

Teachers' Perception towards Continuous Professional Development Policy in Ghana

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated teachers' perception of continuous professional development (CPD) implementation and the mediating role of teachers' professional knowledge in improving teaching and learning in Ghana. A survey was conducted, and valid questionnaires were retrieved from 329 teachers using the KoboCollect Tool, a self-reporting online structured questionnaire for data collection in selected public schools across Ghana. The sample comprised teachers who participated for at least two years in CPD programmes in Ghana and have been in professional practice. Descriptive statistics were used in the data analysis. Many teachers acknowledged the positive influence of CPD on practice and professional growth, there were significant concerns about the quality, sufficiency, and clarity of vision in the programmes. The results showed that the CPD programmes as practiced showed a leaning towards a one-size-fits-all CPD model which does not adapt to differences in subject areas, levels of expertise, and grade levels, thus lacking flexibility in training. It is recommended that policy makers such as Ministry of Education (MOE), Ghana Education Service (GES), National Teaching Council (NTC) and service providers should prioritize aligning CPD programmes with teachers' specific needs and include contents that address the different skill sets and subject areas required by teachers across different educational levels.

KEYWORDS: Perception, Continuous Professional Development, Policy

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Improving educational quality has been a key global issue for governments and educational stakeholders, particularly in the face of diverse and rapid sociocultural changes that place higher demand and expectations on teacher professionalism. As a result, countries have invested heavily in teacher professionalism by providing opportunities for CPD (Abaka & Wellington, 2023).

In Ghana, the Ministry of Education (MOE) (2018), (ESP 2018-2030, Objective BE 2.5), observed that teachers lack adequate pedagogical skills to manage classrooms, teaching literacy and numeracy due to limited regular CPD. For instance, most teachers at Kindergarten (KG) do not have sufficient KG-specific training. Thus, in the year 2019, the MOE introduced the National Teachers' Standards as a clear baseline for attaining professional knowledge, practice, conduct, perception, rights and obligations expected of teachers through Professional Learning Community (PLC), CPD in Ghana. The objectives of CPD are to:

- promote the professional development of teachers
- regulate teachers to enhance their professional standards and competence by building on the initial teacher training and induction programmes throughout their careers.
- ensure that teachers operate at the cutting edge of their profession and develop competencies to progress in their careers.
- enhance the image of the teaching profession and accord it its valued status it deserves in Ghanaian society.
- upgrade teachers' knowledge and skills through continuous training, and their influence on the education system as a whole (GES, n.d.).

Again, the National Teaching Council (NTC) in 2020 developed a framework for CPD for pre-tertiary teachers in Ghana. The framework is linked to a point-based system. Meanwhile, the introduction of the point-based system as part of the CPD framework occasioned an influx of CPD Service Providers with varied interests in the core areas of CPD programmes. Furthermore, the CPD programmes are usually organised with large class sizes. As part of the CPD policy of the MOE, each teacher is allocated two thousand four hundred Ghana Cedis (2,400.00) to facilitate their participation in training workshops to develop their instructional skills and competencies. The CPD serves as a requirement for renewal of a teacher's license (GES, 2019).

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PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Since the introduction of the CPD policy, teachers have been participating in various CPD programmes. However, most teachers seem to have expressed mixed perceptions about the quality of the CPD programmes and the fact that most of them perceived that teachers pay for the CPD to receive points but not necessarily to build their professional capacity to improve classroom teaching and learner outcomes (Abakah & Wellington, 2023). The perception harboured by teachers seems to bring into question the kind of attitude they display towards CPD programmes. The CPD policy is in its fifth year of implementation, so it is expedient to investigate teachers' perception towards its implementation. This will help to improve the CPD practices to enhance teacher participation. It is therefore imperative that an evidence-based study is conducted to assess the perception of teachers towards the implementation of the programmes.

