose of clarity. Section 5.1 which consist of 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.1.3; 5.1.4 presents information on the general life style in the shrines gathered from the priests and the maidens whose views were mostly related. This is why the views of the chief priests were combined with those of the trokosi girls. Section 5.2 (5.2.1; 5.2.2; 5.2.3) provides the views and the clarifications offered by the opinion leaders/parents about the troxorvi practice. Section 5.3 (5.3.1) illustrates how the church presents its efforts and what they think could be done. Section 5.4 presented chapter summary.

5.1 Findings from the trokosi girls and the chief priest

The chief priests are normally the oldest male in the family hence could be as old as between fifty-five and seventy years. This according to the chief priest and shrine owners is due to inheritance. *Shrines are normally owned by families and males are the most qualified people to occupy this positions unless there is no elderly male in the lineage before the oldest women in the families are allowed to step in and hold temporal positions* (Chief priest and Shrine owners). They explain further and acknowledged that, the arrangement of males being considered first is partly due to the patrilineal inheritance system adopted generally by the Ewes in Ghana.

The troxorvi practice accepts mainly virgin girls at a tender age. The maidens are committed between the ages of five and ten in order to prevent them from being defiled by men. One reason which was given by the chief priest for the acceptance of virgin girls is that, the trokosi's (kosi's) are considered as wives of the deity. Relatively, males are not acceptable

because the deity does not engage in homosexuality. *“In fact homosexuality is a taboo within our traditional set up”* (Chief priest). Hence, girls are the most preferred for atonement of crimes committed by males in their family, Even though in rare cases where there is no virgin girl in the family, males could be considered but in this case the priest cannot marry them. This is one thing the girls find difficult to comprehend; to them it is unjust for someone to suffer the consequence of another person’s inaction since punishment is to deter “criminals and others from committing similar crimes in society. They express their disagreement in the following comments:

“It is difficult to understand why we should be used as sacrificial lambs when the offenders are freely walking on the street. If this mode of punishment is really effective, then rape, defilement and adultery should have been a thing of the past. Because the men know they will get innocent girls, to atone for their crimes, they don’t relent. This system is rather motivating rather than deterring” (Trokosi girls).

According to the trokosi girls, the system is full of misplaced justice where the real culprits are left unpunished to the detriment of young girls. So the system which was meant to be correcting wrong doing and perhaps changing the behavior of wrong doer seems to be failing. It could therefore not bring wrong doing such as rape among others to an end as claimed by the devotees of the troxorvi system. The devotees may think it is helping in building good morals but this can only be said at the surface. Why do we still experience wrong doing in society? One is tempted to agree with these girls considering the long period of which trokosi have been in existence. Crime should have been a thing of the past if the troxorvi system is as effective as claimed by its followers.

5.1.1 Recognition and purification ritual

A girl who is inducted needs to go through an initiation ritual to be able to be welcomed into the shrine. The ritual is normally performed as soon as they are inducted. During the ceremony called *godede*, a deep blue piece of cloth known as *avoryibor* is used to protect the private parts of the girls while other parts of their body is exposed. Alternatively, *calico* could also be used in the absence of *avoryibor* (Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 88). This ceremony must be done before the chosen girl’s menarche to avoid any defilement. As part of the ritual, the maidens are made to take special bath known as *“agbametsilele”* for seven days. They also wear raffia leaf known as *“la”* in the local parlance around their neck to signify

their identity to the deity. The maidens are confined in a room for seven days which is the ritual period (ibid).

The confinement is on two levels. During the day, they stay in the deity's room and in the night, they are made to sleep in any ordinary room within the shrine. Newly inducted girls after the *godede* ritual become members of the shrine and must reside there for a minimum of seven years before they can be redeemed by their parents. Any kosi who is able to finish serving the mandatory seven years and is ready to be redeemed must go through a purification ritual called "*fla*". The supposed liberated kosi is given special ritual water to sprinkle in the home where she was dwelling before her committal to the shrine. It is believed that the *fla* will prevent any spell following her (chief priest). According to the chief priest if this purification ritual is not performed, there will be sudden deaths and diseases in the said family. The chief priest confirmed the religious nature of the system as "*a well institutionalized religious practice with specific rituals at each stage. These rituals are observed by its members or devotees*" (chief priest, Shrine owners).

However, most of the *trokosis* are abandoned partly because their parents could not afford the items needed to free them. In addition, there is no motivation for the said relatives to free their children because, these girls or women continue to be part of the shrine even after the purification rituals despite the cost involved to set them free. The liberated *trokosi* must visit the shrine regularly because the end of the seven years only marks her relive from certain duties and obligation within the shrine but not her total freedom.

"It is very expensive to "free" your daughter from the shrine. The most painful part is that the girl continues to be their property despite all the cost and payments. Sometimes the girls become extra burden on us because they come back with a child which becomes our responsibility. One cannot complain nor reprimands their daughter since they are not supposed to make them angry. It is also difficult to control others not to offend these maidens" (A parent).

5.1.2 Permanent servitude

The girls become permanent members of the shrine. In view of this, the kosi must attend all their ceremonies and festivals even though she has finished serving as a successful kosi. Simply put by one of the respondents, "*there is no total freedom once you become a member you remain in it even if you travel, you must come for the celebration or on real occasions*

send your donations” (trokosi girls). Also the liberated kosi should not be made angry by any member of the public else, there will be another punishment of taking a virgin girl. In cases where the trokosi had a child for the chief priest, the child becomes the burden for the family as noted in the quote above, since the families are not ready to take care of an extra human being which was not part of their budget, the easiest way is to leave the girls permanently in the shrine despite the abuses. It is only few courageous relatives who are able to liberate their girls after the seven years.

The maidens are also sometimes renamed during the “*godede*” ritual. This is to change their identity signaling to the public that they are full members of the shrine. However, this is different in some areas where they only add the title “mama” (grandmother) to their names no matter how young they are to signify respect of the gods to whom the girls belong (Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

5.1.3 Concerns about Human Rights abuses within the shrine

In the shrine, the girls or women are made to perform various duties ranging from house chores like cooking, fetching of water, washing, farming, fishing and petty trading. However, there are differences when it comes to how the trokosis are treated from shrine to shrine (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). A case in study is those shrines from Agave traditional area. In the Agave traditional area, a newly inducted kosi is made to sweep the whole shrine single handedly no matter how big the shrine is. In addition, she takes care of seven other special areas within the shrine until she gets a newly induced maiden before releasing her duties to this newly committed kosi. In view of this kind of intensive chores, the trokosis are made to wake-up as early as 4:00am. As part of the rules, she must finish all her morning duties latest by 8:00am (ibid).

Movement of the newly committed trokosi is restricted so much that she is not allowed to visit her home and relatives until three maidens are inducted after her. It is important to note that, even if she is “lucky” to get these three girls after her, she is only allowed to visit her home for a period of nine days. “*We don’t see our parents for a long time (Trokosi)*”. Unfortunately, if no new maiden is committed, then she has to remain in the shrine without a common visit to her home town. In short, the kosi could spend more than five years or

even all the seven years in the shrine without any visit to her home (Akpabli-Honu, 2014, pg. 92).

It must be noted that there are no schools and hospitals within the shrines. Meanwhile, the girls are committed at a tender age and are restricted hence the girls and women end-up being illiterates due to the absence of formal education by the troxorvi system. They normally drop out at whatever class they were as soon as they are inducted in to the shrine. As a result only few of the women had primary education which they never completed because they are not allowed to go to school after the initiation ritual. The following are views of respondents on education:

“Formal education is the means through which most people are living decent lives but we are not fortunate to be part of it. It is very sad to see people of your age speaking English which you can barely understand or contribute meaningfully to. Our lives have been ruined because there is nothing one can do effectively these days without education. Even if you are liberated and given skill training, it is difficult to work when almost all your customers come in and speak this foreign language you do not know anything about. It is an embarrassing and discriminatory situation for us. Our health is equally at risk because most often we don't have access to good health care” (trokosi girl).

