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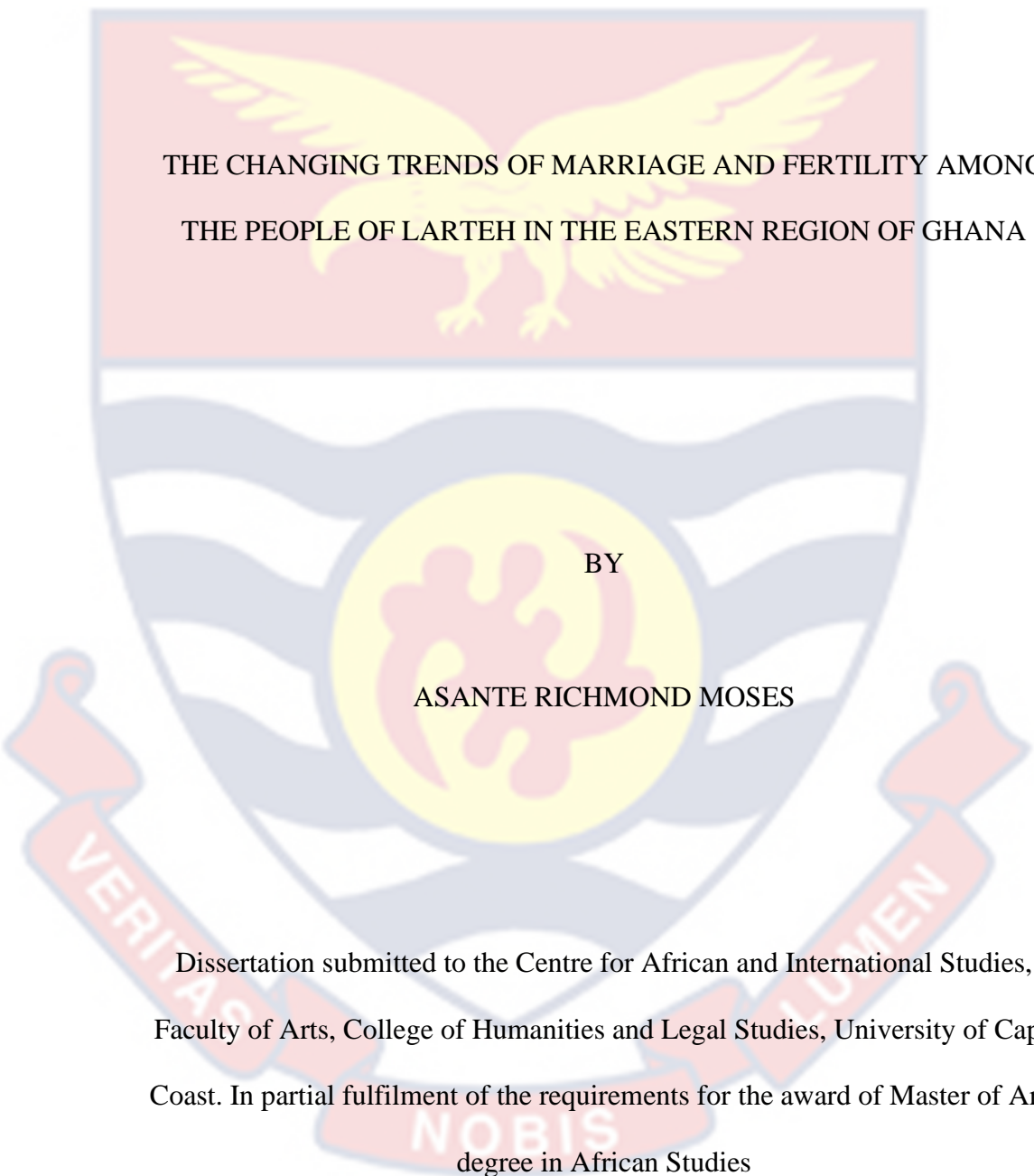


**THE CHANGING TRENDS OF MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY
AMONG THE PEOPLE OF LARTEH IN THE EASTERN REGION OF
GHANA**

