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Critical Investigation of the Causes of Economic and Cyber Fraud among the Youth in Africa: A Case of Ghana

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Abstract:

This research was conducted to study the rapid spread and the prevalence of sakawa (internet fraud backed by occult practices or spiritualism) in Ghana, localizing or using Swedru as a case study. Using qualitative method of inquiry, the study examined the reasons why the youths engage in sakawa, the rituals they perform, its repercussions on the perpetrators, the society and the nation as a whole, and the government and other stakeholders' efforts to combat or curtail this menace. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and the ATLAS it was used for the Data analysis. Findings from this research explored that peer pressure, unemployment, poverty and haste of becoming rich at an early stage in life push the youths into sakawa without considering the consequences. Also, the level of consciousness about sakawa in Ghana is increasing but most crimes associated with sakawa are not reported to the police. This is because of lack of evidences from the public to the police. Also because of the rights to privacy, the Police cannot interfere in what one is doing at the café. I recommended that there should be laws governing the operation of internet cafes in our communities and Ghana Police Service should also be well trained in I. C. T. to become proficient in computer literacy in fighting or combating cybercrime or other computer related crimes. Government should also create adequate technical and computer training schools where the youth technical skills in I.T. will be sharpened and channeled into other developmental programs and researches created by the government to enhance their technical competencies and development as a whole.

Keywords: Sakawa, internet fraud, 419, perpetrators, agona swedru, Fraudsters, Cyber, Cafe Operators, Mallams.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

This study is generally concerned with popular narrative of a type of "computer- assisted crime" (Wall 2010; 99) labeled in Ghana as „sakawa“. Sakawa narratives allege that participants engaged in this fraudulent act, who are to a large extent the youth (mostly males in the ages of 16-40), indulge in occultism ritual practices to enhance their potential to defraud people and become wealthy. This occultism is coupled with negative consequences that affect participants. These results include any type of ill-health such as insanity and / or ultimately death within a short time after achieving one's desire. (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011).

Abbey (2009) also posits that this occultism ritual practices is as a result of the widespread of the knowledge that most business conducted over the internet are susceptible to internet fraud, many business men / women have become extremely cautious of transactions over the internet. This knowledge led to the decline of the 419 trade. So steep was the decline that many perpetrators of 419 otherwise known as "sakawa "sort spiritual guidance in their action to defraud and get more money from their business partners.

This action opened a chapter in the sakawa trade. In an article, Internet Fraud to Modern Day Sakawa – The Untold Synonymity, published on Joy FM website, Richard Nii Abbey reports that most people who consulted for spiritual guidance were given special rings to wear on a particular finger to be used during the transaction over the net. This ring allegedly possesses the power to charm a victim into succumbing to the whims and caprices of the fraudsters (Abbey, 2009).

After the victim has been charmed, the perpetrators will then go on to make their demands which cannot be refused by the victims (Abbey, 2009). Another spiritual dimension taken by „sakawa“ is the use of caskets (Amissah, 2009). Three or four people interested in cyber-crime would contact a selected spiritualist who would make them sleep in a casket each for a specific number of days. In taking this journey, they would be made to understand that one of them would not survive the ordeal. The interested parties then gamble with their lives as they definitely know one of them stands the chance of dying as a

result. After the incident, one dies as a result and the surviving ones then go on to become spiritually strong and they use their spiritual favor and strength to indulge in more sakawa deals. Money immediately accrued from their deals is used to organize a lavish funeral for the deceased or the unfortunate person. Whereas the spiritual ring provides an added advantage to the perpetuating of sakawa, but the casket method seems to be the most powerful as a result of the sacrifice of a human life being made (Amissah, 2009).

Another spiritual approach is the provision of conditions as a result for the outcome of success or failure of the sakawa deals. One of the conditions which perpetrators of sakawa are given is the abolishment of bathing (Amissah, 2009). As long as the perpetrators remain without taking their bath the potency of the spiritual power would be at its highest efficiency. One of the news of this example making rounds is that a young man, who went for this method, went a great deal of days without taking his bath. On a very unfortunate day for this guy, his mother just jokingly sprinkled water on this young man not knowing the repercussions saying the son has developed an offensive odour. This marked the death of the young man as he fell down foaming from his mouth. The repercussions of the breach in this spirituality method can never be compromised (Amissah, 2009). Certain conditions are prescribed for the practitioners. They are asked to eat from a refuse dump; search for blood-soaked women sanitary towels from the refuse dump; walk bare-footed, others are prevented from sleeping at night. All these helped sakawa perpetrators to accrue money. The desire for more money therefore increased and this led to a new dimension of sakawa.

As the demand for more money increases, the spiritual processes are also intensified. A new dimension to sakawa was developed. Though totally not new, the use of the term "sakawa" to refer to "blood money" or "quick money" evolved just recently when spirituality attached to internet fraud broke off to stand on its own as a new way of making money. The culprits are mainly the youth, who for want of a quick money generating venture go in for these means of making money. These people can usually be seen riding in posh cars such as Ford Expedition, Infinity, and Chrysler etc. which were bought with the money accrued from Sakawa (Abbey, 2009).

Daily Guide in its 1st May 2009 edition reported that Nana Azumbi a.k.a Motia Father a renowned sakawa spiritualist has been busted by the police for allegedly defrauding people of various sums of money under the pretext of doubling it. His arrest has led to several interesting occurrences on the same issue within the media landscape. For instance, Peace FM online reported that "A group of suspected Blood Money, SIKA DURO, or, SAKAWA, boys have been arrested by the Ghana Police at Mambo, a suburb of the Greater Accra Region, following a tip of by some residents. Peace FM sources say upon the arrest of the gentlemen, coffins and gallons full of blood and a girl of about seven years old with her mouth sealed with cello tape was found in the room which is suspected to be their hideout."

The current form of sakawa has also taken several forms such as the use of caskets by the culprits to practice the illegal act. These culprits go about late midnight carrying caskets which have been fortified with magical powers to draw unto it the souls of innocent individuals who get frighten by the mere sight of a casket at midnight. So as outrageous as the new case may be, but people have really testified that it is true and real. In any case, what the solution maybe is that upon sighting such a strange occurrence, one must be alert and not panic. Panicking is what the perpetrators require to make more money out of the untimely death of these unfortunate ones who may chance on this weird situation. The more panic-stricken people come across the strange casket at midnight, the more money the perpetrators spiritually accrue from their unwholesome trade. Reports have been received in several parts of Accra of the death of people who were alleged to have chanced upon the strange spectacle (Abbey, 2009).

The issue of sakawa has dominated the news for about a decade now. However, what is lacking in most instances is concrete evidence. It appears that most reports of sakawa have been allegations and few works have provided concrete evidence to support their claims. Therefore, this study sought to find out the causes empirically from those who are involved.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The desire by some Ghanaians, especially the youth to get rich quickly is compelling them to engage in social vices such as occultism, and cyber fraud, otherwise known as „sakawa" among others and in their quest to attain riches and status in society (Micah, 2011). Also, the late President Mills said that some of the youth are losing focus on their spiritual needs, sacrificing their youth, health, family life and spiritual values in pursuit of these things.

Consequently, these vices are creeping into our social fiber and are gaining roots. Thus day after day, the number of youth involvement in this negative practice keeps rising.

These negative practices have adversely influenced our youth who are the most vulnerable in the society, in terms of morals (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011). This means so long as this negative practice is not curbed, issues of health and human sacrifices would continue to occur in our society. These have a lot of spillover effects on the society such as death of family members, children, impotence and infertility among those who practice it, minimum skilled labor in our society since most of the student have become school drop-outs to engage in this activity. Abbey (2009) explains that there is a loss of reputation of a town where sakawa is practiced. For instance, as soon as you mention the town "Swedru", what comes to mind is sakawa and after all these effects, it makes the town a "hopeless" town in the future since all the natives or the youth in the town are engaged in immoral acts such as occultism and cyber fraud. Attending or furthering their education is the last thing on their minds because of their quest for quick money.