The girls did not only express their frustration about their inability to get formal education but also lack of proper health care. According to them they are mostly put on herbal treatment since the chief priest is presumed to be knowledgeable about a lot of herbs that could cure various diseases. When asked why they couldn't get the type of treatment they wanted, their reply was:

“Assuming you fall sick during your confinement period for example, what do you do? You can only receive treatment from the chief priest. Even if you are made to go to town, where do you get the money from? You can't go to your family if you are not permitted” (trokosi girls).

As part of the clarifications, they were asked if they were not part of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). It seems most of them do not even know anything concerning NHIS since they are used to the herbal treatment.

5.1.4 Troxorvi practice as a social control mechanism

The troxorvi system is considered as a very effective social control mechanism by its followers especially when it comes to crime detection. The chief priest concurs to this position through the following comments:

“Those days troxorvi was the only effective means through which crime was detected and punished in order to prevent others from engaging in similar crimes. When did your so called justice system come into being? Even with it, are you able to arrest and punish people properly and promptly? Many criminals who escape your modern justice system cannot do likewise here. The gods will strike their families immediately with sickness and death. They will be the ones chasing us for intervention and punishment not the other way round. Sometimes the victims themselves are dealt with instantly depending on the intensity of the crime and the request from the one whom they have stolen from. “When we invoke the spirits of the gods they don’t make mistakes” (chief priest).

It can be deduced from the above that the troxovi system has been in existence for a long time. Many people have trusted and seek refuge in the system both in the past and present. To the devotee, they need not to chase the criminals for example but the other way round. They see the justice system as a waste of time and resources where the criminals may not be found at the end of the day. In short many people benefit and see the troxorvi practice as a vital part of their life. These are the people who make sacrifices of all kinds to the gods for their “faithfulness”. Such group of people do not consider themselves as slaves. The following comments from Akpabli-Honu buttress their accessions:

“The people who condemn our believe system are confused themselves. Left to some of us no one should mind them. Those of us who have benefited from the goodwill of our gods can tell the success story. Let those who always want to discredit the gods continue to do so. We are a group of happy people who are christened by others as slaves. Can the aggrieved express these degree of happiness that is seen at our festivals”? (From celebrants of the annual festival. These may be people who consult the gods in various reasons including seeking of justice cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 104).

Comparing this position with the earlier comment from the trokosi girls, one can see two main factions of people (those who are sad and others who are happy). To the trokosi girls, they regard their committal process and membership as psychological compulsion since they have to suffer for other people’s crime. It is therefore difficult to identify themselves as beneficiaries of the system. This group of girls have no choice but to make themselves happy together with those who have benefited from the system. The same can be said for parents who felt that their daughters have been forcefully taken.

It could be said that, the annual festival is the biggest occasion where the girls may associate with a lot of people including the liberated trokosi members from both far and near, hence their perceived happiness. In other words, many of the girls may be in a state of despair since there is nothing they can do about the situation so has decided that life must continue. Also they could derive some level of “joy” from the annual festival due to their mutual recognition of which they take consolation in the fact that they are not alone. This type of “happiness” could not be linked to the joy associated with self-actualization. When the girls were asked how they manage their day to day life and about survival in the shrines, they agree they have good interpersonal relationship among themselves as it was the best way to cope. They support each other in times of crises.

5.2 Views from opinion leaders/parents and Church

According to the parents, reparation of the girls is as a result of rape or any kind of sexual knowledge of the trokosi girls. They expressed their disappointment in the troxorvi system which is generally surrounded by fear. Their frustration could be identified in the following statements:

“It is not an easy thing but one has no option than to surrender a lovely daughter in order to save the whole family from the consequences of a troxorvi deity. Penalties such as sudden deaths and strange diseases that befall any offending family becomes serious concern because if care is not taken, a whole family will be swept off. However, we can say it is a way of robbing our daughters from us since punishments given in our law courts and elsewhere are not worth even half of the price we pay” (parents).

As much as they agreed that they have to be punished due to their offences, they think the price of a girl child is too much. Most of the people grew up to know from oral history that the deity could give protection as well. In view of this, some secretly wondered how the deity that is supposed to protect them could rather enslave its followers by taking their daughters as captives.

“It is a difficult moment to release your daughter to a deity for an offence she did not commit. But to avoid disintegration in the family, one needs to comply in order to belong to the family. Sometime, you have only one child or one girl but you must release her to the gods in order to have peace” (A parent).

Parents were not able to give any concrete reason why only girls became objects of atonement but for the fear of the whole family being wiped away, they simply obeyed “a religious order”. One is therefore tempted to conclude that, the troxorvi system operates based on unseen “forces or spirits” in order to achieve specific aims.

5.2.1 Sexual promiscuity

In addition, the system could be said to engage in sexual promiscuity. Apart from the sexual abuses in the shrines, sexual immorality is also quite high during the annual festival where a band is lifted on sexual intercourse (dodese) with the trokosi or fiashidi. During the celebration people who indulge in indiscriminate sex with the trokosi girls are not punished. Most of the people who find themselves in this web do not use any protection.

Comparing this “dodese” with the current rate of HIV-AIDS, it can be dangerous especially for the innocent girls. This is because the men they meet during this annual festival have other sexual partners and their HIV-AIDS status is not checked or known. As much as one can agree that the men are equally at risk, the maidens may be affected more since some of these girls might not have had any sexual experience at all. It may be a serious issue since the married women among them are also accused of partaking in the “dodese” ritual (Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

5.2.2 Troxorvi practice as a source of hope?

The troxorvi system in general could be considered by the devotees as a religion for its followers despite the reservations and human right abuses of innocent girls since even its followers agreed that it has some hash aspects. However, to many the system helps:

- To reduce crime if not curtailing it in the practicing communities especially in the past;
- To check the moral behavior of people because many of them are afraid to pay with the girl child;
- Fight against epidemics;
- Prevent frequent deaths among family members and the whole community;

- Solve land litigation problems amicably within the community and among close relations;
- Engage in proper investigation (courtship) before marriage so as to avoid choosing a trokosi girl;
- Effective dictation of crime and its associated punishments to the culprits;
- Provide children to couples who have fertility problems (they consider them as fertility gods);
- Give meaning and provide hope for its followers who consult the gods during crisis;
- Offered mystical protection during the period of migration and victory over their new settlement (parents; opinion leader; Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

In view of these benefits they derived from the system both in the past and present, the followers agreed that it is a well recognized traditional practice or “religion” which was built and have survived on detailed rituals by its members since time memorial. In case of any crisis or enquiries, the spirits are normally invoked and consulted for solutions. Nevertheless, some parents were quick to acknowledge that it is an obsolete practice in modern times in the phase of human rights and the present judicial system, hence they agreed further that the practice has out lived its usefulness. The following statements may be regarded as the basis of their opinion; *“The way of doing things have changed. One can easily report any criminal in the law court which was not possible in the olden days* (Parents and opinion leaders). In other words, it could not be said to offer “hope” to many in contemporary society at the wake of both local and international human rights laws. Meanwhile, due to some economic benefits that the shrine owners, priests as well as some people from the public sphere derive from the system, the practice continue to exist even after the law was passed in 1998 to criminalize it.

5.2.3 Possible reasons why troxorvi practice still exist

The promulgation of the Criminal Code Amendment Act (554), was supposed to end all customary practices that encourage ritual servitude (Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 63). However,

because the shrine owners and the priests depend on donations from their “clients”, (the items they receive during various stages of initiation and liberation process), it is difficult for them to willingly stop this practice. In addition, economic activities within the communities are boosted during the annual festivals and other celebrations. The annual festivals are established to help bring together all the devotees all over the world. During these festivals a lot of activities including marry making and rituals are performed as well as various items such as beads, calico, “avorybor” are briskly sold. Hotels and guest houses around the practicing communities are fully booked during these times since many people come from far and near to celebrate (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). In general, economic activities seemed to have blinded many about the human right abuses involved in the practice.