ASANTE RICHMOND MOSES

2023

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



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BY

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degree in African Studies

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree either in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

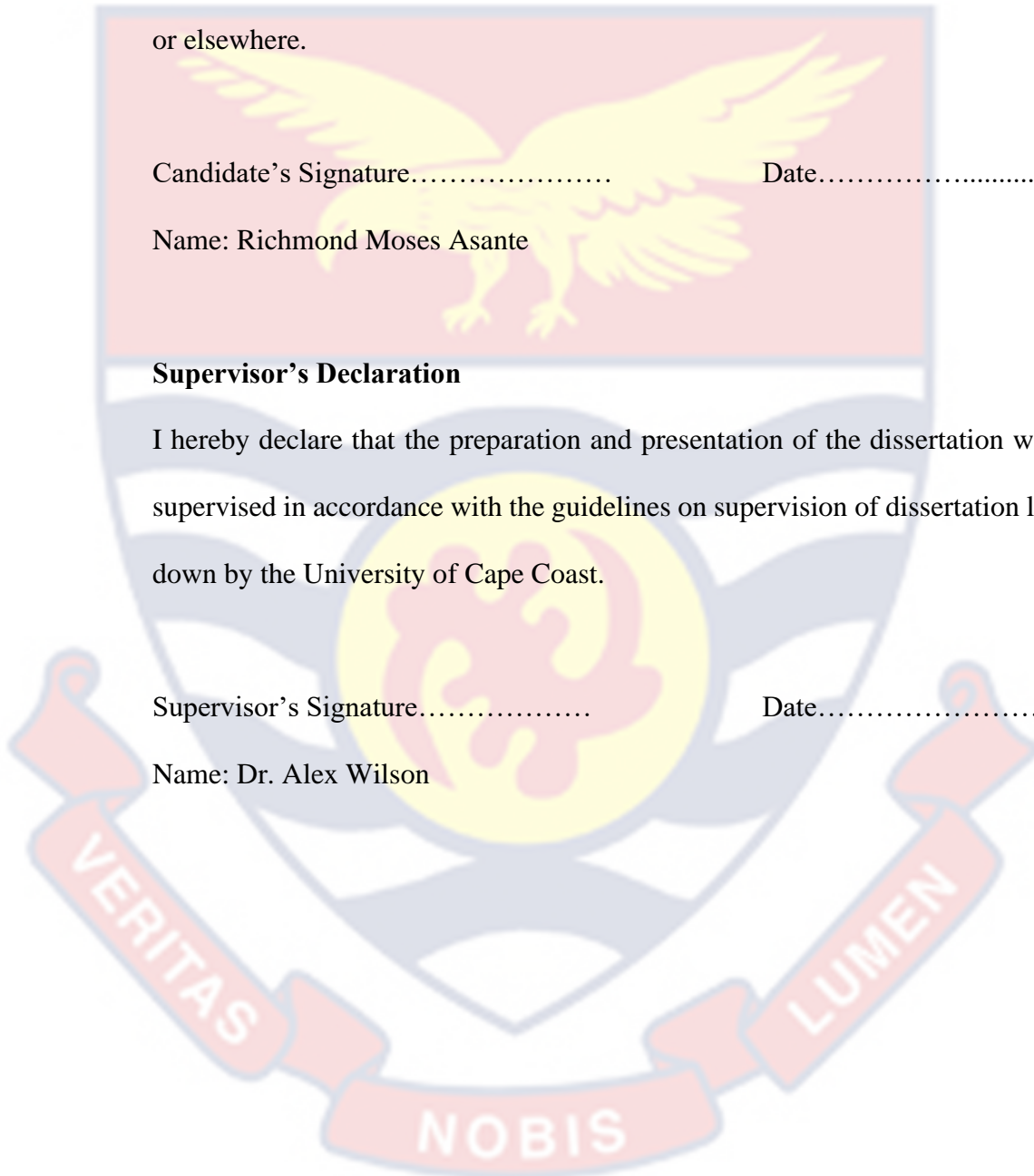
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

