

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT SUSPENSION: THE IMPACT OF GUILT IN MEMBERS OF  
THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST, GHANA.**

Philip Osei-Korsah

Department of Community Care Counseling, Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University

2023

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

**ABSTRACT**

The research utilized 13 respondents to investigate the impact of guilt because of sexual misconduct suspension on the church member using The Church of Pentecost in Axim as a focus. The Church of Pentecost has the practice to discipline by suspending a member who commits sexual misconduct such as premarital sex or extramarital sex. In extra-marital relations, the misconduct is mostly detected when the other partner discovers extra-marital relationships and for that matter, a cheat by his or her partner and reports to the church leadership. Pre-marital sexual misconduct is recognized when a young lady is discovered pregnant without a husband, usually when the young man and young lady are going to marry and the lady is discovered pregnant before the marriage is officially contracted. The condition of the member suspended because of sexual misconduct was investigated. Subjective evidence were obtained by getting closer to interviewing the respondents who were members of The Church of Pentecost in Axim and have been suspended because of sexual misconduct. The hermeneutical phenomenological approach of qualitative study was adopted. Numerous studies conducted on sexual misconduct and church discipline found varying rates of prevalence in the church. The Church of Pentecost in Axim has a 4% prevalence rate of suspension because of sexual misconduct. The most salient characteristic experienced after suspension for sexual misconduct is, in fact, guilt. The scripture also provides hermeneutic support for this conclusion. At the same time, research on guilt in suspended church members is limited. The study revealed that sexual misconduct suspension is a disciplinary action employed by the church to curb sexual sin. The findings will contribute to the church literature on the impact of guilt on the suspended church member and appropriate pastoral care recommendations.

*Keywords:* Sexual misconduct, suspension, disciplined, guilt, healing.

**DEDICATION**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

## TABLE OF CONTENT

SIGNATURE PAGE .....	2
ABSTRACT.....	i
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	iv
LIST OF TABLE(S) .....	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.0 Overview.....	1
1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.1.1 The Church of Pentecost.....	1
1.1.2 Discipline practices in The Church of Pentecost .....	3
1.1.3 Biblical background of church discipline .....	4
1.1.4 Application of pastoral counseling.....	9
1.2 Problem statement.....	11
1.3 Purpose statement .....	13
1.4 Significance of the study.....	14
1.5 Research Objectives.....	15
1.6 Research questions.....	15
1.7 Definitions.....	15
1.8 Summary .....	17
1.9 Organization of the study.....	17
CHAPTER TWO .....	19

LITERATURE REVIEW .....	19
2.1 Introduction.....	19
2.2 Theoretical framework.....	22
2.3 Related literature.....	23
2.3.1 Sexual Misconduct in the Bible and the Guilt Impact .....	23
2.3.2 Guilt Conceptualization .....	25
2.3.3 Sexual misconduct in the Church.....	27
2.3.4 The Guilt of sexual misconduct .....	32
2.3.5 Biblical foundation to Church Discipline .....	34
2.3.5 Importance of Church Discipline.....	39
2.3.6 Discipline in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana.....	41
2.3.7 Church Discipline in some of the mainline churches in Ghana .....	43
2.3.8 Pastoral care counseling.....	46
2.3.9 The demands of pastoral care.....	51
Cultural Consideration in Providing Pastoral Care.....	54
Restoring the Suspended Church Member.....	56
2.4 Framework for restoring suspended members in The Church of Pentecost .....	59
2.5 Research gap.....	60
2.6 Summary .....	61
CHAPTER THREE .....	63
METHODOLOGY .....	63
3.0 Introduction.....	63
3.1 Research design .....	65
Research questions.....	66
3.2 Research setting .....	66
3.3 Participants.....	67
Sampling procedure and sampling size.....	67
3.4 The researcher's role.....	68
3.5 Instrument/Material.....	70
3.6 Data collection procedure .....	71
Interviews.....	72
3.7 Data Analysis.....	73

3.8 Trustworthiness.....	75
Credibility .....	75
Transferability.....	77
Dependability.....	78
Confirmability.....	80
Ethical Considerations .....	82
3.9 Summary .....	84
CHAPTER FOUR.....	85
RESULTS .....	85
4.0 Introduction.....	85
4.1 Experience of sexual misconduct suspension .....	85
4.2 Impact of sexual misconduct suspension .....	87
4.2.1 Emotional impact.....	87
4.2.2 Loss of Reputation .....	88
4.2.3 Feelings of shame and guilt .....	88
4.3 Poor relationship with God .....	90
4.3.1 Neglect and Loneliness .....	93
4.4 Factors that affect restoration of suspended members .....	95
4.4.1 Social support.....	95
4.4.2 Role of pastor .....	97
CHAPTER FIVE .....	100
DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION, AND CONCLUSION .....	100
5.0 Introduction.....	100
5.1 Discussion of findings.....	100
5.1.1 The effect of guilt of the sexual misconduct suspension on the suspended member .....	100
5.1.2 Impact of sexual misconduct suspension .....	103
5.1.3 Restroation.....	105
5.2 Implications of the study.....	108
5.3 Limitations and recommendations .....	112
5.3.1 Limitations .....	112
5.3.2 Recommendations.....	113
5.4 Recommendation for future studies .....	114



5.5 Conclusion ..... 116

REFERENCES ..... 120

APPENDIX..... 136

**LIST OF TABLE(S)**

1. Themes

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

1. *CoP*: The Church of Pentecost.
2. *GSS*: Ghana Statistical Services.
3. *IDS*: Institute of Developmental Studies.
4. *GPO*: *General Purpose Order*

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Overview

Church discipline for sexual misconduct has been extensively studied in the past decades (Barclay, 2019; Durso, 2017; Garnett, 2020; Gross-Schaefer et al. 2011; Hammet & Merkle, 2012; Kleiven, 2018; McInteer, 2017; Norman et al. 2013; Oxford, 2012, & Stephens, 2011). These studies have not only found varying rates of prevalence in the church but do not discuss the impact of guilt on the members of the church disciplined because of sexual misconduct. The unpublished report at the office of The Church of Pentecost at Axim indicates that 4% of the members are serving suspension because of sexual misconduct. In The Church of Pentecost of Ghana, assessing the impact of guilt on a church member suspended because of sexual misconduct has received no research attention, though discipline on sexual misconduct is a cardinal practice of the church. This study examines the impact of guilt of the suspension on suspended members of sexual misconduct and also assesses the existing activities of The Church of Pentecost as a healing community. Because no prior study of this kind has been undertaken in The Church of Pentecost in Ghana, the findings are expected to make a substantial contribution to church literature on the impact of guilt on the suspended church member and suitable pastoral care suggestions.

#### 1.1 Background of the study

##### *1.1.1 The Church of Pentecost*

The Church of Pentecost descended from Rev. James McKeown's (an Irish Missionary) 1937 ministry, which resulted in the creation of the Gold Coast Apostolic Church in 1953. The church was renamed Ghana Apostolic Church after the Gold Coast gained independence and the

term Ghana replaced the Gold Coast. The Ghana Apostolic Church adopted the name The Church of Pentecost as its new name on August 1, 1962, and its Board of Trustees registered under the new name on June 14, 1971, under certificate number XY 158 as a religious, non-profit making organization (CoP Ministerial Handbook, 2018).

The church has grown rapidly over the years, and it now has a presence in several African countries, including Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and Liberia. The church is known for its adherence to biblical teachings, evangelism, and strict moral code. The Church of Pentecost in Ghana is an evangelical, protestant denomination, which emphasizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophecy. The church has a strong belief in the holy trinity- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and preaches the repentance of sins for salvation. It has several doctrines that guide the Christian life, including love, self-discipline, personal and corporate responsibility, and commitment to virtuous living.

The church has been instrumental in the spread of the gospel in Ghana and beyond. Its ministry focuses on evangelizing and planting churches in rural and urban communities. Also, the church has many social welfare programs, including health care, education, and economic empowerment. It operates several schools and vocational training centers, provides financial aid to needy students, and has established hospitals, and clinics in different communities. The Church of Pentecost is known for its vibrant worship services, which are characterized by singing, dancing, and clapping by members. Its music is renowned across the country, and it has produced several gospel musicians over the years. The church has a strong youth ministry that trains young people in Christian values and leadership, and also organizes camps, conventions, and seminars to empower them.

The Church of Pentecost has a strong leadership structure that comprises of executive and administrative bodies. The church is headed by the Chairman, assisted by other officials, including the General Secretary and the International Missions Director. The church has a decentralized system of governance, where each district is led by a district pastor, and each local congregation has a Presiding Elder. The fundamental goals and purposes of The Church of Pentecost are to do and spread what our Lord Jesus Christ instructed in Mark 16:15-16 (King James Bible, 1769/2017). "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (CoP Ministerial Handbook, 2018). The mission statement of the Church of Pentecost of Ghana is "to develop responsible and self-sustaining congregations filled with devoted, Spirit-filled Christians of character who will affect their communities" (CoP Ministerial Handbook, 2018). By the repair of shattered lives, effective pastoral care counseling helps with the character development of Christians.

### ***1.1.2 Discipline practices in The Church of Pentecost***

A member of the church who misconducts himself or herself sexually or in any other form is disciplined by any of the following depending on the seriousness of the offense. Although there are other contexts of sexual misconduct, the study was limited to extramarital and pre-marital sex.

#### ***Interdiction***

The offending member of The Church of Pentecost who is an officer (that is holding a position of an elder, deacon, or deaconess) will be relieved of his/her office for an investigation to be conducted into the matter.

#### ***Public Rebuke***

The offending member of The Church of Pentecost will be rebuked publicly depending on the seriousness of the offense by being reprimanded in the presence of the congregation during church service.

### ***Suspension***

The member of The Church of Pentecost who engages in sexual misconduct will be prohibited from holding a position of authority in all church activities and programs. He or she also will not be permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper, preach or give testimony in front of the congregation, be removed from office if they are an officer (serving as an elder, deacon, or deaconess), and their ordination into office could be revoked by the person who appointed them. After being restored, such a member will once again, have the status of full membership. The member who is to be suspended is invited to the front of the congregation on a Sunday during service. After he/she has been introduced to the congregation, the pastor will go ahead to announce that because this brother or sister could not honour God in his/her body and has therefore, indulge him/herself in sexual misconduct, I suspend him/her and hand him/her over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

### ***Excommunication***

The Executive Council may, in the worst case scenario, excommunicate a violating member or officer from the church (CoP Ministerial Handbook 2018).

#### ***1.1.3 Biblical background of church discipline***

A core tenet of both the church and the Christian faith is discipline. According to Leeman (2012), the biblical approach to dealing with persistent, unrepentant sin among the members of the local church is called church discipline. Because every believer constantly struggles with the flesh and because a local church is made up of both the visible and invisible church (Christians

and non-Christians), the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church, has kindly provided the practice of church discipline to support the church in its work of gospel ministry. In addition to provide safety to both members and non-members of the local church congregation, this formal process seeks to restore the sinner's relationship with the Lord and his or her relationships with other members of the church.

While dealing with issues of ongoing, unrepented sin, church members are strengthened and encouraged in their spiritual growth through the proper use of church discipline. This formal process concludes with 1) the decision that the member of a local church can no longer be affirmed as a believer in Christ, 2) revocation of Church Membership, 3) restriction from partaking in the Lord's Supper, 4) removal from ministry position, and 5) excommunication if the offending party persists in their sin in an unrepentant and contumacious manner. Depending on the seriousness of the transgression and the danger the offender offers to the congregation, additional (civil or otherwise) action may be required.

Discipline in the context of this study refers to corrective action intended to restore a member who has engaged in sexual misconduct. According to the glossary of church words, discipline is a sanction imposed by spiritual leaders on a church member who engages in wrongdoing in order to assist that person mend his or her relationship with other Christians and God (Malaty 1992).

Suspension as a kind of disciplinary action is a form of censure, according to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's book of Church order (2011), through which one is denied the privilege of church membership, of office, or of both. It could be for a set period of time or indefinitely. The church member under suspension is deprived of privileges like singing in the choir, giving testimony in the church during service, and playing any leading role in the church.



Church discipline's primary goal is to instruct and prepare people to comprehend and apply Christ's ideals (McInteer, 2017). Love is the driving force behind church discipline. Via the judicial practice of the local church and its officers, church discipline aims to return members of the local church to a right-standing before God and others (Leeman, 2012). The reputation of Christ is at stake when it comes to church discipline, and caring about the reputation of Christ entails caring about the welfare of non-Christians, according to Leeman (2015). When churches don't enforce church discipline, they start to resemble the outside world. The Lord's prescribed procedure for church discipline is laid out in Matthew 18:12–20 (King James Bible, 1769–2017). The church is the Lord's people, and He cares about them a great deal. The fact that unrepentant immorality necessitates corrective action is because he does not want even one of the lambs to wander or become separated from the group.

According to first Corinthians 5:1-11 (King James Bible, 1769/2017), the church is to hold the sinful party accountable for the sake of unity and God's glory; as a result, church discipline is an expectation in the church. So, tolerating wickedness in the absence of a plan for repentance and restoration amounts to effectively approving of the sinful behavior. According to McInteer (2017), the failure of the modern church to enforce good church discipline frequently results from an unfounded and possibly cowardly belief that such problems belong to the leadership rather than the assembled community. The atmosphere of a church can be therapeutic, and the communal living of its members can both facilitate and impede healing.

Based on the above, the church is called upon to exercise disciplinary action against members who often go against the standards the church expects of them. The question to be answered is, what happens to such persons after the church hands out disciplinary action to the offenders especially the guilt of the member suspended because of sexual misconduct? Most

churches in Ghana often tend to neglect the offender after they are handed their disciplinary action. However, McInteer contended that the aim of discipline is to make the person better than worse and to enable the person to repent and develop good fellowship with his or her maker.

This has not been the case in some churches in Ghana, as suspended members or members disciplined are left to their fate without any proper framework to help them to overcome the impact of guilt on the suspension and be restored to their maker through repentance and fellowship. Pastors even sometimes neglect these suspended members without any pastoral care thereby failing to adhere to what Christ has called the church to do. It is against this background that this research tends to investigate the impact of guilt on the suspended member of sexual misconduct, and the activities of the church to provide healing for such members in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana.

### ***Factors that Lead to Church Discipline***

For a vibrant local church, church discipline is an essential component of discipleship. It upholds and defends the health of the local church, warns sinners of the bigger impending judgment, defends the reputation of Jesus Christ, and clarifies the church's witness to the outside world. It is biblical and based on the gospel. Several reasons have been outlined by Leeman (2012) as the reasons for church discipline. These reasons include the following:

1. Christian discipleship includes Church Discipline (Colossians 1:28-29): Paul has a serious obligation to "present everyone mature in Christ" as a church planter and leader. Two methods are used to develop this maturity in Christ: 1) formative aspects (such as preaching, teaching, prayer, study, fasting, participation in healthy and strengthening practices, abstinence from sin, etc.) and 2) restorative aspects (warning, rebuke, correction, etc.). One of the restorative methods of discipleship called "church discipline"

is meant to reveal bad actions and prompt repentance (Mt 18:15-20; Acts 8:17-24; 1Cor 5; Gal 6:1; Eph 5:11; 2Ths 3:14-15; Titus 3:10; 2Jn 9-10; etc.).

2. Church discipline is an application of the gospel: Although the gospel is the good news of redemption through faith in Jesus Christ (Rms 1:16–17), it also imposes requirements on believers to live up to those obligations (Gal 2:14). According to the gospel, newly saved believers are no longer under the control of sin (Rom. 6:22), but rather are brand-new beings (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Each and every regenerated believer will exhibit the fruit of the spirit, which is borne in contrition, humility, and obedience (Mt 3:8; Mk 1:15; Lk 3:8; 5:32; Gal 5:22-24; Jam 2:14-26; 4:6; 1Ptr 5:5; Heb 13:17; Mic 6:8; etc.). One of the best examples of this doctrine is found in 1 John 5:2. Since the believer's sanctification (Definitive Sanctification) has an instantaneous nature, it is prudent to note that fruit will not always be constant in every believer because of the associated progressive nature of sanctification (Mt 6:12; Rms 7:21-25; Phil 3:12; 1 John 1:8). A local church's leaders should therefore challenge a person's regeneration and, consequently, their standing as a church member if they notice that the member is continually acting contrary to the expected fruit of their rebirth (1Cor 5:12-13).
3. Church discipline safeguards and enhances wellbeing in the local church: If sin is not addressed, it will swiftly spread across a local church. A local church's elders have a duty to joyfully tend to people whom the Lord has placed under their direction (Heb 13:17). Church members are expected to spot sin when it occurs and put it out before it spreads across the congregation and causes more issues (1Cor 5:6-8).
4. Discipline in the church warns sinners of a larger judgment: Church discipline is a form of judgment or condemnation (1 Corinthians 5:3, 12–13) that serves to alert the sinner to

the coming final judgment on the Day of the Lord (1Cor 5:5). The regenerated Christian will fear the impending judgment as a result of a compassionate warning and turn from their wrongdoing in repentance.

5. Church discipline defends Jesus Christ's reputation: The word of reconciliation to God has been given to the people of God, who are therefore called to represent the Kingdom of God (2Cor 5:20). The world needs "salt" and "light," and God's people are to provide both. Nevertheless, if salt has lost its flavor, how can its saltiness be revived? It is just useful for being tossed away and trampled under people's boots at this point (Mt 5:13). Church discipline is essential for maintaining the good name of Jesus Christ and the church's witness to unbelievers.
6. Church discipline is reparative rather than punitive: Church discipline is a therapeutic activity rather than a punishing one. This is demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 5:5, when Paul tells them to "purge the bad individual" from their assembly in order "for his spirit to be saved on the day of the Lord" (v.5). Jesus endorses this approach in Matthew 18:15–17 in order to restore human relationships (v.15). Church discipline serves as a corrective measure to restore ties between individuals and the Lord.

#### ***1.1.4 Application of pastoral counseling***

This qualitative study on the impact of guilt on suspended members because of sexual misconduct is significant to pastoral counseling in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana. The church believes the Word of God holds truths for healing despondent saints. Manala (2016), posited that pastoral care counseling is inevitable in the healing work of the church. Pastoral counseling is a form of counseling that focuses on the spirituality and beliefs of a person, with a goal to improve their mental and emotional well-being. The primary aim of pastoral counseling is to provide guidance and support to individuals who are struggling with life's challenges,

including emotional distress, relationship issues, and other forms of psychological trauma. Counselors who practice pastoral counseling often take a holistic approach, looking at their clients' emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.

Pastoral counselors may use a variety of techniques, including prayer, meditation, Bible study, and other forms of spiritual guidance, to help their clients overcome their challenges. They may also provide practical advice, such as relationship counseling, financial planning, and stress management techniques. One of the most significant benefits of pastoral counseling is that it acknowledges the importance of spirituality in a person's life. For many people, their spiritual beliefs are an essential part of their identity, and they can play a vital role in their emotional and mental well-being. By incorporating spirituality into their counseling practice, pastoral counselors can help clients develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

In addition to helping individuals, pastoral counseling can benefit families and communities as well. By providing guidance and support to families and couples, pastoral counselors can reduce conflict and promote stronger, healthier relationships. Church member who has been subjected to any form of church discipline because of misconduct will experience a feeling of sorrow in one way or the other which involves a distressed relationship with the church, the offender will as well have a distressed relationship with God (Kohn & Campbell, 2011). The account of David in 1 Chronicle 21 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017) when he had done evil in the sight of God by taking a census of Israel, indicates an offender who feels remorse over his misconduct. The remorseful offender nurses sorrow. Kohn and Campbell found that David in Psalm 6 felt remorseful of his misconduct and the sorrow created in him was worse than death, because of the loss of the opportunity to praise God because of his misconduct.

Fink (2019) posited that the purpose of church discipline is to contribute to the total health of any church and the spiritual growth of members into maturity. Discipline in the Bible always leads to remorsefulness and repentance which is followed by restoration. Bible characters like Adam and Eve, and David experienced discipline by God but were restored after a demonstration of remorsefulness. Adam and Eve disobeyed the commands of God when God commanded them not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They experienced pain and guilt when they realized their sin and decided to run away from God. The Lord restored them to Himself by clothing them to cover their shame (*King James Bible, 1769/2017, Genesis 3*). David coveted Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, and caused the murder of the husband. His sins were pointed out to him through the Prophet Nathan and was disciplined accordingly. David demonstrated remorsefulness and repentance, he was forgiven and restored into a relationship with his God when the Prophet pronounced forgiveness on him (*King James Bible, 1769/2017, 2 Samuel 12*).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Misconduct suspension is an issue that needs careful consideration by educational institutions globally. While suspension may be necessary in certain instances, it has significant consequences for the students and institutions involved. Therefore, schools should strive to establish clear policies for maintaining a safe learning environment and work to create supportive environments that foster good behavior and help students achieve their academic goals. The problem of misconduct suspension has become a pervasive issue among educational institutions across the globe. Schools and universities are grappling with the challenge of balancing the need for discipline with the desire to ensure that students achieve their academic goals. This problem affects both the students suspended and the educational institutions themselves.

One major issue with misconduct suspension is that it can have long-lasting effects on the student's education trajectory. For instance, frequently suspending students can result in them becoming disengaged from the educational process. This can, in turn, damage their self-esteem, sow feelings of alienation, and ultimately reduce the likelihood that they will graduate. Another problem with misconduct suspension is that it paints a negative image of the school. When a student is suspended for misconduct, it creates a perception of a school that is not conducive to providing a safe and secure learning environment for its students. Moreover, a school that frequently suspends students may be viewed as unresponsive to the needs and concerns of its students.

However, another issue with misconduct suspension is that, in some cases, it may be necessary for maintaining a safe learning environment for all students. Certain types of behaviors, such as bullying, fighting or drug use, can have a profoundly negative impact on the school community, and may require suspension as an immediate response. Failure to sanction such behavior may endanger other students, and damage the credibility of the institution. There is, therefore, a need for schools to ensure that their disciplinary policies are clearly spelled out and applied consistently, so that students understand the standards of conduct expected of them. Additionally, schools need to work with parents, community groups and other stakeholders to create supportive environments that encourage good behavior and help students achieve their academic goals.

The church is called upon to act on the issue of sin through forms of discipline including suspension followed by pastoral care leading to reformation and healing. Observations from the churches in Ghana have shown that the practice of discipline ends up exposing the victim to a complete abandonment of the Christian faith. However, discipline is not meant to simply punish

people for the wrong done but to help the person go through the impact of the guilt, to provide healing, and to restore such persons to fellowship and commitment to the Christian faith. *In The Church of Pentecost of Ghana, assessing the impact of guilt on the member suspended because of sexual misconduct has received no research attention, though discipline for sexual misconduct is a cardinal practice of the church.* The research sought to examine the impact of guilt of the suspension on suspended members of sexual misconduct, it also assessed the existing activities of The Church of Pentecost as a healing community for the member suspended because of sexual misconduct.

The researcher hopes to develop a pastoral care counseling framework to heal the maleficent church member by restoring him/her to fellowship. In this study, the researcher got as close as possible to the participants who are members of The Church of Pentecost in Axim to obtain subjective evidence through interviews.