The objectives are to:

1. investigate teachers' perception towards CPD programme implementation
2. assess teachers' perception regarding the influence of CPD on the quality of teaching and learning.
3. explore ways to improve the CPD programme implementation in Ghana
4. identify challenges confronting teachers' participation in CPD programme

Significance

First, the results would provide insight for policy makers such as MOE, NTC, and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) on the perception of teachers towards Continuous Professional Development. Second, it would also highlight the positive aspects of the CPD programme that needs to be reinforced and sustained by the Ghana Education Service to achieve quality education, optimal teacher participation, and attitudinal change. More importantly, it would be useful to appraise the activities of the CPD programmes since its inception relative to teachers' sustained passion for participating and sustainability of the CPD programmes.

METHODOLOGY

The research involved policy review and fieldwork. The policy review involved scrutinizing secondary data (existing documents such as the Standard Based Curriculum, Guidelines for CPD, and GES documents) on CPD and PLC. The research design was a cross-sectional survey that involved quantitative approach. The target population were beneficiary teachers who have been participating in CPD across various metropolitan, municipal and district directorates of education. The study employed the KoboCollect Tool, a self-reporting online structured questionnaire for data collection. The sample comprised teachers who have participated for a minimum of two years in CPD programmes across various educational districts in Ghana. Others, such as heads and School Improvement Support Officers (SISO) whose observations and attestations enriched the data were included. The response rate was 329. Descriptive statistics (measures of central tendencies) were used to analyse the data. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by giving the questionnaire to colleague researchers to read through and made comments that were used to improve the questionnaire. The questionnaire was pilot tested and subjected to Cronbach's Alpha formula to establish the internal consistency of the items which yielded a result of 0.83 coefficient. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) are of the opinion that a reliability coefficient alpha of 0.70 and closer to 1, means the items were more reliable for a study.

RESULTS

1. Teachers' perception towards CPD programme implementation.

The perception of teachers regarding the implementation of any activity aimed at their continuous professional development cannot be over-emphasized. Research objective one sought to investigate teachers' perceptions on the implementation of the CPD programme in Ghana. The key variables relating to this objective as indicated in Table 1 are satisfaction with the programme, quality of the programme, contribution to improving teaching practice, professional growth, sufficiency of the content and clarity of vision.

Table 1: Teachers' perception on the implementation of the CPD programme (N=329)

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I received the necessary assistance and support from my headteacher	63(19.1)	185(56.2)	21(6.4)	39(11.9)	21(6.4)
The CPD I receive is sufficient	21(6.4)	119(36.2)	33(10.0)	121(36.8)	34(10.3)
The CPD activities I receive help me improve my teaching practice	63(19.1)	185(56.2)	21(6.4)	39(11.9)	21(6.4)
The CPD training does not meet my expectations	40(12.2)	97(29.5)	19(5.8)	139(42.2)	34(10.3)

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The CPD programme does not contribute to my professional growth	28(8.5)	55(16.7)	17(5.2)	157(47.7)	72(21.9)
I am not satisfied with the CPD I receive	74(22.5)	115(35)	19(5.8)	93(28.3)	28(2.8)
Teacher professional development lacks quality	47(14.3)	101(30.7)	16(4.9)	122(37.1)	23(7.0)

Note: Percentages are reported in parentheses.

For any training programme geared towards improving the lot of teachers, head teachers are very pivotal in terms of the nature of support/assistance they give to teachers (MOE, 2018). The literature (GES,2019) emphasize that it is unlikely that teachers will continue to learn and adopt innovation and other training strategies in their instruction without the trust, support and individual involvement of their headteachers. Some examples of assistance and support from the GES that headteachers can render to their teachers in training programmes are resource materials such as books, worksheets, charts, computers, calculators, and course materials. Also, included in the litany of supports by headteachers is morale support, motivation and counseling. These are shown from the data in Table 1 as regard support and assistance gotten from their heads as depicted in their responses of 19.1% and 56.2% for strongly agreed and agreed, respectively to the question item I received the necessary support and assistance from my headteacher.

