

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY IN THE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN GHANA: A FOCUS ON THE
COMMUNICATION PROCESS

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Date: December, 2024

DECLARATION


SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC-IJ).

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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DEDICATION

This is for my daughter.

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ABSTRACT

It appears that mental health concerns are addressed in the legal system as more and more people with mental health conditions break the law. Through the use of forensic investigation techniques and protocols, law enforcement organizations worldwide have improved their ability to deter and manage criminal activity. Nonetheless, the non-expert audience that the forensic expert interacts with on a daily basis might not be as informed as they are, and more importantly, they may not understand their technical terms in the same way. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address the dearth of understanding on forensic psychology and increase awareness of the subject among Ghanaian legal practitioners. Further, Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Burr's Social Constructionist Theory served as theoretical foundations for this study. The study employed the qualitative research approach to obtain data from 15 employees within the criminal justice system using a semi-structured interview guide. The study discovered that forensic psychology describes the application of psychological principles in the criminal justice and legal systems and helps law enforcement and courts assess a person's likelihood of committing a crime and understand criminal behaviour. The study also revealed that forensic psychology is essential for resolving conflicts and assessing an offender's mental state and preparedness for trial. Moreover, the study revealed that forensic psychology can easily be integrated into the legal system through education, training, and awareness creation on forensic psychology within the legal system. Also, the study discovered that the discipline can be incorporated in policy and through collaboration amongst key stakeholders of the legal profession is necessary. The study recommended that the legal system must encourage forensic psychologists to share their in-depth knowledge and expertise, encourage the application of forensic psychology in their proceedings, and also encourage educational institutions to offer forensic psychology courses to educate legal professionals on the value of using forensic psychology in the legal system.

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises an overview of the study's background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study, the study's significance, organization of the study, and chapter summary.

1.1 Background of the Study

In many contemporary scenarios, forensic evidence is thought to provide critical impartiality and counteract the influence of prejudice, averting and overturning verdicts that could otherwise have been based on prejudiced beliefs. Also, the use of forensic science has the benefit of minimizing the suffering and involvement of innocent people who are thought to be suspects or accused persons (Prahlow, 2010; Inman & Rudin, 2000). Computer forensics, for instance, can be used to locate, identify, and bring charges against cybercriminals while keeping innocent people out of the picture (Mohammed, Mohammed & Solanke, 2019). Further, financial crimes can be solved with the aid of forensic accounting (Ehioghiren & Atu, 2016). Moreover, it is crucial to take into account the part forensic psychology plays in preventing crimes (Tshababa, 2020).

In forensic psychology, psychological concepts and techniques are applied to civil and criminal issues (Ward, 2018). Further, this field of psychology provides explicit support to enforcement agencies in the form of examination, rehabilitation, and other services that are necessary to inform a legal judgment. As such, forensic psychology is viewed as the most trustworthy method of investigation for undetected crimes and criminal identification (Nishad & Hariharan, 2021). Nevertheless, psychology is not only used for examining crimes; it is also used to better

understand victim perspectives, public perceptions of crime, and the effects of crime on law enforcement professionals who deal with it on an almost regular basis (Jamal, Walia, Sharma & Sharma, 2022). More importantly, since the public still uses the media to learn about and evaluate the criminal justice system and its processes, it is impossible to minimize the importance of communication in its operation (Barak, 2007).

Communication is not a straightforward linear process, and potential obstacles and filters may have an impact on how and to what extent the information being sent is understood (Bucchi, 2008). Therefore, the ability of the communicator to convey the necessary information, the recipients of the communication, the message's context, and how the message is communicated all play a role in effective communication (Bucchi, 2008). Having said that, it is important to understand how the public views a 'crime' based on communication within the criminal justice system, and more crucially, criminology and criminal law place a high value on what 'justice' actually means. (Barak, 2007).

Further, the process of merging mental health applications with legal settings enables professionals in the legal field to take into account social science and behavioral analysis elements that are occasionally disregarded or rejected by institutions and society (O'Hagan & Quinn, 2018). As more and more people with psychological issues violate the law, the court system seems to be a place where mental health issues are addressed. By using forensic investigation methods and procedures, law enforcement agencies today, all around the world, have enhanced their capacity and ability to prevent and control crime (Robertson, Vignaux & Berger, 2016). Crimes are now solved more successfully by meticulous inspection of the crime scene and analysis of forensically collected evidence than through traditional investigation (White, Borrego & Schroeder, 2014). Therefore, the application of forensic investigation

becomes pertinent and significant in Ghana's criminal justice system, specifically modern policing.

In Ghana, it is believed to be important to note that high-profile cases that could be of forensic interest frequently make headlines. Examples of these cases are rape cases, murder cases, and kidnappings of both foreign and local nationals (Gunther, 2019). These instances provide a number of challenges for the investigating team, including excessive delays, inadequate crime scene management, improper treatment of evidence, and occasionally unclear investigative results. Regarding unclear investigative results, Howes and Kemp (2017) indicate that the police are concerned about how the scientific language used in the reports and scientific evidence would be problematic for juries and other people who might need to interpret the reports and who might not have the chance to question the expert in question. Further, according to Cashman and Henning (2012), legal practitioners may also have trouble understanding reports.

As a result, this study comes in to address the limited understanding of forensic psychology and raise awareness of the concept among Ghanaian legal practitioners.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The non-expert audience that the forensic expert communicates with on a daily basis may not be as knowledgeable as they are, but more significantly, they may not understand their specialized scientific terminology in the same manner (Rice & Giles, 2017; Bucchi, 2008). Within the criminal justice system, a courtroom's formalized communication methods and the distant manner in which forensic investigators provide reports to the police and courts, which leads to few in-person interactions, have an impact on forensic communication (Howes & Kemp, 2017). This has a way of limiting the possibility of active exchanges of ideas that allow for the development of a more profound understanding of the message.

In recent years, forensic science investigations have garnered significant attention and research globally (Steele, 2023; Jamal et al., 2022; Crighton & Towl, 2021; Nishad & Hariharan, 2021; Pozzulo, Bennell & Forth, 2021; Howes & Kemp, 2017; Robertson, Vignaux & Berger, 2016). It is, however, imperative to note that majority of these studies (Steele, 2023; Jamal et al., 2022; Crighton & Towl, 2021; Nishad & Hariharan, 2021; Pozzulo, Bennell & Forth, 2021) are grounded in forensic psychology. Yet, forensic psychology was briefly discussed in these studies, disregarding the role communication plays in its integration into the criminal justice system. Due to this, there is a paucity of literature on forensic psychology and Ghana's criminal justice system, especially when it comes to the communication process that takes place when these concepts are applied.

Although earlier research in Ghana evaluated the forensic support provided to criminal investigations (Sulley & Quansah, 2021), reviewed forensic science in Ghana (Amankwaa et al., 2019) and examined the forensic DNA profiling industry's present developments, challenges, and prospects in Ghana (Kofi et al., 2020), these studies overlooked the communication process that takes place during the integration of forensic psychology into the Ghanaian criminal justice system.

Therefore, there is the need to explore forensic psychology in the criminal justice system, with specific focus on the communication process. The study also provides further information on the present state of legal professionals' understanding and awareness of forensic psychology. Last, the study examines how to effectively integrate forensic psychology into Ghana's legal system.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the communication process that unfolds when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system.

The study specifically seeks to:

1. Examine the current awareness and understanding of Forensic psychology among legal professionals
2. Identify the best practices for effectively integrating Forensic psychology into the legal framework of Ghana

1.4 Research Questions

1. How much do legal professionals currently know and understand about forensic psychology?
2. What are the best ways to integrate forensic psychology into Ghana's legal framework?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the communication process that takes place when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, the scope of the study was centered around concepts like forensic psychology, the criminal justice system, communication, and the integration of forensic psychology to Ghana's criminal justice system.

Further, the study population comprised personnel within the Ghanaian criminal justice system. This indicates that the study population may not have been an exact representation of all government agencies. However, the findings can serve as a guide for other agencies even though they might not exactly fit the circumstances of other public and private institutions in Ghana. Yet, the findings of this study are particularly relevant to other government agencies.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has relevance because it reveals the communication process that takes place when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system in Ghana. Therefore, it is

anticipated that the study's findings will contribute to the body of knowledge on forensic psychology's communication process within the criminal justice system.

Further, the study intends to assist policy makers, legal practitioners, clinicians, and other relevant experts with an interest in issues surrounding the criminal justice system and forensic psychology in making well-informed decisions about how to oversee and manage forensic psychology within the criminal justice system. By considering the offender's psychological state of mind, this will aid in determining the proper penalty for the offense, the credibility of witnesses, and the offender's mens rea at the time of the crime.

Last, the study intends to lay the groundwork for policymakers to create laws that regulates forensic psychology and maximize its benefits.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study comprises of five chapters. Chapter One touches on the study's background, problem statement, research aim and objectives, research questions, scope of the study, as well as the significance of the study. In Chapter Two, relevant literature on the subject of forensic psychology and criminal justice system were reviewed. Chapter Three covers the theoretical framework and research methodology. Further, Chapter Four dwells on data analysis, presentation of findings and discussions. Chapter Five, which concludes the study consists of a summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The background of the study, which gives crucial context for the research topic, was covered in this chapter. It includes a literature review that gathers current knowledge on forensic psychology-related issues in the criminal justice system with a focus on communication, the justification for the conduct of the study, a key problem statement, and the thesis statement.

Further, the study discussed the problem statement, which highlighted the research problem, gap and the focus of the study. Also, the chapter covered the research objectives, which highlight the goals of the study, and the research questions, which serve as the cornerstone around which the whole study is built, were covered in the chapter that followed.

Moreover, this chapter focuses on the scope of the study, which examines the limits within which it will operate, and its significance, which includes its contributions to and impacts on academics, governments, businesses, and individuals, among other stakeholders. Last, the chapter concluded with outlining the study's structure.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on forensic psychology in the criminal justice system, with emphasis on the communication process. The chapter is divided into four primary sections: review of relevant literature, review of empirical studies, theoretical framework, and operational definition of terms and concepts section. The sections on the review of relevant literature deal with forensic psychology and crime, forensic psychology in the criminal justice system, and specifically in Ghana's criminal justice system.

Further, there were two sections to the review of empirical studies: the current awareness and understanding of forensic psychology among legal professionals, and the best practices for effectively integrating forensic psychology into the legal framework. Moreover, with the theoretical framework section, the social learning theory, which served as the study's theoretical foundation, was also reviewed.