According to Oduro – Frimpong (2011), the President of Ghana also lamented on the youth's involvement in sakawa. He explained that the country as a whole also suffer some effects such as loss of skilled and human resources and good future leaders. Hence, there will be a peaceful co-existence and harmonious living in our society since this activity has resulted in the rise of social vices in our societies.

From the above discussions, it can be realized that the problem of sakawa is not mainly the effects of it but the reasons why or what is pushing the youth to engage in this negative practice without even considering the dire effects it comes along with. Therefore, less research has been done in the area "reasons why the youth engage in sakawa" and this is the most important factor to be considered when trying to eradicate sakawa.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- To distinguish between Cyber Fraud and Sakawa.
- To find out what factors push and pull the youth into Sakawa.
- To identify some of the adverse effects of sakawa on the perpetrator and the society.
- To identify some measures to control and curb the menace and prevent the youth from engaging in sakawa.

1.4. Research Questions

These are the four key questions that may cover the whole study

- What is sakawa and how is it different from cyber fraud?
- What factors account for the rise of sakawa in the society?
- What are the adverse effects of sakawa on the individual and the society as a whole?
- In what ways can we minimize or if possible, eradicate the practice Sakawa in our societies?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research would expose the activities involved in the practice of sakawa. Sakawa has been a menace in society and most of the youth instead of continuing their education, engage in it and this has called for the attention of the government and other stakeholders in the communities to act against the menace. This practice affects the human resources in the country and the economy as a whole. This study therefore sought to find out the reasons why the youth engage in sakawa and also looks at the relevance of this study to research, social work practice and policy making.

1.5.1. Research

Although a lot of researches have been conducted in the area of sakawa but most of the attention is placed on the effects of sakawa on the people and the nation as a whole. Therefore this study seeks to add to literature by identifying the reasons why the youth go into sakawa and to invoke the government and the stakeholders in the various communities to minimize and gradually eradicate the practice of sakawa.

1.5.2. Practice

This study would also be relevant to social work practice as most of the social problems in our society could be traced to sakawa and its devastating effects, hence social workers help in resolving social problems. Moreover, since social work is interested in the improving the livelihood of the people in the society, advocacy and also serving as brokers, the result of this research can be used to appeal to the government and stakeholders to come out with remedies to curb the menace, thereby reducing the practice of sakawa and its repercussions on the society, hence minimizing the social problems in the society.

1.5.3. Policy

The result of this study will help and serve as a guideline for the government, the policy makers and the stakeholders in the society to formulate policies and also rules and regulations governing the operations of the internet cafes. Hence reducing the practice of sakawa.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

Sakawa has become a social problem that evolved as a result of certain factors that compelled the youth to engage in it. Therefore there are various theories that seek to explain causes of this social problem that exist in our societies. A sociological theory like the deviance / strain theory by Robert Merton in 1949 seeks to throw more light on why youths involve themselves in sakawa and also change our perspective on the individual or the perpetrator to the society or the system in the society.

Merton (1949) argued that deviance is not simply due to an individual's faulty socialization but some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in non-conformist rather than conformist conduct. He further explains that the deviance is not as a result of a person's biological disposition but the person's normal response to the social situations in which they find themselves in. He argued that the person we tag as deviant is rather innovative because that person accepts the prescribed goals in the society but finds new ways to achieve them instead of the society's approved means of their attainment.

The main proposition of the strain theory by Robert Merton is that the society is not fairly structured in terms of distribution of resources, or economic justices that will help one attain his or her goals in life. Due to that, only few people in the society have access to resources that will help them attain their goals in life and mostly these people are the well-off people in the society and the masses in the society have less or are denied access to the resources that will help them attain their goals in life. Because of this situation, the masses in the society go through a lot of strain and are compelled to find different means of achieving the society's acceptable goals. These means or ways may not be the required means of achieving society's acceptable goals. These means can be in the form of vices such as being a drug dealer, sacrificing people for money, armed robbery and engaging in sakawa. Robert Merton calls such people „innovators" because of their ability to adapt to diverse means of achieving their goals.

Applying the strain theory to this study, it explains why the youth have adopted sakawa as a means of surviving in the society and getting all the material things one ever loved to have in life instead of going by society's acceptable means. For instance, most of the youth are not in school because of high cost of education and poverty and also most of the parents are engaged in petty trade and do not earn enough income. The income earned is not enough to sponsor their children to the second cycle of education or the tertiary level. The children are also eager to take care of their parents especially the single parents. They then resort to the practice of sakawa.

Therefore, the practice of sakawa is triggered by the strain systems in the environment that exert pressure on the individual and thus individuals themselves are victims of the unfair structure and the strains in the environment. (Kwasi, 2014). Consequently, for them the perpetrators of sakawa going against the state, wealthy Ghanaians or Westerners is not a crime but sort of redemptive project of social justice (Warner, 2011).

In conclusion, from the theory, it can be seen that the causes of sakawa lie outside the individual and this results in the individual resorting to diverse ways of achieving his or her set goals aside without using societal accepted means of achieving.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the background of the study. It described how sakawa has evolved and its diverse spiritual approaches. It also talked about the relevance of the study to research, social work practice and policy making. The theoretical framework for the study was also given a detailed explanation in this chapter. The theoretical framework helps in understanding the reason why the youth engage in practicing sakawa to make money instead of using societal accepted means. The chapter also included the research objectives and research questions

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Sakawa, can be seen as internet fraud or cyber fraud backed by rituals that participants perform in order to exploit foreigners for money or other material things (Armstrong, 2011). As compared to some decades ago, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) penetration and adoption is on the increase across Africa (ITU, 2008). The internet has opened a window for both legitimate and illegitimate transactions. Dalal (2006) observes that information technology is a double-edged sword, capable of destructive as well as constructive purpose. Although Dana (2001) opines that a sizeable number of users in cyberspace are well behaved, engage the web for productive purposes and law abiding.

Danquah and Longe (2011) posit that a fraction of internet consumers act inappropriately, break the law and use illicit means to take advantage of others in cyberspace. Those who explore the internet and pervert it for criminal opportunities are cybercriminals. A study by Norton (2012) puts the cost of cybercrime globally at \$110 billion annually. In essence, the innovations in technology have opened a vista of possibilities for pursuit of a criminal and deviant career (Durkin, Forsyth, and Quinn 2006; Nurth, 2008). Ratliff (2005) opines that with computers, traditionally difficult crimes can now be accomplished with ease.

In Africa, cybercrime has been indigenously christened. For instance, in Ghana, it is called, sakawa '(Coomson, 2009) and in Nigeria, called, Yahoo yahoo'. In a study conducted in Ghana, Warner (2011, p. 744) reports the use of Klepto-theological paradigm, created to abet the perpetration of internet crime. He also calls this sakawa. According to him, Sakawa serves two main functions: it protects the cybercriminal and ensures their financial success. In Ghana, majority of the sakawa boys fall within the ages 16-40 years and are mostly students from the Junior high school level to the tertiary level (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011). However, this attack by humans through machines (Jaishankar, 2010) has now incorporated spiritual elements in Ghana.

Tade (2013) explains that sakawa is internet fraud blended with spiritual elements such as the use of mystical and supernatural powers, to enhance victimization rates on the web. He calls it cyber spiritualism. He further explains that the difference between a sakawa boy and an internet fraudster is that an internet fraudster surfs the internet and defraud plainly whiles the sakawa boy surfs the internet and employ spiritual assistance for increased defrauding.

2.2. Factors Leading to Engagement in Sakawa

The causes of sakawa are evident in our society today and much work has not been done in this area since much of the attention is placed on its effects rather.

