

The Resurrection of Love: African Couples' Experiences After Obstetric Fistula Repair in Ghana

Nyarko Mensah O¹ • Van-Rensburg E² • Vormawor A³ • Eshun E⁴

¹ University of South Africa, Department of Health Sciences, Department of Midwifery, School of Nursing & Midwifery, KNUST, Ghana • ² University of South Africa • ³ KNUST / KATH, Ghana •

⁴ Garden City University, Ghana

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BACKGROUND

- Obstetric fistula can disrupt intimacy, companionship, dignity and family life (UNFPA, 2025; WHO, 2024).
- Post-repair research has focused mainly on women; couples' shared relational healing remains underexplored.
- This Ghanaian study examined recovery, reconciliation and post-repair transformation among couples.

AIM

To explore couples' shared recovery experiences, relational healing and transformation following successful obstetric fistula repair in Ghana.

METHODS

- Qualitative narrative inquiry in a tertiary hospital and selected Ghanaian districts.
- 10 couples (20 participants); purposive + convenience sampling.. Individual and joint in-depth interviews;
- Appreciative Inquiry 4-D cycle. Audio-recorded, verbatim transcription + field notes; saturation achieved. Braun & Clarke (2012) Thematic Analysis was used to analyze collected data

PARTICIPANTS

10 couples = 20 participants
10 women • 10 male partners

RESULTS: THREE OVERARCHING THEMES

1. BROKEN BEGINNINGS

Distance • lost intimacy • silence



"I avoided my husband and felt I had lost him... but now we laugh together again." **Aku, 27**

"We became distant, but today we are closer and happier because our sexual life has changed for the better."

Ambos, 30, husband

2. HEALING TOGETHER

Repair as a turning



"After the surgery, my husband held me... as if it was our first love encounter; now our home is full of joy." **Adjoa, 32**

"Peace has returned to our marriage."

Christian, 35

3. RESTORED PARTNERSHIP & SHARED FUTURE

Renewed intimacy • hope • companionship



"We go out together and enjoy each other's company again." **Alima, 21**

"We are planning our future again. Now, I wake up happy." **Asana, 28**

RELATIONAL RECOVERY JOURNEY



Suffering & disconnection



Surgical repair



Healing & reconnection



Restored love & shared future

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY LENS

Discovery → Dream → Design → Destiny Listening for strengths, hopes, relational rebuilding and future possibilities

CONCLUSION

- Repair restored more than physical health: couples described renewed love, dignity and shared purpose.
- Narratives reflected resilience, reconciliation and relational transformation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CARE

- Integrate couple-based psychosocial support into fistula services.
- Include partners appropriately in recovery and reintegration.
- Strengthen stigma-reduction and community engagement.
- Support intimacy, communication and emotional recovery after repair.

WHY IT MATTERS

Physical repair can reopen pathways to affection, companionship, confidence and future planning—placing relationships at the heart of survivor-centred recovery.

REFERENCES

1. UNFPA. (2025). Global report on obstetric fistula: Progress, challenges, and recovery pathways.
2. WHO. (2024). Obstetric fistula: Progress, priorities, and global health strategies.
3. Braun V, Clarke V. (2022). Thematic Analysis: A