Last, the chapter looked into the various operational definitions of key terms and concepts in forensic psychology and criminal justice system provided by various academics, including: the concept of forensic psychology, criminal justice system, and communication process.

2.1 Review of Relevant Literature

2.1.1 Forensic psychology and crime

Psychology as a field began in Leipzig, Germany in 1879 when the first laboratory was set up with the express purpose of doing psychological research (Buschmann, 2011). Thus, psychology has been used to manage crime and lower the number of offenders for as long as psychology has existed. The unabated occurrence of crime in cultures since ancient times,

coupled with the inability to reduce its prevalence, suggests that crime is ingrained in human nature (Jamal, Walia, Sharma & Sharma, 2022). Thus, it is crucial to eradicate the root causes of crime from society (Buschmann, 2011).

The field of forensic psychology is the intersection of justice administration and the study of human behaviour in criminal activity (Jamal et al., 2022). It includes realizing how deeply ingrained and applied criminal law is in a certain jurisdiction. This is required for efficient communication between the judges, attorneys and other designated legal authorities.

According to Jamal et al. (2022), in more detail, forensic psychology aids in understanding:

- Reasons for considering or envisioning committing a crime,
- their approach for the same,
- what information must be submitted to the investigation in order to apprehend the criminals,
- give legal advice to parties engaged in criminal and civil disputes,
- what can be done to improve the way that prisons operate,
- improved and more effective methods for handling the offenders, and
- generating more advanced methods of treatment and rehabilitation.

Further, many psychological problems that are associated with the aforementioned behaviours have been identified as the underlying causes of criminal activity. Thus, attention must be paid to these issues in order to provide specific propaganda that will support the criminal justice system. According to Jamal et al. (2022), various targeted propagandas consist of:

- The rationale and justification for the psychological foundation of the criminal personality,
- understanding the psychology of memory and how to use it when questioning witnesses and suspects,

- how people behave and interact during court proceedings,
- the jury members arriving at a verdict,
- the evaluation and control of the likelihood of reoffending,
- how rehabilitation facilities and prisons aid in the personal growth of offenders,
- how mental illnesses contribute to criminal activity, and
- what discourages people from committing crimes.

2.1.2 Forensic psychology in the criminal justice system

The best way to characterize forensic psychology is as an applied fusion of the behavioural and physical sciences (Girard, 2008). It appears to be a branch of psychology that examines every facet of how people behave in relation to the law or legal system. Today's conflict resolution methods, tools, and strategies are genuinely multidisciplinary (Jacobs, 2008). The field of forensic psychology is incredibly useful because of its innovative and eclectic approach. As such, the roles of forensic psychology within the criminal justice system can never be overstated, which is why some have said that the lack of forensic psychologists in a country's legal system is a major flaw (Agbonika, 2014).

According to Erhaze and Momodu (2015), all those involved in the system have suffered in different ways as a result of the lack of forensic psychologists: judges suffer, victims are deprived of justice, and some are stuck on an unending waiting list for trials. Further, the police and the accused are also affected by these detrimental impacts within our nation's criminal justice system.

Within the criminal justice system, forensic psychology performs the following roles: competency evaluations, expert witness, trial consultancy and sanity evaluations.

2.1.2.1 Competency evaluations

The earliest Judeo-Christian writings and the Babylonian Talmud are the sources of the concept of competency to stand trial (Nussbaum et al., 2008). A defendant's right to a fair trial is one of the key concepts of the United States' criminal justice system, which attempts to offer all defendants an objective and dignified procedures (Pirelli, Gottdiener & Zapf, 2011). To continue, all defendants must uphold a minimal standard of competency (Murrie & Zelle, 2015). Competence in the context of adversarial proceedings is the defendant's current capacity to engage in a meaningful defense and understand the trial procedure.

When an accused person's capacity to stand trial is in doubt, forensic psychology is used by having a forensic psychologist appointed by the court to evaluate and analyze the defendant. The person may have been granted bail and released from custody. It is recommended to the court that the defendant be found able to stand trial based on the results of the forensic evaluation. If the defendant is found to be incompetent to proceed, the report or testimony will include suggestions for the interim period during which efforts will be made to restore the person's capacity to properly understand the court and legal proceedings and to appropriately engage in their defense (Zapf, Roesch & Pirelli, 2014). This is frequently a case where the person is committed to a mental health facility until they are judged competent, per the recommendation of a forensic psychologist.

2.1.2.2 Expert witness

An expert witness is a witness who is qualified to render an opinion to the court on any admissible issue requiring the witness's competence (Morris & DeYoung, 2012). It is the responsibility of an expert witness to independently support the court on issues within their area of competence by offering an unbiased, objective view (Morris & DeYoung, 2012). This duty seems to supersede any obligation to the party providing the expert with instructions; it is

owed to the court. For expert testimony to be considered credible, it must either have a scientific foundation that is sufficiently dependable or be a component of a body of knowledge or experience that is sufficiently recognized or organized (Chauhan, Warren, Kois & Wellbeloved-Stone, 2015). Expert witnesses are skilled in expressing opinions because, as their name implies, they are assumed to be specialists in a particular field of knowledge, unlike fact witnesses, who are only allowed to testify in respect to what they know or have witnessed. They have specific expertise regarding the subject (The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), 2015).

Expert witnesses can testify on clinical mental health issues or other topics related to their areas of expertise, including social, experimental, cognitive, or developmental issues. Being an expert witness is not a primary job; rather, it is typically carried out in tandem with another position, such as that of a clinical psychologist, researcher, academic, or assessor (Chauhan et al., 2015). However, forensic psychology comes in when expert witnesses, such as clinical forensic psychologists, are asked to assess a defendant and subsequently testify about the defendant's mental condition.

2.1.2.3 Trial consultancy

Benforado (2015) states that forensic psychologists frequently participate in trial consulting and a trial consultant, jury consultant, or litigation consultant is a social scientist who collaborates with legal experts, such as trial attorneys, to assist in case preparation, which includes witness preparation, case strategy development, and jury selection. They appear to make extensive use of research. Trial consultants have a number of ethical issues that they must overcome in order to fulfill their ethical obligations as applied researchers who must adhere to ethical research guidelines.

According to Posey and Wrightsman (2005), the following are the responsibilities of trial consultants: organizing trial themes, preparing challenging witnesses for depositions, assisting attorneys with opening statements, assisting with jury selection, conducting post-verdict jury polling, and preparing clients and witnesses for examination at trial. Forensic psychologists who work as trial consultants need to be aware of the psychological mechanisms that influence juries' assigning of blame. Trial consultants assist attorneys in developing compelling themes for their arguments by utilizing the psychology of blame (Posey & Wrightsman, 2005).

Last, Smith (2006) states that they assist in preparing witnesses by helping them improve their listening and communication skills, helping them to act cooperatively and provide succinct, clear responses, and helping them develop trial strategy recommendations based on empirical research and being aware of potential biases that could skew the results.

2.1.2.4 Sanity evaluation

A forensic psychologist will do a sanity evaluation, among other assessments, to determine the mental state of the subject at the time of the crime. It is possible to find that someone was mentally insane when they committed a crime, even though they were deemed fit to stand trial. Should there be suspicions that the defendant's mental state was seriously impaired at the time of the offense, a forensic psychologist will typically conduct this kind of assessment (Murrie & Zelle, 2015). The forensic psychologist is qualified to assess the defendant's mental state at the time of the offense and is appointed by the court. Prior to the start of the trial, the court usually makes any judgments regarding the defendant's mental state at the time of the offense. (McNichols, Gowensmith & Jul, 2011).

2.1.3 Forensic psychology in Ghana's criminal justice system

In Ghana, forensic investigation dates back to 1922, when finger printing was primarily utilized to identify people and assist the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in solving crimes

(Amankwaa et al., 2019) for other service sectors including the military and immigration services. However, Ghana's current population, together with her economic growth and commercialization, appears to have contributed to an increase in urban crime patterns. As a result, conventional crimes like humans trafficking and kidnapping have also become more common in Ghana (Dziwornu, 2021).

Further, the hard part of this battle is that the nation's increasingly sophisticated crime scenes and evidence are managed primarily through the use of conventional methods such as tip-offs, victim and suspect testimony, eyewitness accounts, and other non-scientific processes (Amankwaa et al., 2019). Even though the adversarial criminal justice system authorizes forensic support for criminal investigations, it seems that the majority of Ghanaians still view forensic investigation as an underutilized field. This calls for an urgent employment of forensic psychology within the criminal justice system.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

2.2.1 The current awareness and understanding of Forensic psychology among legal professionals

Nakhost (2023) conducted a study on the topic "Safeguarding justice: enhancing public safety through the application of forensic psychology." The study found that forensic psychologists apply their knowledge to offer therapy to victims and offenders, examine and assess persons engaged in criminal cases, and counsel criminal justice organizations on how to best manage criminal cases. The study also found that forensic psychologists can assist courts and law enforcement in understanding criminal behaviour and determining an individual's likelihood of committing a crime.

Further, the study discovered that forensic psychologists have the ability to improve the court system's understanding of victim behaviour and make sure that victims of crime receive

humane and respectful treatment. Moreover, the author found that forensic psychology can be applied to assist in creating successful interventions for both criminals and their victims.

Last, the study comes to the conclusion that forensic psychology is a significant area of research that is essential to the criminal justice system since it helps to assess risk, creates treatments to help lower the chance of reoffending, and provides insight into the psychological dynamics of criminal behaviour.

A study on “Forensic science integration in legal education: a paradigm shift for strengthening legal expertise in Pakistan” was carried out by Muhammad Imran Ali in 2023. According to Ali (2023), the modern legal system relies heavily on the objective and scientific interpretation of forensic science-provided evidence. In this study, it was found that forensic science education is not part of the curriculum required in Pakistan to earn an LL.B. (bachelor of law). As such, the lack of a comprehensive forensic science program in law school hinders lawyers’ understanding of the scope and limitations of forensic research. Consequently, this could hinder the appropriate application of forensics in legal proceedings, thereby delaying the dispensation of justice.

According to the study, there are many advantages to forensic science education, such as the development of interdisciplinary skills, improved communication between lawyers and experts, and the preparation of lawyers to handle complex cases. Taking forensic science classes can also help law students gain a greater understanding of the scientific procedures involved in gathering, preserving, analyzing, and presenting evidence during criminal investigations. Last, future lawyers will find this knowledge useful when presenting their clients’ cases, refuting expert testimony, and arguing cases.