### **1.3 Purpose statement**

The goal of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to ascertain how guilt over being suspended due to sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost at Axim affects the suspended church member. This study examines the guilt experience of victims of sexual misconduct suspension and the available church activities that provide healing leading to restoration to fellowship with brethren and God. The pastoral care method will be broadly described at this point in the research as the function of the pastor in the activities of the church to make it a healing community in rehabilitating the suspended member in The Church of Pentecost. The social cognition theory (Bandura, 1986), which highlights how people learn by observing and imitating others, serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. The suspended



church member learns from the love and care of Jesus Christ modeled by the pastor which leads to healing and reformation of the victim of sexual misconduct and subsequent restoration.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Church discipline is required for efficient church operation. The church can however be meaningful in the discharge of her mandate by ensuring discipline of the sinning members and providing appropriate structures for the restoration into fellowship when a member is suspended. The outcome of the research will enable The Church of Pentecost of Ghana to develop a proper framework for discipline and healing of the suspended member because of sexual misconduct in the pastoral care practice in the church. The findings will be applied to improving church discipline for other churches and appropriate measures for understanding the impact of the guilt on the suspended victim and the appropriate means of providing healing and restoration for the members who have been disciplined. In helping to heal the hurt church member, this will demonstrate the fundamentals of pastoral care.

Among other things, appropriate ways of helping suspended members by understanding the impact of guilt of the suspension on their lives will be developed. This will facilitate their reformation towards restoration into the full fellowship of their Christian faith and not abandon them. The findings of the research will contribute to the church literature on the impact of guilt on the suspended church member because of sexual misconduct and the appropriate pastoral care recommendations for healing such church members. The Scripture indicates that the staying together of the brethren in unity is pleasant and a source of healing, over there, the LORD bestows his blessings (*King James Bible, 1769/2017, Psalm 133*).

### 1.5 Research Objectives

The primary goal of the study is to examine how a victim of sexual misconduct is affected by guilt of suspension in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana and how the church functions as a healing community. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the effect of guilt of the sexual misconduct suspension on the suspended member in The Church of Pentecost at Axim.
2. Explore the activities of the church community that serves as healing to the suspended church member.
3. Investigate the involvement and the activities of pastors in providing supportive or crisis care to the suspended church member in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana.

### 1.6 Research questions

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How is the impact of guilt of the suspension on the suspended church member who has sexually misconducted him/herself?
2. What are the activities of the church in providing healing to the church member suspended because of sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost in Ghana?

### 1.7 Definitions

5. *Biblical Discipline*: This is the manifestation of the love of God towards His children and their reception as legitimate as the LORD chastens those He loves (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Hebrews 12:5-8).
6. *Church Discipline*: Church discipline is the use of the authority that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to the visible church for the preservation of its holiness, peace, and good order, according to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's book of Church order (2011).

7. *Discipline*: Jamieson (2012) describes discipline as “corrective” and ‘formative”.
8. *Guilt*: According to VandenBerg (2021), guilt is the objective state that arises from breaking God's law and the emotion that results from realizing that position.
9. *Pastoral Care*: Pastoral care, according to Lartey (1997, cited in Louw, 2011, p. 156), is the helping action taken by exemplary Christians that is intended to heal, direct, and reconcile disturbed people whose problems occur in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns.
10. *Pastoral Counseling*: This aims to emphasize the spiritual aspect, especially the potential and consequences of a damaged relationship between a person and their spiritual roots, both internal and external to the individual. In order to restore wholeness, this kind of connection breakdown causes alienation, which needs to be addressed (Waruta & Kinoti, 2005, p. 6).
11. *Remorse*: Remorse was defined by Emily et al. (2012) as moral or emotional distress brought on by prior wrongdoings.
12. *Restoration*: This denotes a brotherly and sisterly style of confrontation that is soft and humble in order to reconstruct what has been destroyed in someone's life (Hammett & Merkle, 2012).
13. *Sexual Misconduct*: Any sexual behavior, whether desired or unwanted, such as a request for a sexual favor, improper affection such as kissing, stroking, bumping, or patting, or any sexual contact that preys on a parishioner's, client's, or employee's vulnerabilities (Trull & Carter, 2004).

*14. Suspension:* Suspension is a form of censure in which one is denied the right to church membership, office, or both, according to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's book of Church order (2011). It could be for a set period of time or indefinitely.

### **1.8 Summary**

Numerous studies on sexual misconduct discipline in the church do not assess the impact of guilt experienced by the victim. The Church of Pentecost of Ghana adheres to the principle of church discipline including suspending a member who misconducts him/herself sexually. It is observed among churches in Ghana that members disciplined in the church are left to their fate after disciplinary action is pronounced on them. The research seeks to examine the impact of guilt on suspension on suspended church members because of sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana with a focus on Axim a city in Ghana. The activities of the church in providing crisis counseling to members experiencing guilt because of sexual misconduct suspension, and the reformation and restoration of the victim were examined. The research was guided by the social learning theory by Bandura (1986) which emphasizes learning by observation and modeling that elicit behavioral change. The findings of the research will be relevant to The Church of Pentecost and other churches, in that, disciplinary action in the church will be applied to its logical conclusion by seeking to understand the guilt experience of the suspended church member because of sexual misconduct, the reformation, and the subsequent restoration into fellowship.

### **1.9 Organization of the study**

The research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter covers the study's history, research challenge, aims, importance, and contribution. The theory and conceptual model is emphasized in Chapter Two, as well as an in-depth review of pertinent literature for the research.

This includes a review of important material on church discipline, sexual misconduct, the guilt of sexual misconduct suspension, pastoral counselling, and related topics on the subject. The third chapter looked at the research methods and study design. The fourth chapter focused on the display of findings whiles The fifth chapter provides the study's summary of findings, implications, suggestions, and conclusion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Ghana is a nation in West Africa that is bordered by Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, the Atlantic Ocean to the south, and the Ivory Coast to the west (ghanatogether.org). Ghana's population was estimated to be 30,832,019 according to the 2021 population and housing census. According to the official website of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 71% of the country's population is Christian. The Nzema East Municipal of the Western Region, which has an area of 2194 square kilometers, has Axim as its capital (9.8 percent of the total area of the Western Region). The population of larger Axim is roughly 25,000. The closest sizable city, Takoradi, is roughly an hour's drive to the east of Axim, which lies close to Ivory Coast to the west.

As of December 2021, there were 3,333,654 members of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana as a whole. Around 10.8% of Ghana's projected population of 30,832,019 are represented by this. A further 15.2% of Ghana's total Christian population and 34.3% of Ghana's Charismatic and Pentecostal population are members of The Church of Pentecost (CoP official website; GSS official website). A total of 791 people are professing and practicing members of the Church of Pentecost at Axim, including 505 adults and 286 kids. Axim's membership in the Church of Pentecost makes up about 3.20 percent of the total population.

According to a 2016 study on domestic violence in Ghana and its effects by the Institute of Developmental Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Services (GSS), and Associates, there is a direct link between experiencing domestic abuse and poor mental health. The study revealed that 26.7 % of women who suffered domestic violence because of sexual misconduct meted against

them experienced psychological or mental illness. The study further revealed that the incidence of sexual violence was prevalent among women and men who were divorced, separated, or widowed. The statistics indicated 31.7% women and 29.4% men. On a similar note, Gakuba et al. (2015) found that several young women, predominantly refugees in the city of Abidjan and Dakar have mental health problems, which were a result of sexual violence, unfortunately, they have limited access to appropriate healthcare. According to Norman et al. (2013), sexual harassment has a detrimental effect on the victim's health.

Boateng (2015) proposed that victims of sexual assault in Ghana had a propensity to withhold information about the crime, particularly from the police, in an alternative way of looking at the problem. The few people who did call the police demanded that the criminals be punished in accordance with the law. Those who chose not to report believed the situation was not serious or trusted their families to handle it. Typically, this occurs when family members tried to protect themselves from embarrassment or shame and the criminal was a relative of the victim.

Pentecostals claim that Christians today are still experiencing the spectacular spiritual gifts that were bestowed upon them on the first-century Pentecost as reported in Acts 2 (Fairchild, 2022). The Pentecostals do not condone sin; hence discipline is the hallmark. Garnett (2020) agreed by suggesting that religious freedom that compromises church discipline is a threat to the general health of civil society, it is the mainstay of the church's failure to respond to clerical sexual abuse. The sinful situation in the church alienates the church from the Lord, however, dealing with the sin and restoring the penitent is a step toward the glory of God. In Galatians 6:1, the overarching objectives of church discipline are stated (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017). When a member of a mainline church commits sins, there are numerous disciplinary

procedures that are handled by a regulatory authority. Examples of these mainline churches are the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, The Methodist Church of Ghana, and The Anglican Church of Ghana Sekondi Diocese. The problem of inappropriate sexual behavior is not addressed by this.

As part of the practice of The Church of Pentecost of Ghana, a church member who sexually misconducts him/herself is disciplined by a suspension. Such a member is prevented from playing a leading role in all church programs and activities; shall not partake in the Lord's Supper; shall not minister or give testimony on the platform of the church (CoP Ministerial Handbook, 2018). These codes are administered with restoration in mind. The Church of Pentecost Counseling Ministry (COPCOM) offers comprehensive, specialized services to the disciplined church member as well as to the broader church membership. Its goal is to offer qualified counseling and mental health services to help Christians become productive members of society who are prepared to serve and alter their communities (CoP official website).

The inhabitants of Axim come from a variety of tribal groups yet share a lot of the same cultural ideals. They place a strong emphasis on social norms like respect for elders, family, and religious and traditional leaders, as well as the idea of dignity and appropriate social behavior. Family responsibilities take precedence over everything; one's actions are perceived as having an effect on one's entire family, as well as the church, social group, and community. As a fishing community, Adjei and Sika-Bright (2019) found that the people of Axim have a subculture of marital infidelity. The major tribe of descent of the people of Axim is Nzema, while Ashanti, Fante, and Ewe are visibly present. The typical dialects used in this community are Twi, Nzema, Fante, and Ewe. Twenty (20) of the members of The Church of Pentecost in Axim were serving



a suspension due to sexual misbehavior as of December 2021, according to statistics (Unpublished report at the church office in Axim).

The offenses that warrant suspension or disciplinary action include sexual misconduct like premarital sex or extramarital sex, although there are other contexts of sexual misconduct, the study was limited to Extramarital and Pre-Marital Sex. Among other things, the impact of guilt on the suspended church member and the activities of the church that provide healing to the wounded soul leading to the restoration of the suspended church member in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana was looked at. The concluding segment looked at the summary of the review of the literature.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

The social cognitive theory, which Albert Bandura created in 1986, is the foundation of this work. The notion stresses how people pick up knowledge by watching and imitating others (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2014). In order to understand social learning, Bandura (1986) combined the concepts of classical and operant conditioning. Tan (2011) defined classical conditioning as the process by which antecedents, or what happened before the behavior, control the behavior. Additionally, he stated that operant conditioning is a learning process in which one's conduct is influenced by the outcomes of that activity. According to Bandura (1986), in addition to direct experience, learning and subsequent behavioral change can also take place vicariously through observation of other people's actions.

According to Seligman and Reichenberg (2014), social cognitive theory builds on behavior theory and cognitive behavioral theory by recognizing that human behavior is mediated by a complex cognitive process that integrates cognitive, affective, motivational, and selection processes rather than just reinforcement behaviors or erroneous thoughts. Tan claimed that

operant conditioning principles and processes, specifically positive and negative reinforcement, punishment, and extinction, are effective interventions employed in therapy for the alteration of behavior. The Bandura-developed social cognition theory's operant conditioning principle supports using discipline to change behavior. Tan claims that the social cognitive theory is pertinent to this study since it takes a biblical perspective (2011). It highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing about both internal healing and external changes in cognition, behavior, and emotion. It will be careful not to unintentionally encourage sinful self-sufficiency and will use prayer and affirmation of God's Word to facilitate dependency on the Lord in order to produce deep and lasting personality change (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Phi. 4:13). Additionally, social cognitive theory from a biblical perspective gives greater thought to larger contextual variables, such as family life, societal, religious, and cultural influences, and applying the right local resources in therapeutic intervention, including the church as a group of believers and fellow "priests" to one another (King James Bible, 1769/2017, I Cor. 12; I Pet. 2:5, 9).

The modeling aspect of the theory requires the pastoral care provider to model Christ's love to the pertinent sinner who has sexually misconducted him/herself and has been subsequently suspended, who is experiencing the guilt of the misconduct. This is likely to bring healing to the church member who is going through the pain of guilt and elicit positive behavior toward reformation.

## **2.3 Related literature**

### ***2.3.1 Sexual Misconduct in the Bible and the Guilt Impact***

The Bible contains several people who were either victims or perpetrators of sexual misconduct. The accounts indicated the various forms of guilt and its impact on their lives.

#### ***Deception***

Tamar (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Gen. 38), one of the guilt that she experienced in the story as stated in Genesis 38, is the tag of being a deceiver. This is based on the way she disguised herself to deceive the father-in-law. It can be inferred from the story that; people will therefore describe Tamar as a deceiver within the Timnah community. As a result, she will bear that guilt throughout her life within her society.

### ***Stigmatization***

Again, from the story, we can clearly see Tamar being tagged as a harlot by the Timnah community. She will then need to live with this guilt because everyone knew she had no husband and being pregnant, will make people see her as a harlot. Tamar will be living with that guilt throughout her lifetime.

### ***Disgrace***

Diana (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Gen. 34), the guilt of disgrace will be upon Diana throughout her life because such action was not permitted in the family and made her ineligible for proper marriage according to the custom. This brings great shame and disgrace to Diana as many people in her time will be pointing fingers at her. She will also experience humiliation and loss of dignity

### ***Trauma***

Diana from the story will be going through severe psychological trauma because she was forced and defiled by Shechem as a girl. This can even ruin her life by bringing fear upon her. She is likely to live in fear all her life due to the way she was defiled.

### ***Humiliation and loss of dignity***

Tamar (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Sam 13), it was great to live as a virgin, and for one to be deceived and raped, will contribute to the loss of pride and dignity as a young girl. The

guilt of being mocked by people for committing incest will be upon Tamar and that will even cause her to lose respect within her society. Tamar could no longer dwell among the virgins since she had lost her virginity and was no longer a good candidate for marriage. The shame associated with such an act will impact her negatively as a young lady.

### ***The guilt of adultery and murder***

David and Bathsheba (King James Bible, 1769/2017, 2 Sam. 11), one of the guilt from the story of David is that of living with the guilt of adultery and murder. David will be seen as a wicked King within his society for his actions. The guilt of not demonstrating love and care for one's neighbor was one of the consequences David had to live with. He would be living with that tag of a murderer.

#### ***2.3.2 Guilt Conceptualization***

Despite the fact that guilt and shame have some characteristics, a growing amount of research suggests that they are two different emotional constructs, according to Kim (2012). Although it has a negative connotation, guilt is typically linked to approach motivation whereas shame is linked to retreat motivation. Similar to this, Szkredka (2022) claimed that guilt is defined by one's disapproval of their actions. The wrongdoer's reparatory behavior addresses guilt.

We need to start by defining sin in order to comprehend what is meant theologically by guilt and shame. Biblical definitions of sin include concepts like disobeying God, breaking a rule, hurting someone's feelings, and rebelling. Theologically, sin involves both the causes of these deeds—original sin—and the continuous human activities that disobey God's law and draw people away from Him. According to the notion of original sin, the first couple lost their original

righteousness after eating from the tree that God had forbade them from doing so, even though they were originally righteous.

Theology pays very little attention to the subject of shame. The setting of original sin is where the subject of shame is discussed most frequently in Reformed theology. Even in this setting, however, the literature has a tendency to gloss over shame by referring to it in the same sentence as guilt and barely differentiating the two ideas.

The prospect of repentance, a crucial act in the life of religion, is made possible by guilt, which is both an objective state and a painful but possibly useful emotion. In contrast, I will demonstrate how shame is a negative emotion that can prevent someone from turning to God and repenting.

Guilt is categorized as an emotion by psychology, more especially as a moral emotion. According to Brown (2006), guilt is an emotion that emerges from acting in a defective or improper manner. According to Pattison (2000), those who feel guilty believe they have done something particular that is harmful or wrong. Theologians are not obligated to disagree. In actuality, biblically and theologically, the notion of guilt is significant.

The unpleasant sensation of guilt is defined as the conviction that one should have felt, thought, or behaved differently (Kubany & Watson, 2003). The guilt emotion is outward-focused and pertains to a specific act that the person has done. Shame can occur from moral failings as well as immoral circumstances (such as feelings of inadequacy), whereas guilt primarily comes from moral behavior (Ferguson & Stegge, 1995). By motivating an individual to apologize, confess, and demonstrate empathic response (Bybee & Quiles, 1998; Niedenthal, Tangney, &

Gavanski, 1994), guilt feelings provide a reparative role (Tangney, 1991). Only God can free one from sin and guilt since guilt denotes separation from God as a result of sin.

### *2.3.3 Sexual misconduct in the Church*

The Christian church is frequently viewed as a spiritual center, a refuge where one can meet and interact with God. Sexuality is typically not perceived as being celebrated or even understood in this environment. To illustrate the unique bond between Christ and the Church, many of the great liturgies of the past and the writings of the early church mystics enthusiastically fuse spirituality and sexuality. The sexual part of human nature is explicitly acknowledged in both the Old Bible and the Early Church. Historically, people have not viewed sexuality and spirituality as opposing aspects of creation. In fact, some of the most heartfelt and uplifting passages in the Old Testament, like the Song of Solomon, employ sexually explicit language to depict spiritual ecstasy (Francis & Turner, 1995). The institutional church of today frequently denies and represses sexuality and is in stark contrast to the early church's acknowledgement of humanity's sexual essence (Rambo, 1991). In many congregations, sexual misbehavior in the church, particularly among the clergy, has occurred and continues to occur (Durso, 2017). The issue of clergy sexual misbehavior is made to appear even more surprising and challenging to handle by this denial of nature. In other words, it appears that the clergy is not allowed to have any sexuality because of their social position. Hence, when a clergyperson engages in sexual misconduct, it is not only sinful but also a breach of both their holy vows and their duty in society (Francis & Turner, 1995).

Sexual misconduct has a negative impact on the perpetrator and the victim. The victim, the victim's family, and close friends, the church, its leaders, and its members, the congregation's neighborhood and community, and the family and friends of the perpetrator are all badly

impacted by sexual misbehavior (Durso, 2017). Almost all of the literature that was available concentrated on women as victims. It suggested that certain women might be more vulnerable to this kind of abuse than others (Rutter, 1989). It is extremely harmful to experience sexual abuse from anyone (Allender, 1990). The victim may experience any combination of horror, shock, violation, helplessness, betrayal, embarrassment, and wrath. Many bury the event deep under the garb of doubt, despair, deadness, and learned helplessness (Allender, 1990) only to have it plague them in another area of their lives. The already perplexing and painful feelings that come with sexual violation are made even worse by the fact that the perpetrator was a member of the clergy. Members of her congregation refer to the female victim as a "harlot," "wanton lady," or "Jezebel." According to Anderson (1992), when complaints are made against an abusive pastor, the congregation's immediate reaction is to defend the pastor. Defending the pastor also entails demonizing the accusers. These same people are seen by other churchgoers as innocent victims, survivors, and bewildered caregivers. The church frequently divides into two camps. Those who think the pastor couldn't have done it or that the victim tricked the pastor into this illicit relationship make up one camp. This kind of response simply makes things worse.

Not only has the church's spiritual leader sexually assaulted the victim, but a sizeable portion of the congregation has also shunned and demonized the victim. When people are unsure of what to do, how to react, or how to minister to the victim or the pastor, more moderate measures can verge on ostracism. Instead of confronting the perpetrators and the problems around sexual misbehavior, the congregation would rather that the matter simply go away (Hardman-Cromwell, 1991; Cooper-White, 1991; Morey, 1988).

Durso noted that the Baptist church has not taken as strong a stand against clergy sexual misconduct. Their polity is in part to blame for their quiet. When a sexual assault occurs in a

Baptist church, the sad outcome is that Baptist churches, ministers, and lay members are frequently at a loss and even paralyzed. What is even more tragic is that Baptists are not informed about the issue and are not working to create safe and healthy church environments where clergy assault and abuse are less likely to occur. Sexual misconduct is a common occurrence in the church, Starks (2013) found that the primary reason for sexual misconduct in mega-churches is blind trust. In order to move beyond discussing sex in terms of sin and misconduct and toward a more comprehensive conversation about sex and the church, Stephens (2011) advocated a remedy for this menace in the United Methodist Church (UMC). Other denominations also suggested the need for the assistance of sexuality educators. Stephens (2011) called for a solution to this problem in the United Methodist Church in order to move away from talking about sex in terms of sin and misconduct and toward a more thorough discussion about sex and the church (UMC). The necessity of sexuality educators' aid was also advocated by members of other denominations.

Gross-Schaefer et al. (2011) recommended that if there is actual sexual misconduct taking place within a congregation, it is important that people believe there is a reliable and fair procedure in place to address and correct it. They also suggested possible methods by which sexual misconduct, especially by the Clergy, can be stopped. They won't feel secure enough to speak up so that the abuse may be halted right away unless this is the case. They also underlined how important the correct codes and bylaws are to this process. Furthermore, people are more likely to feel safe coming forward when they are aware that the congregation has a policy against sexual misconduct and that they will be treated properly.

Education of congregations and church leaders about the prevalence of and risk factors for misconduct, as well as the implementation of accountability measures that aid church leaders



in recognizing their vulnerability to misconduct and fending off opportunities to abuse power, are essential components of the effort to reduce sexual misconduct. In other words, the occurrence of sexual misconduct can be reduced by education and the installation of measures that will hold church leaders accountable and help them uphold boundaries that will better safeguard their flock (Oxford, 2012). In his writings, Durso (2017) provided several resources for educating the congregation, ministers, and other leaders. Unfortunately, these resources do not consider the impact of guilt on the victim, the emotionally traumatized congregation, and perhaps the offender. This research seeks to bridge the gap by assessing the impact of the suspension on the church members suspended because of sexual misconduct, and the activities of the church that provide healing to the victim, the congregation, and perhaps the offender. A framework for the restoration of a church member who has been suspended because of sexual misconduct into fellowship with Christ with the focus on The Church of Pentecost in Axim will be suggested.

Most churches undoubtedly lacked clear policy statements because they did not view sexual misconduct as a serious problem (Fortune, 1994). Churches have been obliged to acknowledge the severity of the issue as sexual misconduct instances have multiplied and public awareness has grown (Hands, 1991; Rediger, 1990). Growing numbers of victims have opted to report wrongdoing (Hands, 1991), and in our judgment, have chosen to become survivors rather than victims, which has increased this effect. For regional meetings to introduce and discuss procedures regarding claims of sexual misconduct by clergy, many denominations have gathered their clergy. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has one such policy. Several policies go to considerable measures to offer pastoral and psychological support to both the priest in question and the victims of their sexual misconduct. But preventing sexual assault calls for more

than just establishing a policy that applies to the entire church or region. Several denominations have acknowledged this, and their policies reflect this. Most religions no longer simply "move the perpetrator" after receiving accusations of clergy sexual misconduct. Better training is being offered by pastoral educators both at seminaries and continuing education facilities.

