

Perspectives of Young People towards Marriage in the Sefwi Debiso Community of the Western North Region, Ghana

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of young people towards marriage in the Sefwi Debiso Community of the Western North Region of the Republic of Ghana. The study's methodology was a mixed-methods approach. The study was conducted using a concurrent triangulation research design. In the quantitative phase, 210 respondents were chosen for the study using a convenient sampling technique. However, 15 people participated in the study's qualitative component. A questionnaire and an interviewing guide were used to gather the data. While thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data, descriptive statistics like means and statistics were used to analyse quantitative data. The study found that the respondents believed marriage was only for adults and that it was a God-ordained institution. The respondents had generally favourable opinions of marriage. In order to provide the youth in the community with the proper ideas and viewpoints so they can approach marriage in the right way, it was advised that religious leaders such as pastors, Imams, accredited marriage counsellors, and community leaders in the Sefwi Debiso Community collaborate and organise marriage training workshops.

Keywords: Marriage, Marriage attitude, Marital perspectives, Cultural values

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1. Introduction

Marriage is a universal institution. It is the recognised social institution not only for establishing and maintaining families, but also for establishing and maintaining kinship ties (Suganthi & Rajmohan, 2015). Without the institution of marriage, there would be no nuclear or extended family, and thus no kinship ties, which are fundamental features of African society (La Ferrara, 2010). Marriage is regarded as a very important institution in West Africa (Osei-Amponsah, Anaman & Sarpong, 2010). It is a social rather than a private affair because it is of interest not only to the spouses but also to the families, that is, the man and lady's extended families (Papanek, 2019). He noted that these families' interests are manifested in marriage negotiations, the offering and receipt of marriage payments, the selection of partners for their children of marriageable age, and their participation in marriage rites. Marriage has always been regarded as a natural process, with everyone expected to marry upon reaching adulthood (Sarfo, Salifu Yendork & Naidoo, 2022). Even though everyone is expected to marry when they reach adulthood, each person has a unique reason for doing so. According to studies, people marry for procreation, love, companionship, prestige, material possessions, and wealth (Adams & Andrews, 2019). All humans have a need for companionship and close loving human response. Marriage, and thus the family, fulfil this fundamental need for showing, loving, and relating to one another. Marriage can fill the loneliness void and satisfy the desire for intimacy. Marriage allows a man and a woman to have multiple access points to each other. Marriage, in other words, is the proper way for a husband and wife to meet each other's sexual needs. People who are married can satisfy their sexual desires without fear of being accused of fornication by society (Adams & Andrews, 2019). Marriage was once regarded as a universal value (Coutinho, 2015). It is no longer the same, as "delays in marriage, rising rates of cohabitation, high rates of non-marital childbearing, and delays in marital births, combined with changing patterns of schooling and work, have meant that the transition into adulthood has become even less a predictable sequence of events that it once was" (Eggebeen & Dew, 2009). In recent years, young adults have tended to postpone marriage and, in some cases, relationships entirely in exchange for freedom, independence, and greater emphasis on education and careers within society, as well as to meet their own needs as individuals prior to entering into marriage (Davis-Fine, 2011).

Given that emerging adulthood is a time of self-discovery, there is reason to think that perspective change occurs during this stage of life (Youmans, Canby, & Córdova, 2022). Marriage has lost its necessity in the eyes of many young people, particularly women, due to changing views on sex, birth control, and acceptable living arrangements (Gui, 2020). As a result, marriage has been declining generally. The majority of young people still

believe that marriage is a good idea, but they are still unsure about their own marriages (Manning, 2020). It's important to note that young people seem to be perplexed about what is required to get ready for and maintain a marriage relationship. This may be because so few of them have actually experienced a happy marriage on a regular basis (Oren & Hadomi, 2020).

In terms of marital readiness, age expectations, and desire to marry, educational attainment and aspirations also have an impact on marital perspective (Keldal & Eker, 2022). Many young adults prioritise their education over getting married, and they view finishing their education as a prerequisite for being ready to get married (Willoughby, 2010).