A study conducted by Nilendu (2024) examined the importance of implementing an evidence-based education system and how to enhance forensic education. The study looked at how

crucial it is for forensic education to have an evidence-based curriculum and how this might enhance forensic practice and training. The study found that in order to maintain forensic education current and adaptable to the changing needs of the dynamic sector, cooperation between academic institutions and working professionals is crucial. The relationship between the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the then-National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science (NICFS) in India is a prime example of a successful collaborative effort. Further, the study revealed that through cooperative activities that bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and actual application, this collaboration has considerably improved forensic education in India.

Moreover, the study discovered that Effective strategies and programs have greatly improved faculty expertise in forensic science when it comes to training and development for faculty members. For instance, educators can gain real-world experience and stay up to date on the newest forensic methods through intensive seminars and mentorship programs. Webinars and online courses help educators enhance their expertise and support continuous professional development. Additionally, evidence-based forensic science education improves training and the level of the practice by serving as a link between academia and industry. The implementation of worldwide best practices, faculty development initiatives, and collaborations guarantee that graduates are equipped to handle the intricacies of forensic situations in the real world (Nilendu, 2024).

Finally, the study found that evidence-based forensic education empowers practitioners and increases public trust in the dependability and integrity of forensic science by producing a workforce with critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

2.2.2 The best practices for effectively integrating Forensic psychology into the legal framework

In 2022, Neal, Martire, Johan, Mathers, and Otto carried out a study titled “The Law Meets Psychological Expertise: Eight Best Practices to Improve Forensic Psychological Assessment.” With a variety of audiences in mind, the study gave a summary of the history of forensic psychology and talked about potential future directions. Eight best standards for the validity of a forensic psychological assessment were derived from decades of research on the law of expert evidence, clinical and forensic psychology, and fundamental basic science and forensic science. The study found that these best practices should be used when a psychological evaluation is used to guide legal procedures based on the standards, beliefs, and respect of science.

According to Neal et al. (2022), the eight main best practices are as follows:

- foundational validity of the assessment;
- validity of the assessment as applied;
- management and reduction of bias;
- attention to quality assurance;
- proper communication of data, findings, and viewpoints;
- explicit evaluation of limitations and assumptions;
- evaluating conflicting opinions or points of view; and
- adherence to professional standards, evidence rules, codes of conduct, and ethical responsibilities.

Further, Wilson (2019), carried out a study on the topic “Courtroom Psychology during Criminal Trials and its Therapeutic Role on Victims and Offenders.” The aim of the research was to examine the ways in which law and psychology are related to each other during criminal

trials from the perspectives of lawyers and psychologists. Research questions examined the impact of psychology in the courtroom on criminal trials and the difficulties faced by psychologists testifying in criminal trials as well as by criminal trial attorneys presenting mental health evidence. Further investigation focused on the importance of courtroom psychology, and how lawyers and psychologists interpreted courtroom psychology impacting justice for victims and affecting offender rehabilitation sentencing judgments.

The theoretical foundation for this study was therapeutic jurisprudence, and the conceptual framework used in this investigation was procedural justice. The study design used was qualitative-phenomenology. This was done by interviewing four clinical forensic psychologists and four criminal law attorneys. The thematic analysis of the gathered data revealed four themes: There is a need for (a) more psycho-legal services to be enhanced, (b) more education to be obtained, (c) cooperation to build professional relationships, and (d) more advanced training to be required.

According to Wilson (2019), these findings might act as a basis for experts to offer pertinent, morally sound legal therapy services that advance courtroom psychology measures. Last, this study has implications for good social change, such as advising government, legal, and mental health system organizations to think about creating and modifying standards of practice that regulate criminal trial procedures.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and the social constructionist theory.

2.3.1 Social learning theory

According to Driscoll (1994), learning is defined as "a persisting change in human performance or performance potential as a result of the learner's interaction with the environment" (p. 8-9).

Weinstein and Mayer (1986) also explain learning as “the relatively permanent change in a person’s knowledge or behaviour due to experience” (p. 1040). According to learning theories, the environment plays a key role in development (Hoffman, 1993). Learning theories have been divided into three categories by academics: behaviourism, Social Learning Theory (SLT), and Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT). However, this study focuses on Albert Bandura’s social learning theory.

One of the most significant learning theories is the concept of social learning, which was first presented by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977 with the release of his groundbreaking book *Social Learning Idea*. According to Bandura’s social learning theory, learning can occur through seeing how other people behave (Fryling & Hayes, 2017). This demonstrates how people learn social skills through imitating and observing others. Observational learning is enhanced when observers see the person displaying the behaviour as a ‘similar other’ (Bandura, 1977). To address the behaviourism-influenced work of B.F. Skinner, Bandura developed the social learning theory (Kelland, 2015).

Social learning theory is still applicable today, despite being the basis for a lot of classroom activities. According to Muro and Jeffrey (2008), the theory is an increasingly important part of sustainable resource management and encouraging positive behavioural change. The foundation of this theory is the notion that social interactions with others teach us valuable lessons. People independently acquire comparable behaviours by seeing the actions of others. People absorb and mimic other people’s conduct after witnessing it, particularly if their observational experiences are rewarding or involve rewards associated with the observed behaviour. Imitation, in Bandura’s view, entails replicating observed motor actions (Bandura, 1977).

2.3.1.1 Basic principles of the social learning theory

Social learning theory is based on three key tenets:

- 1) people can learn by observation;
- 2) mental conditions within an individual play a vital role in the process; and
- 3) learning does not necessarily translate into a change in behaviour.

According to Bandura (1977), if people just depended on the outcomes of their activities to guide them, learning would take a very long time. As a result, Bandura suggests that most human behaviour is acquired through modeling, in which people pick up ideas about how to do new behaviours by watching others; later, they use this coded information as a reference.

2.3.1.2 Application of the social learning theory to the study

There are many different contexts in which forensic psychology is used. This study explains how forensic psychologists work in the criminal justice system using the social learning theory. Psychologists can act as forensic experts in the criminal and civil courts, in prisons, rehabilitation centers, and correctional facilities, or with victims and offenders (Allan, Martin & Allan, 2009).

According to Allan et al. (2000), few psychologists have had specialized training in forensic psychology; the majority of psychologists who work in forensics hold postgraduate degrees, typically master's degrees. Therefore, when they delve into forensics within the legal system, they typically pick up knowledge by observing or imitating other forensic experts who are already working in the field. As such, psychologists who work in forensics generally get specialized knowledge through on-the-job training and informal training (Allan et al., 2000). This setting becomes crucial for their development (Hoffman, 1993).

2.3.2 Social constructionist theory

Social constructionist theory, often known as the social construction of reality or social constructionism, is a theory that asserts that how knowledge is formed and perceived has an objective reality. Existential-phenomenological psychology, social history, hermeneutics, and social psychology all have roots in the idea (Watzlawick, 1984). This shows that scholars from varied areas of study have employed the social constructionist theory at different times and places. As such, social constructionists, according to Schwandt (2003), view knowledge and truth as constructed or created, and not discovered by the mind.

Further, the term social constructionism was coined in 1966 by Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman. Their ideologies were inspired by early thinkers such as Karl Marx, George Herbert Mead, and Emile Durkheim; and scholars like Giambattista Vico, and Immanuel Kant have all made remarkable contributions to social constructionism. Specific disciplines like the sociology of knowledge and the history of ideas are similar to social constructionism. For instance, in his book titled *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead (1934) laid the framework for symbolic interactionism, which claims that social interaction is responsible for one's identity development. Berger and Luckman's work on the *Social Construction of Reality* (1966) is regarded as an important contribution of sociology to social construction. Furthermore, researchers like Vivien Burr have recently offered valid assumptions to the theory of social constructionism to fit our current society. As a result, this study focuses on Vivien Burr's strand of social constructionism.

Moreover, according to Berger and Luckman's anti-essentialist account of social existence, externalization, objectivation, and internalization are three key processes that humans engage in the production and maintenance of all social happenings through social practices. They mentioned that individuals practice externalization when they act on their world, creating some

object or practice. For instance, a legal practitioner may have the idea that there is the need to integrate forensic psychology into the legal system and externalize it by narrating it to others. This idea becomes part of the social realm taking on a life of its own. This articulated concept becomes an object of awareness for members of that society (objectivation) and develops into a true statement.

According to Gergen (1985, p. 265) social constructionism is viewed as a perspective that believes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences. Gergen (1985) further posits that everything people “know” or “see” as reality is partially socially situated. In social constructionism, people are viewed to be the experts of their own lives.

Last, because people are born into an area where this worldview already exists, they integrate it as part of their everyday experience. This shows how the world can be socially constructed by the practices of people within a society, and experienced them as though their world is fixed.

2.3.2.1 Basic principles of the social constructionist theory

According to Burr (2003), the social constructionist theory is founded on four basic assumptions. These assumptions are:

- a. The social constructionist theory challenges conventional knowledge that has historically guided our understanding of how the world should be.
- b. There is a belief that the language and concepts we use to generally understand the world are historical and cultural.
- c. Knowledge is constructed through social processes, and
- d. Negotiated understanding (social constructions) is viewed as practices that affect social life rather than being mere concepts or abstractions (Corey, 2012).

2.3.2.2 Application of the social constructionist theory to the study

The social constructionist theory provides a helpful foundation for understanding how legal professionals working with individuals with mental illnesses make decisions in the criminal justice system. Social constructionist theory states that a behaviour's classification as abnormal or deviant is contingent upon the unique historical, cultural, and contextual experiences of its individuals within a given culture (Sahin, 2006; Dewees, 1999; Gergen, 1985).

Through this interactive process, some meanings are constructed; once constructed, these meanings are passed down to others through the socialization process and become ingrained in individuals' constructions of reality (Sahin, 2006). Legal practitioners' reasons and processes for responding to specific types of offenders through formal (i.e., court) versus informal (i.e., diverted to community programming) measures may be better understood if they have a better understanding of the behaviours they associate with people they believe to be mentally ill, as well as how they construct such definitions.