Congregational leaders also show compassion for clergy who increasingly find themselves in situations that test limits. Church lay leaders are trained to actively participate in church activities and to recognize the importance of the pastor and his or her family's need for privacy. To assist persons who have been molested by clergy as children or adults, groups are formed (Fox, 1992). For persons looking to recover from and lessen sexual abuse by the clergy, these policies and activities by church officials, ministers, congregational members, and others working in or related to the Church represent a source of hope.

### ***Premarital Sexual Misconduct***

Premarital sex, according to Mashau (2011), is defined as sexual activity that occurs between individuals who are not yet married. It is typically used in relation to young people who are assumed to be of marriageable age or who will someday get married but are engaged in sexual behavior before it is permitted within a marriage. The Christian is urged by the Scriptures to abstain from every sexual sin. According to the traditional sexual ethics of Christianity, sexual relations should only occur during monogamous marriages. According to the Bible (King James Version, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 10:31), people have a responsibility to honor God in all of their decisions, including those related to sexuality. The Bible forbids fornication (premarital sex), adultery, and defiling one's marriage vows through any or all of the aforementioned behaviors. According to Eriksson et al. (2013), the church's teachings ought to address sexuality-

related concerns pertinent to young people, such as peer pressure, gender power dynamics, and fostering trust in close relationships between young men and women.

### ***Extramarital Sexual Misconduct***

A study conducted by Chadambuka (2014) indicated that whereas society expects married women to be bound to their spouses for love affection and even sex, women are also active sexual actors outside their marital domains. It may be stated that extramarital relationships begin, endure, grow, and even come to an end in a world of secret. Gibson (2020) claimed that shame in extramarital affairs only becomes a problem when it gets more well known, implying that it is more frequently a reaction to a woman's current and material circumstances than feelings necessarily associated with committing adultery.

#### ***2.3.4 The Guilt of sexual misconduct***

When we approach others in an attitude of love rather than judgement, we show the kindness of God in the face of our guilt (Sande, 2004). Misconduct such as being pregnant outside wedlock, and any form of disobedience to the Word of God and church principles and practices are grounds for church discipline in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana. The offending church member who has been subjected to any form of church discipline because of the misconduct will experience pain and sorrow in one way or the other. Messina-Dysert (2015) posited that sexually violated women suffer disrupted self and their spirits are wounded. On one hand, guilt is a negative aspect; on the other, initiative abounds: this may involve the motivation (initiative) for self-control (autonomy). For instance, Adam and Eve went through a life of suffering where they experienced loss, shame, pain, and guilt after they had been banished from the Garden of Eden (Hunt, 2017). By personalizing guilt as a sexual sin, the church is likewise released from accountability. The Apostle expected the Church in Corinth to mourn when sexual

immorality was found in the church, rather they were puffed up, that he turned over the incestuous brother to Satan or suspended him (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2). When commenting on the incestuous church member, Reed (2007) highlighted the following as the possible consequences of his handed over to Satan or suspension. He is enraged by his fellow Christians' lack of understanding and resentful of how he has been treated unfairly. As a result of the unequal treatment in the church, animosity develops, especially when other members are just as bad as the suspended member but have not been expelled. The man tells himself that he is best out of the fellowship if that is what Christians are like - so narrow-minded and blinkered.

However, Reed went ahead to observe that the man experienced great sorrow and in Paul's own words he was in danger of being overwhelmed by exceeding sorrow (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Corinthians. 2:8). According to Creed et al. (2014), persons both cognitive and affective live as community members and thrive by maintaining important social links through continuing behavior that validates their belongingness. People of such belongingness are so mindful of what others in the communities think about them, especially when they feel guilty about the wrong that necessitated discipline or suspension.

Laskaris (2020), drawing on Augustine's confessions, concurred that it is challenging for Christians in the twenty-first century to rid themselves of the guilt of sexual immorality, especially those who had recollections of having engaged in sexual activity (outside of marriage) before conversion. Viewing the issue from a different perspective, Rudolfsson and Tidefors (2014) posited that the guilt feeling of women who have been sexually abused, made them think that God had betrayed them and sometimes excluded them from the church. Similar to this, Blagden et al. (2020) discovered that it is challenging for someone to forgive themselves after a mistake, particularly when it involves sexual transgressions. In Matt. 18:15–17 (*King James*

Bible, 1769/2017), Jesus outlined the path of church discipline, from individual punishment through church witnessing to expulsion from the body. This is consistent with Paul's Titus 3:10 disciplinary mindset (Hatfield, 2018).

### ***2.3.5 Biblical foundation to Church Discipline***

Discipline is a major component of the scripture, and it is a cardinal practice of the church. Based on scripture, the offending church member is corrected through discipline. The offender is most of the time grieved after he has been disciplined. Cain lamented that his punishment is greater than he can bear (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Genesis 4:13). The very purpose of church discipline is to teach and train in understanding and using the principles of Christ (McInteer, 2017). The author went on to say that tolerating wickedness without a strategy for repentance and restoration amounts to effectively condoning the sinful behavior. The church is instructed to approach the offender with a heart of grieving that leads to the Lord's deliverance and glory in Paul's address to the specific issue of sin (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 5:1–5). According to Leeman (2010), while the specifics of sin and the circumstances surrounding it will vary greatly, one question must constantly be on our churches' minds: "How will this sinner's transgression and our reaction to it reflect the holy love of Christ?"

Everything that discredits the person or work of Christ causes agony and suffering. The agony and sadness of dealing with it, however, pale in comparison to the pain and grief of ignoring it. Church leaders have a responsibility to guide the congregation toward holiness and purity. This calls for challenging confrontations and divine intervention, but the end result will be a stunning display of the Lord's splendor in the lives of his people. Church discipline, although not always used, was the norm during the apostolic age, claim Hammett and Merkle

(2012). By the fifth century, the practice started to decline and was replaced by private confession and individual penance. Recovering the use of apostolic church discipline was a goal of the protestant Reformation. Due to their concentration on the separation of the secular and sacred spheres and their practice of regenerating church membership, the Anabaptists were successful in the area of church discipline. Sadly, the Anabaptists' achievement in restoring church discipline from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries drastically decreased during the twentieth century. Church discipline as a concept is rarely rejected by churches, but for a variety of reasons, the church has lost its commitment to enforcing it.

According to Schumacher (2019), Christianity has had to contend with the fact that its members and adherents do not uphold the lofty ethical standards that the Gospel demands since its inception. The possibility that the church might deny the existence of evil or act as though everything is fine; the idea that the violent suppression of evil can give rise to religious terror; the exclusion of all impurity from the church community in order for the church to move closer to the ideal of "pure church"; or the reluctant acceptance of the presence of impurity and integration of it into the church in some way are all possible causes of impurity in the church. Hence, the author advises that the guilt denial must be acknowledged and eliminated. Garnett (2020) asserts that the inability of the churches to address clergy sexual abuse is a result of religious freedom that undermines church discipline. This compromise poses a threat to the general wellbeing of civil society. It is incorrect to equate religious freedom with the church's liberality and egalitarianism. According to Barclay (2019), the Scottish Church emphasized the importance of religious concepts of sexual morality by focusing on the practice of church discipline as a spiritual exercise.

When a sinful circumstance is brought to the attention of the church, there is a general movement away from the Lord; yet, when the same circumstance is handled in a biblical manner with the aim of restoration and renewal, there is accentuation toward the glory of God. Galatians 6:1 (King James Bible, 1769/2017) outlines the overarching objectives of church discipline. Hence, the importance of restoration and humility can be highlighted. Any effort at biblical church discipline must include the providing of restoration. Yet restoration does not just take place; it also takes place in a certain way. Paul exhorts the church in Galatians 6:1 King James Bible (1769/2017) to take the necessary steps to bring the offender back, but to do so in a spirit of genuine gentleness. He also cautions the church to be mindful of its own spiritual state and to be on the lookout for any signs of spiritual arrogance or lethargy. Compton (2016) came to the conclusion that, depending on how the church views the disobedient, church discipline can involve excommunication, but it can also involve a level short of excommunication, where the congregation directs the sinner to repent and initiates discipline to bring about repentance. He did this by combining Matthew 18:15-17 King James Bible (1769/2017), 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 King James Bible (1769/2017), and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 King James Bible (1769/2017).

Jesus outlines the four steps of church discipline in Matthew 18:15–17: (1) tell the offender his sin privately; (2) gather some witnesses; (3) inform the church; and (4) punish him as an outsider. Stage 1 (Matt. 18:15). The method of enforcing church discipline starts with the individual. And if your brother sins, go and chastise him in secret, Jesus commanded (v. 15a). An individual believer in this situation is to approach a sinning brother individually and address him in a compassionate and humble manner. The goal of this encounter is to invite him to repentance while plainly exposing his fault so that he is aware of it. If the rebellious brother confesses his sin after the private debate, he is pardoned and restored (v. 15b).

Stage 2 (Matt. 18:16). The next phase in the disciplinary process is to bring one or two other Christians together to address the sinful brother again if he refuses to listen to the one who has corrected him privately (v. 16a). In order for "by the word of two or three witnesses every fact may be proven," it is necessary to bring along additional believers (v. 16b). To put it another way, the witnesses are there to attest to the fact that the fault was committed as well as to the fact that the offending brother was properly rebuked and whether or not he has repented.

Both the one being approached and the one being defended are protected by the presence of extra witnesses. In the end, a prejudiced individual can falsely assert, "Oh, I tried to address him, but he's impenitent." Even if he was the one who had committed the sin, it would be arrogant to assume that one person could determine what was right or wrong. If there is a heart of repentance or if it is one of rejection or apathy, the witnesses must attest to it. A report like this serves as the foundation for further action because it confirms the problem beyond just one person's report.

It should be hoped at this stage that the one or two who are called in to confront the sinner will not have to testify against him in front of the congregation. Ideally, their second rebuke—which the first one did not—will be sufficient to compel the offending brother to reconsider his mind. That brother is pardoned and restored if this change of heart does take place, and the case is closed.

Third Step (Matt. 18:17a). If some time has passed and the transgressing brother continues to ignore the witnesses' questions, the witnesses are required to inform the church (v. 17a). This is best accomplished by bringing the issue to the elders' notice, who then supervise its dissemination throughout the entire assembly.



Fourth Step (Matt. 18:17b). Ostracism is the fourth and last stage of church discipline. A sinful believer is to be excluded from the fellowship if he or she will not even listen to the church. Let him appear to you as a tax collector and a Gentile, Jesus commanded (v. 17b). The term "Gentile" was most commonly used to refer to non-Jews who adhered to their traditional paganism and were excluded from the Jewish covenant, worship, and social life. On the other side, a "tax-gatherer" was a Jew who had chosen to be exiled from his own people after turning traitor. The church is not required by Jesus' use of these terminology to mistreat these people. The apostle Paul ordered that a man in the Corinthian church be expelled when he refused to end an illicit connection with his stepmother (1 Cor. 5:13). According to 1 Corinthians 5:11, the believers there were not even allowed to eat dinner with him because doing so represented a friendly and welcoming relationship. One who refuses to repent repeatedly should be completely excluded from church activities and treated more like an outcast than a brother.

In terms of the welfare of the church, ejecting the brother serves to preserve the fellowship's purity (1 Cor. 5:6), alert the congregation to the gravity of sin (1 Tim. 5:20), and provide a witness to holiness to an onlooking world. But, in terms of the brother's own welfare, the ostracism's goal is to awaken rather than punish, therefore it must always be done out of humble love and never with a sense of superiority (2 Thess. 3:15). When a church has tried everything to restore a sinful member to holiness of life but has been unsuccessful, that person is to be left to face his or her shame. If he is a true Christian, God won't reject him, but He might let him continue to descend into sin before he becomes desperate enough to repent.

The prohibition against social or even just fellowship with an unrepentant brother does not apply to all interactions. Any chance to correct him and make an attempt to get him to call

back should be seized. Such opportunities should actually be sought for. Therefore, the only reason for the communication should be for reprimand and restoration.

### ***2.3.5 Importance of Church Discipline***

Discipline is extremely important in the Christian context because it is a common aspect of helping people grow towards perfection as well as being. According to common belief, fanatics with limited minds who meddle in issues that are none of their concern practice church discipline (Hammett & Merkle, 2012).

Hammett and Merkle, however, asserted that for those who comprehend the biblical witness, the purpose of church discipline is the restoration of the one who has fallen, and the motivation behind it is love. If one comprehends the greater biblical narrative and recognizes the significance of creation, fall, redemption, and ultimate restoration, discipline is one aspect of discipleship that fits well in the overall drama of redemption. According to Szuromi & Praem (2020), the bible serves as the foundation for church discipline. Hence, the purpose of discipline is not to shame or publicly chastise those who disobey. Instead, the goal is to reintegrate them into the fellowship of the community of the redeemed. Biblical correction is restorative rather than vengeful. The authors emphasized the significance of church discipline to Jesus Christ by pointing out that while Jesus addressed little about the church during His mission, He was exceedingly meticulous about it as He stated in Matthew 18:15–17 (King James Bible, 1769/2017). According to Taggart (2011) church, discipline is a privilege by God to His church, when it is practiced in love and obedience to God, it is a recipe for blessings. The witness of powerlessness in some churches is a result of a lack of discipline in those churches. In as much as it is aimed at bringing about remorsefulness that leads to repentance (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 2 Corinthians. 7:8-10), the pronouncement must be carried out in love with restoration in mind. Sande (2004) illustrated the art of speaking the truth in love using Apostle

Paul's approach in 1 Corinthians 1:2-9 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017). This approach which was characteristic of Paul was seen in his epistles, he always reminds the people who they are before telling them what to do.

White (2014) indicated that church discipline is an urgent need for moral reformation. He further said that discipline cannot be divorced from personal, economic, and ecclesiastical since they are integral components, however, civil punishment cannot be used to correct a spiritual flaw. He posited that the purity of the church hinges on church discipline which must lead to remorseful repentance and subsequent restoration to full fellowship. Kettering-Lane (2013) asserts that church discipline keeps the believer from continuing sinning as well as bringing about repentance from sinful activities. Dipple (2014) further identified church discipline as a central doctrine of the church that enables the church to achieve its core mandate of the salvation of the soul. Church discipline is necessary to hold the reputation of the church in high esteem since unaddressed visible sin in the church significantly affects the Christian witness of the church (Sande, 2004).

It must be noted that without church discipline, the church will be with spot. As stated in Ephesians 5: 27 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017), Paul admonished the church to be without spots and wrinkles and church discipline is one way by which we can ensure that the church is without spots and wrinkles. We must therefore ensure that church discipline is upheld if we are to present the church to Christ as a bride without spot and wrinkle. Jesus also admonishes the people in the book of Mathew that his house shall be a house of prayer when people had turned the church into a marketplace. Jesus had to discipline them to bring them on track. This clearly shows that discipline is important to the church and Jesus himself endorsed it and we must not downplay church discipline in our churches.

Generally, the importance of church discipline cannot be overstated. It is a vital aspect of church life and plays a significant role in promoting the spiritual health of the church community. Church discipline involves correcting and rebuking a believer who has strayed from the path of righteousness, protecting the church from harmful influences, and ensuring that the church remains true to its biblical principles and values. One of the primary reasons why church discipline is so important is that it creates a sense of accountability within the church community. When believers are held accountable for their actions, they are more likely to take their faith seriously and live in a manner that is consistent with the teachings of the Bible. This helps to maintain the spiritual purity and integrity of the church, which in turn fosters an environment that is conducive to the growth of the church community. Church discipline also serves as a form of protection for the church. By identifying and correcting false teachings, immoral conduct, or other harmful behaviors, the church can safeguard its members from the negative consequences of sin. This is particularly important in a world where false teachings and moral relativism are becoming more prevalent. Church discipline helps to prevent these negative influences from infiltrating the church and leading believers astray. Wholly, church discipline is an expression of love. While it may seem harsh to rebuke someone for their actions, it is ultimately done out of a desire to see them repent and return to a right relationship with God. The Bible teaches that discipline is a sign of God's love for us, and it is a way for us to demonstrate our love for one another.

### ***2.3.6 Discipline in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana***

Forgiveness and discipline are fundamental Christian tenets. According to Matthew's 18th chapter, both punishment and forgiveness are necessary for both wholeness and loss. It is concerned with controlling actions that are detrimental to the community. It is ethical in protecting and caring for the most vulnerable (Illian, 2010). Shemesh (2002) identified two penal

codes exclusion and expulsion as disciplinary measures practiced by the church. While the exclusion is temporal in nature, the expulsion is permanent.

A member of the Church of Pentecost of Ghana who disobeys is subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the church's tenets and procedures and the Word of God. The following transgressions are prohibited by the church and will result in punishment: Regularly frequenting questionable locations, such as drinking establishments, brothels, and the like; Falling into open sin, such as intoxication, adultery, fornication, stealing, etc.; Adopting or Spreading False Doctrines; Divorcing a Wife or Husband; Marrying More Than One Wife or Husband; Having a Sister (the Female Member of the Congregation) marrying a married Man (CoP Ministerial Handbook, 2018).

According to Snow (2020), restricting access to sacramental life or leadership roles to people who do not uphold church standards is the punishment that offending members of a church encounter as part of the discipline. Women who are subject to punishment for having children outside of marriage are prohibited from receiving Holy Communion and are also barred from participating in the choir or other church activities. Before this woman can experience forgiveness, she must first take the matter to a church elder, who then refers it to the parish pastor. The pastor then calls the parish committee members to meet with the woman, at which point she must ask for forgiveness; if her request is granted, she will be required to perform manual labor in and around the church; and finally, she must confess her sin to the congregation during a Sunday service. According to the Church of Pentecost's disciplinary policy, the offending member may face any of the following punishments, depending on how serious the infraction was:, Interdiction, Public Rebuke, Suspension, or Excommunication

### ***2.3.7 Church Discipline in some of the mainline churches in Ghana***

The information in the following is taken from the bylaws and constitutions of some of Ghana's mainline churches. the Sekondi Diocese of the Anglican Church of Ghana, the Methodist Church of Ghana, and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The mainline churches have almost similar rules regarding church discipline in the respective churches as enshrined in their constitutions and standing orders in some cases.

#### ***Methodist Church of Ghana***

The Wesleyan Methodist Church's missionary society established a mission on the Gold Coast in 1835, and it was from that mission that the Methodist Church in Ghana was born. When the Deed of Foundation of the Methodist Church was signed at Cape Coast on July 28, 1962, Methodist Ghana was established as an equal and autonomous community of Christian Believers, in no way subordinate to the parent Methodist Church. Prior to 1961, this church was governed by a District Synod under the authority of the Methodist Church of Great Britain (though joining with her in their common faith and heritage). Including all Methodist Circuits, Missions, Organizations, and Institutions that were once governed by the Ghana District Synod (The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana, Revised Edition, 2000).

The revised Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana has among other offenses that will warrant disciplinary action to a Minister as “Immorality or imprudent and unchristian behavior and conduct”. The Disciplinary Council shall then have power to: Suspend the Minister from the exercise of Ministerial duties for a period to be specified by the Council; recommend to Conference through Synod and the General Purposes Council, in their Ministerial Session, the expulsion of the Minister from the Ministry (S.O. 72); recommend to Conference through Synod and the General Purposes Council (GPC), in their Ministerial Session, a change in

status or expulsion of the Minister from the church as a member; recommend to Conference that he/she resumes duty with or without a change of status (2000). The following are the prescription for a member of the Methodist Church under discipline: Whenever a disciplinary action is taken, the name of the disciplined member shall be placed on a list of *Members under Discipline*. While a member is on this list, he shall be excluded from the Lord's Supper and from all business meetings in the Society and Circuit but shall be encouraged to continue to attend public worship; at regular intervals, the Leaders' Meeting shall be given prayerful consideration to all names on the list of *Members under Discipline*. A name shall be removed from the list when restoration to full church fellowship can be recommended by Leaders' Meeting, or when for any reason it is clearly of no use to keep the name on the list; When a member under discipline for polygamy is unable after a period to accept the full discipline of membership, his name shall be transferred to the roll of adherents (2000).

### ***The Presbyterian Church of Ghana***

The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), is governed by a set of guidelines and tenets that are predicated on the supremacy of the triune God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), as well as the centrality or authority of the Holy Scriptures. The PCG is a body of believers and a member of the Word Reformed Family. The Rules, Practice, and Procedure (RPP), which served as the Presbyterian Church of Ghana's "Constitution" until August 2000, was the first written representation of these laws and principles (Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution, 2016).

The Presbyterian Church of Ghana has it incorporated in its constitution that the implementation of discipline in the Church will be based on the Holy Bible. The purpose of discipline is for the glorification of God, the holiness of the Church, and the spiritual advancement of all members, even the offending member. The appropriate censures of the

church given to individuals whose conduct shall have caused them to be the subject of discipline must be administered with loyalty, love, and gentleness. Any act or omission by a member, group, or agent of the Church that is against the Holy Bible's Scriptures, as well as against Church custom and tradition, shall constitute a discipline case (Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution, 2016).

Among other forms of disciplinary action that may apply in the Church is suspension. The suspension in some cases may be the exclusion from a single communion which may prove to be a sufficient punishment; it may be a temporary exclusion from the privileges of the sacraments and the rights of membership. Suspension may or may not be for a specified period in which case it is commonly referred to as *exclusion*. It is removed as soon as sufficient cause for its removal appears. The objective is to deeply impress upon the mind of the offender and to give him/her the opportunity of judging the sincerity of the profession of repentance. Every Court (the suspending body) shall keep track of the disciplined member's development in anticipation of readmission or restoration when the essential requirements have been met (Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution, 2016).

### ***The Anglican Church of Ghana – Sekondi Diocese***

The Diocese of Sekondi Church of the Province of West Africa (Anglican Communion) has it in the 2015 revised edition of their constitution that “A member who has contravened any Regulations of the Church or has wronged his neighbor and has failed to remedy such wrong after Godly admonishing of the Priest-in-Charge or some of the other Sacred Ministers of the Church commits an offense against this Law” (The Constitution of the Diocese of Sekondi in the Church of the Province of West Africa, Anglican Communion, 2015, p. 32). The Priest-in-charge shall solemnly warn an offending member not to present him/herself at the Altar for Holy



Communion until the order and direction from the bishop be known. The Diocesan constitution mandates that any member contravening any of the provisions of this Law shall be liable to such punishment as the bishop in his discretion sees fit to impose.

The disciplinary codes in these mainline churches are administered by regulatory bodies in the church when a member has committed a sin by contravening the regulations of the church and the scripture. The offending church member can experience any of this as disciplinary action: warning by the Priest-in-charge; prevention from taking part in Holy Communion; placing the name of the offender on the notice board of the church as a “member on suspension” which may or may not be for a specified period.

Historically, all churches including The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, The Methodist Church of Ghana, The Sekondi Diocese of the Anglican Church, and the Church of Pentecost of Ghana exercised public discipline for sexual misconduct. However, any form of discipline is non-existent due to less sanctions in current social mores. In addition, the guilt impact of the disciplinary action on the victim is not evaluated, and there are not comprehensive structures laid down for possible restoration of the disciplined church member. The aim of disciplining a member in any of these churches is to glorify God, ensure purity in the church, and benefit the offending church member.