Another variable of low perception according to the teachers was sufficiency of the training programme. According to the data, 6.4% and 36.2% of teachers strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the training they received was sufficient. These scores were low compared to 36.8% and 10.3% who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement the training was sufficient. Sufficiency of a training programme according to the specification of the National Teaching Council (2020) relates to the contents of a programme. For example, according to the National Teaching Council, the content of a programme should be sufficient enough to address subject matter in the classroom, effective teaching in classrooms, and improved management and leadership skills. Sufficiency of training of CPD should be the collective responsibility of the organizer of any training programme.

On the issue of teaching practice, the perception was also positive as demonstrated by 19.1% and 56.2% who agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the CPD programme should align with real work (teaching practice) in school settings. For instance, the knowledge and skills obtained from CPD programme must apply to their classroom (MoE 2018). In essence, it should fit teachers' professional needs.

A key component of educational development is stakeholders' expectations. This also translates as benefits or feedback from an intervention or programme. The data in Table 1 show that teachers strongly disagreed 42% and disagreed, 10.3%, that the CPD did not meet their expectations. This is very important and in line with the GES' prescriptions of benefits of training programmes such as its relevance to specific teaching career, acquisition of new knowledge, increased work output, improved confidence level of teachers and improved human relationship (GES, 2019).

On the whole, the data reported portrays perceptions that reflect contentment and discontentment regarding the implementation of the CPD programmes. Specifically, teachers were not largely satisfied, especially in terms of quality implementation, sufficiency of the programme, and clarity of vision. On the other hand, positive scores were shown for the contribution of the programme to teaching practice, professional growth, expectations from the programmes and support/assistance provided by the headteachers. In aggregate terms, one stands to agree that there were mixed results regarding teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the programmes.

First, among the variables that indicated a negative score was teachers' satisfaction with the programme implementation. Regarding this, 22.5% responded strongly agreed and 35% agreed that they were not satisfied. In Ghana, as stipulated by the MoE (2018) and enshrined in the Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030, satisfaction with programme implementation largely hinges on the relevance of the programme and effectiveness. For example, the National Teaching Council's views regarding these two variables, stresses a number of sub-indicators which must be satisfied for the relevance and effective implementation of a CPD training programme. These include frequency and duration of teaching and learners' sessions, number of facilitators involved and their competence levels and teaching methods adopted. For instance, teachers will not be satisfied if CPD activities were held during school period and that will compel them to leave the classroom. Conversely, longer CPD teaching periods conducted during school vacation will provide an opportunity for in-depth discussion of contents, teachers' conception, misconceptions, and pedagogical strategies.

Of equal significance regarding satisfaction with the implementation programme is the issue of the methods used. It is expected that there will be a variety of teaching methods such as lectures, discussions, demonstrations, role-play, simulations and case study that will create excitement and motivation for learning (Abakah & Wellington, 2023).

A variable that showed a negative perception regarding the CPD programme was the quality of implementation. The MoE (2018) observes that the quality of training programmes that teachers receive for their professional development should be of great concern. It could be that teachers were unimpressed with the quality of training materials in terms of their ease of understanding, readability, illustrations and linking theory to practice. The perception of teachers regarding lack of quality of the programme had a combined

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score of 44.9% agreed as compared to those who disagreed and strongly disagreed 44.7%. For this particular variable, the scores are almost tied, with 4.9% teachers ticking undecided. It could be with the varying interpretation they assign to the word “quality”.

2. Assessment of teachers' perception on the influence of CPD on the quality of teaching and learning in Ghanaian schools

Teachers' professional development requires quality, knowledge, skills, and practice. The second objective addresses these variables in Table Two (2).

Table 2, Teachers' perception on the influence of CPD on the quality of teaching and learning in Ghanaian schools. (n=329)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The CPD training I receive does not respond to my immediate needs and content.	45(13.7)	95(28.9)	9(2.7)	152(46.2)	27(8.2)
The CPD content does not target different skills and subject areas.	46(14)	97(29.5)	8(2.4)	147(44.7)	31(9.4)
I think that reflective practice should be integrated into teachers' professional development programs.	75(22.8)	210(63.8)	13(4)	9(2.7)	2(0.6)

Note: Percentages are reported in parentheses.