2.4 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts

2.4.1 Forensic psychology

Like many other areas in psychology, forensic psychology is hard to describe precisely. According to Brigham (1999), you can find out if a group of psychologists who work in some capacity with the court system answers "Are you a forensic psychologist?" Most people will undoubtedly acknowledge they do not really know, while many will answer "yes," and some will answer "no." Brigham states that his most accurate response to that question right now would be, "Well, it depends," citing his own testimony in court. Brigham notes that one of two widely accepted definitions is used in the professional literature on the topic. While some academics take a more limited view, restricting forensic psychology to the application and practice of psychology as it relates to the legal system, others take a broader view, referring to

forensic psychology as the research and application of psychological knowledge to the legal system.

The definition provided by Bartol & Bartol (2006) is as follows: “We view forensic psychology broadly, as both (1) the research endeavor that examines aspects of human behaviour directly related to the legal process . . . and (2) the professional practice of psychology within, or in consultation with, a legal system that embraces both civil and criminal law” (p. 3). According to Brigham (1999), Ronald Roesch proposes a restrictive definition: “Most psychologists define the area more narrowly to refer to clinical psychologists who are engaged in clinical practice within the legal system” (p. 279).

Given that it appears to indicate a specialty known as “forensic clinical psychology,” this definition might be overly limiting. Moreover, it does not include, among other things, clinicians who provide inmates with counseling services and carry out other corrections-related duties. However, the broad definition covers not only clinical psychologists (also known as practitioners), but also psychologists that specialize in social, developmental, counseling, cognitive, experimental, industrial-organizational, and school psychology, some of whom may not be clinicians. Their contribution to the legal system serves as the unifying factor.

Further, the term “forensic psychology” combines two very important terms: “forensic,” which assists and provides services to the court, and “psychology,” which educates about the human brain and the behavioural aspects that underlie it (Jamal et al., 2022). They go on to say that psychology covers both conscious and unconscious mental states in addition to the significance of thoughts and feelings in a person’s existence.

According to Girard (2008), the best way to describe forensic psychology is as an applied integration of both physical and behavioural sciences. It is the branch of psychology that examines every facet of how people behave in relation to the law or legal system (Jacobs,

2008). This suggests that the methods, instruments, and strategies used in case resolution appears genuinely multidisciplinary.

Moreover, the concept of forensic psychology was given a more thorough definition by Gudjonsson and Haward (2016), who argued that the word comes from the Latin word “forensis,” which refers to the forum, or the Ancient Roman court system, where disputes were resolved. In support of this, Heilbrun (1992) clarifies that psychologists practicing in the fields of clinical psychology, counseling, neuropsychology, and school psychology are engaged in forensic psychology when they actively participate in activities intended to provide the legal system with professional psychological expertise on a regular basis.

Last, forensic psychology, according to Canter and Youngs (2009), is crucial to criminal investigations because it helps investigators identify the relationship between an offender’s behaviours and characteristics, which helps them determine where and what kind of person to look for. However, in this study, forensic psychology is viewed as a branch of psychology that focuses on applying psychology to address criminal and legal system-related issues.

2.4.2 Criminal justice system

Criminal justice is a framework of laws and institutions that is employed by federal, state, and local governments to uphold social order, deter and prosecute criminal activity, and punish lawbreakers (Singh, 2022). In the same way, the criminal justice system, as stated by Daly (2016), is a practical arrangement of several bureaucratically operated state agencies that handle crimes and criminals. She added that these agencies have three arms: investigative arm (police and prosecution authorities, along with specialized investigative agencies like the Bureau of National Investigations [BNI] and the Office of the Special Prosecutor [OSP] in Ghana), adjudicative arm (the criminal courts), and correctional arm (prisons, community corrections, and probation and parole services).

Further, the government-instituted agencies and procedures known as the criminal justice system are meant to deter crime and punish lawbreakers (Adeyeye & Anor, 1996). Adeyeye and Anor (1996) assert that the state, society, and the criminal defendant are all involved in a criminal trial. The effectiveness of the legal procedures leading to the accused or defendant's sentencing for the wrongdoing or crime hinges on whether or not he or she actually committed the act or omission that is being accused against them. According to Adeyeye and Anor (1996), there are four main parts to the criminal justice system, which are as follows:

- The Police.
- The Prosecution.
- The trial Court (criminal court divisions)
- The correctional facilities, which comprise remand houses and prisons.

2.4.3 Communication process

“Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily” (Fiske, 1982). While everyone acknowledges the existence of communication, few people are able to adequately define it (Fiske, 2010). As a result, scholars describe communication from various angles and take distinct stances while studying the communication process (Littlejohn, 2001). According to Shepherd and Rothenbuhler (2000), research on human communication can be classified as either relational or rhetorical. Relational communication concentrates on the exchange and coordination of communication among individuals to arrive at a shared cognition, whereas rhetorical communication studies concentrate on how to influence and persuade others (Dilbeck, McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2009).

Katz and Kahn (1978) in their book “The Social Psychology of Organizations” define communication as “the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning which is the

very essence of a social system.” The process of human communication is framed by a number of fundamental elements. In this process, a sender sends a message to a receiver via a communication channel. The communication is encoded by the sender. The message is sent through the channel, and the receiver decodes the message. In order to guarantee the accuracy of the communication process, this process can be complete by sending feedback from the receiver to the sender. As such, the basic components of the communication process include the sender, message, encoder, channel, receiver, decoder, and feedback (Nordquist, 2019).

The Latin word “communi,” which meaning “the same,” is the source of the English word “communicatio,” which is used to refer to communication. Here, “same” refers to the same concept. Thus, information is passed from one person to another through communication, but the information must make sense to the recipient (Jureddi & Brahmaiah, 2016). Further, Rohim (2016) saw communication as a process in which a message is conveyed to a recipient or recipients in an effort to influence their behaviour.

Communication can also be seen of as an interactional form, wherein communicator and communicant engage in a cause-and-effect or action-reaction process (Rohim, 2016). In this instance, communication entails communicators conveying messages to the communicant in order to elicit an active, dynamic, and reciprocal response. Further, there are three understandings that can be gained by communication (Rohim, 2016): one-way action, interaction, and transaction. According to Rohim (2016), communication is a one-way action that involves multiple components that combine to create distinct messages that originate from the source. The source, message, and receiver are the three components that make up this strategy.

2.4.3.1 Elements of the communication process

According to Wati (2017), the elements of the communication process are as follows:

- The source is crucial to the production and transmission of information. Individuals or groups of people can communicate with each other.
- A message can be transmitted by media or in-person interactions between the communicator and the communicant.
- Communicators utilize the media as a tool to communicate with communicants.
- A recipient is a person who gets a message that was sent by the sender.
- Influence is a message that has the power to alter a communicant's behaviour both before and after it is received.
- After hearing the communicator's message, the communicant provides feedback.
- The communication process can be influenced by the environment.

Communication, as earlier stated, is the process of discourse between a communicator and a communicant. Sending the message to the communicant is the communicator's duty. The individual who gets the message from the communicator is known as the communicant. In addition, the communication process should result in a shift in the communicant's behaviour or feedback. Further, the focus of communication should not only be on the message conveyed, but also on the communicator's and communicant's spontaneous gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered four main areas, specifically; review of relevant literature, review of empirical studies, theoretical framework, and operational definition of terms and concepts. The review of relevant literature section focused on areas such as forensic psychology and crime, forensic psychology in the criminal justice system, and specifically in Ghana's criminal justice system. Further, the review of empirical studies looked into the current awareness and

understanding of forensic psychology among legal professionals, and the best practices for effectively integrating forensic psychology into the legal framework. The theoretical underpinning of the study was Albert Bandura's social learning theory and Burr's social constructionist theory. The chapter concluded with a review of the operational definitions of key terms and concepts, including forensic psychology, the criminal justice system, and communication process.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the methods and techniques used to collect the data required to meet the objectives of the study. Specifically, the section focuses on the research approach, the research design, the sources of data, the study population, the sample size, the sampling techniques and procedures, the data collection instrument, data collection procedures, the data processing and analyses, and the ethics of the research.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed the qualitative research approach. This is due to the fact that the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research include constructivism and postmodernism, which emphasize personal interpretations and points of view in addition to knowledge that is shared or created through research (Burkholder & Spillett, 2013). To achieve the objectives of the research, the approach enabled the researcher to gather information from participants in their natural settings through observations, field notes, interviews, and open-ended questions. (Eyisi, 2016; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013).

Further, the use of the qualitative approach also enabled the researcher to get in-depth information on the experiences and opinions of the study population. This made it possible to fully understand the integration of forensic psychology, with an emphasis on communication process, into the criminal justice system.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed the phenomenological research design. This approach to qualitative research helped in deriving meaning and understanding from the data (Burkholder, Cox &

Crawford, 2016) to provide a detailed definition of a phenomenon based on a professional's lived experience. Given the paucity of research on the topic, this design was best-suited for the study (Donalek, 2004).

3.3 Data Sources

The main source of data for this study were primary sources, specifically interviews, since they offer up-to-date and first-hand knowledge. The researcher also reviewed pertinent literature, which includes books, peer-reviewed research publications, and organizational records related to the topic.

3.4 Study Population

The study population comprised all personnel within the criminal justice system. This encompasses everyone within the group from whom the researcher is seeking specific data (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Further, these personnel were actively involved in the communication strategies used to incorporate forensic psychology into the criminal justice system as well as concerns related to forensic psychology within the system. As such, the researcher gave this population special consideration when gathering data. Nonetheless, a sample was chosen for the study because there were too many participants for the researcher to interact with individually.

3.5 Sample size

Because qualitative research puts participants' views and personal experiences ahead of an objective understanding of a particular social issue (Creswell, 2014), the study interviewed fifteen participants from the study population. Consequently, the concept of saturation in qualitative research provided a thorough framework for determining the overall sample size of the study. However, it is important to keep in mind that in a qualitative study, the saturation

point, the point at which the interviews produce no new information, determines the number of participants (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 Sampling technique and procedures

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was used in this study. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants, who work within the criminal justice system of Ghana. They included the investigative arm which comprises law enforcement officers, BNI personnel, and OSP personnel; the adjudicative arm which comprises judges and lawyers; and the correctional arm comprised of prison officers. Purposive sampling was also employed because it is thought that this specific demographic group is significant as it could provide pertinent insights on the subject (Mason, 2002).

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

3.7.1 Data collection instrument

Semi-structured interview guides were used in the study to gather data. Both in-person and telephone interviews were conducted with the chosen study participants. The instrument was able to collect the necessary data in order to successfully address the research problem and achieve the study's objectives. In order to guarantee that the reality that emerges is one that all study participants share, the researcher asked each participant relevant questions that were required to address the research questions (Wolgemuth et al., 2015).