### ***2.3.8 Pastoral care counseling***

Everyone goes through seasons when they need wise help. Sometimes we need help because of our circumstances; life in a fallen world has happened to us (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Romans 8:18-25). Sometimes we need help because of our own sins. Believers in Christ are still in process of being transformed; we should expect a struggle between old sinful desires and our new life in Christ (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Galatians 5:16-24; Ephesians. 5:26-27). Occasionally,

we require assistance because we are perplexed and unsure of our next steps (King James Bible, 1769/2017, James 1:2–5). According to Clinebell, pastoral care is a broad ministry that encompasses the variety of ways that people in faith communities are given spiritually enlivened care for the fundamental goal of enabling them to live life to the fullest extent possible wholeness in all of their dark valleys, sunlit peaks, and every plateau (Clinebell, 2011). Similar findings were made by Moyo (2015), who discovered that pastoral care is driven by compassion, kindness, and mercy for the sick and suffering churchgoers as well as the wider community.

Morris (2018) stated in a review of the book *Moral Injury: Healing Damaged Soul* that moral injury is defined as acts done to or received that betray a person's moral sense of right and wrong. Through conventional pastoral healing, supporting, and directing, the injured soul is restored. In addition, according to Moon (2019), humanity as a whole are morally damaged and morally damaging individuals who reside in morally damaged and morally damaging communities. To transition from moral harm to moral health and vital living, all men depend on one another. According to the reviewer, the morally damaged can be repaired via pastoral care and the job of co-creating processes of restitution, reintegration, and healing of an inner sense of virtue and moral direction through love, trust, and true partnership.

Through the pastor's and the congregation's collective pastoral care, the needs of the congregation's discouraged saints can be met. The growth and evolution of pastoral care in Africa have not been adequately documented, claims Magezi (2016). Yet, pastoral care in Africa develops as a result of people's pastoral care requirements. Pastoral care is the compassionate work of a religious group. Pastoral counselors assist in carrying out God's will in a modest way through their acts of love. The pastoral care or pastoral counseling practiced by the congregation heals the wounded souls of the congregation. According to Scheib (2014), love is a crucial and

suitable place to begin when providing pastoral care since it entails taking deliberate action that is anchored in the relationship's specific circumstances. According to Streets (2014), love serves as the foundation of the church's witness and serves as the driving force behind pastoral counseling and care. When care is pastoral, it goes beyond the immediate problem at hand and reminds the person receiving it that they are a child of God, made in and for relationship (Patton, 2005).

Depending on the historical and broader global context, pastoral care can take many different forms. Pastoral care, according to Pattison (2000), historically appears to have included, to a greater or lesser extent, corporate and individual discipline (assisting Christians overcome sin in themselves and in the Christian community); strengthening the local church; consolation (reassuring and continuing to support Christians throughout moments of either private or public sorrow); spirituality and guidelines about the inner life; designed to protect the Christian community from external threats; and healings. For example, the pastoral care provided to old and weak persons is supportive care that keeps them going through numerous losses. Crisis intervention, on the other hand, is a type of care given to individuals, families, and communities who, due to complicating conditions, find it difficult to go through a crisis or transition utilizing their regular support system and resources.

In contrast, Calvert (2009) defined pastoral care as the institutions, practices, and methods that support the welfare, well-being, and development of children and young people. Similar findings were made by Lartey (2003) who identified pastoral care as therapy, ministry, social, action, empowerment, and interpersonal connection. Three pastoral care paradigms—the classical, the clinical pastoral, and the communal contextual—are identified by Patton (2005) and contrasted. The goal of clinical pastoral care is to emphasize the experiential and reflective

participation in caring relationships as the ideal way to learn about providing care for oneself and others. On the other hand, communal contextual care emphasizes the caring community and the various contexts for care rather than focusing on pastoral care as the job of the ordained pastor.

Another type of pastoral care is when the pastor exorcises a bad spirit. In his research on the treatment of moral harm among Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans, Moyo (2015) found that the veterans experience a sense of being stalked by the ghosts of the combatants they killed. Also, they experience shame about certain war-related actions that verge on moral turbulence.

Inherent in the pastoral counseling process is confession in the form of reliving (Hulme, 1981). Although penance was increasingly presented as a positive emotional experience, as confession would bring not just salvation in eternity but also happiness in this life, Catholic practices of auricular confession relating to emotions and oneself were not wholly negative (Hofman, 2018). According to Murphy and Holste (2014), who approached pastoral care from a different angle, institutional affiliation and student chaplaincy are components of the pastor's care for the congregation, and the significant impact of pastoral care on student learning is mediated by institutional affiliation and student engagement.

Pastoral care is often connected with chaplaincy and ministry to congregations, but pastoral counseling is generally associated with individual or family therapy, according to Stansbury et al. (2012). From a different angle, Potgieter (2015) proposed that pastoral care includes pastoral counseling as one of its dimensions. Counseling portrays redemption when it is carried out by persons who see healing as a process that includes brokenness. Those who seek therapy while they are in suffering benefit from a restorative counseling relationship that gives their broken life acceptance, hope, and purpose. In this way, counseling is similar to the gospel in

that it restores the broken in the framework of a healing relationship. Healing-promoting therapy relationships do not just develop from well chosen approaches; they also spring from the individual's inner existence. Counseling is thus a professional and personal endeavor (McMinn, 1996). Pastoral counseling never stops working to improve a person's physical and mental state until their spiritual health has been restored. Pastoral therapy focuses on guiding people toward a fresh, healthy connection with God as the fundamental source of success and a happy life (Waruta & Kinoti, 2005, p. 6). The emphasis McMinn, Waruta, and Kinoti placed on brokenness as a necessary component of healing and the restorative counseling relationship that provides acceptance, hope, and meaning into their damaged lives make their pastoral care counseling perspective important to this study.

According to Kellenbach (2019), the guilty and the guilty-at-heart can be cleaned through decontamination and remediation cycles of sustainable intervention and transformative tactics rather than dissipating magically. The pastoral care counselor expresses the unfailing love of God, relieving the guilty believer (Hulme, 1981). Since pastors are the first to respond to human needs in religion groups, pastoral care counseling is a significant form of therapy (Davies & Dreyer, 2014). They also mentioned how domestic abuse affects the mind, body, and soul of those who experience emotional difficulties as a result. Pastor is one of the most biblical designations for people designated to provide spiritual services in the context of the church, according to Waruta and Kinoti (2005). Hence, it is the duty of church leaders to be accessible to God's people in times of need and to aid in their journey back to wholeness. The essence of pastoral counseling is this duty. According to Heppner et al. (2016), bad life events do not always lead to higher levels of depression among people who have more social support.

Counseling generally enables people to change unsatisfactory living habits and does offer support and guidance to those dealing with life's unavoidable losses and disappointments (Wayne,1974). When there is a conscious awareness of God in relation to people, God as a reality, and a dialogue about faith in God, these counseling practices become pastoral. Pastoral care counseling is ethical. Sanders (2013) provides the following as ethical guidelines for pastoral counseling: maintaining confidentiality in line with the laws of the state pertaining to privileged communication with the clergy; avoiding manipulating the client; avoiding deciding for the client; avoiding carrying inappropriate messages; not being voyeur, and never becoming romantically or sexually involved with the client.

### ***2.3.9 The demands of pastoral care***

Pastoral care refers to the provision of spiritual and emotional support to individuals, families, and communities. The demands for pastoral care have been on the rise due to several reasons, including social, economic, and cultural changes. The modern world has placed new demands on pastoral care providers, who must adapt to these changes to provide the necessary care effectively.

One of the most prominent demands for pastoral care is the need to provide support to individuals who are struggling with mental health issues. The prevalence of mental health problems has risen in recent years, and people are experiencing increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Pastoral care providers must be equipped with the necessary skills to provide emotional and spiritual support to individuals struggling with mental health issues. Another demand for pastoral care is the need to provide care for the elderly population, who may be isolated and lacking support from their families. Aging often brings about changes that can cause emotional turmoil, such as the loss of friends and loved ones, deteriorating health, and

social isolation. Pastoral care providers must be able to provide support to the elderly population, help them navigate these changes, and provide comfort and companionship. The demands for pastoral care also involve providing support in times of crisis and trauma. In times of catastrophic events, natural disasters, or acts of violence, people may experience significant emotional turmoil, trauma, grief, and loss. Pastoral care providers must be trained to provide support and comfort to individuals affected by these disasters.

In our fast changing society and churches, pastoral care is one of the efficient means by which the church may remain relevant to shifting human needs (Clinebell, 2011). Describing the enormosity of forgiveness and restoration of shalom of the pastoral care duty, Kuepfer (2015) indicated that the foundational event and symbol of the Christian faith, the cross of Christ, should emancipate the Christian from any notion that restoration is an easy exercise. Pastoral care duty is a responsibility that demands accountability from God. Hammett and Merkle (2012) posited that the souls entrusted to the pastor to care for, are the eternal souls of Christ's children and He has the right to demand accountability. Compassion exhaustion and trauma overload are also potential problems for caregivers. When a caregiver is exposed to accounts of terror, horror, violence, hijacking, and terrible experiences of other people, trauma can have an adverse effect on the caring system and result in a type of spiritual tiredness or "caregiver trauma," according to Louw (2015). How adept are pastors as first responders at effectively healing the countless church members who bring their pain to the pastor for support? According to Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2014), pastoral practice does not address the needs of the emotionally damaged African child. They also said that while individual treatment has its place, it is unlikely to provide long-term relief for the problem.

Agbiji and Agbiji (2016) suggested that pastoral care is a reflective practice of faith in situations of sickness, suffering, and pain as direct and/or indirect effects of excessive power and unfair socio-economic, political, and cultural institutions exerting control over people's lives. Additionally, according to Schuhmann and Damen (2018), pastoral care involves interacting with people's attempts to support their existential and spiritual development while also fostering dialogue, advancing social justice, and calling out oppressive behaviors both within their place of employment and in society at large. According to Magezi (2016), pastoral care in Africa needs to be seen as an integrated endeavor needing a variety of talents. Pastoral care in Africa is significantly more complicated than it is elsewhere. The complexity of pastoral care in Africa involves the confluence of many expectations, including those of a community leader to officiate public events, a hospital chaplain, a marriage counselor, a community activist, and a community peace broker. Other expectations include those of a homeless child, a child without school fees, a woman who has been abused, a youth who needs professional guidance, and an elderly woman who lives in the city but is neglected by children. Can a pastor make decisions in these circumstances on what to handle? Definitely not! Magezi suggested that pastoral care's engagement is not linear but rather multifaceted. It entails handling people's problems in the heat of the moment.

The wellbeing and comprehensive development of African individuals and communities depends on pastoral care (Agbiji & Agbiji, 2016). According to Ferguson (2010), the members of the Gethsemane Baptist Church in Newport News, Virginia, established a healing community for both themselves and the neighborhood they were in. As the leadership agreed to offer pastoral care, this became clear. The people receiving ministering from the trained leaders valued the consolation and support, while the pastoral care leaders experienced spiritual growth.



Brunsdon (2020) promotes a congregation-based pastoral care strategy that does not need any special education or training. The pastor gives the congregation the ability to feel adequate sympathy for the grieving church member who is going through the anguish of church discipline.

Pastoral care offers healing to those who are weak in the church, but there needs to be a paradigm shift by extending pastoral care healing to those who are weak in communities.

Mouton (2014) proposed a pastoral care perspective that is specifically focused on the recovery and well-being of the community. This demands for a purposeful change from individually inclined pastoral care to care for and with the community. The chance for healing and reconnection for those who have suffered moral harm is provided through the spiritual care offered by the leaders of faith communities (Ramsay, 2018).

### **Cultural Consideration in Providing Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care is a vital part of any church community. It is a form of emotional and spiritual support provided to members of the flock who are facing difficult times. During the pastoral care process, it is essential to consider the cultural background of an individual in order to ensure that their spiritual and emotional needs are met in a meaningful and appropriate way. In many religious traditions, ethnic and cultural backgrounds play an important role in shaping a person's worldview and beliefs. Therefore, it is critical for pastoral care providers to have a basic understanding of how cultural differences and beliefs impact an individual's view of the world. In addition to being sensitive to cultural differences, pastoral care providers must also take steps to incorporate and respect the cultural traditions of a member's cultural background. For example, Christian pastors working with African American congregations must be mindful of the deep cultural significance of gospel music in their community. This may require incorporating gospel hymns and music into worship services or fostering opportunities for members to share

their stories and cultural experiences. Another important consideration for pastoral care providers is the role of language in religious expression. Many churches have an international congregation, and it is essential to offer services and resources in different languages to ensure that every member feels connected and supported. This may involve hiring bilingual staff, providing translation services during worship services, or offering access to pastoral care resources in various languages.

The church is made up of people from diverse cultures. These ideas should be kept in mind by the pastoral counselor: that we are not all the same; that each social group is a distinct entity that has to be recognized and treated as such; and that group identity binds members in a communal unity of homogeneity (Lartey, 2003). Every tradition and culture in the world has its own type of pastoral care to assist people in overcoming life's difficulties, including those relating to identity, motivation, values, grieving and loss, loneliness, meaning, relationships, and resilience. Pastoral care strives to make life more meaningful. The multiethnic and international nature of society necessitates cultural receptivity. Ogbuanu (2014) agreed by noting that, there is a need for receptivity to spiritual and cultural concerns from an international perspective. According to Moyo (2014), when it comes to the topic of death rites, some African cultural rituals make the humanity of women somewhat different and inferior to that of men. In his writings, he cautioned against the lack of pastoral care, saying that communities needed to continue learning about the universal equality of all persons. All religions and secular groups can benefit from the fundamentals of excellent pastoral care, and providing such care is now a profession. Ghana is home to numerous ethnic groups, each of which has an own cultural identity. According to Kaufert (1977), the Ghanaian cultural practice supports a situational

variation model in which a person becomes more inclusive in how they identify or are perceived by others as they stray from their core group.

### **Restoring the Suspended Church Member**

The restoration of shalom, or God's peace and well-being, is a necessary step on the road to grace (Hawkins & Clinton, 2015). For the restoration process, Sande (2004) suggested employing a variety of methods to minister to the people, such as confessing, teaching, instructing, persuading, supporting, correcting, advising, chastising, or rebuking (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 17:3; Acts 17:17; I Thess. 5:14; II Tim. 2:24; 4:2). Hammett and Merkle (2012) prescribed the following as the process of restoration in line with Paul's admonishing in Gal. 6:1 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017). They suggested that the individual who unintentionally sinned should be made whole. Confrontation, which results from analyzing another's actions, is what the restoration suggests. The exchange must be handled with kindness and humility. The confrontation must be conducted in a caring but tough and compassionate tone. Admonishing needs to be done in a sibling or brotherly way. The goal of discipline in the church is to reconstruct what has been destroyed in a person's life. James affirmed that when people who stray are corrected, the goal is restoration. "My brothers, keep in mind this if one of you should stray from the truth and someone should bring him back: "Whoever turns a sinner from the mistake of his way will save him from death and purge many sins" (James 5:19–20, King James Bible, 1769–2017).

In Ps.40:1-3 King James Bible (1769/2017), David wrote that God might repair and use shattered vessels for His purposes. I patiently awaited the Lord, and when I cried out, he turned to me and heard me. He pulled me out of the muck and mire, the slimy abyss, and planted my

feet firmly on a rock so that I could stand. He helped me learn a brand-new hymn of adoration for our God. Many people will witness, be terrified, and trust in the Lord.

In his commentary on the second epistle to the Corinthians, Henry (2016) provided the following as the basis for the restoration of the suspended church member as prescribed by Paul. The Apostle was grieved about the gravity of the sin of the incestuous man, and of that, the church at Corinth did not mourn, that made the man puffed up, I Cor. 5:2 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017). Paul then realized that the punishment of the incestuous man was sufficient for him, II Cor. 2:6 (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017). When the man was humiliated and it was clear that they had followed his instructions, Paul was pleased with the outcome of his advice to the church. In order to resume their communion, he asked for his speedy restoration. He accomplished this by pleading with the church for forgiveness, releasing him from ecclesiastical reproaches, and consoling him. They must also prove their love for him by demonstrating that their criticism and reprimands were motivated by both love for him as a person and hatred of his sin, and that their goal was to change rather than destroy him. The church had shown obedience to his direction by ensuring the offender, and now he would like them to comply with his desire to restore him. The premise for this restoration process was that the penitent was in danger of being swallowed up with excessive sorrow; that he was so aware of this fault; that he was so suffering under his punishment; and that he was in danger of falling into despair. His readiness to subscribe to the forgiveness by the church in this matter. “To whom you forgive I also forgive” (vs. 10). Another weighty reason for forgiveness and restoration of the penitent is (vs. 11) “Lest Satan gets an advantage against us”. That the church and, for that matter, Christ's ministers be perceived as being overly strict and stern, deterring people from visiting them because of this. In reinstating the penitent in the church, as in other matters, Henry said, wisdom is advantageous to

guide and to govern in accordance with so that the ministry may not be condemned for indulging vice on the one hand or for being too harsh with sinners on the other.

Suspension in the church as prescribed by the church leadership is aimed at resulting in humility, submission, and repentance (Reed, 2007). Kimble (2014), describing discipline to repentance, indicated that Edward was consistent in his dealings with church discipline. In his consistency, he always exercises this practice in a gracious manner, always with restoration through repentance in mind. His seriousness in discipline was aimed at saving the eternal life of his people.

The suspension of a church member is never a pleasant experience for anyone involved. However, in some cases, restoring a suspended member can be a beneficial step for both the individual and the church community. There are several reasons why restoring suspended church members is essential. Firstly, it is crucial to bear in mind that every individual Christian is a valued member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 12-31). Therefore, when a member is suspended, this can negatively impact not just the individual but can cause division and harm to the entire community. Restoring the individual helps to bring unity back into the church community, and it helps to maintain the love of Christ. Secondly, sometimes individuals may have been suspended due to minor offences or misunderstandings. Forgiveness and compassion are fundamental teachings of Christianity, and restoration can be viewed as an act of love and forgiveness towards an individual in need. The Bible encourages church members to restore those who have been 'caught in sin' and to do so with gentleness, care, and compassion (Galatians 6: 1). Thirdly, restoration provides the opportunity for the individual to repent and make amends for their mistakes. It is important to remember that all humans sin and sometimes make mistakes. However, when a suspended member is restored to the church, they can be given

the support and guidance to understand the actions that led to their suspension while also making restitution to the church and the individuals involved. Fourthly, restoring a suspended member can also comprise an act of leadership within the church. Christ encourages His followers to be servants and leaders not because of power, but because of their desire to help build a community of believers (Mark 9: 35). Restoring suspended members allows church leaders to demonstrate the love and grace of Christ while also showing care for each member of the congregation.

#### **2.4 Framework for restoring suspended members in The Church of Pentecost**

Every culture, including the church, is prone to misconduct. According to Chivasa (2017), the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in Zimbabwe is adept at upholding strict discipline within the church to guarantee sanity. Members who commit misbehavior on their own are subject to reprimand. The guilty member's relationship with the specific church where the wrongdoing happened is not addressed by the church in any future steps. Chivasa proposed a peace-building framework to address the negative effects of misconduct on the offending church member and to help encourage and deepen the mending of the relationship.

The Church of Pentecost of Ghana holds that restoration should be used for the process of bringing back a disciplined offender into fellowship. Discipline is not complete without restoration. Restoration as a component of discipline must be given attention. In the process, a counselor or a mature Christian should be assigned to the person under discipline to counsel him or her. In much the same way mature people are assigned to support the person undergoing a grief process to facilitate their healing. The congregation should be encouraged to support the person undergoing discipline and not shun him/her (CoP Ministerial Handbook, 2018).

## 2.5 Research gap

Misconduct suspension is a common disciplinary action taken by organizations to address issues such as violations of policies, procedures, and codes of conduct. While some research exists on various forms of disciplinary actions, there is scarce literature on the research gap in misconduct suspension. This gap in research is significant as it hinders the development of effective misconduct suspension policies within organizations.

Firstly, the available research on misconduct suspension has reported mixed findings regarding its effectiveness. Some studies suggest that misconduct suspension serves as a deterrent to future misconduct, while others have found that it has no effect on reducing future misconduct. This lack of consensus implies a need for further research to provide clarity on the effectiveness of misconduct suspension. Secondly, there is a lack of research examining the causes of misconduct in organizations. Understanding the underlying causes of misconduct can help organizations develop more effective suspension policies. Without this knowledge, suspending an employee may merely function to remove them from the workplace, rather than addressing the root causes of their misconduct. Thirdly, while misconduct suspension is viewed as a means of protecting the workplace from harm, there is a lack of research on the impact of suspension on the employee. There is a need to understand the impact of suspension on factors such as employee morale, productivity, and job satisfaction. This knowledge can help organizations determine the most appropriate form of disciplinary action rather than relying solely on suspension as the default. Finally, there is a gap in research on the effects of rehabilitation options for suspended employees. Reintegrating suspended employees back into the workplace can be challenging, and organizations need to have effective rehabilitation options

to ensure these employees can work without further misconduct. However, there is a lack of research on the impact of rehabilitation on reducing future misconduct.

Based on a review of existing documents from the church of Pentecost and other churches (i.e., Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican), it has come to light those churches in Ghana have various forms of disciplinary action against members who commit various forms of sins including sexual misconduct. The members who misconduct themselves sexually are suspended. Some of these suspended members have abandoned the Christian faith due to the impact of guilt and shame they experienced and the lack of care and love from pastors and other church members. Pastors in the various churches only tend to announce the suspension of the members in question. Thus, these members are left to their fate without any monitoring or care to find out the impact of guilt of the suspension they are going through. It must be noted that the motive of suspension is not to drive members away from the faith but as a form of discipline to correct a member and restore their relationship with God. In The Church of Pentecost, there are no further activities to ascertain the effect of the guilt the suspended church member goes through because of sexual misconduct. It's against this background that this research intended to examine the impact of guilt on suspension on the suspended member of the church because of sexual misconduct and to assess the activities of the church that make the church a healing community to heal such wounded souls.

## **2.6 Summary**

It takes a large ministry to heal the hurt in the church. In order to help individuals live lives with the greatest amount of wholeness possible in all of their gloomy valleys, bright peaks, and every plateau, as defined by Clinebell, many different forms of care are provided to people in faith communities (2011). Good pastoral care can be offered when the caregiver recognizes



the anguish of the sufferer and feels his or her guilt. The causes that precede behavior and the results that follow are what regulate it. The restoration of a member who has been suspended because of sexual misconduct requires the pastor who is providing pastoral care to model the love and care of Christ which will elicit positive behavior. Available documents of The Church of Pentecost and other churches revealed that there are forms of disciplinary codes in their respective constitutions and standing orders. They did not, however, develop a structured framework to evaluate the impact of the guilt of suspension that a suspended church member experiences in order to foster the supportive environment for such a church member's restoration. The documents of the various churches did not mention the church's actions that make it a healing community. With a focus on the Ghanaian city of Axim, this study will investigate The Church of Pentecost of Ghana's actions.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

The methodologies and procedures used for the study form a significant part of doing research or carrying out a particular study. Also, all research is predicated on a set of philosophical assumptions about what constitutes "legitimate" research and which research methodology(ies) is(are) best suited for each study's goal of advancing knowledge. It is crucial to understand these assumptions in order to undertake and assess any research. These presumptions are used to explore any philosophical position(s) made by researchers, which will help understand the rationale for the technique selection for the study. The choice of an acceptable methodology for a research study will typically depend on factors like research objectives, the study's scope, etc. The research paradigm, research approach/strategy, research design, study population, sampling technique, sample size, data collecting, and data analysis will all be covered in this chapter. The selection of a suitable technique is a crucial component of any research endeavor (Davis, 1996; Stevens, 2002). The methodological approaches that the researcher should employ are presented in Chapter 3. This is required to give the proper context for analyzing the research's findings and conclusions.