Issue of sakawa has continually been increasing and this has brought the attention of researchers to research on this practice in the quest to find the factors that push the youth into the practice of sakawa. In 2014, Kwesi Prince had a study on finding what pushes the youth into sakawa. His study asked "Are sakawa boys victims of the unfair structure of the society or villains?" (Kwesi, 2014). From his findings and interview with a sakawa practitioner, he came to the conclusion that sakawa people are victims of the unfair structure of the society and should not be blamed for their actions. He spelt out factors like our educational system. He posited that in Ghanaian education, the school system has failed by writing these smart boys off as block-headed just because they did not meet the expectations of a so-called „chew, pour, pass and forget“ system that puts more emphasis on memorization than learning (Kwesi, 2014).

Another factor that pushes the youth into sakawa is their quest for quick money (Oduro- Frimpong, 2011). According to the former Youth and Sports Minister, the eagerness of the youth to be rich in the shortest possible time is a contributing factor to the rise this social menace (Micah, 2011)

There is also a perception of corruption among our political leaders as they have also a stake in it. Most of them believe since their leaders will use the pen and paper to defraud the state and live flamboyant lifestyles at their expense, they will also use the internet to get money and solve most of the problems confronting them as citizens (Asamoah & Agyapong, 2009).

Another factor that pushes the young ones into practicing Sakawa is poverty. Kwesi (2014: p.1) conducted an interview with a 22 years guy who is involved in Sakawa (let us call him Kwame) who tells us how he got involved in this business.

"Kwame started Sakawa at a tender age. He had senior brothers who were into drugs and their lives were nothing to write home about. Sometimes they got arrested and their poor mother had to gather the little money at home and even borrow in order to bail them from cells. As for Kwame, he wanted to live a better life so he never went into drugs. Unfortunately for him, he was not good in academics and had difficulty in memorizing things taught in school. As a result, he faced rejection and practiced Sakawa right after Junior High school. Now Kwame has gotten money through Sakawa and at the moment he is the one taking care of the mother".

According to Micah (2011), unemployment pushes the youth into frustration and lawlessness. This means that the pressure and the strain on the individual as a result of unemployment, compel them to engage in social vices such as Sakawa. They spend almost all their time in the internet café surfing the internet to dupe foreigners. Within Ghana, sakawa boys justify their activities as being the only way that they can survive in a country where the state is not doing enough to offer social support to ensure their livelihoods. It is common knowledge that sakawa boys turn to crime to make money that cannot be made through legitimate means, thus in national policy discussions on how to mitigate cybercrime, finding suitable employment for the youth is a frequent topic of conversation (Essel, 2009).

2.3. Effects of Sakawa

The perpetrators of sakawa after performing the rituals and defrauding their clients, acquire all the benefits, material things and other wealth, as indicated by Oduro-Frimpong (2011). Such rituals are alleged to come with dire negative consequences for participants and the nation and its economy as a whole (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011).

These consequences on the individual include any type of ill-health such as insanity and / or death within a short time of achieving ones desire. According to Amissah (2009), due to the spiritual nature of Sakawa related cases, legal proceedings against arrested perpetrators normally come to a standstill because of lack of evidence. Most arrested perpetrators are normally charged with issues other than the substantive one for which they were arrested. Also, some of the perpetrators of Sakawa after enjoying their wealth for some time, change into different creatures like snakes and dogs and these happen when one refuses to go according to the principles involved on the rituals. They also stated that some of the practitioners vomit money themselves and die afterwards. According to Amissah (2009), the practice of Sakawa cuts or reduces our morality or moral life of a young person in the society. On the other hand, our society becomes endowed with occults and immoral young ones. As with Sakawa, many Nigerians and Ghanaians fear the consequences that such behaviors inflict on their society as a whole as a powerful generation of educated but immoral and violent youth is created (Bastian 2001:81).

It builds immoral and corrupts future leaders. The President of Ghana lamented the involvement of the youth in Sakawa. He noted that, this was eating deep into the moral fiber of the youth who are supposed to take the place of the elderly in the future and the repercussion were quite enormous. Therefore the kind of generation we build today will determine our future as a country. Also, if the youth are craving for money and have started defrauding people at their early stage, then there is the possibility of these youth growing to become corrupt leaders in the country some years to come.

Furthermore, Abbey (2009) indicated that currently, Ghana is ranked 10th country among the world's top cyber fraud (Sakawa) countries according to statistics on internet usage and this does not augur well for the business community because a lot of businesses have suffered due to lack of confidence dealing with clients in Ghana hence government losing revenue especially from the private sector. According to Chief Obosu Mohammed, a Zongo Youth activist, states that E-commerce has also suffered major setback due to restriction of Ghana to take part in online trade on most of the international companies"

websites. Even if the government wants to eradicate this menace, the government will have to spend scarce resource to combat these crimes which could have been used for other infrastructural development. Hence, these adversely affect the nation's economy.

2.4. The Spiritual Procedures or Rituals Involved In Sakawa and Its Manifestations

Much ethnography has described witches' abilities to travel large distances in mysteriously little time. Rosalind Shaw's Sierra Leonean ethnography recounts of witches flying to London and back within an hour (Shaw 1997:857). Similarly, the internet allows Sakawa boys to manipulate its compression of time and space, transcending national boundaries and engaging in worldwide spiritual level (Armstrong, 2011).

For sakawa perpetrators to be able to defraud their foreign clients, they participate or engage in occult or some spiritual activities. Some of the rituals according to Oduro-Frimpong (2011) are taking an oath not to divulge sakawa secrets and fully abide by sakawa rules; inflicting wounds that never heals; sleeping in coffins for specified days at cemeteries (maximum being a week); carrying coffins in the dead of the night at road-intersections while being semi-naked; drinking human blood obtained either from murdering someone or from discarded female menstrual pads; eating contents from rubbish dumps for a required number of days; abstinence from bath-taking before and after making a hit; spiritually sacrificing one's manhood (which manifests either as impotence or not being able to have children).

Also, there are other rituals rules to be followed after one makes a hit include spending one's wealth in one's specific ways such as not owning any permanent fixed structures or, in the case of owning such building, entering the building backwards (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011).

Furthermore, one also has to purchase new „luxury“ cars such as Toyota Matrix, Chrysler, and Hammer, Infinity, Ford explorer and among others (Abbey, 2009). According to popular accounts, the consequences of violating these ritual rules include either losing all the wealth, going mad, death or all of the above.

2.5. Ways of Curtailing Sakawa in Ghana

Sakawa comes with misfortunes and these misfortunes are not just paid by family or friends but they are also inflicted on the entire nation (Armstrong, 2011). Due to this, some influential people in the countries like the President, Ministers, men of God and other members in communities have come up with certain strategies that can help curb the menace.

In the year 2011, the Government of Ghana made an attempt to combat Sakawa among the youth in Ghana. In Accra, May 19, the Ministry of information and National Orientation on Tuesday brought together all the comparatively young government appointees and Ministers to address the issue of „sakawa“ which is eating into the culture of Ghanaian youth (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011). Former Minister of Information and her Deputies, the former communication minister and the sports Minister, amongst others took turns to address the media. According to the ministers who took turns to address the press, the NDC Government will soon put before parliament a Cyber Security Bill which will clamp down on the menace of Cyber Crime and that government initiating measures to deal with the upsurge of internet fraud, popularly known as

„Sakawa“ among the youth in Ghana. The ministers hit the moral high grounds when addressing concerns about the evils of Cyber Fraud locally known as „sakawa“.

Running across their concerns is the admission that unemployment pushes the youth to experience frustration and engage in lawlessness. According to the former youth and sports minister, the eagerness of the youth to be rich in the shortest possible time is a contributing factor to rise this social menace. To him, this is in obvious reference to reported cases of some young men and women resulting to occultism with the aid of some spiritualists in their quest to acquire quick money. He stressed the need for the youth to be hard working and self-sacrificing since that will bring them better life rather than being involved in occult practices.