Considering the frustration and disappointment in the system from parents and opinion leaders, the researcher wanted to know if there are any programs in place to help in liberating the girls from the shrines. These were the responses from the participants: *“we have tried our possible best but it is difficult since there are strong believes about the unseen coupled with its punishments. You know, it is a system that needs to be handled well with collaboration with shrine owners and chief priests otherwise, we could have more problems than we thought of”* (parents). The main challenge when it comes to abolishing the system is non cooperation of the people who mater most in the troxorvi system such as shrine owners and the chief priests.

5.3 Efforts by the church and some other alternative views

The church on the other hand has in place various sensitization programs which are mainly targeting individuals who are likely to be victims (the community members who are Christians) of the troxorvi practice. The church (diaconal actor) organizes group talks in the form of seminars, educating its members about the importance of education without neglecting education of the girl child. They also educate many people who do not have enough information about the law banning the practice hence the church is educating its members about some related issues of the troxorvi system.

“In addition, we support researchers as well as NGOs and well meaning Ghanaians by giving information that is available to us as a way of exposing the weaknesses of the system. Some NGOs like International Needs (IN) are able to succeed to some extent by establishing

a training center for the liberated trokosi who were brought out by the efforts of the IN. We also have some counseling programs for the liberated trokosi in order to help them live among us” (A church member).

In the process of integrating the liberated trokosi girls and women back in to society, they are normally given skilled training in hair dressing, soap production, and batik making. This is to help the girls to be gainfully employed and be self sufficient. International Needs (an NGO) came into the Tongu Traditional area in the 90s when the debate on the trokosi system was very high. They were able to collaborate with some shrine owners, chief priests, chiefs, opinion leaders and the community at large to free some of the trokosi girls. *“It was not an easy battle but there was light at the end of the tunnel” (A church member).* They managed to establish a vocational school and liberated some of the girls from the shrines in the area. Shrines in the Tongu districts were known for serious human right abuses during the time (Akpabli-Honu, 2014).

Some church members agreed that there was the need for more advocacy work since the practice is still in existence. These were their views:

“We need to expand our programs by involving the media to help disseminate information. There is also a need for political commitment so that the law can be enforced. To be able to carry out all these duties, there is a need for collaboration especially to involve the powerful in the troxorvi sector” (A church member).

5.3.1 Integrating the Liberated Trokosi back into society

After liberating the girls, their ages were considered. Those that cannot go to school because of their age, are given skilled training within the established training centre (vocational school) while the young ones who could still receive formal education are encouraged and supported to go to school as any other child. Meanwhile many of the girls have difficulty in understanding the reason for their committal into the troxorvi system. This was noted by Akpabli-Honu as psychological compulsion. In this confused state, they wondered why they should be punished for a crime they knew nothing about (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). There is the need to talk with them to be able to accept their situation and move on with life. *Hence we thought it wise to counsel and also link them to their families to enjoy family life* (representative from the church). However, the main problem according to the church is that some people still believe and sometimes see the girls as belonging to the gods.

5.4 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, there were different views from all the participants in this study. However, it could be deduced from the above quotes that, there were some issues related to freedom, dignity and education as well as economic, physical and sexual concerns. The church (diaconal actor) may be considered as been involved in some educational activities such as seminars, and workshops but need to do more.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of the results from both the interviews and documents. While the interview is given more attention, the information gathered from the documents barely strengthens the interviews. The chapter is divided according to the main themes of this study for the purpose of clarity. Meanwhile, related concepts are classified together such that, their interrelation could easily be addressed. Section 6.1 examines whether the dignity, freedom, and education of the trokosi girls and women are affected. Section 6.2 scrutinizes issues relating to empowerment of the girls both within the shrines and public sphere. Section 6.3 discusses if there is a need for transformation in the troxorvi system as a whole and in the life of the trokosi girls. Section 6.4 argues and presents alternatives towards eradication of the troxorvi system. Meanwhile, the functionalist, feminist and diaconal perspectives will be employed as and when needed to help understand the troxorvi practice and the future of the troxorvi system. Section 6.5 presents the summary of the chapter.

6.1 How are the dignity, freedom and education of the trokosi girls and women affected within the shrines?

Every human being has an innate right to be respected, valued and would like to be treated compassionately by others in society. This inherent worth which is deposited in every individual is referred to as dignity. It has nothing to do with social class or status and could therefore not be discriminatory. The awareness of individual's dignity could influence development because it is deeply rooted in freedom which is closely related to autonomy (Haugen, 2010; Schmidt, 2010). An autonomous individual is anyone who is free to make basic decisions or choices concerning their own lives. "The more autonomous an individual is, the less vulnerable he or she is" (Haugen, 2010 pp. 210-211). Relatively, if there is any individual or a group of people with less autonomy then they will be more vulnerable.

Vulnerability could affect ones development because most often, the vulnerable in society are seen as not capable of doing anything hence are not involved in decisions that concern

their very lives. The trokosi girls and women are more vulnerable due to several limitations within the troxorvi system. These limitations were identified during this study. Firstly, the girls are not involved in any decision making process and are used by chief priests at will since the system is male dominated and highly superstitious.

In this vain, according to the feminist perspective, girls and women could be regarded within the shrines as private properties owned by men (chief priests) and are controlled for men's benefits. Power within the system belongs to the shrine owners and chief priests while the maidens are considered as subordinates who are supposed to do whatever they are detailed to do including marrying the priests against their will. The girls in this case may be regarded as objects of pleasure since this domination is based and backed by superstition (Collins, 2000).

Development may be questionable in any sector that is not inclusive, participatory and said to be ruled by the supernatural since development actually needs physical involvement of people. This is not the case in the troxorvi system because the behavior of the priest and almost every activity can only be questioned by the deities or the spirits rather than human beings. These power relations coupled with objectification of the girls could be problematic if related to black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). How can dignity be said to be innate in the troxorvi system where women and girls are considered as second class citizens, exploited and are abused physically, mentally, economically, emotionally, sexually and even spiritually? This kind of system could be referred to by feminist perspective as being divided into two, comprising the exploit and the exploited (ibid).

People in authority exploit the maidens who are the less privileged. The girls and women could be said to be "coerced" to engage for example in economic activities such as trading, farming, and fishing which only benefit the chief priests and the shrine owners. This view point could be likened to King Solomon in the Bible who "neither put nail nor hammer to the temple, yet received the praise" so also are the chief priests and owners of the shrines taking all the glory while the girls work tirelessly to support in every domain (Collins, 2000 p. 1). Could it be said that the chief priests reap where they did not plant? Richardson concur and capturing the suffering of the marginalized and comparing it with the benefits

derived by people in authority, he said quoting the voices of the marginalized “We have pursued the shadow, they have obtained the substance; we have perform the labor they have received the profits; we have planted the veins they have eaten the fruits of them.” (Richardson, 1987 p.59). The “powerful” within the troxorvi sector also hide behind the deity to have sexual relations with the girls.

The maidens like the African-American black women household workers can neither complain about any relationship nor treatment in the shrines since these treatments are said to have receive “divine approval” (Akpabli-Honu, 2014; Collins, 2000). These maidens are not only considered as objects of atonement and “forced” into economic activities but also “forced” to marry the priests. So the maidens may be considered as the exploited while the shrine owners and the chief priests are the powerful who exploit the girls within the troxorvi system. What happens after marriage? Are the girls happy? The whole troxorvi system could be regarded as patriarchal due to its domination by men and how women and girls are treated.