Understanding the research theory behind this study is necessary in order to accurately characterize the research method that will be used to conduct the study. Research philosophy refers to the "generation of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge," according to Saunders et al (p.31). The interpretive paradigm's methodology aims to comprehend a problem from a person's point of view. The interpretive paradigm, which contends that "reality is socially created," emerged from the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, and

others in the study of interpretive understanding known as hermeneutics (Mertens, 2005). This paradigm demonstrates the diversity of perspectives and approaches to a given topic or situation. Different actors' differing points of view help us understand the issue more thoroughly.

Relativism is individually constructed and derives multiple meanings from the existence of knowledge. Examples include case studies, phenomenology, ethnography, and hermeneutics. The study made use of the interpretive paradigm to comprehensively understand the subjective views on the impact on the guilt of suspension of the suspended church members because of sexual misconduct in the church. This research used hermeneutical phenomenology qualitative methodology as the research strategy to achieve the stated objectives. Connolly's (2003) three-stage method for analyzing qualitative data served as the basis for the examination of the qualitative data that was gathered. Connolly proposed the creative phase, interpretative phase, and theorizing phase as the three stages. By utilizing qualitative research techniques, the researcher will be able to comprehend how suspension impacts the victim of sexual misconduct in a particular church, as well as how it impacts his or her life and relationship with Christ.

This study looked at how guilt about being suspended due to sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost in Axim affects the suspended church member. Design, study questions, locations, participants, instrumentation, process, the researcher's role, data collecting, data analysis, and summary will be the sections of this chapter. The objective was to gather data that will address open-ended research questions, provide suggestions for additional research, and offer guidance to pastors in how to do their work in a way that meets the specific requirements of the congregation.

### 3.1 Research design

The study utilizes an interpretive qualitative design with the use of primary data which was obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The qualitative technique is supported by researchers who value an inductive approach, an emphasis on personal meaning, and the significance of accurately portraying the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2008).

For the purpose of this study, non-numerical data on The Church of Pentecost in Axim were gathered and analyzed in order to determine how guilt over a member's suspension for sexual misconduct affects that person. In the study, individual interviews were conducted. The researcher has the chance to get detailed information from the respondent using this conversational approach. The interview was conducted face-to-face, which improved the ability to interpret the respondent's body language and match the responses.

The focus of this study's hermeneutical phenomenological qualitative research methodology is on people's individualized subjective experiences. Through the subject's life tales, an attempt is made to reveal the world as it is experienced by the subject (Kafle, 2013). The phenomena is fully described by the hermeneutical phenomenological research design. The research used the retrospective phenomenology approach since it examines long-standing church practices. According to Guillen (2019), phenomenology develops as an examination of events or important experiences made visible to consciousness. It is separated from experience and removed from knowledge of the object itself. Heppner et al. (2016) claim that phenomenology is a qualitative study approach focused on discovery with origins in constructivism and Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy.

In-depth interviews are used in phenomenological research to gather information on the research object, which is already covered in the interviewee's biography. Interviews with study

subjects are used to learn how they perceive their own experiences. The conversational interview, on the other hand, minimizes the subjective interpretation of an experience in favor of eliciting its underlying meaning (Guillen, 2019). This helps the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of why the occurrence ensued as it did, and what might become significant to consider more comprehensively in future research. The hermeneutical phenomenological methodology is deemed appropriate for this research as it provides an organized way to collect data and present an in-depth analysis of the phenomena under study.

### **Research questions**

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How is the impact of guilt on the suspension of the suspended church member who has sexually misconducted him/herself?
2. What are the activities of the church in providing healing to the church member suspended because of sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost in Ghana?

### **3.2 Research setting**

The Western Region of Southern Ghana's Nzema East Municipal, which covers an area of 2194 square kilometers, is home to Axim as its capital (9.8 percent of the total area of the Western Region). Some 25,000 people live in the larger Axim area. The closest major city, Takoradi, is 64 kilometers away and roughly an hour's drive to the east from Axim, which lies near Ivory Coast to the west ([ghanatogether.org](http://ghanatogether.org)). One of the administrative offices for the Church of Pentecost (CoP) is located at Axim, and a pastor in charge of it. The Church of Pentecost is a community-based church with branches in surrounding villages whose population and cultural dynamics are nearly identical, except from convenience and proximity. The results of this survey can serve as a general indicator of how the branches are doing across Ghana as a

whole and in the nearby communities. This can serve as a starting point for the church's future investigation into that setting and will also aid in its strategic planning, which will assist the ministers in meeting the specific requirements of the congregation.

### **3.3 Participants**

The research was conducted in the church of Pentecost at Axim, a city in Ghana. The study intended to purposively select suspended members in the church, those currently on suspension because of sexual misconduct. The choice of Church of Pentecost at Axim is appropriate, in that, there are issues of suspensions because of sexual misconduct among members. The population of the study therefore were the members of the church who were serving suspension because of sexual misconduct at Axim. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method popular in qualitative research, was utilized to locate and choose information-rich examples connected to the phenomenon of interest. A total of thirteen (13) interview participants were chosen (Bryman, 2012).

#### **Sampling procedure and sampling size**

For this study, a non-probability sampling strategy called "purposeful sampling" was used. By using this sample strategy, the researcher can better grasp the experiences of the chosen group, apply his discretion in solving problems, and gain understanding of the study subject(s). Researchers choose "information-rich situations" to help them achieve this goal.

The available data (unpublished) at the church office of The Church of Pentecost at Axim indicates twenty (20) of the adult members are serving suspension because of sexual misconduct. This number represents 4% of the total adult membership. The study used thirteen (13) of the members who were serving suspension because of sexual misconduct as the sample size because of the small number. When conducted within a non-positivist paradigm, qualitative research, according to Boddy (2016), is concerned with gaining a depth of understanding. He came to the

conclusion that a sample size of one is the smallest that can be used in this kind of qualitative research.

A popular sampling technique is called "purposeful sampling," in which participants are chosen based on pre-determined standards that are pertinent to a particular research subject. Purposive sampling, also known as "judgment sampling," aims to produce instances with lots of information for in-depth research (Curtis et al. 2000). This is due to the fact that participants are individuals who have the necessary position, expertise, or particular understanding to supply the data researchers need. Interviewing entails posing questions to study participants and listening to their responses. It should be mentioned that there are various types of interviews, such as face-to-face group interviews and individual interviews. The semi-structured interview will be employed for this investigation.

### **3.4 The researcher's role**

The focus of this study's hermeneutical phenomenological qualitative research methodology is on people's individualized subjective experiences. In research, phenomenology is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon or experience. Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that seeks to understand the essence of human experiences, emotions, and consciousness. A phenomenological study often involves the use of interviews, observations, and other methods to gather data from participants. Through the subject's life tales, an attempt is made to reveal the world as it is experienced by the subject (Kafle, 2013). The researchers played the role of a phenomenologist. The researcher's role as a phenomenologist is crucial to the success of the research. The phenomenological role of the researcher allowed him to be a compassionate and empathetic listener, understanding and respecting the varied experiences of the participants. The researcher approached the research

process with an open mind, be non-judgmental, and put their personal biases aside. He established a rapport with the participants, make them feel comfortable, and provided a safe and secure environment for them to share their experiences.

During the data collection phase, the researcher employed various techniques like interviews, observations, and focus groups to gather relevant information from the participants. He used probing questions, active listening, and provide enough time for the participants to elaborate their responses. The researcher kept an open mind and allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings without judgment. The researcher analyzed the data collected carefully, organizing the information based on themes and patterns that emerge. This process requires the researcher to be attentive, reflective, and open-minded. He used the findings to create a description of the phenomenon that accurately reflects the participants' experiences. This information will then be used to create in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon being studied, often in the form of narratives or case studies. The final stage of the phenomenological study is to present the findings. The researcher used a clear, concise, and understandable language to communicate and disseminate their findings. He also presented the limitations of their study and explicitly state any recommendations for future research.

Before beginning the phenomenological investigation, researchers are supposed to put away all emotions, presumptions, prior scientific knowledge, and judgments about the phenomenon in order to have a clear and unclouded perspective, according to Heppner et al. (2016). The researcher is a Minister at The Church of Pentecost where the study is being conducted, hence there is a chance that there will be a bias towards verification that confirms preconceived views. By completely and properly detailing the data collection process and documenting every piece of information to attain reliability of the phenomenon, the researcher



can eliminate biases in the study (Starman, 2017). According to Wertz (2005), who referred to phenomenology as scientific knowledge, it starts with a new and objective description of the subject at hand.

### **3.5 Instrument/Material**

In order to explore or investigate the effects of guilt on suspension on a suspended church member due to sexual misconduct and the church activities that make it a healing community to heal the wounded soul of such suspended church members in The Church of Pentecost in Axim, a qualitative interview guide was used. The study's objectives served as the basis for the semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide's semi-structured format gave the chance to delve deeper into any problems that came up during the interview. A dependable source of comparable qualitative data, the semi-structured interview guide offers interviewers a clear set of instructions. In order to give the researchers the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the subject of interest necessary for creating pertinent and insightful semi-structured questions, semi-structured interviews are frequently preceded by observation, informal interviewing, and unstructured interviewing. The interview guide was made up of twenty questions that capture the experience of the suspended members and the activities of the church as a healing community. "Please tell me about your experience with The Church of Pentecost in Axim ever since you have been in the church," is an example of a question from the interview guide. In order to properly cross-reference primary findings with secondary data and boost the validity of the research findings, the researcher used the triangulation approach.

Other research materials that were used are a tape recorder, pen, and notebook. The tape recorder aided in recording the interview sessions which were later transcribed. The pen and notebook were useful in taking field notes such as the participants' body language (non-verbal

cues), emotions expressed as well as the environmental conditions during the data collection since the recorder cannot capture such moments.

### **3.6 Data collection procedure**

The mode of data collection used in this research was based mostly on primary methods. Ethical clearance was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval, an introductory letter was taken from the department and copies were sent to the selected congregation of The Church of Pentecost to gain access to the study to be conducted. After explaining to them the purpose of the study, interview dates and venues that will be convenient to the participants were set with those who will agree to participate in the research. The purpose of the study was once again explained to the participants to make sure they understand what they were going to partake in. Also, participants were allowed to ask questions to clear any doubts in their minds about what the research is about. When rapport has been established, participants were asked to sign a consent form to testify that they were not coerced to take part in the study after assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. A face-to-face interview was used to collect the data among the participants.

The semi-structured interview for the research was conducted in 'Twi' since it is the primary language of the participants. This provided flexibility for participants to express their feelings. The interview questions which were crafted in English were translated into the Twi language by the researcher who equally uses Twi as his primary language. The response by the participants were as well transcribed into English. The interviews were audio-recorded with the approval of the participants and stored in a password-protected file to ensure confidentiality. The interview session took 30 to 60 minutes.

Peers who are familiar with the study were tasked to review the materials and listen to the researcher's concerns and thoughts as they were briefed on the design by the researcher. Peer debriefing "helps develop credibility by allowing a colleague who is a professional outside of the setting and who has some broad grasp of the study to assess materials, and emerging designs, and listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns," according to Erlandson (1993, p. 140). The transcript were made accessible to the participant so they can confirm the content is an accurate portrayal of the dialogue that took place during the interview as part of the process to ensure the reliability of the data collected.

The study made every effort to ensure that rigorous adherence to Covid-19 protocols will be used to guide the whole data gathering procedure in order to respect those protocols. This entails setting up a setting that will permit social isolation and take into account interviewees' worries about how the interview will be conducted in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines. The interview was conducted by the researcher with thirteen (13) participants over the course of five (5) days. The researcher planned to meet with each participant for 30 to 60 minutes, and he met with three responders in a single day.

### ***Interviews***

The first through fifth questions are knowledge tests that are meant to build on the participant's interaction with The Church of Pentecost in Axim. The goal of these questions is to build rapport between the subject and the researcher by being straightforward and unthreatening. Questions six through eight are knowledge-based questions on the participant's understanding of sexual misconduct suspension, the guilt of the suspension, and the initial feeling at the pronouncement of the suspension on the respondent. Questions nine through twelve find out from the participant the impact of guilt on suspension because of sexual misconduct. They are an

expression of any difficulties the suspended church members may be having on an emotional, bodily, and spiritual level. The researcher can use questions 13 through 18 to find the church's activities that make it a healing community by healing the wounds of the suspended church members. The communal living of the members is therapeutic. Questions nineteen and twenty seek to confirm from the respondent whether the church factors the wounded soul in their activities.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The three-stage analysis of qualitative data by Connolly (2003) served as the basis for the examination of the data gathered. The creative phase, the interpretative phase, and the theorizing phase are the three steps proposed by Connolly. The first two stages, that is, generative and interpretive phases were however employed as the project did not intend to generate a theory. At the generative stage, the data obtained through interviews were coded into themes and sub-themes, which correspond to the questions and probes associated with the main research questions. A comparative and distinctive approach were adopted to analyze similarities and differences in responses (in this case verbatim quotes). Notice was also taken of new themes that emerged from the responses that did not fall under any of the main questions or further probes.

According to Ping (2008), the process of methodically searching and organizing the interview transcripts constitutes data analysis in qualitative research. Usually, this entails classifying or coding the data. In order to make sense of the vast amounts of data gathered, it was necessary to first reduce the amount of raw data, then find important patterns, and then derive meaning from the data. The method used to analyze the data gathered was broken down into the following steps:

- Step 1: The transcription of the voice recorded: All the voice recorded responses from the participants were painstakingly transcribed.
- Step 2: Reviewing the transcript: The researcher skimmed through each transcript and made notes on their initial impressions. After that, each line of the transcript was carefully examined one more time, line by line.
- Step 3: Coding or indexing is the act of labeling pertinent components. Words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, activities, or acts that are pertinent were labelled. Activities or acts that may have been repeated multiple times, those that surprised the researcher, or those that the interviewee directly stated are important were the relevant elements that drew coding or indexing. The researcher made every effort to maintain objectivity by adhering to the transcripts and not hesitating to code a wide variety of phenomena.
- Step 4: In order to combine many codes into one category, it was determined which codes were most crucial. In this situation, many of the original codes were eliminated because new codes were made by fusing two or more codes.
- Step 5: Following the labeling of the categories, a choice was made regarding which of the categories is the most pertinent and how they relate to one another.
- Step 6: If there is a hierarchy among the categories or if one category is more significant than the other, the researcher made that determination.
- Step 7: Writing up the findings: This section included an explanation of the categories and their relationships. In light of findings from related, prior studies that were published in pertinent scientific journals, the results were discussed and their interpretation were made.

The contents of the various themes were read through and written as narratives, preserving verbatim quotes. At the interpretive stage, the data was reduced, and this was achieved by determining the patterns between the themes and sub-themes. Qualitatively, the Researcher intended to conduct content analysis. This made it easier for the researcher to examine the main themes and issues in the responses from the chosen suspended members.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

The degree to which the results of a qualitative study may be accepted is known as its trustworthiness, and it is determined by the research's quality standards (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). While qualitative research is highly valued for its rich and nuanced findings, some critics have questioned the trustworthiness of its methods and findings.

#### ***Credibility***

The first principle of trustworthiness in qualitative research is credibility. Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the accuracy and authenticity of the data collected and the interpretations made by the researcher. Semi-structured in-depth interviews was conducted as the primary source of data collection. The rationale behind the use of in-depth interviews as opposed to surveys is that in-depth interviews provided better flexibility for participants to express their feelings and guide their own paths to underlying answers rather than designing a defined route which is characteristic of most survey questionnaires.

One way to establish credibility is to use multiple sources of data, such as interviews and observations, in order to triangulate findings and reduce the risk of bias. Additionally, the researcher can establish credibility by engaging in prolonged engagement with the research participants, showing a deep understanding of their perspectives, and sharing the interpretations with them to gain feedback and correction.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Korstjens & Moser, 2018) stated that the credibility of research is determined by whether the research findings are a valid interpretation of the participants' original viewpoint and represent believable information derived from the participants' original data. One way to establish validity involves participant verification. This technique involves having participants review and confirm the findings to validate the accuracy of the results. Another approach to establishing validity is peer debriefing. In this practice, professionals outside the research process are asked to review and provide feedback on the results, thus ensuring that the findings are consistent with the data collected.

Triangulation is also a validity technique where researchers strive for convergence across various and distinct sources of information to construct themes or categories in a study, claim Creswell and Miller (2000). Triangulation is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research, and it is a method used to increase the validity of research findings by providing converging evidence from multiple angles. This approach uses various data sources and methods to answer research questions and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Triangulation ensures that the conclusions drawn from research data are reliable by confirming the findings through different methods or data techniques, which helps to rule out the possibility of inaccurate interpretation or incorrect analysis.

One type of triangulation is data triangulation, which involves using different data sources to explore the same research question. For instance, a researcher may collect data through interviews, focus groups, and observations. Combining these different types of data provides a more complete picture of the research question being studied. The researcher can then compare and contrast information from the various sources to identify patterns, trends, or anomalies that appear repeatedly. Another form of triangulation is investigator triangulation,

which refers to the use of multiple researchers to analyze the data. By involving multiple researchers, it is possible to avoid individual biases coming into play and identify alternative interpretations of the research findings. Methodological triangulation is another approach that involves the use of multiple methods to explore a research question. The researcher may use different methodologies from different disciplines such as anthropology or psychology when researching human behavior, for instance. The researcher can then combine the findings from these methodologies to create a richer and more in-depth picture of the subject being studied. Lastly, theoretical triangulation involves using theories from multiple disciplines to explore the research question. Researchers can apply various theoretical perspectives to answer the same research question, giving a broader understanding of the research topic being studied.

### ***Transferability***

The second principle of trustworthiness is transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings. While qualitative research typically focuses on specific individuals or groups in particular contexts, the researcher can enhance transferability by providing rich descriptions and explanations of the research context and the participants' experiences. This enables readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to their own situations.

The extent to which the results are transferable to various contexts determines how transferable qualitative research is (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to ensure that the content is an accurate depiction of the responses given during the interview, the researcher will need to give a detailed description of the participants' responses and make the transcript of the interview available to the participants.



To enhance the transferability of qualitative research, researchers need to design the study in a way that fosters generalizability without sacrificing the richness and depth of the data. One effective strategy is to use purposive sampling to select participants who are representative of the target population and relevant to the research question. By selecting participants who have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, researchers can ensure that their findings are grounded in the lived experiences of the participants and can be applicable across a range of contexts.

Another way to enhance transferability is to use a detailed description of the research context, including the setting, research participants, data collection methods, and analysis procedures. This information should be presented in a way that enables readers to understand the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the research was conducted. The use of thick description can also help readers to identify and evaluate the similarities and differences between the research context and their own context, facilitating the transfer of findings to other settings.

Moreover, researchers can enhance transferability by using a theoretical framework that explains the relationships between the variables under study. By using theory to guide their research, researchers can identify the factors that are likely to influence the phenomenon of interest and explore how these factors interact in various contexts. The use of theory allows researchers to explore the generalizability of their findings and identify the conditions under which their findings may be applicable.

### ***Dependability***

The third principle of trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the research findings over time and across different researchers. One way to ensure dependability is to use rigorous and transparent methods for collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data, such as audiorecording and transcription, memo writing, and

member checking. Additionally, the researcher can enhance dependability by documenting their decision-making processes and participating in peer-review and intercoder reliability checks to ensure consistency with other researchers.

Korstjens and Moser (2018) posited that qualitative research is dependable when the process of analysis is consistent with accepted standards. Confirmability concerns that the interpretation of the data is devoid of the personal biases of the researcher. This can be achieved by the researcher describing the data collection accurately and comprehensively. Also documenting every piece of information (Starman, 2017).

The goal of dependability in qualitative research is to increase the credibility, transparency, and trustworthiness of the research process by generating accurate, comprehensive and reliable results. Dependability achieves four fundamental goals in qualitative research that are 1) verifying the integrity of data collection, 2) ensuring that the analysis is consistent, 3) establishing the stability of the findings, and 4) strengthening the translatability of the results. Dependability is maintained through a variety of practices or techniques, including the use of multiple and diverse data sources, conducting data analysis concurrently with data collection, conducting data analysis independently by various researchers, conducting member checks, establishing a set of standardized data analysis procedures, creating audit trails, and recording the research process thoroughly and accurately.

The use of diverse data sources is vital in achieving dependability in qualitative research. Researchers can use various methods such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, and observation, etc. It is also necessary to collect data from different participants or views in the data collection process. Data collection can be done over time, or repeated at different intervals, to ensure that the findings are stable and that the data is comprehensive. Conducting data analysis concurrently

with data collection is another critical aspect of maintaining dependability. Researchers need to examine the data as they collect it, enabling them to identify gaps, contradictions or inconsistencies. Therefore, if they spot errors or inconsistencies, they can fix or clarify them on spot. The reliability of data analysis can be increased by conducting independent data analysis by different researchers. Researchers who analyze data independently are more likely to verify the reliability of the data and the validity of the findings.

Member checks enhance dependability by allowing participants to verify and evaluate the researchers' interpretations or coding of their data. Member checks ensure that the researcher has accurately interpreted and represent the participants' perspective, which can strengthen the findings' credibility. Finally, audit trails, standardized data analysis procedures, and thorough records of the research process also enhance dependability. Audit trails allow other researchers to examine the study's procedures and critically evaluate the research and interpretation of the findings.

### *Confirmability*

The fourth and final principle of trustworthiness is confirmability. Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research findings, and the extent to which they reflect the experiences and perspectives of the participants rather than the researcher's biases and preconceptions. To establish confirmability, the researcher can use reflexivity to actively reflect on their own positionality and biases, and engage in dialogue with other researchers and participants to challenge and validate their interpretations. One way to achieve confirmability is to use explicit and systematic methods in data analysis and interpretation. For instance, researchers should document their analytic procedures, including the coding process and any emerging themes or

categories of analysis. This makes it easier for other researchers to follow and replicate the study's findings.

Another way to achieve confirmability is to use multiple authors in the data analysis and interpretation process. This ensures that the study's findings are not influenced by a single researcher's biases or subjective judgments. In addition, multiple authors can serve as a check on the data analysis process, as they can raise any discrepancies or disagreements and work collaboratively to resolve them.

Confirmability can also be enhanced through triangulation, which involves the use of a variety of research methods or data sources to cross-check findings. This can help to ensure that the study's conclusions are not based on a single data source, but are instead supported by multiple sources of evidence.

Moreover, researchers should also be reflexive, which means that they should regularly examine their own assumptions and biases in the research process. They should document how their own background and experiences might have influenced the research questions, data collection, and interpretation of findings.