The former Communication Minister highlighted that the image of the country is at stake and the will do all it can to reverse the creeping image of the country of immoral young men and women. The former information Minister also on her part disclosed government's readiness to look at the activities of internet cafes and will soon issue some directives to regulate their function especially those who operate all day, all night (Micah, 2011). Abbey (2009) nevertheless said, the security agencies continue to make strides as far as Sakawa is concerned. Their continuous arrests of alleged suspects show that they are still committed to making Ghana safe.

2.6. A Challenge to Prosecuting Sakawa Perpetrators

Due to the spiritual nature of some Sakawa related cases, legal proceeding against arrested practitioners normally come to a standstill because of lack of evidence. Most arrested practitioners are normally charged with other issues other than the substantive one for which they were arrested (Abbey, 2009).

2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, researches on sakawa show that study on sakawa has become very necessary considering the rapid increase of Sakawa in Ghana especially in Swedru which is the epicenter of sakawa in Ghana according to oral tradition (Abbey, 2009). This research has become very necessary considering the rapid increase of Sakawa in Ghana especially in Swedru. Therefore, this reviewed literature seeks to bring to light the factors that contribute to rise of Sakawa among the

youths. Researches on Sakawa are very scanty and therefore this literature review provides more information on the factors that contribute to rise of Sakawa among the youth and even the practice of Sakawa as a whole.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The chapter three of the study contains the method used in organizing and collecting the data. The research methodology shows the processes and methods that were used in the collection and analysis of the data. It includes information on the study area, the general research design, sources of data, target population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection tool, method of data collection, data management and analysis and the ethics that were considered for the study.

3.2. Study Area

The proposed study was carried out in Swedru, the capital town of the Agona West Municipal District in the central region of south Ghana. Swedru can be located at the southern part of Central Region and is found north of Winneba Junction and south of Agona Kwanyako. It is located at the intersection of latitude 5.53333 North and Longitude -0.7 west. The population as at 2013 was about 68,216 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The town's elevation is 74m (243ft). Some of the towns in this district are: Abodom, Bobikuma, Duakwa, Nsaba and Nyakrom (Districts: Agona West Municipal District, 2013). Swedru is the main town in the lower Agona West Municipal district that received attention particularly the presence of the large Swedru market and the allocation of most of the administrative offices in the town. The town is drained with a river known as River Akora. The topography of the town can be generally described as plain. The town experiences two major seasons, namely wet and dry seasons. The wet season is from April to early August as well as September to October; whereas the dry season is between November and March. The vegetation in this town is not encouraging which makes it less potential for farming. The major economic activity in the town is trade.

Swedru was selected as the study area because it is the epicenter of sakawa in Ghana (Abbey, 2009). Moreover, the researcher being a native of Swedru also found it more suitable and convenient to use the town as a study area. Also, the researcher found it appropriate to use Swedru since it other youth move from their various towns to Swedru to practice sakawa and also because it was a municipal capital town for Agona West Municipal Assembly. Figure 1 below is a map of Swedru.

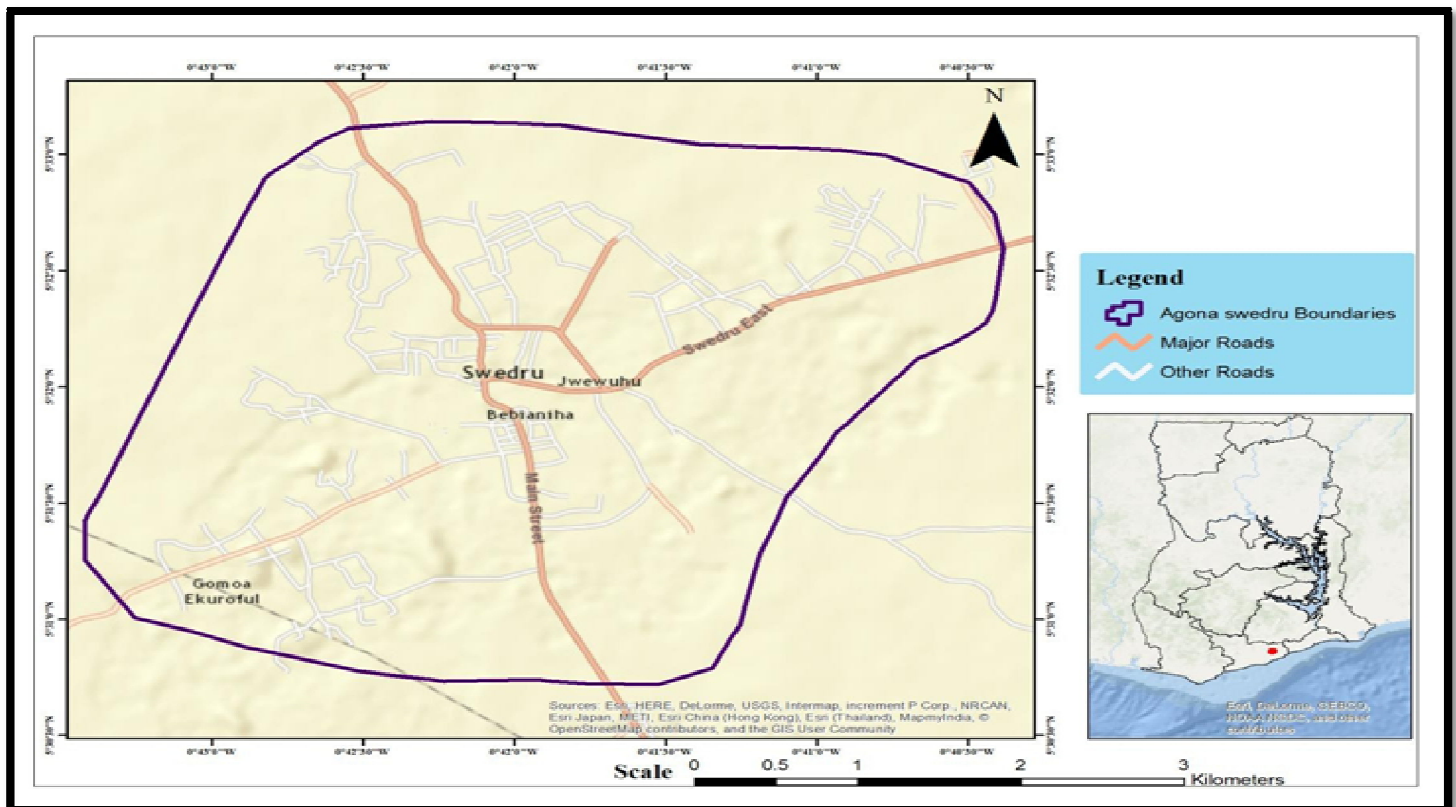


Figure 1: The Map of the Study Area (Agona Swedru)

3.3. Methodology

3.3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative method of enquiry. Qualitative research can be defined as a detailed descriptive analysis of events (Issahaku, 2014). In qualitative research, there is the need to live the reality of your target population and experience their beliefs and practices. This study is particular about the richness and the depth and quality of the information needed from participants. Opened-ended questions were asked and participants also expressed themselves in what they said. This study therefore examined the experiences of sakawa perpetrators from Agona Swedru as well as what influenced their decisions to resort to sakawa. It is also about the ritual activities they perform and the effects on the individual and the nation as a whole and to retrieve such information, qualitative method of enquiry was used. This was used because the participants could freely express themselves due to the opened-ended questions which were asked.

3.3.2. Sources of Data

This study made use of primary sources of data. The primary source of data was collected from participants on the field using in-depth interviews. Literature from journal articles, books and other publications on sakawa was reviewed to gain an understanding of the topic and also to assist with the discussion of findings.

3.3.3. Target Population

Perpetrators of sakawa in Agona Swedru was the selected population for the proposed study. People who used to be perpetrators but have given up were also part of the target population. These people were identified by the knowledge of the community members and the perpetrators themselves. The community members, the relatives and friends of the perpetrators of sakawa, the opinion leaders such as chiefs and the Divisional Commander of Police and other officers at the Divisional headquarters in Agona Swedru and other café operators in other suburb towns (Aboso) in Swedru were also part of the target population.