It could be argued that, many people within this traditional practice thought women are less important or are second class citizens and could mostly be used as objects in the house, physically maltreated and abused sexually (Collins, 2000). This is the situation in the shrines where the girl child faces all kinds of abuse due to this traditional practice. The girls who are committed into these shrines at an early age to avoid being defiled are abused sexually by chief priests who are as old as between 55 years and 70 years. One reason given by the respondents about why girls are the preferred objects of atonement is that “the girls are considered as wives of the deity and are normally married by the chief priests” (Chief priest; opinion leader).

There is no freedom of choice when it comes to even taking one’s life partner. Meanwhile, from functionalists such as Malinowski’s perspective, human beings obtain their basic social needs such as relaxation and movement (freedom) among other things by observing societal norms and values. In other words, one has freedom due to obedience of norms and values (Malinowski, 1936). Can the troxorvi system be considered as a socio-cultural practice which helps its followers to obtain basic social needs including freedom? This position is

difficult to balance since one could identify that though the girls are “obedient” by observing the norms and values within the troxorvi sector, it could not have been said that they have freedom in doing anything including choosing their spouses later in life.

Freedom is limited such that the trokosi girls are not allowed to visit their parents as well as get any treatment of their choice when they are sick. As young as they were before their committal, one may think they could at least be allowed to pay regular visits to their parents in order to bridge the gap between parental care and the life in the shrine but this is not the case. As part of their restrictions, “a newly committed trokosi is not allowed to visit her home and relatives until three newly inducted girls come after her. In the event where one is lucky to have fulfilled this requirement, she is limited in freedom such that she can only visit her home town for only nine days” (Akpabli-Honu, 2014 p. 92).

This lack of parental (mother-daughter) relationship could be considered as the major difference between the trokosi girls in Ghana and the African-American black women in the US (Collins, 2000). However, the gap of direct mother-daughter relationship is filled by elder trokosi women in the shrine. These women try to socialize new girls who are committed to know the norms and values within the troxorvi system. Informal just as the mother-daughter training or knowledge, this socialization becomes generational as this knowledge is handed down from one group to another. Do the girls become happy when the gap in parental care is filled by the elderly women in the shrine? Curiously, one would wonder if these elderly women are also able to build high self-esteem in these girls in order to face and handle any challenge in life. This is important because self confident is vital for proper development (Tate, 1983). This researcher is tempted to conclude that, the self-esteem built in the girls if at all is problematic as most of them feel they cannot survive in this modern world because of the lack of education.

During sickness, the girls said they are mostly made to undergo herbal treatment from the shrine. Meanwhile Article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is clear on how children are to be allowed to express their thoughts, conscience and religion (CRC, 1989). However, within the troxorvi system the girls do not have any right. They are barely directed or dictated to in various ways including issues of health, education and religion.

These kind of treatment show the seriousness of how the girls are not only physically abused but also socially, mentally and religiously since they are made to worship these deities and not allowed to worship any other thing once they become members of the shrine through initiation. This is the reason why the “liberated” trokosi is never free; she must visit the shrine regularly to take part in festivals, rituals, and celebrations as well as harvest time in order to help in the farm. Simply put by the girls, “there is no freedom, once a member, always a member. Even if you travel, you must come down during most activities and festivals” (Trokosi girls and parents). It can therefore be said from the feminist perspective and as agreed by Addy that the girls and women are not valued neither are they treated ethically (Addy, 2011; Collins, 2000).

The girls also do not have autonomy hence are more vulnerable. Due to this vulnerability, their development is retarded. One can argue therefore that, the dignity of the trokosi girls and women are affected within the trokosi practice because people whose capacity for self-determination and free decision is limited for whatever social condition have no dignity (Schmidt. 2010 p. 22). This accession by Schmidt is debatable as some writers such as Haugen (2010 p. 210) will ascertain that, their dignity is not necessarily affected since it is inbuilt. Nonetheless the girls are highly vulnerable because of the harmful nature of the practice and its associated human right abuses.

Freedom of education is equally important as freedom of expression and religion among others. Education is becoming a necessary tool for human development all over the world. This is because, “ideas or knowledge coupled with hard work is relevant for development and empowerment” (Collins, 2000 p. 273). A nation that is not focus on educating her subjects especially the youth is bound to delay in development. As technology is becoming more sophisticated, the elites are more suitable for training than the uneducated. This is because; education helps the individual to improve their thinking capacity hence are able to offer good solution when faced with problems in life.

In view of this, most countries including Ghana have laws and programs such as the fCUBE program which is to contribute in promoting education for all citizens. As part of Ghana’s efforts in promoting women affairs, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

(MoGCSP) was established. In addition, there is Girl Child Education Directorate in the Ministry of Education and of a Maternal and Public Health Units in the Ghana Health Service (CEDAW/GHA, 2006). Why then are these trokosi girls still left without education and good health care? Could it be that Ghana is only concentrating on formulation of laws without the disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power identified by Collins and Foucault? (Collins, 2000; Foucault, 1976)

Sometimes, people wonder whether education is the only way through which humans can develop due to the fact that some uneducated people are living average life. In addition, other people who matters most in the troxorvi system such as the chief priests and shrine owners also wonder about the kind of education which is becoming the standard currently because they claimed the girls are being educated in the shrine because they are taught basic things. However, this kind of shrine education may be considered as informal education in my view. Nevertheless, one is tempted to believe that this is the type of education some writers such as Glover who did some work on the historical background were referring to. To him, girls were sent to cultic school to learn various things including morality, poetry, and child care among others.

However, the mystery which he could not unravel is the brain behind sending only girls into these shrines. This is because nothing was accounted for about the boy child and what he used his “education” for if at all he took part. The girls were said to have married prominent people in society. One may therefore link this behavior to the present day where parents are more interested in sending only boys to school due to various reasons and encouraging girls to enter early marriage leading to inequalities in society which feminist perspective together with some NGOs are addressing currently. The legal system and enforcement of same is what Collins identified as the main approach to challenging unjust structures leading to structural transformation (Collins, 2000).

As much as she identified the legal system as vital towards structural transformation, she admits some challenges and agreed with Foucault on disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power as well as grass root organizations, advocacy groups and social protest as means towards a holistic approach. To them, it is not enough to order social institutions or

dominant groups to stop a certain kind of behavior since they may not comply. Disciplinary domain of power manages power relations not through social policies from governments but through the very ways organizations are run (Foucault, 1979 cited in Collins, 2000). On interpersonal domain of power, they identified that the marginalized groups themselves (trokosi girls) need to reconstruct their thinking in order to move towards a revolutionary change. This type of change does not involve only avoidance or escaping the oppressive situation but also dealing with individual's negative ideas that are deeply planted by the oppressor as revolution begins with the self (Collins, 2000).

To most of the feminist thinkers, the local laws of countries are either not enforced or are discriminatory. This is the main reason why international organizations such as UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, CEDAW, and CRC are coming out with international Human Right Laws that are increasingly becoming the standard currently. In one such internationally acclaimed convention by CRC in the process of protecting all children, it is stated clearly in Article 29 how education should be organized. Education in their view is supposed to be focused on development of the child's physical and mental abilities as well as their individual talents with the aim of developing their full potential without discrimination (CEDAW, 1979 ;CRC, 1989). The informal type of education that is offered in these shrines could not be said to be able to develop individual abilities and talents in order to properly "fit" in to the modern world coupled with its challenges.

If religion according to Malinowski's functionalist perspective, grows out of necessities of life hence fulfills definite cultural functions in society then, the kind of education claimed to have been given to the maidens in the cultic schools perhaps have helped save a purpose during the olden days but may not be able to help in this contemporary world (Malinowski, 1936 cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014). Could it be that cultural functions and individual aspirations are changing with time? For example during those olden days, technology was not so sophisticated hence a little education could help the individual to survive unlike in this modern world where both individual and societal needs are changing fast due to technological advancement. In view of this, the individual might need more detailed and comprehensive education in order to keep abreast with time. These might be some of the

reasons why parents stop sending their children to these cultic schools at the wake of formal education since cultural functions and societal needs are dynamic.