One can see that many young people between the ages of 19 and 25 in the Sefwi Debiso Community in Ghana's Western North Region are married and divorced, while others have never been married. The researcher made the choice to learn about these young people's views on marriage because, in the eyes of United Nations organisations, those who fall within the aforementioned age ranges are considered to be young (Shannon, Jackson, Perkins, Newell & Payne, 2018). There is no empirical support for the reasons they are not married. Despite this, there hasn't been any research on how young people in the Sefwi Debiso Community view marriage. Thus, the current study will fill a gap in the literature while also offering advice on young people getting married.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objective of the study is to determine the perspective of Young people towards Marriage.

1.1.1 Theoretical Framework

The Intergenerational Transmission Theory is predicated on the idea that children will replicate parental behavioural patterns in their adult lives (Bivona-Guttadauro, 2013). This theory has been used extensively in the literature to study family violence, social capital, marriage and divorce, and attitudes toward marriage (Cherlin, 2020; Cao, Lee, Liu & Gonzalez-Guarda, 2021). When it comes to perspectives on marriage, it has been acknowledged that what children witness as they grow up can have an impact on their perspective (Franklin & Kerchers, 2012).

Researchers who support this theory contend that young people's perspectives on marriage and divorce are likely to be influenced by their parents' viewpoints. In essence, family members frequently teach one another about marriage. Since parents provide children with their earliest and longest exposure to the institution of marriage, Greenberg and Nay (1982) hypothesised that it is not surprising that children's perceptions of their parents' marital happiness may be strongly correlated with their own views on marriage. From the aforementioned, it can be inferred that a child will grow up believing that marriage is a good thing if they are raised in a home where a happy marriage and effective communication are practiced.

According to Willoughby et al. (2012), young people's perspectives on marriage are likely to be shaped by the types of relationships that their parents exhibited as they were growing up. Children may model their own lives after what they observe in their parents' relationship based on this model, in addition to making generalisations and developing expectations about marriage and family relationships. Despite the fact that this theory has become well-known for explaining how perspectives can be passed down through families, Bivona-Guttadauro (2013) notes that it is unclear why or how intergenerational transmission happens in families.

This theory is considered pertinent to the current study because it sheds light on how people's perspectives on marriage are shaped by their upbringing. The impact of background traits on young people's views of marriage will be investigated in this study.

1.1.2 Literature Review

Perspectives of young people towards marriage

There have been some studies which have been conducted concerning the perspectives of young people towards marriage. An investigation into American marriage practises and beliefs was done by Campbell and Wright in 2010. They came to the conclusion that attitudes toward marriage have remained largely constant over time. According to the study, Americans continue to define marriage as monogamous and lifelong, placing a high value on being with a committed partner and disliking infidelity. Extramarital sex is common, despite the fact that many Americans claim to disapprove of it. Additionally, those who have experienced divorce or remarriage in their families are more likely to engage in extramarital sex. Campbell and Wright came to the conclusion that

while the definition of marriage has not changed, its practices, such as ceremonies, gender roles, and values have.

Additionally, Boyer-Pennington et al. (2001) looked into how parental divorce affected college students' expectations for future romantic success. They measured relationship optimism by looking at expectations for both one's own and other people's upcoming relationships. Participants were either from non-divorced homes, homes where they had witnessed one parental divorce, or homes where they had seen multiple parental divorces. It was discovered that students in all three groups believed that other students, both in their own groups and in other groups, had a higher divorce risk than they did. These results lend credence to the idea that some individuals might think that others are more likely than themselves to experience negative outcomes. These findings may also lend credence to the idea that young adults have unrealistic expectations for their own romantic relationships but realistic expectations for those of others.

Additionally, Pretorius, Roux, and Meyer (1991) sought to ascertain the extent to which subjects from various cultural and familial backgrounds differed in their views on the idea of marriage and to explore whether these differences were related to intra- and interpersonal adjustment. The majority of subjects, it was discovered, view marriage as a positive institution, but there is a need for more distinct social norms and improved school guidance programs, as evidenced by the divided opinions on whether cohabitation is desirable.