Finally, researchers should acknowledge and address any potential limitations of their study that may affect the confirmability of their findings. This includes limitations that arise from study design, data collection methods, and the researcher's own perspectives and biases. Additionally, the researcher can use techniques such as thick description and member checking to demonstrate the alignment between their interpretations and the participants' experiences.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics play a crucial role in qualitative research as it involves human participants, and the researcher is responsible for ensuring their safety, confidentiality, and informed consent. The code of ethics in qualitative research maintains the researcher's professional responsibility, maintaining research integrity, avoiding manipulation, and representing accurate results. Ethical considerations in qualitative research are essential to serve specific purposes, including avoiding harm, maintaining privacy, providing informed consent, and protecting the integrity of the research. Harm involves any undesired or negative effects on human participants in qualitative research. The researcher is responsible for ensuring the participant's safety and preventing any harm, either physical or psychological. This includes proper documentation of protocols, such as post-research counsel if needed. It is critical to employ checks and balances to minimize any negative impacts on participants during and after the research process.

Maintaining privacy and confidentiality is an ethical consideration to avoid breaching the participant's trust. The researcher should exercise caution when collecting and storing data related to the study. Participants should be assured that their data will be used solely for the research purpose, and they must be informed of the process used to handle, store, and protect their data. Any personal identifiable or sensitive information should be protected by adequate encryption and stringent protocols.

Informed consent and voluntary participation are necessary ethical considerations for conducting qualitative research. The participants must willingly participate in the research without being coerced or forced; it includes gaining clear informed consent from participants after explaining the research process, risks, and benefits. The researcher must gain consent from the participants, especially vulnerable populations such as children, individuals with disabilities,

and prisoners, where consent may be challenging to obtain. This helps ensure that the participants are comfortable with the research process and the researcher can establish a trust-based relationship.

Research integrity is a critical ethical consideration in qualitative research. The researcher must follow the guidelines and protocols prescribed by the institution, such as recording all information accurately and honestly. The researcher should avoid manipulating data or providing results that misrepresent the truth, thus hampering the research's validity. A fundamental component of research integrity is ensuring that the researcher maintains objectivity in collecting and analyzing data. It is essential for ethical standards to be adhered to in any research involving human subjects. Throughout the research project, the researcher ensured that the interviews conducted were in line with expected ethical standards. Ethical approval of the study was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that it conforms to the standards of Doctoral research. In addition, all interviews were conducted with the consent of both the participants and The Church of Pentecost at Axim. The researcher also informed interview participants of the aim and objectives of the project. To ensure the anonymity of participants and confidentiality of the information they provided, they were made not to mention their names and the information provided were not shared with any person not associated with the study. To further ensure anonymity, the names of individuals from which participants were selected was not mentioned.

Before starting the interview, the randomly chosen respondents were provided with updated informed consent. "Informed consent received at the beginning of the research must be reaffirmed periodically since the human environment and the power relationship within it continuously evolve," according to Erlandson (1993, p. 153). There were no any kind of payment because participation in the study is voluntary. The interview was piloted in a small sample

outside of the study to confirm the clarity of the questions and wording, according to Connelly (2008), who said that a pilot study is intended to lead the future study. Specialists in the field were consulted to review the technique.

### **3.9 Summary**

The study examined the impact of guilt of suspension on the suspended church member because of sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost at Axim. Design, research questions, locations, participants, method, the researcher's role, data collecting, data analysis, and summary were all included in separate sections of the study.

The research is based on the philosophy that it will provide rich evidence and will offer credible accounts that can be used by someone in another situation, as well as the process and the findings being capable of replicating. An explorative qualitative design with primary data collection through semi-structured in-depth interviews were used. This enabled the researcher to take an active role by being part of the environment of study. For this study, a non-probability sampling strategy called "purposeful sampling" was used. The researcher prevented case selection bias, which was unavoidable in a study of this kind, by precisely and thoroughly explaining the data collection technique and recording every detail. Interviews as a research instrument was conducted for five (5) days on thirteen (13) participants. Three (3) interviews were conducted in a day. A hermeneutical phenomenological qualitative approach was used in this research. Coding and categorization of the data was used to reduce the amount of raw data, followed by the discovery of important patterns and, lastly, the interpretation of the data. The study's defining characteristic was ethical observance. To make sure that the study complies with the requirements for doctoral research, ethical approval was requested from the school's ethical committee.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The study aimed to explore the effect of guilt of suspension on a victim of sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis. Three major themes were generated from the data. Each theme had subthemes supported with quotes from the participants. The themes include experience of sexual misconduct suspension, impact of sexual misconduct suspension (subthemes: *Emotional, loss of reputation impact; Feelings of guilt and shame; poor relationship with God; Neglect*), factors that affect restoration of suspended members (*Social support; role of pastor*). The themes and subthemes are discussed with verbatim quotes from the participants in the following paragraphs.

#### 4.1 Experience of sexual misconduct suspension

Sexual misconduct suspension is one of the practices among some churches in Ghana. All the participants (n=13) indicated that sexual misconduct suspension is a disciplinary action employed by the church to curb sexual sin. The practice is a disciplinary action that restricts the victim from taking active roles in the church during the period of serving the suspension. This practice serves as a deterrence to other members. The practice further tends to dissuade other members of the congregation from indulging in such practices. Some participants had these to say about sexual misconduct suspension.

*My understanding is that it is a discipline to a young man and a young lady who indulge in sexual affair while they are not married couple. This is an act that serves as deterrent to other young people from indulging in such illicit sexual act in the church (Participant 2).*



*Sexual misconduct suspension is when young man or young lady is disciplined because of indulging in either premarital sex or extramarital sex (Participant 3).*

The participants reported that sexual misconduct is a sin and it is frowned upon in the eyes of God. Some mentioned that the lack of self-control is the major cause of sexual misconduct among members. One participant, a deacon, who was suspended for sexual misconduct explained that the act is disobedience against God. He said:

*My understanding is that it is a disciplinary action that is meted against a member of the church who is disobedient to the Lord and the church practice by indulging in premarital and extra marital sexual activity (Participant 11).*

Another participant explained that it is disobedience to the Lord and church practices. He stated that:

*My understanding is that it is a disciplinary action that is meted against a member of the church who is disobedient to the Lord and the church practice by indulging in premarital and extra marital sexual activity.*

Some of the participants also explained that it is an action that tends to retrain members from playing active role in the church due to their disobedience to church practices and to serve as a deterrent to others in the church. Some of them stated that:

*My understanding of suspension is that it is a disciplinary action that restricts the victim from taking active roles in the church during the period of serving the suspension. Sexual misconduct has to do with a church member indulging in either premarital or post marital sexual activity. When this happens, you will be disciplined by suspension to serve as a deterrent to the other members.*

The above clearly shows that participant had a good and fair idea of the subject matter under investigation as most of them explained that it is a disciplinary action against members in the church who engage in sexual immorality which is against the practices and values of the church. This collaborate with the explanation from Fairchild, (2022) who explained that the Pentecostals do not condone sin; hence discipline is the hallmark and this discipline comes in various forms such as suspension.

#### **4.2 Impact of sexual misconduct suspension**

This theme focuses on the effects of sexual misconduct suspension on victims. The subthemes that emerged are emotional impact, feeling of guilt and shame, poor relationship with God and neglect. The subthemes are discussed with quotes in the paragraphs below.

##### ***4.2.1 Emotional impact***

Sexual misconduct suspension elicits a wide range of emotions. All the participants (n=13) expressed feelings of sadness and shock. Upon the pronouncement of the judgements, all the participants were shocked to the extent that some of them broke down in tears. One participant recounted that *I felt very sad and wept on the day the pronouncement of suspension was made on me. I felt guilt and wept bitterly on what I have done especially my inability to honor God as a Christian (Participant 6)*. Another participant explained that the pronouncement of the suspension was very severe that it had a psychological impact on him. He explained in the excerpt below:

*The very day the suspension was pronounced on me at church, I nearly went mad. The pain and the sorrow were very deep (Participant 10).*

#### ***4.2.2 Loss of Reputation***

Another participant also stated that suspension does not only have emotional impact but always brings about lost of reputation. The participant believes that being suspended for sexual misconduct goes a long way to negatively affect the reputation of individuals both in the church and even in his community. He mentioned that:

*Suspension has diverse impact on the individual. Aside the pains and shame, it affects the reputation of the individual in the church and even the community in which the church lives. Sometimes even people in the church tends to disassociate themselves from you because you have been suspended and have all kinds of negative views about your personality and this affect ones progress. You tend to lose respect within the church and among the members, when I considered my position in the church. Especially when I knew the practices and principles of the church, but I couldn't obey. Again, the pain of losing the respect I have among my peers. I felt guilty because of the reputation I had in the church and the extent to which I have greatly disappointed the church leadership who had hope and trust in me; I found it very difficult in finding my way back home. My peers were also mocking me because of my situation. (Participant 1 & 11)*

#### ***4.2.3 Feelings of shame and guilt***

All the participants reported that they were shameful and felt guilty when the announcements were pronounced on them. Participants who were vibrant in church and held instrumental positions reported that they felt ashamed of themselves when pronouncements were made. Further, the shame resulted from their inability to uphold the teachings of the church which focuses on chastity. One participant shared his experience in the quote below:

*I am very vibrant in the church, so when it was pronounced on me that I have been suspended because of sexual misconduct, I became ashamed of myself. Because of sexual misconduct, I cannot render the service I use to do in the church (Participant 2).*

It was evident that sexual misconduct suspension results in the bruising of people's reputation. Another participant who engaged in a sexual misconduct with a respectable member of the church expressed that the suspension did not affect only her. Rather, it affected and disgraced the church member. She said:

*I least suspected that this will happened. The man I committed this sexual misconduct with, was a staunch member of the church. I felt very sorry for causing him to fall by sexually misconducting himself (Participant 7).*

Sexual misconduct suspension leads to the feeling of guilt. All the participants expressed that the suspension made them feel guilty. According to the participants, *the feeling of guilt of sexual misconduct is seen in sadness, shame and disgrace* (Participant 3). The suspension is so damning that it makes some participants to judge themselves as unworthy, hence, categorise themselves as the only sinners in the church. One participant expressed what he went through in the quote below:

*I felt very sorry for myself and shameful as I stood in front of the congregation. Shameful because I was seen as the only worse sinner amongst the lot. The experience was very painful and difficult to bear (Participant 11).*

Another participant had this to say:

*I felt very ashamed of myself, it was also painful, and sad moment for me. I even found it very difficult finding my way back to my seat after the suspension has been pronounced on me; I felt*

*guilty because I have disobeyed God and have sinned against Him; I lost interest in the church and the things of God because of the disgrace I was going through; If I will say the church does not help a member in a period of suspension, then the description will be a neglect where the members of the church dissociate themselves from the person serving suspensions. (Participant 6)*

Participant 8 also asserted that:

*I felt very sad and wept on the day the pronouncement of suspension was made on me. I felt guilt and wept bitterly on what I have done especially my inability to honor God as a Christian; I felt guilty because of the reputation I had in the church and the extent to which I have greatly disappointed the church leadership who had hope and trust in me; I found it very difficult in finding my way back home. My peers were also mocking me because of my situation. I lost the opportunity to serve in the capacity I used to do; Sexual misconduct suspension is painful and shameful; The fellowship and association of the members is a great healing to me, even the suspension has helped me a lot, though I have gone through series of guilt, shame and pain.*

The above from the participants show the extent to which suspension bring shame, pain, and guilt on the victims. This confirms a study by Pattison (2000), who found that people feel guilt or shame due to something wrong they have done. This clearly shows that suspension has a negative impact on victims and as a results victims must not be left alone after their suspension but provided with pastoral care to help them overcome the shame and guilt associated with the suspension.

#### **4.3 Poor relationship with God**

All the participants revealed that the suspension has negatively impacted their relationship with God. Victims of sexual misconduct suspension are frozen out from engaging in most activities in the church. Significant activities such as leading church service, reading the bible for the congregation, leading worship among others are taken from victims of sexual

misconduct upon their suspension. This affects their relationship with God. As noted by one participant, *the suspension has affected (his) progress in life*. He said, *it is like I am imprisoned and not of myself* (Participant 8). Since most people are denied the opportunity to engage in significant church activities, their relationship with God were affected negatively and elicited some negative emotions. One participant stated:

*The relationship between me and God became affected in a way, that was very painful to me. That made me cry most of the time* (Participant 7).

Most of the participants reported that the suspension nearly made them stop going to church. The pain, guilt and shame that accompanied the suspension made the victims consider quitting church. The treatments meted to them by other members made them rethink whether they are accepted in the church or not. Some participants shared their experiences in the excerpts below:

*I have been negatively impacted especially in my service to God and the joy I used to have in attending church services* (Participant 12).

*I am not able to serve God as I should, especially as I used to be. I am not a happy person* (Participant 13).

Another participant stated categorically that his interest in the church has vanquished. He said, *My interest in the activities in the church diminished drastically, I don't have the urge to actively participate in the activities of the church when I attend service* (Participant 4). One participant expressed that the suspension has created a form of uneasy feeling anytime Sunday approaches and must get to church. The excerpt below summarises the frustrations he experienced:

*I usually feel uneasiness when it is approaching time to go to church, especially on Sunday morning. Also, my interest in attending church service lost its fervency. The disgrace I am going through is enormous, and it has drastically affected my church attendance.*

*There are instances I shed tears in the course of service, especially when the preaching convicts me and I feel remorse for the sin committed (tears began to flow in her eyes at this time of the interview). The relationship between me and the church members marred seriously because of guilt feeling I have on myself. Some of the members disowned me during the period of suspension, they considered me as not part of them, some even shun my company with the view that I will corrupt them with my immoral practice (Participant 9).*

It is important to note that the suspension impacted participants perception of God. Most of the participants (n=9) had a positive perception of God. The participants revealed that God is loving and merciful regardless of the suspension. They explained that the suspension is as a result of the consequences of the sins they have committed against God, hence the punishment is befitting. Instead of blaming God, most of the participants expressed that they used the opportunity to go to *Him (God) in prayers to plead for His mercies to sustain them in this difficult situation* (Participant 9). The period drew their attention to the wrongs they have done and asked God for forgiveness. To some, the suspension brought them closer to God. As reported by one participant, *the suspension has caused him to understand God better, and his relationship with Him (God) has also intensified* (participant 8). The quotes below further explains some perceptions of the participants about God.

*I still believe that God loves me, and He allowed this to happen so that I will learn the appropriate lessons from it (Participant 7).*

*I still see God as a loving God whose ears are attentive to the prayers of the sinner. I don't blame God for what has happened to me, I see it as my own disobedience to His word. I accept the discipline in good faith (Participant 6).*

Few participants (n=3) reported that God has forsaken them due to the suspension. This made it difficult to approach God. To some extent, some participants started questioning God's decision to allow this (suspension) to happen to them. Some of the participants had this to say:

*I am of the view that the ears of God have been closed to my prayers, in other words, God does not listen to my prayers let alone to answer it (Participant 12).*

*I see that my relationship with God has been affected. I know He still loves me, but I feel shy to approach him (Participant 13).*

#### **4.3.1 Neglect and Loneliness**

It should be noted that upon suspension, most members of the congregation tend to withdraw from the victims since they are deemed to be the sinners. The participants stated that upon the pronouncements of the suspension, most members of the congregation started neglecting them. In the case of some participants, the situation was very dire to the extent that some of their close associates neglected them. The neglect of the victims resulted in loneliness, thereby making them feel disowned by the church. The neglect dwindles their interest in God and church activities. Some participants had these to say:

*I am relegated to the background in the church and its activities... I felt very lonely as some of the church members and leaders who were close associates began to distance*



*themselves from me. It appears the members has disowned me, and I consider myself not to be part of the church (Participant 2).*

*I felt rejected and lonely when it was announced that I have been suspended because of sexual misconduct. Some of the members criticized me wrongly, but I consider all these to be part of it, all I need is to pray to the Lord to forgive me my sins and see me through the situation... I feel guilty because I was unable to faithfully honor my part of the covenant I have with God... most of the members of the church do not get close to me as it used to be (Participant 8). If I will say the church does not help a member in a period of suspension, then the description will be a neglect where the members of the church dissociate themselves from the person serving suspensions. It will lead to a situation where such members will leave the church. Suspension led to shame and loneliness especially as most of the members of the church do not get close to me as it used to be. One observation I made during the suspension was loneliness; I will say the church deserted me, did not provide the encouragement that could have expedited my recovery from the shock of the suspension. The suspension has affected my finances, and some of the members have deserted me making me feel lonely; I even developed a kind of bitterness towards the church leadership.*

The above clearly points to the fact that suspension brings about neglect and loneliness to the victim, as members of the church tends to disassociate themselves from them and does not relate to them as they used to do before the suspension.

#### **4.4 Factors that affect restoration of suspended members**

The theme summarises the factors that influence the going back to church after serving the suspension. Subthemes that emerged are social support, encouragements, visits, and role of pastor.

##### ***4.4.1 Social support***

Social support appeared to be an effective way of reconciling the sexual misconduct suspension victim to the church. From the interviews, it was found that social support is very key if a suspended members is to return back to church. The lack of social support for victims goes a long way to affect their ability to even handle the negative impact of their suspension. As stated by Sande (2004) social support must not be neglected in the process of restoration of a victim of suspension since it plays a crucial role in the restoration of a victim. However, most of the participants indicated that they received inadequate support from members of the church during the period of suspension. Thus, the support came from just a few members of the congregation. This implies that most members of the church neglected the victims. One participant expressed that *the help offered by the church to me in the period of serving the suspension has not been very adequate, since only one person among the leadership did show care and concern for me* (Participant 2). It was revealed by some members of the participants that the attitude of the church towards the victims in the period of serving suspension is characterized by a total neglect by both the officers and the general membership of the church. Some participant shared their experiences in the excerpts below:

*I wouldn't say the officers and for that matter the members offered any meaningful support to me during my period of sexual misconduct suspension. None of the officers empathized with me that made my life very miserable* (Participant 11).

*What is not helpful to the person serving suspension is when the church will disown the person and does not get close to him/her to offer words of encouragement and advice let alone to draw him or her into the fold (Participant 9).*

Support from the church relieves victims from the pain of the guilt of the sexual misconduct suspension. The support provided by some of the members tend to help victims calm their nerves and enable them cope with the challenges of suspension. One participant said that

*The members of the church should get close to me and offer encouragement and social support by relating well with me. This when it is done will be a relief from the pain of the guilt of the sexual misconduct suspension (Participant 2).*

The type of support that was evidenced among most of the participants was words of encouragements. All the participants reported that they received words of encouragements from various avenues. Encouragements came from few church elders and members. The victims were encouraged to continue going to church and serving God. When this is done, the victims see themselves as part of the church and hence, continue to go to church during the days of the suspension. Some participants had these to say:

*The church helps people in suspension through words of encouragement and pieces of advice, also fostering good relationship. This was done by very few of the members in my case (Participant 8).*

*The words of encouragement provided by the very few who chose to get close. Also, the relation was helpful, and it made me feel that I belong. In the event where there is neglect, it becomes the avenue for me to continue in the sinful act since I will think that nobody cares (Participant 2).*

Another form of support was visits. Some of the participants reported that few members of the church, including church elders, took it upon themselves to get personal with them via visitations. This was done as a way of reminding the victim that the church still has them in mind. It should be noted that the visitations were not part of the church's program to reconcile suspended members to the church. It was done by people who care about the victims. This act of visitation made the victims feel accepted. One participant shared his experience in the quote below:

*There were some few of the members who took it upon themselves to visit me regularly and offered me pieces of advice and words of encouragement. The visit and support by the members to the suspended member was not the practice by the general church. The presence of the few members who attended to me in the period of suspension was a relief to me. It gave me a sense of belongingness, and it made me feel loved and accepted*  
(Participant 7).

#### ***4.4.2 Role of pastor***

Pastors tended to have effect on shaping the experiences of suspended members. Few participants reported that pastors were closer to them when they were serving their suspension. Pastors are seen as the leaders of churches and usually, they pronounce the suspension to the members. Therefore, when they get closer to the victims, they (victims) get a sense of belongingness. One participant exclaimed that:

*The pastor has helped me a lot for this disciplinary act of suspension. He did not disown me after he suspended me. He is still close to me as I expected. This must continue*  
(Participant 7).

According to some of the participants, pastoral care was very influential to coping with the suspension. They mentioned that regular visitations and phone calls contributed massively to their coping with the suspension. Some participants explained the impact of pastoral care in the paragraphs below:

*My pastor has related well with me in this period I am serving suspension through periodic phone call and occasional visit at home. I expect that this type of pastoral care will be extended to anyone who will fall victim to my situation and any other (Participant 1).*

*I expect that the pastor will maintain the relationship that existed between him and the member while there was no suspension. The visitation by the pastor to the suspended member must be regular (Participant 2).*

Most of the participants bemoaned that the pastors neglected them. They explained that the pastors were not close enough during their suspension. Some exclaimed that the pastors did not want anything to do with them. A victim said that:

*The pastor does not look for me, though my parents occasionally send me on errand to the Mission House that is when I may see pastor, quite apart from that there is not any form of relationship as I am serving the suspension. I expect that pastor will look for me or call me on phone and give me words of encouragement from the Bible (Participant 3).*

**Table 1. Themes**

Theme	Subtheme
Sexual misconduct experience	

Impact of sexual misconduct suspension

*Emotional impact*

*Feelings of guilt and shame*

*Poor relationship with God*

*Neglect*

Factors that affect restoration of suspended  
members

*Social support*

*Role of pastor*

---

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION, AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

The study was conducted to explore the effect of guilt of suspension on a victim of sexual misconduct in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana and the activities of the church as a healing community. The study had three main objectives. The first objective was to examine the effect of guilt of the sexual misconduct suspension on the suspended member in the Church of Pentecost at Axim. The second objective was to explore the activities of the church community that serves as healing to the suspended church member and the third objective was to investigate the involvement and the activities of pastors in providing supportive or crisis care to the suspended church member in The Church of Pentecost of Ghana. The study objectives were addressed through a qualitative research approach. The study found that sexual misconduct suspension is a disciplinary action. Further, sexual misconduct suspension was found to have adverse consequences on victims. Lastly, social support and the role of pastors were identified to be critical to restoration after suspension. This chapter presents the discussion, limitations and recommendation for future studies, and the implications of the study. The chapter ends with the main conclusions from the study's findings.

#### 5.1 Discussion of findings

##### *5.1.1 The effect of guilt of the sexual misconduct suspension on the suspended member*

The study revealed that sexual misconduct suspension is a disciplinary action employed by the church to curb sexual sin. As a way of steadying the morality of its members, the church institutes programs that help curb immoral behaviours such as sexual misconduct. According to Illian (2010), protecting and caring for the most vulnerable is an ethical action that needs to be promoted. The Church of Pentecost concerns itself with regulating behaviors that are harmful to

the community. According to the Church of Pentecost Ministerial Handbook (2018), offenses such as sexual immorality or sexual misconduct are supposed to be disciplined via suspension. Consistent with the current study, Snow (2020) revealed that the consequence the offending members of a church experience as part of the discipline is denying access to sacramental life or leadership positions to individuals who do not live up to church standards. It was evident that participants who held leadership roles or played a role such as leading of worship, reading the bible to the congregation during church service among others are seized from doing that during the suspension. Perhaps the leadership of the church employed suspension as a disciplinary action in order to deter other members of the congregation from engaging in similar acts. In the Ghanaian culture, it is believed that behaviour is infectious hence the need to curb the immoral behaviours in the community as a way of protecting others.