Formal education may not be the only way but it is important to note that it adds value to whatever opportunity one has in life. In most cases, the elite in every society are the most autonomous and influential. Nevertheless, the troxorvi system does not support formal education. This is evident from the comments of the respondents:

“Formal education is the means through which most people are living decent lives today but we are not fortunate to be part of it. It is very sad to see people of your age speaking English which you can barely understand or contribute meaningfully. Our lives have been ruined because there is nothing one can do effectively these days without education. Even if you are liberated and given skilled training, it is difficult to work when almost all your customers comes in and speak this foreign language you do not know anything about. It is embarrassing” (Trokosi girls).

The expression of their dismay about the inability of the troxorvi system to allow its members to educate themselves despite the fact that formal education is currently contributing to decent standard of living is a serious bother to many who are captives. According to them, the liberated trokosi girls need education even to be able to work successfully in whichever skills they might have acquired. The girls actually wished they were educated. Most of them are almost in despair after having realized that they could not engage in any meaningful venture without formal education. In my view, inadequate education or lack of it could be the reason why most of the liberated girls abandon their vocation barely after some few months of training. The girls admitted that they need to read the instructions on the hair relaxer for example to be able to operate efficiently and effectively.

Apart from the inability of the girls to read and write which could affect their general development in life, communication barrier is a serious concern to them. One needs to be able to communicate well and interact with her customers in order to grow a business but in the case of the girls; it is difficult to entertain their customers. This could be embarrassing as noted by them per the quote above. It must be noted that, people who are vulnerable like

these trokosi girls normally live in abject poverty and are excluded from the lime light of society and this could be termed as social stigmatization which could lead to self-stigmatization (Addy, Dinham, and Kähkönen, 2011 p.7).

Social stigma in this context could be as a result of severe conditions leading to disapproval or marginalization of a person or group of people on social grounds. It seeks to differentiate the stigmatized from the rest of the group. Mostly, it is profound in class societies, but also common in other communities where there are issues relating to inequality, exploitation, and social exclusion. The trokosi system is nevertheless a case in consideration because it creates inequalities, social exclusion and to some extent abject poverty. Sometimes the girls are considered as “untouchable” because they cannot even get married to anybody without the consent of the priest (Leirvik, 2012). In severe cases, stigmatization or self-stigmatization could contribute to poverty and human dignity is normally threatened in contexts of poverty (Addy, Dinham, and Kähkönen, 2011 p.7). This is because self-stigmatization makes the individual to accept his or her social status hence would not make any effort to progress in life. The inequalities in the troxorvi system could contribute to social exclusion and marginalization which feminist theorists are not comfortable with hence could not see any reason for its existence.

Despite all the accusations, the troxorvi adherents still believe the system is useful due to its effective detection of crime, protection of its followers, settling of land litigation disputes, and serving as a general social control mechanism. The devotees of the troxorvi system who are well aware of the fact that these problems could be similarly handled by modern law courts and criminal justice systems quickly backed their accession by the following comments:

“This system helped in the past and still very effective today. In the olden days the deities helped in crime detection and provided the necessary punishment in order to prevent others from engaging in similar crimes. When did your so called justice system come into the lime light? Even with it are you able to arrest and punish every criminal? Many criminals escape the criminal justice system but cannot do likewise before the gods. They will be located

spiritually, we don't chase them like you do, they run to confess due to the calamities that befall them and their families" (The chief priest).

The functionalist perspective as describe by Malinowski and Robertson, may refer to these reasons as being responsible for the continuous existence of the practice despite the presence of both local and international legal systems. Similarly Robertson may link the continuous existence of the troxorvi system in modern times to its ability to promote conflict which is a permanent feature in society so as to bring about disagreement, tension and competition (Robertson, 1977). Thus, the traditional practice could promote competition in the legal system for example where more effective ways may be explored in crime detection and promotion of peace and justice. However, it must be noted that it is not every tension between the institutions that sparks competition in society. On the other hand feminist perspective by Collins could associate the resistance within the troxorvi system to the inability to combine the disciplinary domain with the legal system (Collins, 2000). Despite all the explanations given above, one could also identify with the fact that since society is not static and culture is dynamic, this practice could also evolve on its own with time, bringing about the needed change but whether modernity coupled with all the human right laws will allow and wait for what I will refer to as "systemic self revolution" could be another consideration.

6.2 Empowerment in the troxorvi system

Empowerment could mean equipping people especially the marginalized, the excluded, the poor with power and ability to be able to do what they could not do in the past. It is a way of giving them hope to find meaning in hopeless situations. Empowerment could be physical, psychological, spiritual, as well as economical. People who have been "brain washed" due to a particular believe or practice for example needs to restructure their minds in order to be fully empowered (Collins, 2000). This reconstruction of mind could be done through counseling. In view of this, the feminist thinkers will agree that the trokosi girls and women need physical, psychological and economical empowerment in order to be totally liberated from exploitation, deprivation, and exclusion (Collins, 2000; Hamilton, 2007).

Similarly, group solidarity is necessary for resisting oppression. Although individual empowerment is important, collective action could effectively generate permanent transformation when it comes to social justice all over the world (Collins, 2000). It is worth remembering that the girls work on farms, engage in retail business and fishing as part of their commitment. If economic empowerment for example is about giving skilled training, the functionalist may think these girls are already engaged in doing something and contributing to the economy of the troxorvi system and perhaps to the general economy. Nevertheless, as noted before these girls are not paid for their labor but rather are obliged to hand over everything they get from their businesses to the chief priest which is economic exploitation.

Alternatively, one could argue that the proceeds from the farms are used to feed the girls sometimes so they should not be paid. However, it may also be identified that the trokosi girls are only used as cheap labor since any income the women get including those from retailing must be accounted for and handed to the chief priests. The system only benefits the shrine owners and the chief priests. In other words, the girls and women live in abject poverty as individuals and they could become a threat to their communities and the world at large due to lack of economic power. In short, they may become a burden to society. This behavior of dividing society into two, as exploits and the exploited may be challenging from feminist perspective (Collins, 2000). In this case the shrine owners and the chief priest being the exploits while the maidens are the exploited. This exploitation is what the feminist perspective may be uncomfortable with hence will argue for it to be addressed through empowerment that could bridge the gap between the powerful and the maidens as well as men and women in general (ibid).

Women in general need empowerment since they were trained basically to believe that their place is the *home* and for that matter the kitchen but it can be realized that these trokosi girls need empowerment most (Seip, 1998 p.49). This is because, they were made to understand that the shrines are their only homes where they can live otherwise they will die together with their families. This fear which was agreed by the parents as being responsible for the release of their girl child need to be taken away or reduced to a reasonable minimum level

through psychological counseling to help restructure their minds just as feminist theorist will advocate (Collins, 2000).

They could be helped to understand life in general or life outside the shrine and that they are capable to survive just like any other human being in the world. To be able to survive economically, they may be encouraged to get employable skills and perhaps a start-up capital as empowering the marginalized group needs more than changing their consciousness (ibid). However, if economic empowerment is all about skilled training and start-up capital, most of the “liberated” trokosi women who benefited from these interventions would have been self sufficient by now. Nevertheless, there is an educational gap as identified by the trokosi girls from the quote above.

Formal education is a vital tool during the process of empowering any vulnerable group. The trokosi girls are trained to be illiterates in shrines and this may be dangerous from feminist perspective if they are to be totally self sufficient. Collins identified and accentuated knowledge as effective tool for holistic empowerment (Collins, 2000; Hamilton, 2007). It implies that any diakonial activity (empowerment) should also aim at providing formal education for the girls since education is becoming a necessary standard for effective development for both individuals and countries. Education could also help them to make better choices in life. Unfortunately most of these girls or women have already passed the require age for formal education; they feel shy to go to school let alone study with other privileged students.