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Name: Dr. Alex Wilson

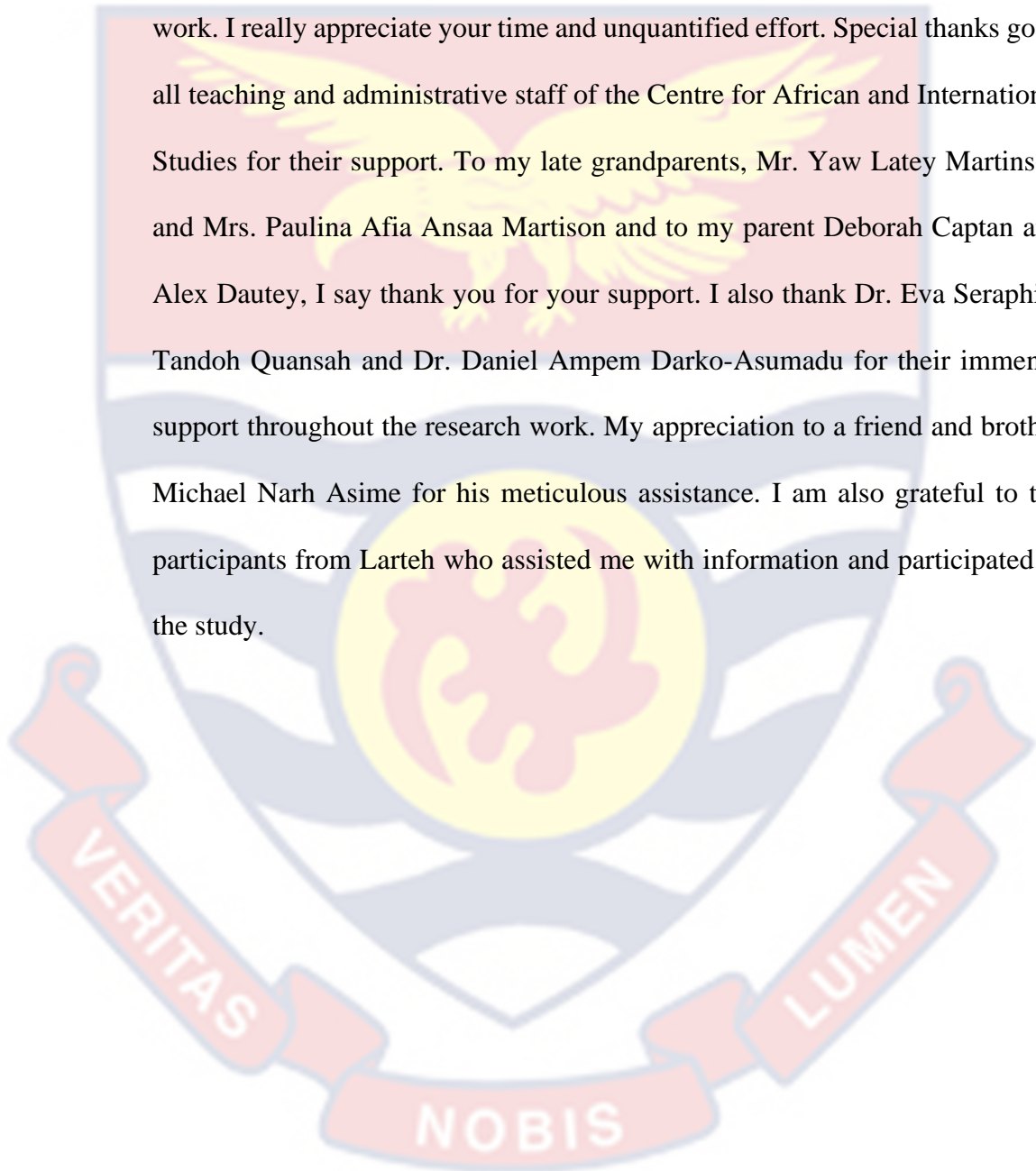


ABSTRACT

Marriage and fertility in the African setting has assumed changes over the years. These changes have the ability to affect the African society. This study therefore aimed at exploring the changing trends in marriage and fertility in Larteh in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study was guided by the following research objectives: examine the relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh; explore the fertility trends among households in Larteh in the last decade; and examine the effects of changing trend on marital fertility among the people of Larteh. Using qualitative research method, the study used the interview guide to collect data from participants who were selected through the purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The study found that marriage has a significant impact on fertility, with married couples having higher fertility rates compared to unmarried individuals. The study revealed that socio-cultural, and economic factors reinforce the importance of marriage in the reproductive behaviour of Larteh's population. The study also showed trends of changes in the number of children per household, shifts in the age at which people have children and changes in birth rates. The study further found that delayed marriages, use of contraception and changes in economic conditions have led to a decline in fertility rates within marriages. These changes are leading to smaller family sizes, later childbearing ages, or other demographic shifts within married couples. The study concludes that marriage remains a significant determinant of fertility among the people of Larteh, but that fertility patterns have evolved over the past decade due to various social, economic and health-related factors. These changes have influenced marital fertility, potentially leading to new behaviours regarding family size and reproductive timing within marriages.

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DEDICATION

To my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Martinson



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Marriage is an important stage in the life cycle of humans. Its meaning and arrangements vary across cultures and religions, although it acknowledges and sanctions sexual and interpersonal relationships (Haviland et al., 2011). Marriage is historically believed to be central in building families across America and Europe (Christiano, 2000) and religious institutions play a key role in strengthening marriages (Gottman, 1998). In Africa, a high value emphasis is placed on marriage because of the societal functions it performed (Nyanungo 2014). Some of the functions include being a determining attribute in the transition from childhood to adulthood, meeting the economic needs of married people, forming and reinforcing kinship networks, and providing a foundation for the care and cultural transmission of children (Nyanungo 2014).