It should be noted that suspension as a form of discipline is peculiar to all the orthodox churches in Ghana. Church discipline is the backbone of the early missionaries and was an embodiment of the early churches in Ghana. For instance, in the Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana, Revised Edition (2000) states immorality or imprudent and unchristian behavior warrant suspension and, in some cases, expulsion of members including ministers as a disciplinary action. Similarly, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has it enshrined in their constitution that the application of discipline in the Church is based on the Holy Bible and aimed at the glory of God, the purity of the Church, and the spiritual benefit of members, including the erring member. It is possible that the suspension of the sexual misconduct victims was geared towards promoting spiritual benefits and achieving church purity as a whole. Previous studies have identified church discipline as a central doctrine of the church that enables the church to achieve its core mandate of the salvation of the soul thus, spiritual growth (Dipple,



2014). Church discipline is necessary to hold the reputation of the church in high esteem since unaddressed visible sin in the church significantly affects the Christian witness of the church (Sande, 2004). Thus, the suspension of sexual misconduct victims is believed to be an act of “removing the bad nut” from the rest.

Discipline is an essential part of the Church's reputation. In the Church, discipline is necessary to uphold the moral and ethical standards that are central to its mission. If discipline is not maintained, the Church's reputation can suffer, leading to a loss of trust and respect among its members and the broader community. Being disciplined means that Church members uphold and live according to the Church's teachings and values. Discipline is not just about punishment, but it is about self-control, obedience, and dedication to the Church's teachings. It is essential to maintain discipline within the Church to protect its reputation and keep it true to its mission.

The Church's reputation is not only important to its members but also the broader community. The Church is seen as a moral authority and a place where people can find guidance and direction in life. If the Church's discipline is lacking, it can result in a loss of trust and respect among its members and those who look up to it. This can lead to a decline in membership and a loss of influence in the community. Discipline also plays a crucial role in maintaining unity within the Church. When members of the Church live according to its teachings and values, they are more likely to work together towards a common goal. This can result in a sense of cohesion and a strong bond among its members, which can be a powerful force for good.

Furthermore, the Church's reputation depends on its ability to maintain high moral standards. If its members fail to live up to these standards, it can erode the Church's reputation and cause scandal. For example, if a leader within the Church engages in immoral behavior, this can reflect poorly on the Church as a whole, leading to a loss of credibility.

### ***5.1.2 Impact of sexual misconduct suspension***

The study revealed the effect of sexual misconduct suspension on the victim. Specifically, it was evident that suspension expressed emotional impacts such as feelings of sadness and shock upon the pronouncement of the suspension. It is possible that feelings of shock come as a result of the way the announcements of suspensions are made. Announcements that come as a surprise or without the prior knowledge of the individuals are likely to come as a shock. Again, in instances where the announcements are negative news, the victims or receivers are likely to be in shock (Lagrine et al., 2020). It is possible that the victims of the suspension least expected that their names would be mentioned in the congregation as those who have sexually miscondacted themselves hence their shock they experienced. Furthermore, since most of the victims were actively involved in the church activities, most of them were held in high esteem prior to the announcements. Therefore, as they were suspended for sexual misconduct, it came as a shock to them and the congregation as a whole.

The findings suggested that suspended members experienced a range of emotive responses. Feelings of shame, guilt, sadness and anger were experienced by the victims when the announcements were made. The shock that came after the announcements was accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt as well as sadness. Guilt and shame emanated from the fact that the victims are perceived to be upright and to some extent served as role models to other members in the church. Thus, the victims' inability to live up to the standards of the church and uphold the principles and teachings of the Bible created feelings of guilt and shame to them and their families. According to earlier research, the feelings of guilt and shame have a significant impact on how we live our daily lives (Bedford, 2004). They are crucial for socialization, serve as social control mechanisms (Creighton, 1988), preserve our sense of self (Hultberg, 1988; Scheff, 1988),

demonstrate our concern for others, and offer pathways for turning stress or norm violation into self-punishment (Lebra, 1988). Shame and guilt quietly influence how we behave, frequently motivating us to act in ways that prevent us from feeling them. As victims think back on their conduct and feel disappointed in themselves, sadness and resentment start to set in. When a suspension for sexual misbehavior is perceived more as a punishment than a disciplinary measure, victims might sometimes lose faith in the church.

The study revealed that sexual misconduct suspension negatively affects an individual's spirituality or relationship with God. It is not uncommon for individuals to feel betrayed or unfairly treated by the process. Perhaps it feels as though your hard work and dedication to your job or church have been discounted, or that your character has been tarnished in the eyes of your peers. These feelings of confusion and resentment can easily lead to feelings of isolation and cynicism, as we begin to lose faith in our own abilities and the people we work with. It is precisely during these moments of difficulty that we should turn to our faith and seek guidance from God. By seeking out moments for prayer and contemplation, we can begin to examine our own behavior and identify any areas where we may have fallen short. This type of introspection can be a painful experience, as we confront the parts of our personality that are in need of redemption.

However, it is only through this type of self-reflection that we can begin to rebuild our spiritual foundation and prepare for the work of healing and repair that lies ahead. Suspension of sexual misconduct victims implies that they are frozen out from engaging in most church activities especially those that require them to be in leadership position in the church or during church service. The poor relationship with God, perhaps emanates from restrictions that are put on the victims during suspension. These restrictions limit the victims' influence in the church

and further diminishes their interests in the things of God and the church as a whole. Thus, sexual misconduct suspension vanquishes victims' interest in church and God. Socially, sexual misconduct suspension results in neglect of the victims which further dwindles their interest in church. The suspension creates a situation where victims are tagged as the "bad nuts" in the congregation hence they are avoided. The neglect comes in the form of avoiding the individual, pointing fingers at the person, using the individual as an example of a bad behaviour among others. These activities alienate victims of sexual misconduct suspension in the church and further disrupts their relationship with God.

### ***5.1.3 Restroation***

The study found that social support is instrumental in restoring victims of sexual misconduct suspension to the church. Although most of the participants reported inadequate support, most of the support came from a few leaders of the church and in some cases, pastors. Social support has been identified as an important factor in reconciling individuals into a larger society. Consistent with previous studies, being part of a group is a key element in helping individuals to feel that they are not alone and sustain participation in organized activities (Tixiern & Lewkowicz, 2016). When victims are showed love and compassion during suspension, they adjust positively and have a sense of belonging to the church. By providing a sense of security, validation, resources, restored trust and social connections, social support can help victims to recover and rebuild their lives in the aftermath of a traumatic event. The instrumental role of social support in reconciling victims is due to several factors. First, social support provides a sense of safety and security. Victims who receive support from family, friends, or community resources feel less alone and more protected. This helps to alleviate the immediate fear and trauma of the event and instills a sense of hope and resilience. Secondly, social support helps victims to feel validated and heard. When someone has experienced trauma, it can be very

difficult to articulate or process the emotions and thoughts that come with it. Social support gives them an outlet to express their feelings and thoughts in a way that can help them to cope with their new situation. Support can come in the form of empathetic listening, talking through the events that occurred, and identifying ways to move forward. Thirdly, social support can help victims to identify and access resources they may not have known about previously. From legal aid to therapy services, the network of social support can help connect victims with the help and resources they need to recover. This can be particularly important for individuals who may be struggling financially or don't have the social capital to access the resources they need on their own. Furthermore, social support can help to rebuild trust and social connections, both of which are critical to healing. Victims of trauma may have lost faith in themselves and the world around them. Social support can provide a pathway back to social ties that are necessary for psychological well-being. This is critical in helping individuals to rebuild a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, and move forward from their traumatic experiences. Finally, social support is essential to the sustainability and longevity of recovery. Victims who have a strong support network are more likely to adhere to therapy, follow-up appointments, and maintain the necessary lifestyle changes associated with healing. This can make a significant difference in determining long-term outcomes and the ability to return to a sense of normalcy.

According to the findings, pastoral care facilitates victims' reintegration into the church both during and after suspension. Pastoral care is motivated by compassion, kindness, and mercy shown to the ill and suffering churchgoers as well as the wider community (Moyo, 2015). Pastoral care is necessary because those who have experienced sexual misbehavior are thought to have suffered moral harm. It is important to note that pastoral care and counseling within the congregation heals the wounded souls within the community and is communicated through love

concentrating on deliberate action founded in the connection (Scheib, 2014). Pastors who visited or followed up with victims during the suspension were more likely to encourage them to return to church than those who were not. This is because pastoral care and visitation gives victims of sexual misconduct a sense of belongingness in the church.

Pastoral care plays an essential role in helping victims of various kinds of trauma reintegrate into the church after a difficult experience. The church is a community of believers, and it is essential to ensure that everyone who has suffered a difficult time feels welcome and included. One of the significant impacts of trauma is isolation. Victims may feel disconnected from their families, friends, and even their faith community. Pastoral care can provide these individuals with a safe and supportive environment to share their experiences and heal from the pain they have experienced.

The church has a unique role in the healing process for those who have experienced trauma. The church can offer spiritual guidance, comfort, support, and encouragement to those who feel lost or alone. Through pastoral care, individuals can learn to find hope and healing in their faith. The process of reintegrating into the church can be challenging, and pastoral care can help make this transition more comfortable. The compassion and empathy that is offered can help individuals feel more comfortable and at ease. A non-judgmental space can help them become more open to returning to church and participating in church activities.

In addition to emotional support, pastoral care can also provide practical assistance. Sometimes, victims struggle to navigate through the church structure and activities, and pastoral care can provide them with information and support to help them participate in church activities. The restoration of faith can be challenging for individuals who have experienced trauma, but pastoral care can offer a significant contribution in this process. Many victims experience a loss

of faith or struggle to maintain their faith because of what they have experienced. Pastoral care plays a crucial role in helping them to restore their faith.

Pastoral care can help individuals who have experienced trauma reintegrate into the church and develop a sense of belonging in a safe and supportive environment. By offering emotional support, practical assistance, and spiritual guidance, pastoral care can facilitate the healing process for those who have been hurt or wounded. Ultimately, pastoral care can be critical to helping individuals find hope, healing, and a renewed sense of faith.

Pastoral care therapy is crucial because it emphasizes how brokenness is a necessary component of rehabilitation and how a restorative counseling relationship can help sexual assault victims find acceptance, hope, and meaning in their shattered lives (Waruta & Kinoti, 2005, p. 6). After a sexual misconduct suspension, guilt and the guilty do not miraculously vanish, as stated by Kellenbach (2019). Instead, through decontamination and remediation through cycles of sustained intervention and transformative tactics, the guilty or the perpetrator can be purified. Hence, pastoral care conveys God's unfailing love, relieving the believer who feels guilty (Hulme, 1981). Since pastors are the first to respond to human needs in religion groups, pastoral care counseling is a significant form of therapy (Davies & Dreyer, 2014).

## **5.2 Implications of the study**

The study suggests that sexual misconduct suspension is a disciplinary tool used to curb sexual immorality in the church. Although the suspension process can be difficult and uncomfortable, it is necessary to maintain the integrity of the church as it ensures that members align themselves with the church's vision and mission.

Firstly, misconduct suspension is good for the church as it ensures that members who engage in inappropriate behavior are held accountable for their actions. The suspension process

allows the church to investigate the allegations against the accused member and determine whether the charges leveled against them are indeed true. This process ensures that there is transparency and fairness throughout the disciplinary process, and members who are found guilty of misconduct are held accountable for their actions. Moreover, misconduct suspension helps to protect the image and reputation of the church. The church is a respected institution that is expected to uphold high moral and ethical standards. However, when members engage in misconduct or violate the church's rules and regulations, it can severely damage the church's reputation. By suspending such members, the church demonstrates its commitment to maintaining its integrity and upholding its moral and ethical standards. Furthermore, misconduct suspension helps to protect other members of the church from harm. Some behaviors may pose a risk to the safety and wellbeing of other members of the church. For instance, a member who engages in sexual misconduct may put other members at the risk of sexual abuse. By suspending such members, the church ensures that other members are safe from harm. Additionally, misconduct suspension helps those who are suspended to reflect on their actions and make necessary changes. Suspension is not meant to punish members but rather to help them get back on track. It gives the suspended member an opportunity to reflect on their behavior and make necessary changes so that they can be readmitted back into the church. However, this action has unintended consequences because it illicitly negative emotions such as sadness, shock and anger. Churches and their leaderships should therefore, take this into consideration and design programs that will orient the victims before suspensions are given out. This will psychologically prepare the victims for the consequences that comes with the pronouncements of suspension. Furthermore, the findings suggest that social support greatly improves restoration of sexual



misconduct suspension victims. When people show love to the victim during suspension, they tend to engage more in church activities and feel part of the church family.

The suspension restoration process in the church can be a complex and difficult journey for members who have been suspended from their church activities. Social support can play a crucial role in this process by providing encouragement, accountability, and practical help. Social support improves suspension restoration in the church. Firstly, social support can improve the suspension restoration process by providing emotional support. When individuals are suspended from their church, they can often feel isolated and disconnected from their community. However, the presence of social support can help to alleviate these negative feelings and provide emotional encouragement by offering a listening ear, empathy, and validation. Social support can also provide reassurance and optimism that restoration is possible, which can help individuals feel less hopeless and overwhelmed.

Secondly, social support can help individuals remain accountable during the suspension restoration process. The process of working towards restoration in the church can be daunting, and it can be challenging to stay motivated and committed. However, social peers can provide accountability by offering feedback and encouragement when needed, promoting personal growth and self-reflection through dialogue and mentorship. With a support system in place, individuals are better equipped to navigate the suspension restoration process, and they can work towards overcoming the issues they experienced while still in the church community. Finally, social support can help with practical assistance, which can be beneficial in the suspension restoration process. Practical assistance can include helping to plan and prepare for church meetings or events, providing transportation to appointments, or offering resources for financial

assistance or counseling. By offering practical help, individuals are supported in both the emotional and practical challenges of the suspension restoration process.

Church leaders are therefore, entreated to set up restoration teams mandated to check up on suspended members and incorporate them into the church after suspension. The team should be entreated to engage in visitations of victims and showing them love. The team should also take the suspended members to Bible teachings so that they would understand that the suspension is not a punishment, rather a correctional process that is geared towards bringing them closer to God. The role of pastors was very instrumental in restoration. The church leadership should enshrine the responsibilities of pastors in reconciling suspended members to the church. The church leadership must encourage the pastors to get closer to the suspended member in order for them to feel part of the church.

The findings suggest that churches and their leaderships must explore other disciplinary actions that would help curb sexual immorality in the church. The institution of the church has always played a pivotal role in shaping the moral and spiritual values of societies. However, in recent times, it has become apparent that the traditional disciplinary actions adopted by churches are insufficient in dealing with the contemporary issues faced by the faithful. Therefore, it is imperative that churches explore other disciplinary actions to ensure that they remain relevant and effective in guiding their congregations towards a meaningful and fulfilling spiritual life.

One of the reasons why churches should explore other disciplinary actions is to address the issue of sexual misconduct among clergy and members. In recent years, numerous cases of sexual abuse by church leaders have come to light, leading to widespread outrage and a loss of trust among the faithful. While traditional disciplinary actions such as suspension and

excommunication have been used, they have not been effective in preventing such incidents from repeating.

It was evident in the study that sexual misconduct suspension results in some negative consequences. The suspension leads to anger, sadness, poor relationship with God among others. In some instances, victims of sexual misconduct suspension stop going to church entirely due to the shame they experience. Therefore, churches must develop strategies that will make the suspension more correctional than punishment. This will curb these adverse consequences of sexual misconduct suspension. For instance, the church can set up counseling facilities which are well structured and resourced at the various levels of the church, which will be readily accessible to the sexual misconduct suspended victim. This will make the victims feel part of the church and prevent some of them from leaving the church in its entirety.

### **5.3 Limitations and recommendations**

#### ***5.3.1 Limitations***

The study solely focused on the Church of Pentecost at Axim in the Western region thereby, limiting the application of the findings of the study. It is worth-noting that cultural differences affect the practices of some church principles. Thus, the study findings which was emanated from members of the church located in Axim is likely to be different from other members in other jurisdictions of the church. This suggests that the findings of the study cannot be applied to other churches. It is therefore recommended that future studies should encompass other branches in the Church of Pentecost and other church denominations in order to get a broader perspective of the impact of suspension on the individuals.

In addition to the above, the study failed to explore the role played by the family of victims of sexual misconduct suspension. It was evident that social support is critical in restoration after suspension. However, the role of family was not investigated to a larger extent.

The family, which is the first point of contact in socializing individuals into the society, is instrumental in providing social support to individuals. Future studies should explore the impact families have on the healing of the sexual misconduct suspended victim.

Researcher bias also served as a limitation. The researcher, being a Minister in The Church of Pentecost, might have influenced the data collection process. Although, the researcher avoided biases in the study by accurately and comprehensively describing the data collection procedure and documenting every piece of information, his position as a minister might have influenced the participants to withhold some useful information.

### ***5.3.2 Recommendations***

The suspension process of churches is a critical issue that requires proper recommendations to ensure proper implementation. The suspension process aims to limit or halt the activities of a church following an identified violation of the relevant laws or policies. As such, it is essential to ensure that the process is objective, transparent, and respectful of the affected church and its worshippers. This study provides detailed recommendations on the suspension process of churches.

First, the authorities should establish clear guidelines on the suspension process, including the well prepared discipleship structure for the local church to meet social, emotional, and religious needs during the period of suspension. This is to facilitate the restoration process as well as providing appropriate pastoral care. Also, the structure should clarify the roles of the relevant stakeholders, such as the Pastor, the Leaders and the general congregation.

Second, the authorities should ensure that the suspension process is fair and just. This entails providing an opportunity for the affected church member to be heard and respond to the

allegations. The hearings should be conducted by an impartial panel or individual, and the decisions made should be based on objective and clear criteria.

Third, the authorities should ensure that the suspension process respects the rights and beliefs of the affected church member.

Fourth, the authorities should ensure that the suspension process is transparent and accountable.

This can be achieved by making the process public and accessible to all interested parties. Similarly, the authorities should regularly communicate the progress and outcomes of the suspension process to the members of the church.

Finally, the authorities should ensure that the suspension process is effective in achieving its intended purpose. This entails ensuring that the restoration and reconciliation structures are duly followed.

#### **5.4 Recommendation for future studies**

Sexual misconduct suspension in the church has been a long-standing issue that has affected various religious organizations across the globe. While some religious groups have taken necessary measures to limit instances of sexual misconduct suspension, many faith-based organizations still struggle with how to handle such cases in the future. Future study on sexual misconduct suspension in the church should focus on methods for identifying and addressing inappropriate behavior, preventative measures to limit instances of sexual misconduct in the future, and methods for providing support to both victims and perpetrators of sexual misconduct suspension.

The first focus of future study on sexual misconduct suspension in the church should be on identifying and addressing inappropriate behavior. This includes exploring the underlying causes of sexual misconduct suspension and finding effective interventions to address problematic behaviors. One potential approach to addressing inappropriate behaviors in the church is through the development of education programs designed to inform church leaders and members about the damage caused by sexual misconduct suspension. These programs could also teach congregants about the warning signs and risks of sexual misconduct suspension, and provide guidance on appropriate reporting processes.

Secondly, future study on sexual misconduct suspension in the church should focus on preventative measures to limit occurrences of sexual misconduct suspension in the future. This could involve the implementation of stricter guidelines for the behavior of church leaders, such as mandatory background checks and psychological evaluations. In addition, churches should create safe and transparent reporting mechanisms for any sexual misconduct. These measures could help to identify sexual misconduct suspension issues before they escalate and prevent future sexual misconduct suspension incidences.

Finally, future study on sexual misconduct suspension in the church should focus on support for both victims and perpetrators of sexual misconduct suspension. For victims, the church should provide adequate support, and counseling to help them heal from the trauma of sexual misconduct suspension. For perpetrators, churches could provide education, therapy and opportunities for reconciliation with their victims, with the aim of helping them cope with their past sexual misconduct suspension.

## 5.5 Conclusion

During the days of the missionaries, several churches in Ghana have used sexual misconduct suspension as a form of disciplinary action. Sexual misconduct suspension was a significant tool used by the early churches to maintain the integrity and sanctity of their communities. This punishment provided a powerful deterrent effect, encouraged repentance and restoration, and safeguarded the unity and cohesion of the church. While some may argue that it was a harsh method, it was ultimately a necessary one, given the challenges faced by the early churches as they sought to establish themselves as pillars of strength and faith in their communities. The early churches faced many challenges in their attempt to maintain the sanctity and stability of their communities. One of the methods they used to protect their congregations from disruptive and harmful behavior was the punishment of sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct suspension was a form of discipline that involved the temporary or permanent denial of leadership position in the church or playing a role in the church worship. Suspension was primarily utilized for offenses such as adultery, theft, and slander, which were believed to endanger the moral and spiritual well-being of the church community.

The early churches were built around a shared sense of faith and commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ. By removing members who were causing disruption or acting in a way that went against the teachings of the church, the unity of the congregation could be preserved. Sexual misconduct suspension ensured that the church remained a cohesive and harmonious community where all members were held to the same standards of behavior. The early churches were also concerned with protecting the sanctity of the church and preserving its religious traditions. Sexual misconduct suspension was seen as a way to maintain this sanctity and to prevent the church from becoming corrupted by immoral or unrepentant members. Sexual

misconduct suspension provided a deterrent effect to other members, who may have been tempted to engage in similar behavior. By making an example of those who had committed sins, the church hoped to instill a sense of fear and respect for the consequences of immoral behavior. While it was important to hold members accountable for their actions, the early churches were also committed to promoting repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. Sexual misconduct suspension was seen as an opportunity for the offender to reflect on their actions and to ask for forgiveness from God. In some cases, those who showed genuine remorse and a desire to make amends would be welcomed back by means of restoration.

The Church of Pentecost, one of the biggest churches in Ghana, is regarded as a strict church that upholds its morals and beliefs without compromising. One of the church's contentious traditions has been suspending members for sexual misconduct; some have criticized this practice as being outdated. The act has been defended as a deterrent for believers and a way to polish morals. The Church of Pentecost, as a religious organization, upholds its morals and beliefs for several reasons. These reasons can be traced back to the fundamental principles of Christianity and the mission and vision of the church.

Firstly, The Church of Pentecost recognizes that morality and belief systems are essential for the spiritual growth and development of its members. As a Christian organization, the church places high value on the teachings of the Bible and the principles of righteousness and holiness as these are necessary for the continuous transformation of believers into Christlikeness.

Secondly, The Church of Pentecost upholds its morals and beliefs to serve as a moral compass for its members. The church believes that following the word of God is a responsibility that Christians must uphold, and it is through the demonstration of godly conduct that believers can effectively witness to the world and engage in evangelism. Thirdly, the Church of Pentecost



maintains its morals and beliefs to preserve the spiritual heritage and identity of the church. The Church of Pentecost, as a Pentecostal denomination, has a distinct culture, beliefs, and practices that differentiate it from other Christian organizations. As such, the church holds that upholding its values and beliefs is necessary to maintain its unique identity and continue the legacy of its founding fathers. Moreover, The Church of Pentecost seeks to provide a strong and stable foundation for its members to build their lives on. By upholding its values and beliefs, the church aims to provide its members with a solid foundation that will help them navigate the challenges of life and build a firm relationship with God.