3.3.4. Sampling Technique

Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen (Trochim, 2006). Twenty people were sampled for the research. The respondents were sampled using non-probability sampling method such as snowball, accidental, convenient and purposive sampling techniques. This study adapted a non-probability sampling design because the target population of the study is not large. Firstly, the friends and relatives of the perpetrators were selected based on who was met accidentally and conveniently available and factors such as the accessibility, availability and willingness of relatives to participate in the study were also considered. The selection of the sakawa boys or perpetrators were done by the snowball technique. This began with a core or known perpetrator and the participants increased as new perpetrators were identified by the original or first sample or the perpetrator. Some community members also pointed out or gave the locations of the sakawa perpetrators one after the other after they had been interviewed. Convenient sampling was once again used to select the opinion leaders and two café operators who participated in the study. Both purposive and accidental sampling techniques were also used to select the community members.

3.3.5. Sample Size

A total of 20 people were interviewed for the study. Any woman who was asked to comment or say something about sakawa refused to be interviewed. Ten (10) sakawa perpetrators in Swedru, two (2) opinion leaders in Swedru and its suburb towns, six (6) community members and two (2) internet café operators / attendants were also interviewed. Deciding on this sample size was based on the rational that samples for qualitative studies are mostly smaller and more data does not necessarily generate more information. Additionally, smaller sample size was also selected because the researcher had limited time to complete the research. Analysis for qualitative researches is usually labor intensive. A large sample size could be time consuming and prolong the analysis, thereby falling behind the given duration for the study.

3.3.6. Data Collection Tools

For the purpose of this study, an interview guide designed by the researcher was used to collect data from the participants. The interview guide was in simple English and easy to understand. For the sake of participants who could not speak and understand English, the researcher interpreted the questions in Fante for the respondents to understand. Another tool that was used to collect data was a mobile phone recorder. The participants' permission was sought before their voices were recorded.

3.3.7. Methods of Data Collection

In-depth interviews with participants (face-face) and observation were used to collect the data. This is because the study is a qualitative one. The local language, Fante was used to interpret the interview guide to the participants. The researcher used 9 days to collect the data that is from 6th to 14th January, 2016. The researcher left Accra and went to the

study area (Swedru) on the 6th January and left on the 14th January, 2016. Averagely, the researcher used 2 hours to interview participants every day within this period and at least one participant was interviewed in a day. An interview could take a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 38 minutes. The interview was also audio-taped and was transcribed verbatim. The participants were notified of the use of the audio recorders. These methods helped captured the causes, the effects and the experiences of the sakawa perpetrators.

3.3.8. Data Management and Analysis

The data collected was analyzed qualitatively. Data collected from the field was first of all transcribed or documented. During the transcription process, the researcher distributed the recordings taken from the field to colleagues to help in transcribing including the researcher himself. The recordings were played severally and the researcher and his colleagues listened to them carefully and were typed verbatim. The tapes that were not clear were replayed to be transcribed correctly. Softcopy of the transcribed document is kept in the researcher's email as backup. The data was analyzed by the use ATLAS ti software. ATLAS ti is a computer programme for analyzing qualitative data. After the transcription, the data was inputted into the software. The document or the data was coded. Codes were then grouped into themes. The themes were about the difference between sakawa and internet fraud, the reasons why the youth engage in sakawa, among others. The themes were labeled as the difference, reasons, measures of control and recommendations. The connection between these themes was described and the results were also interpreted and discussed in the light of results from other literatures and the theory.

3.3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethics that were taken into consideration during the study included confidentiality. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept in secret without publication or third parties receiving their responses. Informed consent was also considered. Participants consented to participating in the study was done verbally due to their low level of education and also could not read nor write. There was no inducement of respondents. The researcher ensured there were no third parties during the interview sessions. Also, pseudonyms were used in place of the original names of the participants to promote anonymity. Finally existing materials used in the research were also referenced to avoid plagiarism.

3.4. Limitation of the Study

There were some difficulties getting information from some of the participants as they gave excuses such as they do not want to talk about any issue concerning sakawa and also some of the perpetrators were not ready to reveal the secret or admit that they practice sakawa. These limited the researcher from retrieving information on the different views and experiences from different perpetrators.

Additionally, there was difficulty in finding literature on this study as most of the already done researches concentrated more on internet fraud. This reduced the literature the researcher could have used for this study.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter provided description and justification of the methodology used in the study and also gave a description of the study area. The next chapter presents the results and the discussions of findings of the data collected on the field.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on presentation and discussions of findings of the study. This includes demographic features of the respondents as well as relevant findings based on the objectives of the study. The presentation in this chapter attempts to explore the incidence of „Sakawa“ from the perspectives of some residents of Swedru in the Central Region of Ghana. The residents comprised community members, a sub-chief of the town, café operators, self- acclaimed „Sakawa“ perpetrators and a police commander. The analysis tackled the issue of incidence of „Sakawa“, the mode of conduct of „sakawa“, why the youth engage in „sakawa“, its implications on criminality and its consequences on those who engage in it after presenting the demographic feature of the respondents. The findings of the study therefore have been categorized into main themes and sub-themes where necessary.

4.2. Background of the Respondents

At the end of data collection, the respondents obtained include 10 self-acclaimed people engaged in „Sakawa“, one sub-chief of the Swedru Township, 6 community members (ordinary residents), two café operators, and one police chief commander. The views of these individuals through the interviews provided insight to varying dimensions of the practice of „Sakawa“ in the Swedru Township.

4.3. Incidence of 'Sakawa' in the Swedru Township

This part of the study reports the views surrounding the incidence of „Sakawa“ in the Swedru Township. From responses obtained, it is evident that the incidence of „Sakawa“ is something that is believed to exist in the Swedru Township. This realization stemmed from the views of the respondents when they were asked to offer information regarding what they knew about „Sakawa“ in the town. A case in point was provided by a community member, respondent 7, when responding to the question of what can be known about „sakawa“ in the community. The respondent said:

“The little I know about „sakawa“ is that the boys here do not like to work. Even if there is work and you tell them to engage in it, they refuse. They end up going to see, Mallams “ for medicine” and before you know it, rumours start spreading that they've killed people to pay themselves off. So as for the boys here, they do not regard profitable jobs. Money issues and unnecessary things are what they engage in. They smoke „wee“ and chase women after they get blood money.”

One of the dimensions of the varying views was expressed by a community member, respondent 2. This respondent not only believed the incidence of „Sakawa“ in the town, but also admitted that he had knowledge of some perpetrators of „Sakawa“ in the town. The response when he was asked, “...do you know any perpetrators?” reads:

“Yes. I know of quite a number of guys in town who are involved in it [Sakawa].”

The perpetrators, the respondent denied, excluded any of his family relatives. Closely linked to the above was a response from another community member. The respondent said:

“...Sakawa has been in existence for about 8 years, and according to my personal opinion, I believe it is because of hardships. That is why people engage in Sakawa”.

The import of the response given by another community member ties in with the view above mentioned. The respondent showed that there were some young people engaged in „Sakawa“ within the community.

“...actually, you find a lot of guys in Swedru enter into Sakawa business. Not that they just want to get into it but they do not have any work to do; they do not have anything to do. When they finished school there was no job opportunity. That's why they involve themselves in that situation.”

One of two internet café operators engaged in the interview also confirmed that some young fellows, including him, were engaged in the „sakawa“ business. This respondent acceded to the opinion that „sakawa“ perpetrators visited the café to operate. He said:

“We chat with our clients as if we are females so we get money from them.”