Further, the study employed open-ended questions to guarantee the participants' freedom of expression. Also, when needed, probes were included with each open-ended question in the interview guide. This enabled the researcher to investigate the subject or issue more thoroughly (Collins & Hussey, 2009). Moreover, the instrument was designed based on the objectives of the present study.

3.7.2 Data collection procedures

The researcher set up a meeting with study participants to confirm their availability before reaching out to them or paying them a visit to conduct an in-person interview. The researcher then chose a time and day that works for every participant. Participants in the study also understood that they were permitted to discontinue the data collection procedure at any time. After giving their permission for the interview, the participants were informed of the study's goal and their signed consent were requested. The interview was flexible and open-ended, permitting questions, probing, and detours from the main study objective (Yin, 2012).

Therefore, interviews were used to collect the views and experiences of the chosen participants with respect to the study's objectives. Because of this, participants were able to go above and beyond what is specifically required of them in the question, ask more questions and provide more detailed explanations (Creswell, 2012).

Further, audio recordings of interview responses were recorded with consent (Nordstrom, 2015). In the event that research participants object, the interviewer wrote-down responses in a notebook.

Last, the researcher also kept a study notebook in which significant events, casual discussions, and further observations were noted (Gibbs, 2007). To reduce security threats and safeguard privacy, the researcher stored the collected data on her laptop and an external hard drive.

3.8 Data Processing and Analyses

To undertake this analysis, the researcher first transcribed the recorded information from audio to word text in order to be assessed as a specific event (Duranti, 2006). This was done by listening to the recordings several times in order to ensure the researcher is acquainted with the data and its components and understands the concepts.

Further, the researcher went through the text to ensure that all discrepancies are resolved. In order to determine the significance of each participant's statements and recollections of prior experiences, the researcher coded (annotate) the transcripts as part of the data analysis process (Mason, 2010).

Moreover, through data transcription and annotation, the researcher produced codes based on statements made throughout the data collection process. Cataloguing was done to reveal recurrent patterns (themes) that were significant and could be identified (Brod, Tesler & Christensen, 2009). These themes revealed the feelings, opinions, and reflections of the participants; hence, it was crucial that the researcher balanced subjective accounts of events with interpretations.

3.9 Research Ethics

Prior to collecting any data, permission from the relevant authorities were obtained. Before the interviews started, each participant was given the opportunity to freely and voluntarily consent. The researcher also provided a written explanation of the study's objectives to participants. The interview guide addressed a wide range of topics, including getting participants' consent to participate, how data is collected, and the details of the study. This determined whether or not they choose to participate.

Further, the researcher took all necessary precautions to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, including not identifying study participants in the background data and refraining from utilizing any information that could be used to immediately link a specific individual with a particular response (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015). Last, the research participants were told that they are under no obligation to answer all of the questions, that they are free to leave the interview at any time, and that there are no negative repercussions if they decide to.

3.10 Chapter Summary

The research approach and design were covered in this chapter. Along with looking at the data sources, it also examined the sampling method, including topics related to study population, sample size, and sampling technique and procedures. The chapter also focused on methods of collecting data, namely the instruments and procedures used. The final section of the chapter included data processing and analyses as well as research ethics.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The findings and a discussion of the data obtained from interviews regarding the communication that takes place when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system. Thus, this chapter focused on two key areas to achieve the study's objectives. First, the section discusses the current awareness and understanding of Forensic psychology among legal professionals. The second and last section outlines the best methods for effectively integrating forensic psychology into Ghana's legal system.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Participants' sociodemographic data as well as the frequencies and percentages of important demographic factors are shown in the tables in this section.

The sociodemographic data of the fifteen (15) study participants is shown in Table 4.1. This information includes their age, gender, marital status, level of education, religion, ethnicity, and length of time employed in their present place of work. This can be seen in the following:

Table 4. 1 Social-demographics of participants

| Gender | Age | Position | Length of time working | Educational level | Religion | Ethnicity | Marital status |
|---------------|------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Male | 57 | Senior Staff Officer | 13 years | Master's Degree | Christian | Akan | Married |
| Male | 38 | Legal Head | 2 years | First Degree | Christian | Ewe | Married |
| Male | 58 | Legal Head | 7 years | Master's Degree | Muslim | Guan | Married |
| Male | 37 | Senior Staff Officer | 1 year | Master's Degree | Christian | Ewe | Single |
| Male | 40 | Investigator | 14 years | Master's Degree | Christian | Ewe | Married |
| Male | 39 | Legal Practitioner | 10 years | Master's Degree | Christian | Ga | Married |
| Male | 38 | Principal Staff Officer | 2 years | Master's Degree | Christian | Akan | Married |
| Male | 29 | Investigator | 5 years | First Degree | Christian | Akan | Single |
| Male | 49 | Head of Department | 7 months | Master's Degree | Christian | Ewe | Single |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------|----|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Male | 40 | Legal Practitioner | 2 years | Master's Degree | Christian | Dagaati | Single |
| Female | 46 | Investigator | 14 years | Master's Degree | Christian | Fante | Married |
| Male | 43 | Prisons Officer | 3 years | Master's Degree | Muslim | Frafra | Married |
| Male | 24 | Prisons Officer | 2 years | First Degree | Christian | Ga | Single |
| Male | 39 | Public Relations Officer | 1 year | First Degree | Christian | Akan | Single |
| Female | 36 | Prisons Officer | 1 year | First Degree | Christian | Ga | Single |

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4. 2 Frequencies and percentages of key demographic variables

| Demographic variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender: | | |
| Male | 13 | 87% |
| Female | 2 | 13% |
| Age: | | |
| 20-24 years | 1 | 7% |
| 25-29 years | 1 | 7% |
| 30-34 years | - | 0% |
| 35-39 years | 6 | 40% |
| 40-44 years | 3 | 20% |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----|-----|
| 45-50 years | 2 | 13% |
| 50-54 years | - | 0% |
| 55-60 years | 2 | 13% |
| Position: | | |
| Senior Staff Officer | 2 | 13% |
| Prisons Officer | 3 | 20% |
| Investigator | 3 | 20% |
| Public Relations Officer | 1 | 7% |
| Head of Department | 1 | 7% |
| Legal Practitioner | 2 | 13% |
| Principal Staff Officer | 1 | 7% |
| Legal Head | 2 | 13% |
| Length of time working: | | |
| Below 1 year | 1 | 7% |
| 1-5 years | 9 | 60% |
| 6-10 years | 2 | 13% |
| 11-15 years | 3 | 20% |
| Educational level: | | |
| First Degree | 5 | 33% |
| Second Degree/Masters | 10 | 67% |
| Religious Affiliation: | | |
| Christian | 13 | 87% |
| Muslim | 2 | 13% |
| Ethnic background: | | |
| Akan | 4 | 27% |

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Fante | 1 | 7% |
| Ewe | 4 | 27% |
| Ga-Adangbe | 3 | 20% |
| Dagaati | 1 | 7% |
| Guan | 1 | 7% |
| Frafra | 1 | 7% |
| Marital Status: | | |
| Single | 7 | 47% |
| Married | 8 | 53% |
| Total | 15 | 100% |

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4.2 displays the frequencies and percentages of the participants' primary demographic characteristics, including gender, age, current position, length of time in that role, educational level, religious affiliation, ethnic background, and marital status. Table 4.2 presents data showing that two (2) participants, representing 13% of the study's participants, were female, and thirteen (13) participants, representing 87% of the study's participants, were male.

Based on the field data, a participant, representing 7% of the study's population were in the 20-24 years range. Likewise, a participant, representing 7% of the study's population were in the 25 – 29 age range. Further, 6 participants, representing 40% of the study's participants, were in the 35 – 39 age range while 3 participants, representing 20% of the study's participants were between the ages of 40 – 44. Moreover, two (2) participants each, or 13% of the study's total population, were in the 45–50 and 55–60 age groups. Last, none of the study participants were between the age ranges of 30 – 34 and 50 – 54.

In terms of the current position, three (3) study participants were prison officers, three (3) were investigators, and two (2) were senior staff officers. Among the study participants, a public relations officer made up 7%, one (1) department head, who also accounted for 7% of the participants, and two (2) participants representing 13% of the study participants were legal practitioners. The study population also included two (2) legal heads and one (1) principal staff officer.

Further, the survey data indicated that 60% (9) of the study participants had worked in his/her position for 1 – 5 years, 20% (3) of the study participants had worked for 11 – 15 years, and 13% (2) of the study participants had worked for 6 – 10 years. Last, at the time of data collection, only one (1) study participant had been working for less than a year. In terms of educational level, majority of the study participants, comprising 10 participants, held a masters' degree certification accounting for 20% of the study participants, while 5 study participants, accounting for 33% of the study population held a first-degree certification.

Moreover, thirteen (13) of the study participants were Christians, making up 87% of the sample, and two (2) of the study participants were Muslims, making up 13% of the sample. Of the study participants, 27% were Akans, 7% were Fantes, 27% were Ewes, and 20% were Ga-Adangbes. Additionally, of the fifteen study participants, Dagaatis, Guans, and Frafras made up 7% each.

Last, based on the frequencies and percentages indicated above, 47% of the study participants were single, and 53% were married.

4.2 The current awareness and understanding of forensic psychology among legal professionals

Forensic psychology is best described as an applied combination of the behavioral and physical sciences (Girard, 2008). It seems to be an area of psychology that looks at all aspects of how people act when they are around the law or the judicial system.

According to Jamal et al. (2022), forensic psychology is the area that combines the study of criminal behavior and the administration of justice. It involves recognizing the extent to which criminal law is engrained and applied in a particular country. This is necessary to ensure effective communication between judges, attorneys and other law enforcement authorities.

However, this section looked at the meaning of forensic psychology, how important forensic psychology is in the legal profession, ways the application of forensic psychology benefits the legal profession, challenges faced when applying forensic psychology within the legal profession, and strategies to handle these challenges.

4.2.1 The meaning of forensic psychology

Forensic psychology's creative and diverse approach makes it extremely beneficial. Therefore, it is important to understand what forensic psychology means for legal professionals in their work.