While marriage is still regarded as an important societal institution, marriage practices have changed dramatically in many regions in sub-Saharan Africa (Edin & Kefalas, 2011). Marriage rates have changed over time as a result of a cultural redefinition of marriage. Also, marriage appears to have lost some of its significance in some societies but not in others (Walsh 2008). According to Edin and Kefalas (2011), the practical significance of marriage has declined in various societies while its symbolic significance has increased. The rate of marriage among sexually active women (15–49 years) has been estimated to be extraordinarily low by worldwide standards: only 27% percent of all women aged 15–49 years were now married in 2014, with black African (23 %) and coloured (34 %) women faring the worst (Chimere-Dan 2015).

Conversely, Indian and Caucasian women were more likely to be married, with marriage rates of 55% and 53%, respectively (Chimere-Dan 2015).

According to Chimere-Dan (2015), this downward trend has resulted in marriage losing its place as the most common type of relationship for family development. For example, in 2014, a notable majority, approximately 70%, of children in a certain region were born to women who had not married. This trend was particularly pronounced among black African women, where the percentage reached 75%, and coloured women, with a rate of 63%. In contrast, this phenomenon was less prevalent among Indian and white women, with percentages of 15% and 18%, respectively (Hertrich, 2017). The changes are mostly apparent in the increasing age of first marriage for women, as well as the amount of time spent out of marriage during adulthood (Hertrich, 2002; 2017). Several possible reasons for first marriage postponement have been identified, including extended schooling for women and the effect of women's entry into the labour force leading to increased levels of jobs and income (Garenne 2004), thus fulfilling the financial needs traditionally associated with marriage.

In sub-Saharan Africa including Ghana, marriage is a widely respected institution. This is because it determines one's adulthood, links individuals and lineages in the network of cooperation and support (Mascona et al., 2017). Marriage and childbearing substantially shape the African family. It is believed that, in the traditional African societies, the families of both couples take pride in their children marrying and the demand for grandchildren (Amos, 2013). In many African homes, child bearing is one true way to protect and sustain one's marriage and hence, failure to procreate leads to unhappiness in marriage which

may result in divorce (Tabong & Adongo, 2013). That notwithstanding, couples without children face pressure from their families, relatives, friends, and the community at large (Tabong & Adongo, 2013). Thus, this affects a person's standing and social status within the society.