A self-acclaimed perpetrator of sakawa in an attempt to share information about the act showed that there is every attempt to take money from unsuspecting people by pretending to be someone else, preferably a lady, and using that as bait to collect money from people. The respondent elaborated this in his response as follows:

“Sakawa is something like chatting with someone and taking money from the person. Pretending to be a lady when you are a man and using it to take money from the person”

There were some people, however, who thought that there exists internet fraud which was distinct from „Sakawa“. Two of such people were community members in this study. These respondents opined that „Sakawa“ was distinct from internet fraud. One of them, in so doing, showed that the difference lies in killing of people for ritual which is associated with „sakawa“. Both sakawa and internet fraud were, however, seen as deceiving people to collect money from them. This being so, the respondents seemed to suggest that, where killing was not involved, it could not be described as „sakawa“.

“With internet fraud, I know they deceive whites and collect their money. With „Sakawa“, they kill people to get money and also deceive whites.”

“Sakawa is about using the internet to get „blood money“ but internet fraud is scamming people to get money using the Internet. Also another name for

„sakawa“ is sika duro”

The responses of the sub-chief of Swedru Township and the police chief commander, as to the information they have concerning the incidence of „Sakawa“ in their jurisdiction, confirmed

„sakawa“ as a novelty that young fellows, most especially, indulged in. The police chief commander mentioned that, there have been reported cases involving death of infants suspected to be acts of sakawa attributed to a young fellow. In another instance, certain people suspected by some residents as sakawa boys were nearly lynched by a mob because they sought the help of a „Mallam“. The officer gave his account in the following words:

“...We have had two cases. First one was five years ago when a case was reported to us that they have found a dead body of a five-year old school girl in Gomoa Afransi and they suspected a certain sakawa guy who stays around to

have killed the person. This is because the person had all parts like the eyes, private part, heart all gone, and they claimed that it is only sakawa guy who would do that. But there was no way we could arrest the person because the people did not have evidence.”

Although, the accounts lacked scientific proof, and the police could not obtain evidence to independently confirm the fact of sakawa deeds. This, however, did not clear the air of the suspicion that sakawa was behind the incidents.

The comments of the sub-chief imputed the cause of sakawa to the failure of parenting. In children's quest to meet their own needs which could not be met by their parents, they resort to quicker way of obtaining money, and are easily swayed by their friends into sakawa. The sub- chief said in the inquiry about what can be known about „sakawa“ in Swedru that:

"Yes, it is true. For sakawa, we have seen and heard a lot in this town. Majority of the young boys and girls do not plan their lives. What happens is that, these young boys sleep with the girls and give birth to a lot of children. Their income, however, cannot take care of all their responsibilities. Growing up, as all the needs of the children are not provided, they go outside the home to get what they need. In doing so, they associate themselves with bad company such as armed robbers or sakawa gangs. These children look up to how their sakawa friends are prospering and will also like to flourish the way their friends are. So they eventually learn from their sakawa friends."

The comment from the sub-chief made strong points regarding the cause of the youth engaging in the business of sakawa.

4.4. *Why the Youth Engaged in 'Sakawa'*

Effort was made in the study to come to terms with the forces causing indulgence of the youth in Swedru. The sub-chief of Swedru had already elaborated that, "Growing up, as all the needs of the children are not provided, they go outside the home to get what they need. In doing so, they associate themselves with bad company such as armed robbers or sakawa gangs. These children look up to how their sakawa friends are prospering and will also like to flourish the way their friends are. So they eventually learn from their sakawa friends." The quest to meet all of their needs or get money is a great driving force to sakawa.

The sub-chief also pointed out that peer influence was a significant cause of indulgence in sakawa by the youth. The respondent said this in the following way:

"Sakawa could also be as a result of peer group influence. Though the child's parents are rich, due to his/her character he/she associates himself/herself with the sakawa boys. From my point of view, I think the cause of sakawa is from some parents and others too from the character of the child himself. Peer group influence also brings about sakawa."

Closely related to that, a self-acclaimed perpetrator of „sakawa“ showed that, the financial difficulty in the country called for urgent remedy from the youth if they are to stand up for themselves. The respondent blamed the indulgence in sakawa by the youth on leadership failure. This concern was vividly expressed by the respondent as follows:

"Because the country is hard, and there are no jobs for us to do. In this country, those who are in authority keep embezzling funds and using it for unnecessary things while we are suffering. So if I am also in need, I will take my laptop and chat with some whites so that I can get some money to survive. So this is the reason why we also go to the internet to deceive the whites and take their money. So, if there are job opportunities in this country for us to gain employment and feel comfortable there, no one would take their laptops and take money from the whites by deceiving them. One, the act isn't good, it is a sin in the eyes of God but because there are no jobs we are forced into the act. So if those in authority think about us and not just their children, wives and their own pockets and they think about the whole nation then they should use the loans that they take to open jobs and if we also get some of the jobs to do we will not go and deceive the whites. We will not pretend to be ladies to take money from the whites. So tell them to open jobs available for us to that we can also work so that we can live comfortably in this country because we are really suffering in this country. So, if they are not careful we will resort to stealing and if I come to you and you don't have money I will kill you. So the ministers and MP's should beware because we will come to them. So tell them to provide jobs so that we can get some to do and that we are suffering."

Virtually, all the respondents attributed the cause of the youth indulging in sakawa as the need to survive. This survival instinct, with no recourse to whether a decision was good or bad, operated underneath and had the propensity to make some individuals quickly and easily buy into the sakawa ideas of their friends; or when the individual saw a friend who had been enriched by that practice, they are easily swayed into commit same act.

4.5. *Consequences or Effects of 'Sakawa'*

Probing further, the study inquired what the effects or consequences of „sakawa“ were. Three main dimensions regarding this inquiry surfaced. First, as „sakawa“ may have been intended before it was initiated – to acquire money by defrauding other people of their money over the internet – some of the people who engaged in it reaped the fruits of the seed they sowed. The effort was sometimes found to be worth the money that some individuals get from the practice. One self-acclaimed perpetrator puts this view into clearer perspective:

"When I started, I could get GHC 500 to GHC 1,000 but I realised that my friend was getting much more than I, so I decided to seek for spiritual support."

There was the view that doing „sakawa“ probably brought money to the perpetrators. This is also why people are easily swayed into it by their friends. In consonance with this, one community member in the study showed that, his friend made money out of the practice:

"...I was classmates with some but now they have got money so they do not think of working. When they see me they go like they have made it so why do not I enter into it too. But I tell them I am not interested."

Another respondent who happened to be a café operator, mentioned that: "Sometimes [he obtained] \$150 and used it for education"

One important concern is the fact that, the „sakawa“ exercise can be an exercise in futility as some people had waited for so long with no avail or no proceeds. There is no way to guarantee that even when everything is fulfilled under the „sakawa“ procedure, the actor would get the money he/she wanted. One respondent expressed this concern in this way:

"...There is a lot of bad effects. Because they are not my friend per se but guys that I have seen. Because people go and practice sakawa for almost four or five months, yet, get no money. They'll go to juju place, maybe do other things and it'll cause a lot of problem to them. People become mad and other things..."

Second, it was thought that, sakawa comprised spiritual process wherefore human blood is shed. People visited „juju men“ for „blood money“ or to help them get more money through the scam. Often times, this process cast negative repercussions on the perpetrators, such as, sleeplessness, haunting by spirit, illness, or generally, spiritual attacks that could even result in madness or death. This was mentioned by a community member in this way:

"They cannot sleep because the spirits haunt them so they have sleepless nights. Also they have been given some strict law to follow to fulfill the spiritual demands."

Another respondent had this to say: "When you don't go with a strong spirit it might back fire on you. This is because there are bad people who have spiritual support which allows them to see into the future of individuals who come to them and it's believed that it's the positive future prosperity of the individual that these mallams' bring closer to our present and through that they request for you to sacrifice a close relative or someone you love. This is what brings about issues because if you refuse you can go mad, become ill, and be involved in an accident or other misfortunes... But the money will control you. That is, you can't use the money for any proper investment. For instance, you can build a house but can't live in it or else the spirits will haunt you."