However, feminist thinkers like Hamilton and Collins will agree that hope is not yet lost since they can have programs such as adult education which will be geared towards their needs and hence their freedom and liberty. (Collins, 2000; Hamilton, 2007). These programs could be tailored to suit their employable skills that the NGO or the church should give them. Keeping of records, book keeping, general management of a business and reading are some of the things that could be included in their curriculum. Reading is vital in the life of these trokosi girls just as it was needed in the life of the children of black women in the US hence the girls and women need to be encouraged to acquire reading and writing skills. The children of African-American women identified reading as very important that

they simply reiterate: “[...] *if I learn to read, I could experience a form of freedom*” (Collins, 2000 p. 275).

Feminist perspective may concur that counseling is important as much as economic empowerment in order to achieve equality and freedom (Hamilton, 2007). The troxorvi system mainly uses fear to capture people. These views of the parents were expressed in the following: “*It is a difficult situation but one has no option than to surrender a lovely daughter in order to save the whole family from the consequences of a troxorvi deity such as sudden deaths and strange diseases that befall any offending family*” (Parents). This fear could be linked with communalism or collectivism as can be seen from the above quote. Due to the communal approach to care in African societies, the individual (the trokosi girl) is normally preoccupied with the “we story” such that the “I story” is usually abandoned (Engedal, 2008 p. 529). As much as one concurs with the caring aspect of communality, it is important to note that certain oppressive acts are as a result of collectivism. In addition, it is important to develop the self confidence or the “I story” of the individual.

High self-esteem is vital during any personal decision making process as well as needed in critical moments of life. So it may be important for the NGO in this case to help the maidens to re-create their self confidence through care, encouragement, love, and support although the “*self contained individual*” may be said to be opposed in the *New Testament because man is regarded as a person-in-relation* (Collins, 2000; Engedal, 2008 p. 54). Despite this assertion, it is also essential not to forget about the rights and dignity of the individual which is in connection with Jesus’ mission otherwise the son of God would not have defended and healed the sick as well as empowered the marginalized while on earth (Engedal, 2008 p. 78).

This fear from the feminist view needs to be reduced to the barest minimum or eliminate by exposing them to different types of believe systems in order to make their own decision (Hamilton, 2007). To be able to reduce the fear and build self confidence, the diaconal activity should include other strategies such as debriefing and encouraging the girls through conversation, good questioning style coupled with respect for their views in order to gradually bring them to accept and face reality of life. Acceptance of this reality is imperative for them because it will contribute to building high self-esteem to be able to

move on appropriately in life. During the counseling, the girls should be made to talk in order to connect their present to the past hence to be able to determine their own future (Engedal, 2008 p. 52; Lester, 1995 p. 30). This narrative approach also helps the counseling process to be participatory and empowering.

6.3 Transformation within the troxorvi system

Transformation is a continuous process that could be regarded as a holistic approach because it involves structures, ideologies, values, and aspirations (Collins, 2000; Nordstokke, 2004 p. 32). It tries to eliminate any forms of injustice, inhumane treatment, affirms sanctity of life, and promotes peace in societies. In transformation, everybody could be seen as vulnerable and therefore need one help or the other. This is the reason why transformation focuses on improving structures, ideologies, laws and even peoples aspirations by exposing them to alternative ideas and new ways of thinking and doing things. As noted by some of the respondents, the troxorvi system needed a change because it had outlived its usefulness in modern times. This means the system needs total transformation.

The mode of revival is what many are divided about. While some people think it should be curtailed immediately, others like the “Fiaga of Klikor” believed “*the system will evolve on its own in order to deal with the hash areas*” (Fiaga of Klikor cited in Akpabli 2014 p. 106). According to him, through seminars, education, workshops and conferences, the devotees will come to the realization that human sacrifice (virgin girls atoning for other people’s wrong doing) should be replaced by animals perhaps.

Comparing this self revival within the troxorvi system with immediate band on the system which women activist and feminist perspective are more likely to opt for, one would like to ask whether it is right for nations to sit down waiting for a system which is perceived to be abusive to evolve on its own. Thus, it may be difficult for modern standard of rule of law (National and international laws) to wait for “systemic revival” of the troxorvi system. In view of this, the feminist agenda of which I could refer to as “action now” could be combined with part of the suggestions identified above by the Fiaga towards its eradication (Collins, 2000). However it is important to involve all the practitioners in the field, the local

communities where the practice is dominant, and the captives themselves in order to combine the legal, grass root participation, advocacy, social protest such as sit-in and boycotts towards a timely result (ibid).

Structurally, the troxorvi system needs transformation due to its human right abuses of the captives that have been identified by this research based on the interviews. To be able to do this successfully, the feminist perspective will propose collaboration through dialogue with the shrine owners, and the chief priests who are the main actors of the practice as well as any group who could help (ibid). This may seem difficult but if it can be approach from the grass root through consultation, people may definitely welcome the idea. One main reason why the system is still vibrant despite all the local laws and international laws is due to the benefits the owners and the chief priests derive from the system in the form of money and cheap labor.

These people see the troxorvi practice as their source of livelihood and without it many cannot survive within the sector. Consequently any program aimed at liberating the trokosi girls could also consider empowering the practitioners. If people are assured of their daily income and survival, they may be ready to collaborate. As much as one agrees that the girls are vulnerable, the shrine owners and the chief priests are equally vulnerable because they may not be able to make earns meat if the system is abolish since their basic source of income is from the devotees. There is therefore a need to monitor the operations of the troxorvi system in order to involve the devotees. This is what Foucault and Collins will refer to as the disciplinary domain (Collins, 2000; Foucault, 1979).

Collaboration may be difficult if the main actors are not actively involved in the process from the beginning. This might be some of the challenges that some NGOs were facing as noted earlier. Since transformation is a gradual and an unending process, this approach could be considered as a long term approach towards eradicating the trokosi practice.

6.4 Alternative Approach towards transformation of the troxorvi system

In a “traditional religious” practice like the troxorvi system that has cage a lot of people, one need to explore every available means in order to make it a thing of the past. The church is

one body many people including feminist theorist and women activists may consider in the fight against this traditional practice. This is because “*the church is a safe place where divergent discourse could occur*” (Collins, 2000 p. 101). However, some people may argue that the church cannot make any head way since this practice is not within the Christian domain hence any attempt by the church may be seen as infringement upon freedom of worship of others.

In addition, Christianity is as guilty as the troxorvi system when it comes to issues of patriarchy, power and domination until recent times. The Church always promotes men to decision making positions to the detriment of women. Also, some people think the troxorvi system does not encourage involvement of other religions especially Christianity since each of them take their inspiration from different sources. Some people even think Christians undermine the troxorvi worshipers. Nevertheless, the Church is known in history as helping humanity especially when it comes to issues concerning injustice and human right abuses which are trans-religious for example during the apartheid regime in South Africa, the church played a major role (Leirvik, 2012).

Trans-religious misunderstanding is a problem which affects people from two or more different religions such as Christianity and Traditional religion as the case might be with the trokosi practice. In such cases, interfaith dialogues (inter-faith collaboration as I may call it), dialogue from above as well as dialogue from below are some of the techniques which may be employed. Since the troxorvi system is guilty of all kinds of abuses and injustice based on the evidence provided from the interviews in this study, it is important to involve the leaders of this practice (dialogue from above) and the captives (dialogue from below) who may be considered as those from the grass root.

The troxorvi practice is a concern to many in recent times, and any effort towards its eradication is a step in the right direction without reference to any religion (inter-faith approach). The church could be said to be already involved in various sensitization programs and seminars there by educating their members about the local laws which make the trokosi practice illegal. However, these programs are targeted at individuals within the

practicing communities who are Christians because the programs are limited within the church premises.