Based on the information gathered in this section, study participants provided a variety of definitions for forensic psychology. Forensic psychology, according to some participants, is the application of psychological principles to the legal system. For instance, in a brief statement, the first participant said that forensic psychology is "*the application of clinical psychological behaviour to the area of practical law*"

In a similar vein, some participants stated:

“Forensic psychology is the application of psychological principles and practices within the legal and criminal justice system” (Participant 4)

“My understanding forensic psychology is where there is an intersection between psychology and then the legal system...” (Participant 5)

“Forensic psychology, from my understanding is the application of psychological principles, methods and theories in dealing with things that border on criminality and legal procedures” (Participant 14)

According to the aforementioned accounts, forensic psychology explains how psychological principles are incorporated into the criminal justice and legal systems. This shows that forensic psychology humanizes the legal system by evaluating offenders based on their psychological states rather than analyzing the crime committed and determining the appropriate penalty.

Accordingly, some participants made the following statements:

“Forensic psychology is use of psychology to detect crime scientifically. Or the use of psychology to understand how criminals act or think in order to assist investigations” (Participant 8)

“It means a branch of psychology that deals with investigations into the minds of persons involved in a legal issue” (Participant 9)

“Understanding the human mind in relation to criminal investigation/crimes committed” (Participant 10)

The aforementioned accounts reaffirm the need of understanding the mental states of those who commit crimes. This is in line with the social constructionist theory, which offers a useful framework for understanding the decision-making processes of professionals in the criminal justice system who engage with people who have mental illnesses (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985).

Further, some participants' understanding of forensic psychology is focused on the understanding of the behaviour of offenders. They said the following:

“The psychological and scientific enquiry into the conduct of a person to unravel justification for one's conduct” (Participant 6)

“... I know that it is a criminal aspect of psychology, how to understand the behaviour of criminals” (Participant 13)

The aforementioned statements make it clear that forensic psychology helps law enforcement and courts understand criminal behavior and assess an individual's likelihood of committing a crime. The statements above corroborate Nakhost's (2023) assertion that forensic psychologists can help the legal system better understand victim behaviour and ensure that crime victims are treated with compassion and dignity.

Moreover, other participants focused on the different benefits that legal practitioners or the criminal justice system in general can have from using forensic psychology to understand criminal behaviour. They stated the following:

“Forensic Psychology helps by providing psychological insights that improve the understanding of criminal behaviour, ensure fair legal proceedings, and support the rehabilitation of offenders” (Participant 7)

“Forensic psychology, to me, represents the intersection of psychological expertise and the legal system, offering valuable insights into human behaviour that help guide legal decision-making. It's about using scientific understanding of mental processes to address legal issues such as criminal responsibility, competency, and risk assessment” (Participant 11)

“... my understanding of Forensic Psychology is when a forensic psychologist uses a scientific knowledge and methods to help the court make informed judgment /decision...” (Participant 12)

“We have trainings where resource persons come from other law enforcement agencies on how to handle witnesses and suspects. When it comes to eliciting of information from witnesses or suspects, the Office has come with a guideline on the proper way to elicit information from people we interact with. How we should explain our procedures, our process and then expectations to them. All these are methods that or things that we are doing as an organization to apply these methods to help our workers” (Participant 5)

The aforementioned accounts highlight the significance of incorporating forensic psychology into the legal system. These include directing legal decision-making, promoting offender rehabilitation, guaranteeing equitable legal proceedings, and making informed decisions. Further, this suggests that forensic psychology contributes to the creation of an effective solution for both victims and the perpetrators of crimes. However, this reinforces the assertion made by Nakhost (2023) that forensic psychology can be used to help develop effective interventions for both offenders and their victims.

Last, it is clear from the narratives in this section that forensic psychology’s integration with the legal system sheds light on the psychological underpinnings of criminal behavior.

4.2.2 Importance of forensic psychology in the legal profession

Forensic psychology is seen to have several useful abilities that can contribute to the enhancement of the criminal justice system. The lack of forensic psychology has adverse effects like judges suffering, victims deprived of justice, and an unending waiting list for trials.

The data gathered in this section outlines the various benefits legal professionals derive from employing forensic psychology in their operations. The following statements were made by individuals who believed that forensic psychology assisted investigators in making better decisions with regards to human behaviour in the criminal justice system:

“It helps investigators to take proper decision of human behaviour in relation to the criminal justice system” (Participant 1)

“It provides crucial insights into human behaviour, enabling better threat assessment, criminal profiling, and decision-making in high-stakes situations” (Participant 4)

“Help law enforcement agencies to profile criminals, analyze behaviour, and provide insights into the psychological traits of suspects” (Participant 7)

“It is important because it helps with ascertaining the state of mind of a person involved in a legal issue; this, in turn, facilitates the understanding of the underlying reason for the conduct of the person in question” (Participant 9)

The narratives above emphasize how important forensic psychology is to criminal investigations since it helps with threat assessment, criminal profiling, and provides a deeper understanding of human behaviour. These circumstances clearly facilitate a more thorough understanding of human behaviour.

Similarly, some participants asserted that forensic psychology guarantees equitable treatment because investigators take the initiative to fully understand the motives behind criminal activity.

As disclosed by some participants:

“Forensic psychology is important because it provides understanding to human behaviour in a scientific way to help understand the thoughts behind crime or establishing intents to a crime. It helps ensure fair treatment and appropriate interventions for individuals involved in a crime, which contributes to fair investigation” (Participant 8)

“Forensic psychology is crucial in my line of work because it provides objective psychological insights that help address complex legal questions about human behaviour. It supports the justice system in

making informed decisions regarding individuals' mental states, motivations, and risk factors, ensuring fairer outcomes" (Participant 11)

The aforementioned accounts demonstrate how forensic psychology helps in offering psychological understanding of criminal behaviour. This helps in determining the mental health of offenders before making well-informed choices. This ultimately guarantees more equitable outcomes. Last, this reiterates participant 11's brief submission that *"forensic psychology is crucial in promoting fair justice, especially in criminal cases."*

Further, some participants thought that high stress levels and heart attacks were among the problems that plagued the modern world. Therefore, it is essential to understand the mental health of those who commit crimes. A participant stated that:

"... We are in a situation where people easily contract some mental health problems; stress, heart attack among others, so the forensic psychology that you apply to make that person appreciate that his or her problem is very important" (Participant 3)

Moreover, one participant believed that forensic psychology improves understanding of an individual's behaviour or conduct when attempting to settle a legal dispute. A participant mentioned that:

"It helps to better appreciate the conduct of a person before the court either as witness being examined on oath or a party to a case in court in the resolution of disputes before the court" (Participant 6)

It is evident from the narrative above that forensic psychology plays a huge role in conflict resolutions as it helps settle dispute amicably by understanding human behaviour. It is evident that the conflict resolution techniques, resources, and strategies used today are truly interdisciplinary (Jacobs, 2008). The creative and diverse approach of forensic psychology

makes it immensely beneficial. Therefore, it is impossible to underestimate the importance of forensic psychology in the criminal justice system, which is why some have argued that a country's legal system is seriously flawed if it lacks forensic psychologists (Agbonika, 2014).

4.2.3 Ways the application of forensic psychology benefits the legal profession

Forensic psychologists seem to play crucial roles in a variety of contexts, including the legal system, law enforcement, prisons, and healthcare. Psychologists that specialize in forensic psychology examine the criminal mind and purpose, treat defendants, and provide legal advice to lawyers (Gbadebo-Goyea et al., 2012). As such, forensic psychiatrists are mostly brought in when someone's sanity is being questioned in court. This is because a forensic psychologist can support or refute an insanity claim.

According to the data gathered in this section, some participants believed that forensic psychology was advantageous to the legal field because it helped them understand how people behave, which in turn helped them make well-informed decisions. Some participants responded as follows when asked how forensic psychology is used to help the legal profession:

“In giving evidence in court a well-trained forensic psychologist can read from the demeanour of a subject to make decision” (Participant 1)

“Help them better understand human behaviour” (Participant 12)

“By providing a deeper understanding of human behaviour and mental health, forensic psychology enhances the legal profession's ability to make fairer, more scientifically grounded decisions” (Participant 4)

“The legal profession benefits from forensic psychology through more accurate assessments of criminal responsibility, competency, and witness credibility. It helps judges, attorneys, and juries better understand mental health issues, improving the handling of cases

involving trauma, mental illness, and risk of reoffending” (Participant 11)

“Forensic psychologists provide explanations that can clarify mental health issues for judges and juries” (Participant 8)

The accounts presented above reaffirm that forensic psychology helps in an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. Further, forensic psychology helps in assessing offenders’ mental health. In court, this aids juries and judges in reaching well-informed decisions. Last, forensic psychology aids juries, judges, and lawyers in understanding mental health difficulties and human behaviour, which enhances the way incidents involving trauma, mental illness, and reoffending risk are handled. This is consistent with the social constructionist theory, which provides a helpful framework for understanding the choices made by criminal justice system personnel who work with individuals who suffer from mental illnesses. (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985).

Forensic psychology, according to some participants, helps in the analysis and evaluation of court evidence. In brief, participant 6 said that *“Forensic psychologists help in analyzing and evaluating evidence before the court.”* This makes it easier for jurors and judges to reach impartial decisions and make informed choices.

According to some participants, forensic psychology aids in determining the likelihood that a crime would recur. In a brief statement, a participant stated that *“It helps assess the potential for crime reoccurring (Participant 8).”*

The participant goes on to say:

“It helps assess a defendant’s ability to stand trial” (Participant 8)

The aforementioned accounts unequivocally show that forensic psychology helps in determining an offender’s mental health and suitability for trial. Offenders with mental

illnesses are clearly considered incapable to stand trial (Renzaglia, Vess, Hodel & McCrary, 2004). The defendant will therefore be ordered to receive treatment at any of the three public mental facilities, but Accra Psychiatric Hospital is typically chosen since it seems more secure and lowers the likelihood of patient absconding (Adjorlolo, Chan & Agboli, 2016). Because of this structure, the planning and provision of mental health services is extremely relevant in the effort to address the mental health requirements of mentally ill offenders.

Further, the following narratives emerged from data gathered to determine how the use of forensic psychology helps the legal profession:

“... Again, forensic psychology benefits the legal profession in the sense that it helps to situate the entirety of a legal matter in its right context using a rigorous system” (Participant 9)

“It helps fashion out better laws both in punishing and preventing” (Participant 10)

“Aid the legal professionals in their case preparation, the development of case strategy as well as preparing witnesses” (Participant 12)

According to the aforementioned accounts, forensic psychology helps the legal profession by putting legal matters in the proper context through a strict system, introducing better laws to deter and punish criminal activity, and assisting the legal profession in developing case strategies, preparing witnesses, and preparing cases.