Iranian youth's attitudes toward marriage were examined by Keshavarz, Shariati, Ebadi, and Moghadam (2018). The participants were 22 single Iranian teenagers who were chosen by purposive and snowball sampling in Tehran, the country's capital. The interviews were carefully recorded, and analysis was done simultaneously with data collection using the directed content analysis method. Interviews came to an end, and data were categorised after reaching data saturation. It was discovered that, from the perspective of Iranian youth, the idea of marriage is a crucial component that can help to foster a sense of stability, achieve inner peace, and ultimately achieve excellence. On the whole, the perspective to marriage was positive among unmarried Iranian youth, but marriage rate was definitely falling in Iran.

Halkola (2019) conducted a sociological research study to examine how geography (both physically and sociologically) influences choices and the perspectives of women in their late twenties and thirties on marriage. The exploratory nature of the study allowed researchers to gain a better understanding of how attitudes toward marriage are influenced by a variety of factors, including leisure time activities, the sexual revolution, and aspirations for a career and education. Interviews were conducted to learn more about the perspectives, beliefs, decisions, and justifications of women who put off getting married. Overall, the findings showed that the factors that contributed to delayed marriage included geography, education, leisure preferences, sexual freedom, history, and familial ties.

Pickard (2017) also looked at perspectives on marriage in light of people's age and gender. 128 young people participated in an online survey that collected data for the study. According to the research, attitudes toward marriage and the role of children in marriage are slowly changing. The function of marriage, acceptance of cohabitation, and the rise and acceptance of single parenting are the areas where the change is most noticeable.

Dey and Ghosh (2016) also looked into how working women in various organised sectors perceived marriage, sexual adjustment, and performance. 300 working women were randomly chosen as the sample. Regarding marriage registration, 46% of respondents strongly agreed. The statement that having sexual relations without marriage is acceptable was strongly disagreed with by a significant percentage of respondents (58.7%). The views of college professors and clerks on marriage were more favourable. Only a small percentage of husbands and wives were sexually unfaithful to their partners. 53 percent of working women reported being able to handle their dual responsibilities successfully. The studies under consideration demonstrate that different young people have different perspectives on marriage. These viewpoints vary from person to person and may be influenced by various factors.

1.1.3 Methodology

Concurrent triangulation mixed method was used in the study as part of a mixed method approach (Kimmons, 2022). The study used this methodology to more precisely define the relationship between young people's perspectives on marriage by combining quantitative and qualitative data. This falls under the transformative research design, which aimed to combine a quantitative and qualitative approach on the same field. All of the young people in the Sefwi Debiso Community in the Western North Region of the Republic of Ghana who are between the ages of 18 and 25 and either single or married but divorcing made up the study's population. While

15 respondents were used for the qualitative study, 210 young people in total were conveniently chosen for the quantitative phase. The easy-to-access sample was chosen because it allowed the researcher to make the most of his or her limited time and resources. In the qualitative phase, 15 young people were selected because the researcher reached data saturation during the 15th respondents. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires are the tools used to gather qualitative and quantitative data, respectively.

On the basis of the earlier research, the researcher created a four-point Likert scale. My supervisor and two colleagues who teach social studies in Bia Lamplighter colleges of education validated the questionnaire and the interview guide. With fifty young people in Asuopiri, a community that shares many traits with the Sefwi-Debiso community, the researcher pre-tested the questionnaire there to ensure its validity. This was done to make sure the respondents could understand the items and that they were clear and without ambiguity. The reliability index of the items was then calculated using a Cronbach alpha, and it was found to be 0.79, indicating that the items were reliable for the data collection. Before the actual data collection, the interview guide allowed for the modification of the items that were difficult to understand. Additionally, the reliability of the qualitative data was crucial for the study (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Triangulation of sources is thought to be ideal for determining the reliability of the qualitative data. Triangulation of sources is defined as "collecting information from various sources at various times and in various contexts."