As presented in Table 2, the views among teachers regarding the relevance of the CPD programmes in addressing their immediate needs and content requirements are mixed. Specifically, 42.6% of respondents (13.7% strongly agreed, 28.9% agreed) indicated that CPD does not meet their specific classroom challenges, suggesting a perceived misalignment between training contents and the practical demands faced. However, the majority, 54.4%, disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating their satisfaction with the CPD programmes to their needs. This contrary view suggests that while many teachers found CPD beneficial, a notable minority experienced a disconnect between CPD activities and their actual instructional needs. Overall, these findings highlight a need to examine how CPD can be more closely tailored to the daily challenges teachers encounter.

The findings as reported in Table 2 also show varied opinions among teachers regarding the extent to which CPD content addresses different skills and subject areas. An aggregate of 43.5% of respondents were of the view that CPD content did not adequately target a range of skills and subject areas, suggesting a lack of alignment between CPD programmes and the diverse instructional requirements teachers undertake. However, majority of respondents (54.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that they perceived CPD as adequately covering various skills and subject-specific needs. Overall, while a majority finds CPD to be relevant across different areas, the significant percentage that perceived a disparity highlights the need for more targeted professional development content (Desimone, 2009).

Again, it has been established that there was strong support among teachers for integrating reflective practice into professional development programmes. A significant majority (86.6%) of respondents either agreed (63.8%) or strongly agreed (22.8%) with the statement, suggesting that most teachers recognized the value of reflective practice in enhancing their professional growth and instructional effectiveness. However, a small proportion of respondents disagreed (2.7%) or strongly disagreed (0.6%). The results indicate that reflective practice is widely regarded as an essential component of CPD, with teachers viewing it as a means to critically assess and improve their teaching practices.

3. Perceived Challenges Teachers Encounter in CPD programme Implementation

Despite the importance of CPD, teachers often face various challenges that hinder their active participation. Understanding these barriers is crucial for designing more effective CPD programmes that accommodate teachers' needs and promote their sustained engagement. The third objective of this study sought to identify and analyze these challenges. Findings from responses provided by participants in the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Challenges confronting teachers' participation in the CPD programme (N=329)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The CPD activities are inadequate and academically superficial.	37(11.2)	148(45)	25(7.6)	102(31)	17(5.2)
There is an absence of a clear vision of the CPD from policymakers.	56(17)	117(35.6)	25(7.6)	117(35.6)	13(4)

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There is a lack of strategy of CPD from policymakers.	57(17.3)	140(42.6)	32(9.7)	87(26.4)	12(3.6)
CPD providers need to go beyond the one-size-fits-all and the top-down model of CPD.	97(29.5)	192(58.4)	21(6.4)	15(4.6)	3(0.9)

Note: Percentages are reported in parentheses.

As indicated in Table 3, out of the 329 participants in the study, in response to the item that CPD activities they received are inadequate and academically superficial, 45% agreed, suggesting they perceived the CPD activities as lacking in depth and academic rigour. Additionally, 11.2% strongly agreed, further supporting the view that CPD content might be inadequate. On the contrary, 31% of respondents disagreed with the statement, indicating they found the CPD activities sufficient and academically sound, while 5.2% strongly disagreed, reinforcing the adequacy of CPD activities. Altogether, 76.2% of respondents (combining "Agree" and "Strongly Agree") viewed the CPD activities as potentially lacking in academic thoroughness, compared to 36.2% who disagreed. This outcome highlights a notable concern regarding the academic depth of CPD activities.

Continuous Professional Development plays a critical role in enhancing teachers' skills, with studies emphasizing that its influence is most significant when it is rigorous and directly relevant to the classroom (Desimone, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Academically superficial CPD can fail to foster essential pedagogical and content knowledge, which is crucial for effective teaching (Avalos, 2011). In Ghana, recent research undertaken by Ampadu and Danso (2020) underscores the need for CPD programmes that go beyond surface-level knowledge, aligning with global best practices for teacher development. These findings suggest that programmes planners could consider adjusting CPD activities to improve content depth, thus addressing the academic concerns raised by the majority of survey participants.