Third, the issue of „sakawa“ has legal implications. There have been incidences where human lives were taken. The exercise is fraught with fraud and deception. All these have legal consequences and actions could be taken against the perpetrators. In the police officer's response, sakawa was known in legal parlance as „cybercrime“. The culprit can be arrested upon proof that this offence has been committed. Unfortunately, there was no evidence that any culprit of sakawa has been arrested on that count due to lack of scientific proof. It had remained a mere suspicion that some individuals were engaged in sakawa, either they had been arrested or not. The officer provided this information in the following:

"We called it cybercrime and we can't arrest people doing cybercrime because the constitution, in article 18 talks about rights to privacy. So, you can't go and stand behind someone and be watching what he or she is doing. But I did something similar when a white man was attacked and they claimed the suspect sneaked into the café and I had order the police to arrest all those in the café so that we do screening to find out the suspect but not because they were browsing there. So I will say that in terms of enforcing cybercrime, we are deficient and the area of deficiency is that we are not well educated and proficient in computer literacy. Also, we can go to the café but we can't observe what the person is doing because of the law of privacy. So, the police in Swedru in fighting cybercrime and sakawa is very difficult because of lack of evidence."

4.6. The Way Forward

The study solicited views from the respondents on what they felt could be done to curtail the negative implications of the incidence of sakawa. The central points in the varying views offered by the respondents have been reported. The suggestions made by the respondents were that religion ought to play a part in shaping the youth in society; laws to regulate cafés or internet facilities should be streamlined and enforced; and youth unemployment should be addressed.

Under religion helping to shape the youth in the society, the key view shared by the respondents:

"With Swedru, peer influence is a major reason why the youth involve themselves in sakawa, so I think soul-winning through evangelism will be an effective measure. We go, preach to them, invite them to church and convert them to Christianity using the bible."

Regarding laws to regulate cafés the key views include:

"Some laws should be made to regulate the cafés; maybe some of the cafes should be closed at even 11:00 pm or 12:00 am. They shouldn't be there till morning and other things. That will let them also stop that. And other measures they think they can put in place to stop them I think it will be okay for them."

Another respondent said:

"Create a taskforce to trace the boys who don't like to work. If they see a young boy using a car which is way expensive, they should interrogate him on ways and means he happened to get that money to acquire such properties. So there when investigations are carried out and it turns out to be that (sakawa) then they'll take him through legal processes. Nowadays I heard investigations are going on whereby a boy who is not up to 18 years and owns a car will be arrested.

Regarding reducing youth unemployment:

"My aim now is to gain meaningful employment but gradually my economic status is improving and better than before. To me, I would not like to return to this business (sakawa)."

4.7. Discussions of Findings

4.7.1. Characteristics of Respondents

The 20 respondents that took part in the survey were all males. 10 of the respondents were sakawa perpetrators, 2 café operators, 1 sub-chief, 1 police chief commander and 6 community members. This was not deliberate and could be attributed to males being dominant in the indulgence of sakawa. It can also be as a result of the application of the accidental sampling technique in finding participants for the study by the researcher. From the finding all names that were mentioned as

sakawa perpetrators were all males. This could also be as a result of more males engaging in sakawa than females or even no female is a perpetrator in the town.

The study also revealed that the 10 perpetrators that were interviewed were between the ages of 16-30 years. Educationally, the findings of the study revealed that most of the perpetrators were school drop-out and J.H.S. leavers. Only 1 out of 10 started S.H.S. and dropped out after first year. This could be as a result of inadequate financial support to further their education.

In terms of employment, the findings of the study revealed that none of the perpetrators was employed or having a responsible job apart from practicing sakawa. This could be laziness on the path of the perpetrators. From one of the interviews with the community members, one made mention of the sakawa perpetrators refusing to work even when there is work or vacancy.

Economically, from the findings, most of the perpetrators come from poor homes where they find it difficult to fend for them. This could be as a result of a few job vacancies in the town.

4.7.2. The Difference between Sakawa and Cyber-Fraud

From the findings, some of the interviewees were internet fraudsters and they stated that they chat with their clients as if they are females to get money from them. They do not involve or engage in any spiritual activity. They just plainly defraud people with different techniques through the use of computers without any spiritual consultation or rituals. Conversely, the researcher interviewed sakawa perpetrators and the interviewees also said that they go to a juju place "or a mallam" to perform rituals to enhance defrauding.

Another respondent who is a community member also distinguished between internet fraud and sakawa. He said, "with internet fraud, they deceive the whites (clients) and collect their money but for sakawa, they kill people to get money and also deceive the whites." Another respondent also said "sakawa is about using the internet to get „blood money" but internet fraud is scamming people to get money using the internet. Also, another name for sakawa is sika duro.

These findings are supported by a literature by Tade (2013) which shows the difference between sakawa and internet fraud. According to Tade (2013), he postulates that internet fraud is surfing the internet and defrauding plainly whiles sakawa is surfing the internet and employing spiritual assistance for increased defrauding. Another literature by Armstrong (2011) also supports the finding. According to Armstrong (2011), sakawa, can be seen as internet fraud or cyber fraud backed by rituals that participants perform in order to exploit foreigners for money or other material things.

This study has revealed that the only difference between internet fraud and sakawa is the spiritualism or ritualism that comes in as one practices sakawa. These findings show no contradiction with the already existing literature on the difference between sakawa and internet fraud. Also, people engage only in internet fraud but not sakawa because they know the consequences that will befall on a sakawa perpetrator and also what they have seen and experienced from their friends who practice sakawa deter them from practicing it.

4.7.3. Why the Youth Engage in Sakawa

From the findings, one of the interviewees who is a sakawa perpetrator said that the youth engage in sakawa because of unemployment in the country. This finding is supported by a literature by Micah (2011) and she posits that unemployment pushes the youth into frustration and lawlessness. This means that the pressure and the strain on the individual as a result of unemployment, compel them to engage in Sakawa. This assertion is evident in the work of Robert Merton who propounded the strain theory in 1949 that underlines this study. The theory explains that people become innovative and devise unacceptable means of achieving societal set goals as a result of unfair structure of the society that exert strain or pressure on the less privileged (Merton, 1949). From the findings, almost all the perpetrators of sakawa made mention of unemployment being the major reason for their indulgence in sakawa. They attributed this to no job available in the town. The literature by Audrey Micah in 2011 and the theory in 1949 by Robert Merton support these findings.

Additionally, this study found that, poverty is one of the major reasons why the youth engage in sakawa. This is also confirmed by what Micah explained in the previous paragraph. This could be as a result of unemployment. This brings frustrations to those in poverty and pushes them to engage in sakawa to get money. This is also clearly explained by the strain theory for this study. From the findings, surprisingly, only one perpetrator said the reason why he engaged in sakawa is the corrupt leaders we have in the country. This reason is confirmed or supported by a literature by Asamoah & Agyapong, (2009). They explained that there is a perception of corruption among our political leaders as they have also a stake in it. Most of them believe since their leaders will use the pen and paper to defraud the state and live flamboyant lifestyles at their expense, they will also use the internet to get money and solve most of the problems confronting them as citizens. Therefore the finding does not contradict with what Asamoah and Agyapong have said in 2009. This also boils down to the unfair structure the strain theory talks about where the privileged people in the society enjoy resources than the less privileged in the society (Merton, 1949). Hence, the strain theory also supports the reason given by the perpetrator.

The finding of the study also revealed that the character of the youth is also a key reason why the youth practice sakawa. This could be as a result of unplanned future. This was said in an interview with one of the opinion leaders in the town. Another reason could be the quest to obtain a high status in the society. The quest for early riches and greediness could

also be reasons for the youth indulgence in sakawa. A literature by Oduro-Frimpong, (2011) supports this finding. He made an assertion that the quest for quick money is a factor that pushes the youth into sakawa (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011).