In addition, an inquiry audit, in which an outsider reviews the data collection process, data analysis, and the study's main findings, can be a good way to determine the reliability of qualitative data. In order to guarantee the reliability of the data, the interview was conducted in this study at various times and in various locations. Once more, the researcher made sure that an audit of all the study's processes was conducted. My supervisor and other departmental employees completed this. Finally, to ensure that the transcription accurately captured the respondents' opinions, a copy of the interview transcript was shown to some of the respondents. The Department of Social Studies Education at the University of Education, Winneba provided an introduction letter. On the days when the data was to be collected, plans were made. To ensure that participation in the study was voluntary, informed consent from the respondents was requested on each day of data collection.

To ensure that a high percentage of the questionnaires were returned, the researcher himself collected the data. The data for the study were gathered over the course of four working weeks. The return rate was realised at 100%. Each respondent takes between 15 and 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The Chief and the Assemblyman of Debiso town were asked for their permission before the data was collected. Additionally, the respondents were asked to sign or leave a thumbprint on the consent form, which was used to obtain their consent. Regarding the interview data, the interviewees gave their consent for the interviews to be recorded and later transcribed. Both English and the regional Asante Twi and Sefwi languages were used for the interviews. The interview, which took place one-on-one at the respondents' home and lasted between 35 and 40 minutes, was conducted on an individual basis. In order for the respondents to feel comfortable and provide their best input, the interview was conducted in each of their various homes. The techno spark 8C was used to record the interview because it has crystal-clear audio and a powerful battery that can last for about eight hours. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis.

1.1.4 Data Analysis

The questionnaire data was exported to SPSS version 20.0 for analysis. The quantitative data was analysed with descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations, whereas the qualitative data was analysed with thematic analysis. "Identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set" is what thematic analysis entails (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 126). The qualitative data gathered during the interview was used to generate themes.

1.1.5 Results and Discussion

The objective of the study was to find out the perspectives of the respondents towards marriage. In meeting this objective, the respondents were provided with statements to which they had to indicate their level of agreement. The section of the questionnaire was scored on the scale: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Agree=3, and Strongly Agree=4. Mean scores above 2.0 were deemed to be high while those below 2.0 were deemed to be low. On the basis of the scoring, higher mean scores imply that the respondents mostly agreed with the specific statement. A lower mean score however implies that the respondents mostly disagreed with the specific statement. The results are presented in Table 1.

From Table 1, the respondents indicated that marriage is not for homosexuals (Mean=3.17, SD=1.24). This statement recorded the highest mean which means most of the respondents agreed to it. The standard deviation being low means the responses were homogeneous. This result means the respondents perceived marriage to be for heterosexuals. The statement with the lowest mean was “marriage should be bisexual” (Mean =1.61, SD=1.02). This implies that most of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This supports the notion that the respondents perceived marriage to be only for heterosexuals. This decision could be as a result of the cultural background and the religious background of the respondents.

Table 1- *Perspective of Respondents about Marriage*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Marriage is a strategy to gain respect in community	2.26	0.88
Marriage is a sacred institution	2.42	0.78
Marriage is for cultural preservation	2.39	0.92
Divorce is an aspect of marriage	2.36	0.84
Marriage is a source of many problems	2.29	0.97
Marriage is a tool for procreation	2.53	0.93
Marriage is for life	2.77	0.77
Marriage is for companionship	2.40	0.77
Marriage is for both literates and illiterates	2.19	0.65
Marriage is a source of happiness	2.78	1.08
Marriage should be bisexual	1.61	1.02
Marriage is not for homosexuals	3.17	1.24
Marriage is only for mature people	2.86	0.74
Marriage is monogamous	2.54	0.49
Marriage is an institution ordained by God	2.95	0.73
Divorce has no room in marriage	2.51	0.85

Source: Field survey (2021)

Also, it can be seen from the results that, the respondents perceived marriage to be an institution ordained by God (Mean=2.95, SD=0.73). This view was from the religious perspective. Further, the respondents were of the view that marriage is only for mature people (Mean =2.86, SD=0.74). This means that for the respondents, marriage should only be entered into when the individuals involved are mature. The respondents further indicated that marriage was a source of happiness (Mean=2.78, SD = 0.77). This implies that the respondents saw marriage as means to gaining happiness.