In Ghana, the landscape of marriage and fertility has seen significant transformations. These shifts are attributed to several factors: delayed marriages influenced by educational pursuits (Odame, 2018), a trend towards having fewer children (Parr, 2014), an increase in divorce rates (Agyei-Mensah, 2006), and a decline in fertility rates linked to contraceptive use (Parr, 2014). While some view these changes as potentially detrimental to the institution of marriage, others maintain that marriage continues to be a fundamental and preferred relationship model in societal contexts. Rather than a decrease in the importance of marriage, conditions brought about by current socioeconomic and demographic developments are making marriage difficult to realize in contemporary societies (Hosegood et al., 2009). Thus, the study sought to explore the changing trend of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh in the Eastern Region.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage trends have undergone significant transformations, particularly in Western countries, where there has been a noticeable shift towards later marriages and an increase in cohabitation outside of marriage (Cherlin, 2010). Economic factors such as the rising cost of living and higher educational attainments, especially among women, have contributed to these trends (Becker, 1981). Furthermore, the liberalisation of societal norms has

played a crucial role in redefining traditional marriage concepts (Giddens, 1992).

Similarly, fertility trends have been marked by a general decline in birth rates worldwide. This decline is often attributed to increased access to contraception, higher female participation in the workforce, and a greater emphasis on individual career aspirations (Morgan, 2003). Advancements in reproductive technologies and changes in government policies related to family planning also significantly influence fertility rates (Bongaarts, 2001).

In Africa, these trends manifest differently. Urban areas in Africa show tendencies similar to Western patterns, with delayed marriages and reduced fertility rates, while rural areas often retain more traditional patterns (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). The disparities are influenced by varying degrees of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. In Ghana, the gradual decline in fertility rates can be attributed to increased educational opportunities for women and improved access to reproductive health services (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). However, the impact of these factors varies across different communities and ethnic groups within the country.

The Larteh community, known for its rich cultural heritage, exhibits specific marriage and fertility trends that reflect both adherence to traditional customs and the influence of modernisation (Shisana et al., 2015). Traditional practices such as the role of extended family in marital decisions, traditional marriage ceremonies, and the value placed on childbearing are integral aspects of their social structure (Nukunya, 2003). However, these practices are evolving in response to modern socio-economic changes. Family plays a key role in relation to marriage and childbirth, with much emphasis placed on childbirth in

marriages. Inability to have children sometimes leads to divorce (Rootalu, 2010; Tilsen & Larson, 2000). However, Morgan (2003) argues that using childbirth as a basis for sustaining marriage is flawed in the present era, as it does not correspond with current social demands.

Globally, marriage patterns have experienced a transformation, with many societies witnessing a trend towards later marriages and an increase in non-marital cohabitation (Cherlin, 2010). This shift is often attributed to economic challenges, changes in gender roles, and evolving societal norms (Becker, 1981; Giddens, 1992). Concurrently, fertility rates have been declining, influenced by increased access to contraception, changing roles and aspirations of women, and economic considerations (Morgan, 2003; Bongaarts, 2001). In Africa, these trends vary in intensity and pattern, influenced by local cultural, economic, and educational contexts (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). In Ghana, studies on marriage and fertility have largely focused on the implications of infertility in marriage, depression among infertile women, and factors influencing divorce processes (Johann, 2012; Adongo et al., 2014). While many studies have examined the psychological effects of infertility in marriages (Anokye et al., 2017), there has been less focus on changing trends in the institution of marriage and the concept of fertility concerning present social demands.

Among the Larteh people in the Eastern Region, the extent and nature of these changes remain underexplored. The Larteh, with their distinct cultural heritage, provide a unique case study. Positioned at an intersection of traditional values and modern influences, their marriage and fertility practices are likely impacted by broader socio-economic developments such as increased education

and exposure to global culture. Traditional customs, the role of extended family, and societal expectations around childbearing are essential aspects of Larteh social life (Nukunya, 2003). However, these practices may be reshaped by modern influences. This study seeks to address the gap in understanding how global trends in marriage and fertility manifest among the Larteh people. It aims to explore the balance between traditional practices and modern influences and how this balance impacts the social fabric of the Larteh community. This investigation is crucial for developing culturally appropriate policies and interventions that support the community's social and demographic development.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh.
2. Explore the fertility trends among households in Larteh in the last decade.
3. Examine the effects of changing trend on marital fertility among the people of Larteh.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh?
2. What are the fertility trends among households in Larteh in the last decade?
3. What are the effects of changing trend on marital fertility among the people of Larteh?