Conversely, one may ask why the church is limiting most of its programs to only their members. Could it be that, they did not want to be seen as speaking against other religions as noted above? Nevertheless, human right abuses must be spoken about openly and by any group of people including Christians. The church which could be seen as already starting something may be encouraging but need to move beyond its physical walls and organize these programs for the whole community and throughout the country whiles combining advocacy with other strategies including social protest as identified already by Collins (Collins, 2000).

Modern societies are guided by local rules and regulations in addition to all the international laws. If laws are really working, why must the church be concerned about speaking against injustice instead of preaching which many perceived them to be responsible for? As mentioned above, it is not only about legislation because according to Ghana's 1992 Constitution as well as the international laws, Ghana is legally required to eradicate all forms of slavery within her territory? Article 16 of Ghana's Constitution which incorporates the international concept of slavery into domestic law, admonishes that nobody should be held as a slave (servitude) or be required to perform force labor and Article 14 guarantees every person the right to personal liberty (Constitution of Ghana, 1992). The country as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is bound to abolish all existing laws, regulations, and customs that constitute discrimination against women and girls as well as to ensure full development and advancement of women (Article 3). Article 10 of the same convention provides equal access to education for both genders (CEDAW, 1979).

When it comes to issues concerning children based on international Laws and Conventions, the country is committed at least in legislation. That is why she signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in which the state is to ensure that no child is deprived access to health care for example. Article 24 (1&3) of CRC is clear on the fact that all traditional practices which are prejudicial to children's health must be abolish. On education, Article

28 recognizes education as a basic right for every child while Article 34 abhors sexual exploitation and abuse.

Children are even protected against torture, cruelty and any other degrading treatment or punishment under Article 37 of the same convention. Why then should families send their girl child to these shrines where they are denied access to health care delivery, education, as well as exposing them to abuse? Some may argue that, the resistance of the national law is based on cultural grounds but this is not true because when it comes to human rights abuses, international laws supersede the local ones and this Ghana is already committed to by signing these laws. Modern functionalist perspective could be used to explain this resistance. The functionalist perspective may consider the troxorvi practice as necessary because of its roles (benefits as enumerated earlier) in society.

However, what I refer to as the modern functionalist position recognize that if the laws criminalizing the troxorvi practice could be enforced; there will be a disruption (disequilibrium) within these communities which will prompt people to review and transform the sector in order to achieve equilibrium since society will always want to be in a state of equilibrium but the enforcement of the laws within the troxorvi system or what some writers may refer to as disciplinary domain is problematic (Parsons, 1951 cited in Akpabli-Honu, 2014; Collins, 2000; Foucault, 1976).

This is to confirm that society is not static and could evolve in order to bring its changes to bear. To Parson, social change does not disturb the social order but rather alters it and in the process brings new and better social arrangements (Akpabli-Honu, 2014). As much as I agree with enforcement of the Laws, something else could also be done. A holistic approach is needed in order to stop the trokosi practice. A radical stand of speaking against the practice which may be seen from the feminist perspective as a step in the right direction may help the church to engage in advocacy, social protest and campaign programs in order to add their voice to the enforcement of the laws (Collins, 2000; Hamilton, 2007).

Advocacy and campaign is a process through which awareness could be created. It is normally done by reviling the negativities and injustice created in a particular system. In the case of the trokosi practice, advocacy and campaign could be done by coming out with the

unjust structures and conditions under which these girls live within the shrines (Collins, 2000). The church may create awareness through the media, building movements for justice both individually and through collaboration with opinion leaders, chiefs, and others who share common goals in this particular area towards eradicating the trokosi practice (Addy, Dinham, and Kähkönen, 2011 pp.16-17; Halmilton, 2007). For a bottom-up approach, the marginalized girls and women themselves could be directly involved in this campaign since it may promote participation and yield a more sustainable result (Collins, 2000).

However, diaconal actors (the church and NGOs) are faced with several challenges in the process of discharging their duties. This is because diakonia takes place in public sphere hence needs to be conscious of its socio-political structures, laws, culture and even economic status of the society (Nordstokke, 2011 p. 51). Thus diaconal actors are challenged to know about the specific role they should play in particular cultural environments. Sometime it becomes difficult to operate effectively considering the main aspects of diaconal activities including the fight for justice and building inclusive and participatory communities bearing in mind a traditional practice like troxorvi. This is because fighting for justice for instance normally involves talking against static and oppressive structures in society. The question is should diaconal actors (the church) be mindful of societal structures with outmost respect and at the same time speak against these structures?

Prophetic diakonia which has prophetic features in the Bible defends, empowers, promotes justice and denounces abuse of power such that, it may offend the powerful in the process. This is because sometimes the laws, culture and political structures are responsible for the oppressive acts in society hence it becomes difficult to balance the prophetic diaconal position with the basic value of diakonia which is 'respect for all'. Is it the abusive structures coupled with the people who established them who are to be respected or the marginalized? In such dilemmas, it is important for diaconal actors to access the situation carefully by adopting a see-reflect-act strategy and bearing in mind that, the interest of the marginalized supersedes any other abusive structure and interest (Nordstokke, 2009).

Thus, the diaconal actor needs to encourage the marginalized to “*jump outside*” the oppressive frames and systems created by dominant groups and create their own frames in order to speak in authentic and unique voice towards a holistic empowering process (Belenky et al., 1986 p. 134). Accordingly, the diaconal value could be said to be welcomed by both human rights advocates and feminist perspectives as they all operate by similar values (Collins, 2000; Nordstokke, 2009).

6.5 Chapter summary

In sum, awareness of human dignity could influence individual development. People with limited autonomy are at risk since dignity is profoundly rooted in freedom. The trokosi girls are therefore vulnerable because they have limited freedom and could not make their personal choices including the selection of their spouses, the type of health care delivery as well as issues concerning their education. As a result, the girls have little or no education, are exploited economically, and sometimes abused sexually. Since modern societies operates with rules and regulations, the feminist, human rights and diaconal perspectives may consider the operations of the troxorvi system as obsolete as noted by some participants earlier. Hence may prefer a transformation within the system based on laws rather than systemic revolution.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents the study conclusion, implications, limitations and recommendations. Section 7.1 summarizes all the important points from the project. Thus 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.3 and 7.1.4 sum-up the findings of this study. Section 7.2 highlights the implications of the study. Section 7.3 identifies some limitations of the study. Section 7.4 provides some suggestion about what could be done to compel Ghana towards eradication of the troxorvi practice while section 7.5 suggests some areas that could be considered for future research within the troxorvi system.

5.1 Summaries of essential points

The aim of the study is to explore the troxorvi system and its oppressions in relation to both national and international human rights laws and determine whether the practice violets the basic human rights of the trokosi girls. In addition, this project considered some efforts by the church (diaconal actors), why the practice still continuous and probably what new strategies can be utilized to help eradicate the troxorvi practice in Ghana. In view of these, the following research questions were the focus of the study:

- What is the national policy on the rights of the girl child in Ghana?
- In what ways are the rights of the kosi's affected within the Trokosi shrines in the Tongu District of Ghana?
- What are some suggested reasons for the continuity of the troxorvi practice in Ghana?
- How has the church been involved in efforts towards eradicating the Trokosi system in the practicing communities?
- How do the participants consider diaconal approach as an alternative towards the eradication of the trokosi practice?