Concerning the duration for marriage, the respondents were of the view that marriage is for life (Mean=2.77, SD=0.77). This perspective of the respondents gives the indication that marriage should not be temporarily but should be till death. With such perception, divorce would not be contemplated easily unless there is no other way through which the marriage can be saved. From the results, it can be seen that the respondents held fairly positive views about marriage.

The views from the interview data were similar to the views shown in the quantitative data. Specifically, the common themes obtained from the respondents included “marriage is ordained by God”, “marriage brings respect”, “marriage brings families together” and “marriage is between a man and a woman”. Thus, the respondents felt that marriage was an institution ordained by God. This confirmed what was in the quantitative data. The respondents also felt that marriage would bring respect in the community. Marriage was also viewed by the interviewed respondents that in marriage is a family tradition and as such brings families together. Finally, the respondents expressed their views that marriage was heterosexual since it is supposed to be between a man and a woman.

Some of the actual comments from the participants are shown below:

“For me, I think marriage is given by God o...I believe that marriage is specially ordained by God.” – YP 1.

This respondent views marriage as an institution ordained by God, and for that reason, must be accorded as such as postulated by Agboklu (2017). The respondent agreed with him that marriage is a religious issue and must be looked at from that perspective.

“Marriage is family tradition, families come together before people can marry...Yeh.. I see marriage is a family thing.” – YP 3.

The participant see marriage from the sociological point of view by saying that marriage is a family tradition, where families come together before one can marry. He or she agrees with Johnson (2009) that marriage cannot be instituted especially in Africa without two families.

"I see marriage to be between man and a woman as said in the Bible...only matured men and women can marry." – YP 6.

The respondent sees marriage as God sent and sees it from the religious perspective. He or she further believes that marriage must be contracted by mature individuals who are economically, psychologically and emotionally mature. The respondent side with Agboklu (2017), who sees marriage as a religious issue.

"Marriage brings respect oo so I see marriage as a means to gain respect in society. When you grow, it is expected that you marry." – YP 8.

Marriage brings respect, the participant classified it as a status symbol in one's society. The respondent's view is not different from that of Adams and Andrews (2019) whose research revealed that people marry purposely for procreation, love, companionship, social prestige, material possession and wealth.

From the results in the quantitative and qualitative data, it can be seen that the respondents perceived marriage to be heterosexual, ordained by God, brings respect, brings families together, for matured people, is a source of happiness and is for life. The results confirm the findings of several studies. For instance, Pretorius et al. (1991) sought to determine to what degree differences concerning the idea of marriage exist between subjects of varied cultural and home backgrounds and to investigate whether these relate to intra- and interpersonal adjustment. It was found that most subjects regard marriage as a positive institution but the need for more distinct social norms and improved school guidance programmes were revealed in divided views on the desirability of cohabitation.

Similarly, Keshavarz et al. (2018) explored the desire and attitude to marriage among Iranian youth and found that the concept of marriage from the viewpoint of Iranian youth is an essential element that gives respect in society and create a sense of stability. On the whole, the attitude to marriage was positive among unmarried Iranian youth. Halkola (2019) conducted a sociological research study to explore the attitudes of women in their late twenties and thirties about marriage and how geography (physical and sociological) impacts decisions and revealed that marriage was viewed as God ordained institution which is supposed to last all life. Generally, it can be seen that young people still hold positive views about marriage.

1.1.6 Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, respondents held the belief that marriage is a divinely ordained institution and that it is only for mature people. Marriage was viewed favourably by the respondents. It was suggested that religious leaders in the Sefwi Debiso Community, such as pastors, Imams, accredited marriage counsellors, and community leaders, collaborate and organise marriage training workshops for the youth in the community to equip them with the right ideas and views so they can approach marriage in the right way.

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