Significance of the study

It is evident that marriage is a communalistic affair between four families as a result of two people coming together. But, over the years, marriage was seen as a tool to family ties because it brings both lineages together. This research becomes very important in the current dispensation where marriage and child birth has evolved quickly. This research is useful as it provides insights on the resultant impact of changing trends on marriage and fertility in Larteh. This research is useful as it informs further studies in this area and inform policymakers, educationists, legislators to outline and address issues concerning the ever-changing phase of marriage and fertility in Ghana. Findings from the study is useful to policymakers as it helps to shape or adjust the customary laws of the people in Larteh concerning the changing trends of marriage and fertility. This study also adds to the existing literature on marriage and fertility in Ghana. The methodological approach employed in this study also serves as a useful guide for further research.

Delimitation of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to “The Changing Trends of Marriage and Fertility Among the People of Larteh in the Eastern Region of Ghana”. The study was geographically confined to the Larteh community in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This focus allows for an in-depth exploration of the specific cultural, social, and economic factors influencing marriage and fertility trends within this distinct group. The findings may not be generalizable to other regions or ethnic groups in Ghana or other African countries. The research did not examine trends over a specific time frame, ideally spanning the last two decades. This period is chosen to reflect the impact of recent socio-economic

changes and global influences on the traditional practices and beliefs of the Larteh people.

The primary subjects of the study were adults of marriageable age, including both genders, within the Larteh community. The study did not extensively cover the perspectives of children or adolescents, except where their views are relevant to discussions of future trends in marriage and fertility. While acknowledging that marriage and fertility are influenced by a broad range of factors, the study specifically focused on cultural practices, economic conditions, educational attainment, and access to reproductive health services. It did not delve deeply into related but distinct areas such as broader gender dynamics, political changes, or detailed medical analysis of fertility rates.

The study employed qualitative methods, primarily through interviews and focus group discussions. The study only relied on primary data collected from the field and secondary data from existing literature.

Definition of Terms

Fertility: the ability of an individual or couple to reproduce through normal sexual activity (Amato & Portaccio, 2015). Fertility as used in the study refers to childbirth.

Marriage: the study adopts Assimeng's (2006) definition of marriage as a socially recognized arrangement whereby consenting adults of the opposite sex are brought together into a relationship where the offspring are socially recognized

Organisation of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provided an overview of the background to the study which served as the basis for the entire

study. This is followed by the statement of the problem and objectives addressed as well as purpose of the study, and research questions and hypotheses answered and tested. The chapter is concluded with the significance and delimitation of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the review of related literature. It discussed comprehensively, Concept of Marriage in Ghana, Relationship Between Marriage and Fertility, Fertility Trends in Households, Effects of Changing trend on Marital Fertility, and The Marriage in Ghana and the Changing Trends. Empirical studies were also reviewed on the changing trends of marriage and fertility. The theoretical framework that underpinned the study, Demographic Transition Model, was also discussed.

Chapter Three talks about the methodology highlighting the research design that was utilised to execute the research. It also looked at sampling procedures, instrument for data collection, and the tools for analysis of data. Chapter Four reports on the results stemming from the analysis of the data obtained from the field work. This is complemented by discussion of the results referring to studies that support the findings of the current study.

Chapter Five focuses on the summary of the study, key findings, conclusions, recommendations, and implication for counselling. It ends with suggested areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of previous studies that are relevant to this study as well as a description of conceptual issues that will influence the study. It discusses the theory employed for the study and how it is used. Concept of Marriage in Ghana, Relationship Between Marriage and Fertility, Fertility Trends in Households, Effects of Changing trend on Marital Fertility, The Marriage in Ghana and the Changing Trends, Current Discussion on Divorce and its Associated Discourse are also discussed here. Also empirical studies related to marriage and fertility are reviewed.

Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the Demographic Transition Model and how it is employed in the study.

Demographic Transition Model

The study is underpinned by the Demographic Transition Model. The model shows the demographic studies over the history. The model was developed in 1945 by Warren Thompson. The model is based on the trend in fertility and mortality experienced in Europe, North America and Australia. The model postulates that as a country improves in terms of socio-economic development, fertility and mortality will decline from its high stable levels to low fluctuating level. The first demographic transition is assumed to have been driven by two main transitions; mortality transition and fertility transition, with fertility transition being a necessary response to mortality decline (Defo, 2014). The model shows a particular pattern of demographic change from high fertility

and high mortality to low fertility to low mortality. The model outlines three basic assumptions: First, the decline in mortality rate comes before the decline in fertility rate, the fertility rate actually declines to match mortality rate and socio-economic transformation of a society is commensurate with its demographic transformation.

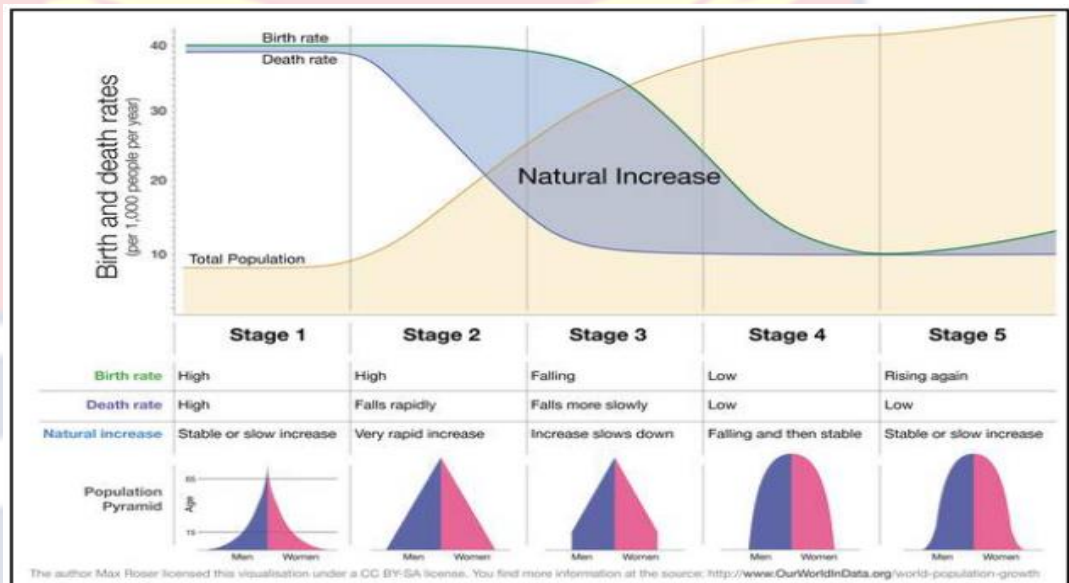


Figure 1: Demographic Transition Stages

Source: Adopted from the Demographic Transition Model

Demographic transitions have been described in five stages (Caldwell, Caldwell, McDonald & Schindlmayr, 2006; Lee & Reher, 2011). These include; stage 1- high and fluctuating birth and death rate and population growth remains slow; stage 2- high birth rate and declining death rate and rapid population growth rate; stage 3- declining birth rate and low death rate and declining rate of population growth; stage 4- low birth and death rate and slow population growth; and stage 5- birth and death are approximately equal that result in zero population growth.