The study found the following answers to the research questions:

7.1.1 National policy on the rights of girls and women in Ghana

Freedom, education and health could be said to be important for sustainable development hence most nations including Ghana are determine to promote education for all as well as promote good health in an atmosphere of freedom. In view of these, Ghana has formulated some policies as well as implemented the fCUBE program to promote education for the citizenry. In addition there is a Girl Child Education Directorate within the Ministry of Education. Having realized that the troxorvi system does not promote education, the country amended the criminal code per Act 554 in 1998 prohibiting the troxorvi practice within her territory. The country is also committed to international laws on children and women rights by signing the CRC in 1999 and CEDAW in 2006 respectively. Apart from the specific laws and program, Ghana has established Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Why then is the practice still in existence?

7.1.2 Reasons for the continuity of the troxorvi practice

The following are some of the motives behind the continuous troxorvi practice:

- It is considered as a source of income for the practitioners;
- It helps in effective crime detection, punishment and control;
- Helps in situation of barrenness by solving problem of infertility;
- Solves land litigation disputes amicably;
- Offers mystical protection for its “followers”;
- Fight against epidemics;
- Help in reducing crime in the practicing communities;
- Check moral behavior of people since they are afraid of the calamities of the gods;

- Provide “hope” for people who consult the deities during crisis;

7.1.3 The rights of the trokosi girls within the troxorvi system

This section is organized based on the abuse of various rights within the troxorvi system:

- **Education and freedom:** The troxorvi system does not promote formal education and freedom. The girls are isolated from their parents and friends who are outside the shrine and are not involved in any decision making process. In view of these, the developments of the girls within the system are affected. The girls have little or no education. Those who have some education had it before their committal period and as soon as one is committed, one’s right to education and freedom ends within the confines of the troxorvi practice.
- **Exploitation and Sexual abuse:** Trokosi girls are economically, physically, sexually, emotionally and religiously abused. Economically, the girls are “forced” to undertake economic activities such as retailing and farming without any payment for their services. They account to the chief priest who collects all the proceeds from them. Physically, the young new virgin girl who is committed is made to do strenuous work on daily basis. She is responsible for sweeping large shrine compounds and works up around 4:00Am to be able to finish her chores. The age of the new convict has nothing to do with the type of chore she is given since its part of the rules. The chief priest considers all the girls as his wife hence abuse them sexually irrespective of their age and concern. Despite the constitutional rights of freedom of worship, the trokosi girls are supposed and remain worshipers of these deities. It is therefore difficult to have total liberation
- **Health:** The trokosi girls normally go through herbal treatment contrary to Article 14 of CRC (Ghana is a signatory) any time they fall sick.

7.1.4 What has the church (diaconal actor) done and what alternative strategies could be employed to eradicate the troxorvi practice?

The church does organize some sensitization programs such as seminars; support researchers with information available to them; educate people on the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 554; Support skilled training; and help in linking the liberated trokosi girls back to their families. However, the church does not go beyond its premises when it comes to the seminars. Apart from these empowering programs, the church (diaconal actor) could also employ prophetic diakonia which will help speak openly against unjust structures in society; organize advocacy programs through the media, at the community level as well as at the national level. They could also use trans-religious approach (interfaith dialogue) which will bring all the main actors (both powerful and the less privileged) on board.

5.2 Implications for Ghana

The findings of this current study on the troxorvi system imply that Ghana is quick in formulating policies and laws as well as signing international treaties concerning human rights issues. The country however does not make conscious efforts to implement its laws to be able to fully protect the vulnerable as her intension might be. This is because not even a single culprit has been arrested though there is a law prohibiting the troxorvi practice within the territorial boundaries of Ghana. Is Ghana paying only lip service to the vulnerable in society? How could Ghana move beyond only formulation of laws to take actions that will really protect the plight of the under privileged?

5.3 Limitations

The study concerns the plights of the trokosi girls which is a highly sensitive issue in Ghana due to the spirituality surrounding the troxorvi system. In view of this, it was a little difficult to find participants of the study as people were afraid of their names been mentioned. In addition, the following were also identified as limitations of the study:

- The troxorvi sector did not have enough literature though there are few studies in the area;

- The study could not find any convincing contextual analytical framework hence has to adopt different views from diverse areas to be able to form a comprehensive analytical framework;
- Part of the interviews was conducted in the local language (Ewe) while the language of the study is English hence there was a need for translation of the interview material which was sometimes problematic due to language differences. It was sometimes difficult to find similar words to replace the original views of some of the participants.
- The study did not consider the views of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP). This is a Ministry for the vulnerable hence it would have been ideal to seek their views. Nevertheless, there were some documents from the Ministry that were considered.

5.4 Out look

- Based on the findings which included violation of basic human rights of the trokosi girls, one would wish to agree with the feminist theorist, human rights perspective, diaconal perspective and the NGOs that the troxorvi practice should be abolished immediately. However, this consent will continue to be a mystery if the international community did not intervene as soon as possible. This is because the local laws are not synchronized with disciplinary and interpersonal domains hence the delay in the eradication of the troxorvi practice despite all the human right abuses. Meanwhile it is dangerous for the trokosi girls to continue living under such conditions. The international community must therefore come in with a more cogent strategy apart from the international human right laws and the help of some international NGOs to compel the country to respect the rights of these girls. The following recommendation could help contribute towards the early eradication of the troxorvi system:
- Since Ghana rely on international funding, the IMF, The World Bank, as well as CIDA, USAID and UNICEF could make eradication of the troxorvi practice a

condition for assessing funding from them. In this era of globalization, international pressure may be the best option;

- Continents such as the European Union who has some agreements with the country. For example the “Cotonou Agreement” which gave Ghana duty free access to European Union Markets could be temporarily removed to compel the country to be more active in the fight against the troxorvi practice;
- The Regional and international media may collaborate with the local media houses, NGOs, and other advocates groups to raise awareness and dramatize the dangers of the troxorvi practice and the positive sides of educating the girl child.

Apart from all the international efforts, the country may:

- Involve National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) and CHRAJ and civil society organizations to educate people especially women and children on their rights to help them speak for themselves;
- Shrine owners and the chief priests should be re-engaged in profitable ventures such as agriculture where seeds, and start-up capitals could be provided by the state to facilitate farming activities at the shrine sites;
- Agro-industrialization is yet another option at the shrines sites. If the “powerful” in the troxorvi sector are sure of sustainable livelihood, they will be willing to cooperate;
- Micro-credit for the poor to reduce the abject poverty associated with the troxorvi system;
- Education for all especially the girl child should not be seen by politicians as lip service but carried to the later to help improve the analytical level of the individuals since troxorvi thrives on ignorance and fear.
- Women at the community level (Queen mothers) should be involved at higher level decision making-processes for example Regional and National House of Chiefs;

- There should be a replica of the Vocational school built at Adidome to promote access by the liberated girls.
- Programs for the liberated trokosi girls should be tailored to building their communication, reading, and writing skills, as well as book keeping and managerial skills to help promote success in the vocations they may be trained in.

5.5 Future studies

- Future studies may consider the following areas:
- There should be a study on Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) linking their activities to specific marginalized groups in society since the Ministry is responsible for protecting the vulnerable in society;
- An evaluation of the activities of the International Needs (and NGO) relating to the programs for the liberated trokosi girls;
- A follow-up studies on the liberated trokosi girls who benefited from the training programs instituted by International Needs (IN).

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Appendix

Interview guide

Girls/women

How did you end in this shrine?

How long have you being here?

Do your parents believe in anything?

Are you allowed to go to school?

What happens when you fall sick?

Do you have any friends apart from those you have within the shrine?

Do you visit anybody outside this shrine and how often?

How do you interact with people?

How do you feel?

Does anybody visit you here in the shrine?

Shrine owners/Priest in charge of shrine

How does this practice come about?

How long does it take an individual to serve in the shrine?

Are the girls allowed to go to hospital and school and who takes care of the bills?

How often do the girls visit town?

Are there any customs to be performed if they are of marital age?

Opinion Leaders/ Church

Is there any program or effort to help bring these girls or women out of the shrine?

How are they integrated back into society?

How do you deal with issues of stigmatization?