4.7.4. The Adverse Effects of Sakawa on the Perpetrator

From the findings, majority of the perpetrators found it uneasy to talk about the consequences associated with sakawa. This is due to the oath some of them have taken before the spiritualists. From the findings, some of the perpetrators become insane. Some also have sleepless night. This could be as a result of spiritual haunting. The findings also revealed that some perpetrators fall sick seriously, some experience spiritual attacks and eventually die. This could be as a result of disobeying the instructions given by the spiritualist or the mallam. This is therefore confirmed and supported by the literature by Oduro-Frimpong in 2011. He postulated that sakawa rituals are alleged to come with dire negative consequences for participants and the nation and its economy as a whole.

4.7.5. Measures to Control, Curb and Prevent the Youth from Sakawa

From the findings of this study, a few measures of control were used to help curb the menace. The finding reveals that evangelism has been an effective way of converting the perpetrators lives from evil deeds to good deeds. This is done through preaching to them and inviting them to church. The findings also revealed some suggested ways of minimizing the practice of sakawa. One is that, there should be a fixed law that will not allow internet cafes to operate after 11pm. During the survey, it was observed that most of the perpetrators browse midnights and at dawn. With this law, it will prevent the perpetrators from browsing through-out the night. With this, it will decrease the number of perpetrators who browse to defraud people.

From the findings, taskforce was also suggested to trace the young guys who do not work but drive expensive cars and live in big mansions. These young guys will be interrogated on ways and means he got money to acquire all that property. From the findings, some of the participants stated that youth unemployment should be reduced and that the government should open up a lot of job opportunities for the youth to engage in. This will help reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. Hence will minimize the youth's engagement in sakawa.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter presented the results and discussion of findings from the study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents including their sex, age range, economic background and level of education were presented. It also presented the findings of the study and were briefly explained. It further presented a detailed discussion of findings on the differences between sakawa and internet fraud, reasons why the youth indulge in the practice of sakawa, the adverse effects on the individual and finally the measures that will help curb or minimize the menace. This chapter moreover showed confirmation or evidence of the correlation of the findings of the study with the objectives and the theory underlining this study. The next chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the study.

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings from the study, the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study. The chapter therefore comprises three sections.

5.2. Summary of Findings

The study sought to explore the incidence of „sakawa“ within the Swedru Township. Residents in the town were engaged and these included ordinary community members, perpetrators of sakawa, sub-chief of the area, and police commander. Varying insights were obtained from the study and different dimensions were identified and the relevant issues were reported and argued conscientiously. The study found that the incidence of „sakawa“ in the Swedru Township was not new. At least over about five years ago, there has been a reported case at the police station which was shrouded with suspicion instead of real scientific proof.

The summary of findings is grouped under themes in relation with the objectives of the study.

5.2.1. The Difference between 'Sakawa' and Internet-Fraud

In summary, the sakawa is defrauding people via internet and backing up with spiritualism to increase defrauding and wealth whiles internet-fraud is defrauding people plainly on the internet. This is not associated with any spiritual back-up or activity. Hence, the only difference that lies between sakawa and internet fraud is the spiritual activities or the rituals the sakawa perpetrators perform. This makes them different from internet-fraudsters.

5.2.2. Reasons Why the Youth Engage in Sakawa

From the community members, the reasons for indulging in sakawa are laziness, the character of the youth, peer pressure and the quest for getting rich. On the other hand, the sakawa perpetrators also blame the government for not creating enough job opportunities, those in the authority mispending and embezzling money. Another reason too is poverty.

This study also found out that a lot of the young ones or the youth do not plan for their lives or towards the future. They engage in sexual acts and it results in unplanned pregnancy. In quest of taking care of the pregnancy or solving issues concerning the pregnancy push them into sakawa for financial advancement.

5.2.3. The Adverse Effects of Sakawa on the Perpetrators

The study also brought to fore the fact that the repercussions of sakawa on the perpetrators from the responses from the community members are spiritual haunting which results in sleepless night, serious illness, spiritual attacks, madness and sometimes might lead to death.

5.2.4. Measures to Control, Curb and Prevent the Youth from Sakawa

The study has also revealed that Evangelism by some religious groups like Christianity will help minimize the rate at which the youth indulge in sakawa. This is because the evangelism will focus on their moral behaviors and convince them to live a good life. Also, rules and regulations governing the use of internet cafes should be enacted to minimize the people who use the café at odd times. Additionally, there should be taskforce to investigate young unemployed guys youth who live in big mansions and drive expensive cars on how they acquire all that wealth and finally, the government should open up more employment opportunities for the youth. With these, it is believed that sakawa will be minimized.

5.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, in this study, after using the qualitative method of enquiry, sakawa is seen as defrauding people on the internet which is backed by spiritualism. Unlike internet fraud which is defrauding people plainly on the internet. Sakawa has become a serious social problem and this is mostly practiced by the youths. From the findings of this research, the youth engage in this practice because of poverty, peer pressure, unemployment, the character of the children and finally irresponsible parenting.

In terms of repercussion of this practice on the perpetrators, the study brought to fore the fact that the perpetrators go through spiritual haunting, loosing of loved ones, loosing of minds and ultimately death. To ensure a successful minimization or eradication of sakawa, the government should address the issue of unemployment, enact laws to regulate the operation of the cafes and also the various religious groups should help shape the moral values of the youths.

5.4. Recommendation

After the study has shown as the causes and other aspects of sakawa, the researcher has come out with some recommendations that will help curb the menace. From the findings and the observation of the people in the community during the study if care is not taken, sakawa will reach a pandemic level and almost more than 50% of the youths in Ghana might engage in sakawa. The recommendations given are based on the findings of the study. From the findings, one of the reasons why the youths engage in sakawa is unemployment.

Although the government in its own ways provides employment for the citizens, there should also be more vocational and technical training programs for the youths who are computer literates and because of poverty could not continue their education. This will make them more proficient in computer literacy. Also, the government should form alliance with more private organizations to expand the vacancies for employment in the country. Also, the government should concentrate on rural industrialization and rural development instead of allocating more of the resources in the urban cities. These will address the issue of unemployment and minimize poverty because working in these industries in the smaller towns will fetch money for the youths in these towns and will prevent them from migrating to the cities which indirectly can also be a cause of the youth engaging in unacceptable economic activities like sakawa. From the findings, one of the perpetrators said his aim was to gain meaningful employment and now that he is working and gradually his economic status is improved, he would not like to return to sakawa business. Hence, when the youth are employed, sakawa will be minimized or a thing of the past.

Furthermore, the findings of this study make it clear as the Divisional Commander said in the interview that the police faces a lot of challenges in combating sakawa or cyber-fraud because of the rights to privacy, there should be rules or laws made by the parliament that will regulate operations in the internet cafes. There should be rules on the ages of the users of the café and the number of hours the user can spend. If a user is a minor (below 18), he or she should not use the café after 9pm and also should not be allowed to spend more than 2 hours at the café. I recommend that these rules or laws should be observed nationwide.

In Addition, in an interview with a Minister of music in one of the churches in Swedru suggested that evangelizing to the members of the community can help minimize the act. He added that they go to the people, preach to them, invite them to church and convert them to Christianity using the bible. Therefore I recommend not only Christianity but all the various religious groups (Christianity, Islam, and Traditional) should add to their teachings the repercussions of engaging in unacceptable economic activities such as sakawa, armed robbery, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, and among other. This will help shape the moral lives of our youths in our various communities and also minimizes the practice of sakawa.

Lastly, from the findings of this study, one of the perpetrators gave his reason why he is engaged in sakawa and he clearly stated that those in the authority keep embezzling funds and tax payers' money for unnecessary things whiles the youth are suffering. From the findings, a perpetrator also complained that those in the authority do not think about the youth.

They only think about their pocket and their families and these are the main reasons why he has indulged in the practice of sakawa. I therefore recommend that those in the authority should handle the country's resources very well and there should be equitable distribution of the national cake so that all different people on the social ladder or strata will benefit. Those in the authority who misuse or embezzle tax payers' money should be held accountable since they serve as role models or mentors to the youth. With this I believe there will be no greediness on the path of the youth to crave for early riches and hence sakawa will be minimized.

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