Regarding the prisons, forensic psychology is a significant part of the establishment. Based on information gathered, some participants identified several advantages that prisoners experience when forensic psychology is used. These are what they said:

“... forensic psychology will actually help us to classify inmates, know their needs, their risks, and prepare appropriate programs for them to reform” (Participant 13)

“... if the forensic psychology system is working, we don't have, maybe the kind of sentence given to prisoners would have been different. The kind of treatment they would have given them would have also been different. And so, forensic psychology is of great help to the country and the justice system” (Participant 15)

The first narrative focuses on how prisoners are categorized based on their needs in order to help assign suitable reformation programs for them. This will be very beneficial to the inmate rehabilitation process. Further, this will also minimize recidivism over time since inmates get to go through effective rehabilitation.

Moreover, the second narrative points out that forensic psychology helps in imposing lesser punishments. This can be the result of lower sentences being imposed on inmates due to their psychological and emotional states at the time of the offense.

4.2.4 Challenges faced when applying forensic psychology within the legal profession

Forensic psychology plays a variety of roles in the legal profession, including considering or imagining committing a crime, determining what information needs to be provided to the investigation in order to arrest the criminals, providing legal advice to parties involved in criminal and civil disputes, developing more sophisticated treatment and rehabilitation techniques, and more.

Nonetheless, there have been shortcomings in the legal profession's use of forensic psychology. The data obtained for this section highlighted some of the difficulties in using forensic psychology in the legal field. These include the dearth of experts in forensic psychology training, lack of appreciation and understanding of forensic psychology as a field beneficial to the legal profession, and misinterpretations and diverse behavioural patterns.

Regarding the dearth of experts in forensic psychology training, some participants stated the following:

“... lack of trainers to train forensic psychologist as a subject, and the use of advance forms of technology such as artificial intelligence” (Participant 1)

“In Africa, we do not have people with resources, people who are interested, specialists in that area, we do not even have them. Even the lawyers who keep complaining that we do not have the numbers given the cases we have” (Participant 15)

“And so, this is a new area that, even in Ghana, we don't have programs like that for people who are interested in a role and become one of the forensic psychologists” (Participant 15)

The aforementioned accounts suggest that there are insufficient forensic psychology specialists in Ghana's legal system. Because of this, forensic psychology training and integration into the legal field are challenging. Therefore, in order to train more professionals in the field and to reveal the significance of forensic psychology in the legal profession, specialists are needed.

Further, the lack of appreciation and understanding of forensic psychology as a science that benefits the legal profession presents another difficulty when integrating it into the legal system. In light of this, some participants expressed the following views:

“... I will also site a lack of appreciation and knowhow by the law enforcement community in general” (Participant 2)

“The lack of appreciation and understanding of the use of forensic psychology to resolve disputes” (Participant 6)

These accounts suggest that people and law enforcement officials are ignorant of and do not value forensic psychology. Therefore, it makes sense to employ forensic psychologists to assist

in educating both the general public and those working in the legal system. This could increase their understanding and appreciation of the field.

Moreover, another challenge faced when applying forensic psychology has to do with misinterpretations and diverse behavioural patterns. Some participants said the following:

“Misinterpretation of psychological concepts which may lead to misuse in court” (Participant 8)

“... The challenge may arise from interpretation of human behaviour because we have different persons with different psychological levels...” (Participant 3)

“... You know sometimes people that we come across, some are suspects, some are witnesses. We have witnesses that are even hostile. There are witnesses that will not cooperate with you. We have suspects that will not cooperate with you. People who have already made up their minds so no matter what you will tell them, they are not responsive. Some people too have, you know, some kind of mental issues. With this there has to be help from probably a professional doctor and all that. So, there are challenges at times” (Participant 5)

“Human behaviour is very difficult to deal with” (Participant 12)

The aforementioned accounts demonstrate how people’s varied perspectives on the world lead to misinterpretation of forensic psychology and how people behave. Therefore, it is necessary to provide forensic psychology education to the general public and legal professionals while also taking into account the views and perspectives of individuals.

Last, the narratives and discussion above highlighted the difficulties in integrating forensic psychology into the legal profession. Therefore, the strategies to deal with these issues are examined in the next section.

4.2.5 Strategies to handle these challenges.

When asked how they would approach the aforementioned challenges, some participants provided a variety of responses. Among them were initiating educational programs and training, providing precise knowledge about a topic to serve as a foundation for decision-making, guaranteeing careful research and impartial assessment, and speaking in plain terms and promoting open communication.

Regarding the implementation of training initiatives and educational programs on forensic psychology, some participants expressed the following:

“... Forensic Psychology should be taught in the law school to educate people for them to know the essence of forensic psychology in our legal system” (Participant 3)

“ability to train as forensic psychology as a surest way to crime management” (Participant 1)

“Continuous education about forensic psychology to investigators and legal practitioners” (Participant 8)

“Education” (Participant 10)

“... the Ghana Education Service, if they can introduce programs in the universities or even, yeah, from university level, then they can be able to train people in that area...” (Participant 15)

“These challenges can be addressed through better interdisciplinary education for legal professionals...” (Participant 11)

The aforementioned accounts suggest that education is crucial in addressing the difficulties arising from the use of forensic psychology in the legal profession. Further, considering how quickly the area of forensic psychology is expanding, it is essential that education and training give individuals and legal professionals the range of knowledge, skill sets, and experiences they

need. However, the increasingly diverse tasks that forensic psychologists are taking on in the areas of assessment, treatment, and consulting further emphasize the significance of making sure that appropriate training is received (Marczyk, DeMatteo, Kutinsky & Heilbrun, 2008).

Additionally, another strategy involves giving detailed information about a topic to support decision-making. Regarding this strategy, some participants said the following:

“having accurate information to form the base of decision making about subjects” (Participant 1)

“By getting a team of knowledgeable forensic psychologists who would render sincere and accurate service and support; and having a system that helps to minimize human error” (Participant 9)

“In our system, everything is bureaucratic. So, there must be a conscious effort with legislation, whereby we all understand that there is forensic psychology. And when anybody commits an offence, we have to refer the person to a forensic psychologist to determine his stability to stand trial...” (Participant 13)

According to the aforementioned accounts, it is critical that both individuals and legal professionals be up to date on forensic psychology to guarantee that services in the legal space are provided fairly and accurately. Additionally, it is evident that forensic psychology creates a system that reduces human error. In essence, it is advisable for individuals and institutions to understand the need to factor forensic psychology into the legal framework. This would significantly contribute to impartial verdicts and transparent proceedings.

Additionally, another strategy to address the aforementioned challenges is to ensure thorough research and impartial assessment. In light of this, one participant stated:

“We gather enough evidence about the case and make sure that the right person who committed the crime is punished and that the Victims right is protected” (Participant 12)

The aforementioned narratives emphasize how crucial it is to gather sufficient and reliable evidence for a case. This facilitates judges’ ability to render just decisions. Further, the rights of victims are also adequately safeguarded, and criminals receive the punishments they deserve.

Last, some participants believed that encouraging open communication and speaking in simple language were among the ways to address the challenges discussed in the previous section.

Some participants said the following:

“Use simple language to explain how forensic psychology was applied to resolve the dispute” (Participant 6)

“... fostering open communication between psychologists and legal experts, and developing guidelines for the effective use of psychological evidence...” (Participant 11)

According to the aforementioned accounts, forensic psychology should be explained in clear terms. This would make it easier for the average Ghanaian to understand the forensic psychology process and the need to integrating forensic psychology within the legal field.

Further, the narratives suggest that open dialogue between psychologists and legal professionals should be promoted. This can have a significant impact on mutual understanding and collaborative work between disciplines. However, gaining such mutual understanding, trust, and communication skills calls for more than a passing knowledge with different fields; it requires thorough understanding of the conceptual frameworks, technical jargon, and methods used in various fields (Gilligan, 2019).

4.3 The best practices for effectively integrating Forensic psychology into the legal framework of Ghana

This section looked into how forensic psychology can be integrated into Ghana's legal system or the strategies employed to ensure the effective implementation of forensic psychology into the legal profession.

4.3.1 How forensic psychology can be integrated into Ghana's legal system

Understanding human behaviour at various levels, including emotional patterns, intelligence level, and so on, is the focus of forensic psychology, while law primarily handles issues pertaining to criminal and civil processes (Veeraraghavan, 1987). Further, the law turns to forensic psychologists for a variety of assistance, including the examination and evaluation of the victim's or accused's mental state, in order to bring justice to the victims or even to the criminals (Veeraraghavan, 1987).

Following this, forensic psychology and law must coexist or collaborate to ensure that just and equitable decisions are made in order to contribute to the transformation of the legal system. Therefore, given the importance of forensic psychology, it would be prudent to integrate the field within the Ghanaian legal system.

However, when asked how forensic psychology can be integrated into the legal system, the study participants believed that factors like education and training, awareness creation, policy implementation, collaborations between actors, and provision of expertise can guarantee that forensic psychology is seamlessly included into the legal system.

With regards to education and training, some participants disclosed that:

“... I think the legal system or those in authority should appreciate the fact that forensic psychology is a very importance component of our life. It should be made a subject of study, like the nurses, like the doctors, like the teachers and other people. The legal profession, once we have an interface with the citizenry, it is important and it must be incorporated into our legal system” (Participant 3)

“Forensic psychology can be integrated through specialised training for legal professionals, establishing forensic units, and using psychological assessments in court to evaluate defendants' mental states” (Participant 11)

“From the investigative point to the court everyone in the values chain ought to be educated on what forensic psychology is” (Participant 10)

“Through sufficient education to enhance better appreciation of the role that forensic psychology plays in the determination of disputes” (Participant 6)

“... judges and lawyers at the law school must be introduced and trained, and law enforcements must be trained at the basic level to embrace the concept” (Participant 1)

“Training and Education, and also develop standardized guidelines for psychological evaluations. There should be collaboration with Law Enforcement and workshops should be conducted for law enforcement agencies” (Participant 8)

The narratives above imply that forensic psychology can be easily incorporated into the legal system when people and legal professionals are educated and trained in the field. This is because people tend to value a subject more when they are well-informed about it. This applies to the use of forensic psychology in the legal system. The last narrative also mentioned the need for collaboration with law enforcement. This will encourage learning regarding one's own mental

and behavioral patterns. This supports Bandura's social learning theory, which contends that an individual may learn by observing the actions of others (Fryling & Hayes, 2017).