Concerning the position that there is an absence of a clear vision of CPD from policymakers, the responses received from participants indicated that, 35.6% agreed, indicating a perception that policymakers lack a clear vision for CPD programmes, while an additional 17% strongly agreed, reinforcing the sentiment of policy ambiguity. In contrast, another 35.6% disagreed with the position, suggesting that they believe policymakers did have a clear vision for CPD, and 4% strongly disagreed, further countering the notion that the CPD lacks a clear vision. Meanwhile, 7.6% of respondents were undecided, neither affirming nor refuting the perceived clarity of policy vision. Overall, the responses reveal a diverse view, with half, 52.6% perceiving a lack of vision from policymakers and the other half expressing disagreement or neutrality. This contrast suggests potential challenges in how CPD objectives and policies are communicated, which may influence the perceived effectiveness and alignment of CPD initiatives (Avalos, 2011).

In respect of the stance that, there is a lack of strategy for CPD from policymakers, the majority of respondents, 59.9%, agreed, indicating a perception that there was insufficient strategic planning for CPD from policymakers. On the contrary, 30% disagreed, suggesting that they perceived a strategic approach in CPD initiatives. These findings highlight a general perception among respondents that CPD efforts lack a coherent strategy.

In response to the statement, "CPD providers need to go beyond the one-size-fits-all and the top-down model of CPD," the majority, 87.9%, agreed, suggesting that a significant number of participants believed that CPD programmes should be tailored to meet diverse needs rather than being uniformly applied. Furthermore, 6.4% of the respondents were undecided, indicating some doubt toward the idea of customization in CPD delivery.

These results underscore a strong preference among respondents for CPD models that account for individual educator's needs and encourage a more inclusive approach rather than a generalized, top-down structure. CPD programmes that are responsive to teachers' specific needs and contexts are more effective in promoting meaningful professional growth (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Additionally, collaborative and differentiated CPD models have been shown to increase engagement and knowledge retention among teachers (Avalos, 2011).

4. Ways to improve the CPD programme implementation in Ghana

Objective four sought to examine participants' perspectives on the ways to improve the implementation of the CPD programmes in Ghana. Table 4 presents respondents views on the ways to improve CPD programmes in Ghana.

Table 4. Ways to Improve implementation of the CPD programme in Ghana (N=329)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
CPD providers should integrate follow-up activities as part and parcel of the training.	90(27.4)	202(61.4)	15 (4.6)	15(4.6)	7 (2.1)
I am not involved and engaged in designing CPD activities for teachers	80(24.3)	141 (42)	26 (7.9)	68 (20.7)	14 (4.3)

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Involving teachers in the design of CPD activities will lead to positive changes and quality of CPD activities	154(46.8)	158 (48)	7 (2.1)	8 (2.4)	2 (0.6)
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Note: Percentages are reported in parentheses.

The data in Table 4 reveal that the majority, 88.8% of respondents, agreed that to improve the implementation of CPD programmes in Ghana, CPD providers should integrate follow-up activities as part and parcel of CPD training. Follow-up activities are very important and serve as a monitoring mechanism to identify at first-hand how participants have fared after the training and provide facilitators and service providers with the opportunity to address misconceptions and challenges of participants (Ampadu & Danso, 2020).

Table 4 further indicates that 84.4% participants thought that they were not involved and engaged in designing CPD activities for teachers. Understandably, to improve CPD implementation, it is important to involve teachers in the designing of training content. The CPD should be informed by the needs of teachers.