Finally, The Church of Pentecost upholds its morals and beliefs to ensure the overall well-being of its members. The church recognizes that deviating from its values puts members at risk of moral decay, spiritual stagnation, and separation from God. As such, the church endeavors to maintain a strict adherence to its values to promote the holistic development and growth of its members. The study made clear that, despite its function as a disciplinary measure, suspension for sexual misconduct can have negative effects on the victims. Suspension has a negative emotional consequence that includes feelings like grief, rage, and regret. Surprisingly, the victims suffered unforeseen effects. In other words, the suspension causes people to have a bad relationship with God and, to a greater extent, it causes people to turn away from God. In order to prevent any unintended implications on the victim and the church at large, it is encouraged that The Church of Pentecost and other religious denominations who suspend members for sexual misconduct consider this disciplinary action. The church can improve upon this disciplinary action by providing adequate support system. This can be enshrined in the church's standing orders or by-laws. The Pastors must be given adequate training on pastoral care which must be effectively practice as they do Ministry.

In summary, future study on sexual misconduct suspension in the church should prioritize methods for identifying and addressing inappropriate behavior, preventative measures to limit future sexual misconduct suspension incidences, and methods for providing support to both victims and perpetrators of misconduct suspension. By doing so, religious organizations can create church communities that are both safe and inclusive for all members.

**REFERENCES**

- Adjei, J. K., Sika-Bright, S. (2019). Traditional beliefs and sea fishing in selected coastal communities in the western region of Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Geography* 11(1), 2019 1–19 <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjg.v11i1.1>
- Agbiji, E., & Agbiji, O. (2016). Pastoral care as a resource for development in the global healthcare context: Implications for Africa's healthcare delivery system. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 72(4). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3507>
- Allender, D. B. (1990). *The wounded heart*. Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press.
- Anderson, C. (1992). *Hope for the betrayed: Pastoral care of victims of clergy sexual abuse*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL.
- Barclay, K. (2019). Marriage, sex, and the Church of Scotland: Exploring non-conformity amongst the lower orders. *The Journal of Religious History*, 43(2), 163–179. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12580>.
- Bedford, O. A. (2004). The individual experience of guilt and shame in Chinese culture. *Culture & Psychology*, 10(1), 29-52.
- Blagden, N., Winder, B., & Lievesley, R. (2020). The resurrection after the old has gone and the new has come: Understanding narratives of forgiveness, redemption, and resurrection in Christian individuals serving time in custody for a sexual offense. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 26(1), 34–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2019.1634194>
- Boateng, F. D. (2015). Victims of sexual assaults: The experiences of Ghanaian women. *International Review of Victimology*, 21(3), 343–360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758015591931>

- Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*.
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society*, 87(1), 43-52.
- Brunsdon, A. R. (2020). Congregation-based pastoral care to the victims of shack fires in the African context. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 41(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2101>.
- Bryman, A., (2012). *Social research methods* (2nd edn). Oxford University Press
- Bybee, J., & Quiles, Z. N. (1998). Guilt and mental health. In *Guilt and children* (pp. 269-291). Academic Press.
- Calvert, M. (2009). From “pastoral care” to “care”: Meanings and practices. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 27(4), 267–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643940903349302>. 0063.
- Chadambuka, P. (2014). Biting the forbidden apple: Unmasking the strategies that married women employ when conducting their extramarital affairs in Shamva’s Wadzanai Township Zimbabwe. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 29(2), 33–56.
- Clinebell, H. (2011). *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the ministry of Healing and Growth*. Updated and reviewed by Mckeever, B. C. Abingdon Press.
- Chivasa, N. (2017). Handling of pastoral misconduct and discipline: Evidence from the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe church. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, 73(3), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4518>
- Coetsee, D., & Grobbelaar, J. (2014). Equipping lay facilitators to support emotionally wounded children in Africa by means of healing communities. *In Die Skriflig/in Luce Verbi*, 48(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v48i1.1712>.

- Compton, R. B. (2016). Church discipline: The correction of a believer or the excommunication of an unbeliever? Harmonizing Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. *DBSJ* 20: 21-43.
- Connelly, L. M. (2008). Pilot studies. *Medsurg Nursing* 17(6), 411-2.
- Connolly, M. (2003). *Qualitative analysis: A teaching tool for social work research*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325003002001282>
- Cooper-White, P. (1991, February 20). Soul stealing: Power relations in pastoral sexual abuse. *Christian Century*, pp. 196-199.
- Creed, D. W. E., Hudson, B. A., Okhuysen, G. A., & Smith-Crowe, K. (2014). Swimming in a sea of shame: Incorporating emotion into explanations of institutional reproduction and change. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(3), 275–301.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2012.0074>.
- Creighton, M. (1988). Revisiting shame and guilt cultures: A forty-year pilgrimage. *Ethos*, 18, 279–307.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. (2nd Ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Curtis, S., Gesler, W., Smith, G., & Washburn, S. (2000). Approaches to sampling and case selection in qualitative research: examples in the geography of health. *Social science & medicine*, 50(7-8), 1001-1014.

- Davies, P. J. & Dryer, Y. (2014). A pastoral psychological approach to domestic violence in South Africa. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2802>.
- Davis, D. (1996). *Business research for decision making*. Belmont, CA: Duxbury Press.
- Dipple, G. (2014). Wounds that heal: the importance of church discipline within Balthasar Hubmaier's theology. *Ecclesiology*, 10(2), 280–282. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-01002016>
- Durso, P. R. (2017). A word from Pamela R. Durso: Baptists and clergy sexual misconduct. *Review & Expositor*, 114(2), 141–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034637317701098>
- Emily, P. C., Robert, J. C., Desiree A. G., Stanley L. B. (2012). Defendant remorse, need for affect, and juror sentencing decisions. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online* 40 (1) 41-49.
- Eriksson, E., Lindmark, G., Axemo, P., Haddad, B., & Ahlberg, B. M. (2013). Faith, premarital sex, and relationships: *Are church messages in accordance with the perceived realities of the youth?* A qualitative study in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *J Relig Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-011-9491-7>.
- Erlandson, D. A. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: a guide to methods*. Sage.
- Fairchild, M. (2022). Pentecostal Christians: What do they believe? <https://www.learnreligions.com/meaning-of-pentecostal-700726>
- Fink, T. M. (2019). A biblical analysis of corrective church discipline: God's loving plan to rescue and restore believers. First Edition. Selah Book Press.
- Ferguson, B. L (2010). Congregational pastoral care ministry: *For the church and the community*. ProQuest number: 3436952

- Ferguson, T. J., & Stegge, H. (1995). Emotional states and traits in children: The case of guilt and shame.
- Fortune, M. (1994, May 18-25). Therapy and intimacy: Confused about boundaries. *Christian Century*, pp. 524-526.
- Fox, T. (1992, October 30). Clergy sex-abuse "survivors" break silence. *National Catholic Reporter*, pp.3-4.
- Francis, P. C., & Turner, N. R. (1995). Sexual misconduct within the Christian church: Who are the perpetrators and those they victimize?. *Counseling and Values*, 39(3), 218-227.
- Gakuba, T. O., Sall, M., Fokou, G., Kouakou, C., Amalaman, M., Kone, S. (2015). Mental Health and Resilience of Young African Women Refugees in Urban Context (Abidjan—Ivory Coast and Dakar—Senegal). In: Khanlou, N., Pilkington, F. (eds) *Women's Mental Health. Advances in Mental Health and Addiction*. Springer, Cham.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17326-9\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17326-9_13)
- Garnett, R. W. (2020). Religious freedom and the churches: Contemporary challenges in the United States today. *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 33(2), 194–204.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946819896077>
- Gibson, K. (2020). I am not on the footing of kept women: Extra-Marital love in eighteenth-century England, cultural and social history. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1642064>.
- Gross-Schaefer, A., Feldman, L., & Perkowitz, N. (2011). A time to learn: A comparison of policies dealing with clergy sexual misconduct. *Pastoral Psychology*, 60(2), 223–231.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-010-0310-y>

- Guillen, F. D. E. (2019). Qualitative research: Hermeneutical phenomenological method. *Journal of Educational Psychology-Propositos y Representaciones*, 7(1), 217-229.
- Hands, D. R (1991). The role of shame in clergy sexual misconduct: Towards liberation from shamed sexuality. *Action Information*, 17(3), 1--4.
- Hammett, J. S., & Merkle, B. L. (2012). Those who must give an account: A study of church membership and church discipline. B & H. Publishing Group.
- Hatfield, S. G. (2018). A comparative analysis of the Apostle Paul's pre-conversion and post-conversion approach to church discipline. *Journal of Biblical Theology*, 1(1), 121–128.
- Hawkins, R., & Clinton, T. (2015). *The new Christian counselor: A fresh biblical and transformational approach*. Harvest House Publishers.
- Hardman-Cromwell, Y.(1991). Power and sexual abuse in ministry. *Journal of Religious Thought*, 1,65-72.
- Heppner, P. P., Wampold, B. E., Owen, J., Wang, K. T., & Thompson, M. N. (2016). *Research design in counseling* (4th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Hofman, E. (2018). A wholesome cure for the wounded soul: Confession, emotions, and self in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century catholicism.
- Hulme, W. E. (1981). Using the unique resources of the Christian tradition: *Pastoral care and counseling*. Augsburg Publishing House.
- Hultberg, P. (1988). Shame: A hidden emotion. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 33, 109–126.



- Hunt, J. (2017). Psychological perspectives on the Garden of Eden and the fall in light of the work of Melanie Klein and Eric Fromm. *Pastoral Psychol* (2018) 67:33–41  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-017-0790-0>.
- Illian, B. (2010). Church discipline and forgiveness in Matthew 18:15-35. *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 37(6), 444–450.
- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) and Associates (2016), *Domestic Violence in Ghana: Incidence, Attitudes, Determinants and Consequences*, Brighton: IDS.
- Jamieson, B. (2012). *Guarding one another: Church discipline*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway
- Kafle, N. P. (2013). Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified. *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 5(1), 181–200. <https://doi.org/10.3126/bodhi.v5i1.8053>
- Kaufert, J. M. (1977). Situational identity and ethnicity among Ghanaian University Students. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 15(1), 126–135.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/159797>
- Kellenbach, K. von. (2019). Guilt and its purification: The church and sexual abuse. *Cross Currents*, 69(3), 238–251. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cros.12375>
- Kettering-Lane, D. D. (2013). Wounds that heal: the importance of church discipline within Balthasar Hubmaier's theology. *The Sixteenth century journal*, 44(2), 627–628.
- Kim, S. (2012). *Exploring Distinct Aspects of Shame and Guilt: Can Startle Reflex Modification Differentiate Shame from Guilt?*

- Kimble, J. M. (2014). That their souls may be saved: Theology and practices of Edwards. *Themelios* 39.2: 251-67.
- King James Bible*. (2017). King James Bible Online. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>  
(Original work published 1769).
- Kleiven, T. (2018). Sexual Misconduct in the Church: What is it about? *Pastoral Psychology*, 67(3), 277–289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0807-3>.
- Kohn, D. & Campbell M. (2011). The captive female as biblical hero: Rowlandson, Rhetoric, and the Psalms, *The Explicator*, 69:3, 125-128,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.2011.626389>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018) Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing, *European Journal of General Practice*, 24:1,120-124,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>.
- Kubany, E. S., & Watson, S. B. (2003). Guilt: Elaboration of a multidimensional model. *Psychological Record*, 53(1), 51-90.
- Kuepfer, T. (2015). Matthew 18 revisited: A journal for church and theology. Vol. 16. No 1.
- Lartey, Y. M. (2003). *In living color: An intercultural approach to pastoral care and counseling*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Laskaris, E. (2020). Memoria and the lust disease: An Augustinian enquiry into post-conversion sexual habit, *Evangelical Quarterly: An international review of bible and theology*, 91(2), 114-132. <https://doi.org/10.1163/27725472-091020000>.
- Lebra, L. (1988). Comprehensive justice and moral investment among Japanese, Chinese, and

Koreans. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 157, 278–291.

Leeman, J. (2015). A Church Discipline Primer. <https://www.9marks.org/article/church-discipline-primer>

Leeman, J. (2010). A church discipline primer. <https://www.9marks.org/article/church-discipline-primer/>

Leeman, J. (2012). *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*. Crossway.

Louw, D. J. (2011). Pastoral care and counseling. *Counseling people of African ancestry*, 155,

Louw, D. (2015). Compassion fatigue: Spiritual exhaustion and the cost of caring in the pastoral ministry. Towards a “pastoral diagnosis” in caregiving. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 71(2). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i2.3032>

Magezi, V. (2006). Community healing and the role of pastoral care of the ill and suffering in Africa. *In Die Skriflig/in Luce Verbi*, 40(3). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v40i3.356>

Magezi, V. (2016). Reflection on pastoral care in Africa: Towards discerning emerging pragmatic pastoral ministerial responses. *In Die Skriflig/in Luce Verbi*, 50(1). <http://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2130>

Magezi, V. (2019). History and developments of pastoral care in Africa: A survey and proposition for effective contextual pastoral caregiving. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 75(4). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5423>

Malaty, T. Y (1992). Dictionary of church terms. OrthodoxEbooks. ST. George’s Coptic Orthodox Church Sporting – Alexandria Egypt.

- Mashau, T. D. (2011). Cohabitation and premarital sex amongst Christian youth in South Africa today: A missional reflection, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 67(2), Art. #899, 7 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i2.899>
- Manala, M. (2016). A therapeutic community as a relevant and efficient ecclesial model in African Christianity. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 72(4).  
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3226>
- McInteer, J. (2017). Discipline in the church. Retrieved from:  
<https://scholarworks.harding.edu/mcinteer-sermons-topic/32>
- McMinn, M. R. (1996). Psychology, theology, and spirituality in Christian counseling. Tyndale House Publishers.
- Messina-Dysert, G. (2015). Rape culture and spiritual violence: Religion, testimony, and vision of healing. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744605>. Routledge, London.
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Moon, Z. (2018). Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls. *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, 28(3), 207–209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10649867.2018.1562648>
- Morey, A. (1988, October 5). Blaming women for the sexually abusive male pastor. *Christian Century*, pp. 866-869.
- Morris, J. T. (2018). Moral injury: Restoring wounded souls. *Anglican Theological Review*, 100(2), 415–416.
- Mouton, D. (2014). Communities facing disruption: The need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care. *Acta Theologica*, 34(1), 91.

<https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v34i1.6>

Moyo, H. (2014). Gendered mourning and grieving rituals amongst the Jahunda people of Zimbabwe as a challenge to the pastoral care ministry of the church. *Black Theology: An International Journal*, 12(3), 213–229.

<https://doi.org/10.1179/1476994814Z.00000000036>

Moyo, H. (2015). Pastoral care in the healing of moral injury: A case of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 71(2).

<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i2.2919>

Murphy, J., & Holste, L. (2016). Explaining the effects of communities of pastoral care for students. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 109(5), 531–540.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2014.993460>.

Niedenthal, P. M., Tangney, J. P., & Gavanski, I. (1994). "If only I weren't" versus "If only I hadn't": Distinguishing shame and guilt in counterfactual thinking. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 67(4), 585.

Norman, I. D., Aikins, M. & Binka, F.N. (2013). Faith-Based Organizations: Sexual harassment and health in Accra-Tema Metropolis. *Sexuality & Culture* 17, 100–112 (2013).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-012-9141-6>.

Ogbuanu, J. N. (2014). The problem of cultural stereotyping in the pastoral care of a suicidal person. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v34i1.8> ISSN 1015-8758.

Oxford, L. K. (2012). What healthy churches do to protect vulnerable others and prevent clergy sexual misconduct: *Family and Community Ministries, Volume 25*.

Pattison, S. (2000). *Shame: Theory, therapy, theology*. Cambridge University Press.

- Patton, J. (2005). Pastoral care in context; *An introduction to pastoral care*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Ping, W. L. (2008). Data analysis in qualitative research: A brief guide in using Nvivo.
- Population and Housing Census (2021). Official website: <https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/>
- Potgieter, S. D. (2015). 'Communities: Development of church-based counselling teams', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71(2), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i2.2050>
- Rambo, L. (1991). Interview with Reverend Marie Fortune, August 8,1990. *Pastoral Psychology*, 39,305-315.
- Ramsay, N. J. (2018). Moral Injury as Loss and Grief with Attention to Ritual Resources for Care. *Pastoral Psychology*, 68(1), 107–125. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0854-9>
- Reed, J. M. (2007). Web article on Corinthian man: <http://www.jetalks.com/1corinth/1cor5.html>.
- Rediger, L. G. (1990). *Ministry and sexuality, cases, counseling, and care*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Rudolfsson, L. & Tidefors, I. (2014). I have cried to Him a thousand times, but it makes no difference: Sexual abuse, faith, and images of God, mental health, religion & culture, 17:9, 910-922, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2014.950953>
- Rutter, P. (1989). *Sex in the forbidden zone*. Los Angeles, CA: Tarcher.
- Sande, K. (2004). *The peacemaker*. ProQuest Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu>
- Sanders, R. K. (2013). *Christian counseling ethics: A handbook for psychologists, therapists and pastors*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. IVP Academic.

- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2007). *Research methods for business students*. Pearson Education Limited, 5th Ed.
- Scheib, K. D. (2014). Love as a Starting Point for Pastoral Theological Reflection. *Pastoral Psychology*, 63(5-6), 705–717. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-014-0614-4>
- Schuhmann, C., & Damen, A. (2018). Representing the Good: Pastoral Care in a Secular Age. *Pastoral Psychology*, 67(4), 405–417. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0826-0>
- Schumacher, M. (2019). Weeds among the wheat: The impurity of the church between tolerance, solace, and guilt denial. *Cross Currents*, 69(3), 252–263.
- Seligman, L., & Reichenberg, L. W. (2014): *Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy: Systems, strategies, and skills*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Pearson.
- Shemesh, A. (2002). Expulsion and Exclusion in the Community Rule and the Damascus Document. *Dead Sea Discoveries*, 9(1), 44–74. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1163/156851702320115733>
- Snow, J. C. (2020). The Troubled Knot: Tying Church Discipline to 'Christian Marriage' in African Contexts. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 71(1), 135–153. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022046919000666>
- Stansbury, K. L., Harley, D. A., King, L., Nelson, N., & Speight, G. (2012). African American Clergy: What are their perceptions of pastoral care and pastoral counseling? *Journal of religion and health*, 51(3), 961–969. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-010-9413-0>.
- Starman, A. B. (2017). (PDF) *The case study as a type of qualitative research*. ResearchGate. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265682891\\_The\\_case\\_study\\_as\\_a\\_type\\_of\\_qualitative\\_research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265682891_The_case_study_as_a_type_of_qualitative_research).

- Starks, G. L. (2013). *Sexual misconduct and the future of the mega-churches: How large religious organizations go astray*. ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Stephens, D. W. (2011). "Sex and the church": Sexuality, misconduct, and education in methodism. *American journal of sexuality education*, 6(1), 32–43.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15546128.2011.547359>
- Stevens, J. P. (2002). *Applied multivariate statistics for the social sciences*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Streets, F. J. (2014). Love: A philosophy of pastoral care and counselling. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 35(2). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i2.1323>.
- Szkredka, S. (2022). Between Clinical and Biblical Conceptualizations of Guilt and Shame: Luke 7:36–50 as a Case Study <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-022-01003-5>.
- Szuromi, S. A., & Praem, O. (2020). Disciplinary and doctrinal texts of the early church (until the 5th century) on virtues and their biblical origins. *Ephemerides Iuris Canonici*, 60(1), 233–245.
- Taggart, J. A. (2011). *A call to harms: Is church discipline for today?* Lynchburg, Virginia.
- Tan, S. Y. (2011). *Counseling Psychotherapy; A Christian perspective*
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: the good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 61(4), 598.
- Terry, K. J. (2008). Understanding the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic church: Challenges with prevention policies, victims & offenders, 3:1, 31-44, DOI: [10.1080/15564880701750482](https://doi.org/10.1080/15564880701750482)



*The book of church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church: The committee on Christian education of the Orthodox Presbyterian church, 2011, 112. Willow Grove, Pa*

The Church of Pentecost General Headquarters (2018). Ministerial handbook. Pentecost Press, Ghana

The Church of Pentecost official website: <https://thecophq.org/ministries/>

The Church of Pentecost official website: <https://thecophq.org/statistics/>

The constitution and standing orders of The Methodist Church Ghana (2000). Buck Press Ltd.

The constitution of the Diocese of Sekondi Church of the Province of West Africa (Anglican Communion), 2015 (Not Published)

The constitution of The Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Revised Edition) 2016. Waterville Publishing House.

Trull, J. E. & Carter, J. E. (2004). Ministerial ethics: Moral formation for church leaders. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Baker Academy.

VandenBerg, M. (2021). Shame, guilt, and the practice of repentance: An intersection of modern psychology with the wisdom of Calvin. *Christian Scholar's Review*

Waruta, D. W., & Kinoti, H. W. (2005). Pastoral care in African Christianity: *Challenging essays in pastoral theology*. Acton Publishers.

Wayne, O. E. (1974). A strategy and Christian philosophy of pastoral counseling. Westminster Press.

Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 167–177. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.167>

Western Heritage Home official website: <https://ghanatogether.org>

White, E. C. (2014). Uniform in virtue: Discipline and reform in Milton's doctrine and discipline of divorce (1643 and 1644). *Prose Studies*, 36(2), 97–116.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01440357.2014.93>.

**APPENDIX****Interview Guide**

Below are sample semi-structured interview questions:

1. Can you please introduce yourself to me?
2. Can you tell me about your experience with The Church of Pentecost at Axim ever since you have been in the church?
3. Out of the numerous activities of the church, which will you say it is the most significant?
4. What made them significant?
5. Is there something else you would like to add to your experience with The Church of Pentecost at Axim that you haven't already written down or mentioned?
6. What is your understanding of sexual misconduct suspension in the church?
7. How do you understand guilt of suspension because of sexual misconduct?
8. How did you feel when it was announced that you have been suspended because of sexual misconduct?
9. What made you feel guilty of sexual misconduct suspension?
10. What is the impact of the guilt of suspension on you as you are serving suspension because of sexual misconduct?
11. What has become your perception about God while you are serving suspension?
12. What else do you think would be important for me to know about the guilt of suspension as you experience now?
13. If you are to say the church helps the members in a period of serving suspension, how will your description be on such practice?

14. On the other hand, if you are to say the church does not help the members in a period of serving suspension, how will your description be on such practice?
15. Sexual misconduct suspension in the church can be painful or shameful; relief or healing can be effective through social support provided by the people around, what made the presence of the church members significant during painful and shame moments of suspension?
16. What is your expectation from the general church while you are serving the suspension?
17. This next question is unique in that it will invite you to look ahead. How do you expect the members of the church to relate to you during the period of suspension?
18. As a follow up, how will you expect your pastor to relate to the member who has been suspended?
19. Would you consider the activities of the church as a healing to a wounded church member like you?
20. We've covered a lot of grounds in our conversation, and I so appreciate the time you have given to this. One final question... How do you describe the church as a healing community?