Further, educating individuals on forensic psychology is another way of incorporating it into the legal system. Some participants during interview sessions stated the following:

"... You create awareness and you train the players of the criminal justice system for them to begin to appreciate what the subject matter can contribute in the criminal justice system" (Participant 2)

"Because now the system seems to be working for the players. So, anything that you are bringing on board needs to convince them that it will make the system work better than it's working now. If you're not able to convince us up to that level, we will not embrace it... And so, the awareness has to be intensive... So yes, we need to, from the legal perspective, advocate. And of course, advocacy is needed to influence the lawmakers to see the need to formulate laws on them, so that from there, the rest can follow" (Participant 14)

The aforementioned accounts highlight the significance of expanding forensic psychology awareness within the legal system. According to them, this will make it easier for those working in the legal system and its structures to recognize the value of forensic psychology in the legal system. Further, it is prudent to know that individuals or institutions have a tendency to reject things when they are not persuaded by the awareness raised about it. As such, the participants advised that intensive awareness must be created in order for lawmakers to appreciate the concept and formulate laws on the subject.

Moreover, some participants believed that in order to integrate forensic psychology into the legal system, it has to be implemented as a policy. They said the following in an interview:

"I think this one should be policy level. If it is a policy level, it will be that judicial service can decide that from now on, we are going to have

a specialist in this area, either one or two. Sometimes it can be, even they can start a few at the national level, then they can decide to increase the number to the regional level, even to district level, fine. Because the judicial services have offices all over, at the regions, at the district, even at the local level, we have a court system and all those things... ” (Participant 15)

“By formalizing its application or adding forensic psychology to policy in the legal system of Ghana ” (Participant 9)

According to the aforementioned accounts, incorporating forensic psychology into policy may facilitate the field's integration into the legal system. Additionally, the first narrative included some information on the various stages at which it can be applied to guarantee its effective incorporation into the legal system.

Integrating forensic psychology into the judicial system can also be achieved through encouraging collaboration between stakeholders. In light of this, some participants expressed the following:

“I think that we all have to play a collective role here because it's a chain, we have investigators on one side, we have the legal profession people on the other side, we have the judiciary on the other side. So, I think that we should find a way to bring these bodies together where we have the judges on one side, the lawyers on the other side, the military of the other side. Then we can say that whilst carrying out your work, these are the methods that are acceptable by the courts and these are those that are not acceptable. So that guides the whole process from the beginning as to what you are to do, what you are not to do and all that. So, if we're able to put them under one umbrella, I think with this understanding, we can incorporate forensic psychology in the legal system. It is a collective effort and it cannot be done by one side because of the system we run in Ghana ” (Participant 5)

“Personally, I make it a point to situate my work within the most viable budget available and employ the use of collaboration with experts where need be. Moreover, personal upgrade in terms of knowledge acquisition as well” (Participant 2)

The accounts presented above indicate that cooperation amongst key legal profession players is essential to guaranteeing the integration of forensic psychology into the legal system. This could include judges, lawyers, among others. Further, this is believed to be a collaborative effort that cannot be accomplished by only an individual. Therefore, when necessary, it is prudent to ensure expert collaboration. Moreover, professionals often learn from one another when they work together. This corroborates Bandura’s social learning theory, which argues that observing the behavior of others might help one learn (Fryling & Hayes, 2017). This illustrates how skills are acquired through observation and imitation of others.

Last, some participants believed that the provision of expertise in psychology could help integrate forensic psychology into Ghana’s legal system. Participant 4 revealed that:

“Forensic psychology can be integrated into Ghana’s legal system by providing psychological expertise in criminal profiling, competency evaluations, and mental health assessments, aiding in fairer trials, improved offender rehabilitation, and more informed legal decisions”

According to the narrative above, the legal profession should have access to forensic psychology experts to assist with criminal profiling, competency assessments, and mental health evaluations. Further, this will help ensure more equitable trials, better offender rehabilitation, and better-informed legal decisions. As a result, forensic psychology could become easier to integrate into the legal system.

4.4 Conclusion

To summarize, forensic psychology plays an essential role in conflict resolution since it helps resolve matters amicably by analysing human behaviour. Further, forensic psychology helps to develop a workable solution for both criminals and victims of crimes. This suggests that the legal profession's use of forensic psychology may result in fair trials and transparent proceedings. In time, this leads to a fair and equitable legal system.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

An overview of the findings obtained from the study and data analysis is provided in this chapter. The study provides policymakers and stakeholders with conclusions as well as recommendations regarding the communication process that occurs when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system.

5.1 Summary of key findings

The study explored the to explore the communication process that unfolds when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system. The study focused on two specific objectives; the current awareness and understanding of Forensic psychology among legal professionals; and the best practices for effectively integrating Forensic psychology into the legal framework of Ghana.

Further, the study was theoretically grounded in the social learning theory and the social constructionist theory. The study adopted the qualitative research approach to gather information from 15 personnel within the criminal justice system using a semi-structured interview guide.

Key findings regarding the current awareness and understanding of Forensic psychology among legal professionals showed that:

- Forensic psychology describes how psychological principles are applied in the legal and criminal justice systems.

- Forensic psychology assists courts and law enforcement in determining a person's propensity to commit a crime and in understanding criminal behaviour.
- Forensic psychology is important for conflict resolution because it uses its understanding of human behaviour to help resolve disagreements amicably.
- Forensic psychology helps in determining an offender's mental health and readiness to stand trial.
- Individual's varied worldviews and behavioural patterns lead to misinterpretation of forensic psychology.
- Education is essential in addressing the challenges arising from the use of forensic psychology in the legal profession.
- To ensure that services in the legal field are rendered accurately and fairly, both individuals and legal professionals should stay current on forensic psychology.
- Clear and detailed explanations of forensic psychology should be provided.

The findings on the best practices for effectively integrating forensic psychology into the legal framework of Ghana revealed the following:

- Forensic psychology can easily be integrated into the legal system when individuals and legal professionals are educated and trained in the field.
- It is important to expand awareness creation on forensic psychology within the legal system.
- Incorporating forensic psychology in policy could make it easier for the discipline to be integrated into the legal system.
- To ensure that forensic psychology is integrated into the legal system, collaboration amongst key stakeholders of the legal profession is necessary.

- Forensic psychology specialists ought to be available to the legal community to help with competence examinations, mental health assessments, and criminal profiling.

5.2 Conclusions

In view of the above stated findings, the following conclusions are made:

- Forensic psychology facilitates an in-depth understanding of human behaviour.
- Forensic psychology humanizes the legal system by assessing criminals according to their psychological states rather than examining the offense and deciding on the appropriate penalty.
- Forensic psychology is not valued or understood by the general public or law enforcement personnel and agencies.
- In order for lawmakers to understand the concept and create laws pertaining to forensic psychology, extensive awareness, education, and training programs must be developed.

5.3 Recommendations

With the conclusions in mind, the following recommendations are made:

- Forensic psychologists must be prepared to share their in-depth knowledge and expertise in order to improve legal proceedings within the judicial system.
- The legal system must encourage the application of forensic psychology in their proceedings in order to reach impartial assessments and make well-informed decisions.
- Educational institutions, specifically institutions that offer law programs, should take the initiative to offer forensic psychology courses to educate legal professionals on the value of using forensic psychology in the legal system.

5.4 Implications of the Study

The study has implications for the fields of law and forensic psychology since it highlights the need to combine the two fields to guarantee impartial and efficient judicial processes. The recommendations of the study are essential for decision-making by a number of stakeholders, including governments, corporations, academics, forensic psychologists, legal professionals, and educational institutions.

Further, the study made great strides in providing recommendations to the legal system and legal professionals about how to enhance their operations by incorporating forensic psychology into their professional activities. This study has also shown that employing forensic psychology in the field of law is an effective strategy.

Therefore, forensic psychology should be integrated into related professions to improve its functionality. Also, the study has made a substantial contribution to theory building by relating its findings to the social learning theory.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN GHANA: A FOCUS ON THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE INFORMED CONSENT

Hello, my name is Betty Acquah and I am a student from the University of Media Arts and Communication. I am conducting research on the communication process that unfolds when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system. Your establishment and you in particular happen to be part of the study sample, and I would appreciate your participation in this study. The interview would last between 30 minutes and I hour. The questions that I would ask you basically concern your experiences within the legal field regarding forensic psychological issues. As academic research, the information is mainly to help have a better understanding of how you are able integrate forensic psychology in your legal practice. Any information you would provide would be kept strictly confidential and would not be shown to other persons. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any individual questions or all of the questions. However, I hope that you will participate in this study since your views are very important. At this time, you can ask me anything you want to know/clarify about this study. May I begin the interview now?

Signature of interviewer.....

Date.....

1. PARTICIPANT AGREES TO BE INTERVIEWED
2. PARTICIPANT DOES NOT AGREE TO BE INTERVIEWED (END)

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE

This study seeks to explore the communication process that unfolds when forensic psychology is integrated into the criminal justice system. The goal of the study is to expand the body of knowledge on forensic psychology's communication process within the criminal justice system. The study is significant because it helps policy makers, legal practitioners, clinicians, and other relevant experts with an interest in issues surrounding the criminal justice system and forensic psychology in making well-informed decisions about how to oversee and manage forensic psychology within the criminal justice system. The findings seek to lay the groundwork for policymakers to create laws that will regulate forensic psychology and maximize its benefits. All provided information will be used solely for educational purposes, and every piece of data will be treated with the utmost privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Therefore, feel free to provide accurate information so that the study is guaranteed to be successful.

SECTION A: Socio-Demographic data

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Current position
4. Length of time working in the said position
5. Educational level
6. Religious affiliation.....
7. Ethnic background
8. Marital status

SECTION B: The current awareness and understanding of Forensic psychology among legal professionals

9. What does forensic psychology mean to you? *Probe*
10. Why does it seem so important to you in your line of work?
11. In what ways does the legal profession benefit from the application of forensic psychology?
12. What challenges arise within the legal profession when applying forensic psychology?
13. How do you handle these challenges?

SECTION C: The best ways to integrate forensic psychology into Ghana's legal framework

14. In your opinion, how can forensic psychology be integrated into Ghana's legal system?
15. What initiatives has your firm implemented to ensure the effective application of forensic psychology into the legal profession? *Probe*
16. Is there anything more you would like to add?

Thank you for your time and cooperation