According to the data, majority of respondents, 84.8%, intimated that to improve the implementation of the CPD programmes, teachers should be involved in the designing of the CPD curriculum; the content of the CPD programme should be anchored on the input of the teacher (Desmone, 2009). The participants emphasized that involving teachers in the programme design will lead to positive changes and the quality of CPD activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights the varied perceptions of teachers toward the implementation of CPD programmes in Ghana. While many teachers acknowledged the positive influence of CPD programmes on teaching practice and professional growth, there were significant concerns about the quality, sufficiency, and clarity of vision in the programmes. The clarity of policy direction in professional development has been recognized as a critical factor influencing its successful implementation. The data show that when CPD programme implementation lacks a clear vision from policymakers, teachers may feel uncertain about the purpose and value of the initiatives. In Ghana, where CPD is key to improving educational outcomes, clear policy communication is essential to align professional development goals with teachers' needs and expectations. This feedback could serve as an indicator for policymakers to refine and clarify their strategic vision for CPD, enhancing its coherence and influence. The perception regarding strategic gaps in CPD policies can significantly influence the success and alignment of professional development programmes. Research has shown that effective CPD is supported by well-defined strategies that clearly outline objectives, processes, and expected outcomes (Desimone, 2009). When there is a lack of strategic planning, it implies that CPD programmes risk becoming fragmented and failing to meet the needs of teachers (Guskey, 2002). In the context of Ghana, improving CPD outcomes may require policymakers to focus on building and communicating clear strategic frameworks that guide professional development efforts and align them with teachers' goals and school needs.

Furthermore, challenges such as a lack of strategy, insufficient depth in training, and inadequate alignment with teachers' practical needs were identified as key barriers to effective CPD participation. Developing CPD content based on real-time feedback from the teachers can significantly improve the relevance of these programmes. Implicitly, when CPD training directly reflects the challenges teachers face, it becomes more applicable and useful in practice, as previous studies have shown that professional development engrained in real-world classroom experiences leads to more effective learning outcomes.

The CPD programmes showed a leaning towards one-size-fits-all CPD models. When CPD moves away from one-size-fits-all to more flexible frameworks, it allows for greater personalization in professional development. Flexible CPD guidelines can adapt to differences in teachers' subject areas, levels of expertise, and grade levels, thus increasing the applicability of training. When CPD is designed with flexibility and personalization, teachers are more engaged and able to implement new skills effectively (Desimone, 2009). It is therefore essential to note that aligning CPD content with the curriculum and current policy standards will enhance its immediate applicability. Teachers often feel frustrated when CPD content does not correspond with what they are expected to teach, as this limits the training's practical value. Ensuring that CPD is in sync with the curriculum and recent educational reforms can reduce this frustration, enabling teachers to integrate new knowledge directly into their classroom instruction (Avalos, 2011).

The study revealed teachers' perceptions regarding involving teachers in the design and implementation of CPD activities to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Reflective practice enables teachers to critically assess their instructional methods, examine outcomes, and make improvements, leading to more effective teaching. Implicitly the inclusion of reflective activities, such as peer discussions and structured feedback sessions into CPD, can help teachers engage more deeply by connecting theory with practice and refine their approaches based on real classroom experiences.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that policymakers such as MOE and NTC should prioritize aligning CPD programs with teachers' specific needs.
2. It is recommended that CPD service providers should develop context-specific CPD modules that address the varied instructional environments teachers encounter. Teachers working in different settings, such as rural and urban schools, frequently face unique challenges. Context-specific training that considers these differences can make CPD more meaningful and targeted, bridging the gap between general training and the particular needs of various teaching contexts.
3. To better support the development of teachers, policy makers such as MOE, NaCCA should make it a priority to include reflective practice in CPD programs.
4. It is important for NTC and service providers to include relevant and appropriate contents that address the different skill sets and subject areas required by teachers across different educational levels.
5. Policy makers such as MOE, NaCCA and NTC should encourage CPD activities that are adaptable to evolving educational needs. A dynamic approach that integrates emerging topics and specialized content can keep CPD responsive to changes in curriculum standards, teaching practices, and educational policy reforms.

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- 12) This study was carried out without any funding from any organization. The research was funded by the researchers themselves. Ethics statement
- 13) This research work did not pose any risk to human participants in any way. Participants took part by responding to questionnaires. Participants gave their consents before taking part in the research.