In the first stage, both fertility and mortality rates are high, in the range of 35 per 1000. But the mortality pattern is erratic due to prevalence of

epidemics and variable food supply. This results in stable and slowly growing population. This stage mainly occurs in agrarian societies with low or moderate population density, societies where the productivity is low, life expectancy is low, large family size is the norm, underdeveloped agriculture is the main economic activity, low levels of urbanization and technological development prevail and low levels of literacy are experienced (Murtin, 2013). Nearly all the countries of the world were at this stage, but now to find a country at this stage of demographic transition seems improbable, because the data on fertility and mortality in such a region would be inadequate or lacking. Also, there is little chance that such a region would have remained totally unaffected by expansion in medical facilities. For these reasons, the first stage has also been called the pre-industrial or pre-modern stage.

The second stage is characterized by high but gradually declining fertility rates (at around 30 per 1000) and a drastically reduced mortality rate of over 15 per 1000. The expansion in health facilities and food security reduces death rates (Angeles, 2010). But, because education has not reached sufficient levels, birth rates are still high. By the end of the second stage, fertility rates are still high. By the end of the second stage, fertility rates start declining gradually and mortality rates start declining sharply (Dokpe, 2004). The population now increases at declining rates.

In the third stage, birth rates start falling due to increase in education and status of women in a society and other social value change. Also, induction of various contraceptive methods and fertility options also been noticed in this stage. Population growth begins to level off. People adopt the use of

contraceptives so as to curtail large family sizes. Most societies are moving from second stage to third stage of demographic transition.

The fourth stage is characterized by both death rates and birth rates declining appreciably. As a result, population is either stable or growing slowly. Birth rates may drop significantly as many societies are experiencing shrinking population due to rapid changes in education, increase in income levels and standard of living (Becker & Lois, 2010). Moreover, increased specialization following rising income levels and the consequent social and economic mobility make it costly and inconvenient to raise a large number of children. All these tend to reduce the birth rate further which along with an already low death rate brings a decline in the growth rate of the population (Bloom et al., 2021).

In the final stage, death rates exceed birth rates and the population growth rates decline. The population becomes highly industrialized with growing urban technological development. A continuous decline in birth rates when it is not possible to lower death rates further in the advanced countries leads to a decline in the population.

Although the model is useful in assessing demographic transitions and trends, various scholars have criticized the model. For instance, Loschky and Wilcox (1974) have criticized the model, arguing that the model is neither productive, nor are its stages sequential and definite. Also, the role of man's technical innovations should not be underrated, particularly in the field of medicine which can arrest the rate of mortality (Coleman, 2006). The model, despite its shortcomings, does provide a generalized macro-level framework within which different situational contexts can be placed in order to comprehend the demographic processes in that particular country. Also, the scope of

transitions should take into account the fact that the present conditions are different from those prevailing 100 years ago in Europe (Lichter, 2013).

The model has also been criticized as just been a descriptive concept. It describes historical trends or antecedents in the population of the western European countries. But then again, it was assumed to be a universal principle that is expected to spread across the populations of middle and low-income countries. Despite these limitations, the Demographic Transition Model (DTM) has been of great importance in the study of population change due to its ability to demonstrate the relationship between population growth and socio-economic development.

That notwithstanding, one advantage of using the demographic transition model was, for some time, weakened by the argument that the experience of the Western World cannot be used for generalizations about other regions like Africa and Asia. Nonetheless, recent studies (Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer, 2015) confirm the applicability of the DTM to Africa. For instance, studies of trends in population changes in developing countries that relied on the demographic transition model have supported the facts that technological advancements, growths in industrialization and urbanization have worked together to explain some demographic transitions in Africa and Asia. Tabutin and Schoumaker (2004), in a study of the Demography of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) from the 1950s to the 2000s, observed that SSA entered the global process of demographic transition with the earliest decline of mortality in the 1950s and 1960s. This was later followed by an onset of a fertility decline.

This theory was helpful in guiding the study on how social factors have contributed to declining fertility rate. For instance, among some societies in

Ghana, large family sizes were seen as an insurance cover at old age thus, the number of children one has determines the size of one's farm land. As a result, families gave birth to many children thereby increasing the fertility and mortality rates. Conversely, death rates take a higher toll for lack of nutritional food and quality healthcare due to poverty. Although the model has been criticized for being western, there are some characteristics of the study area that concurs with some assumptions of the model. For example, reduction in family sizes due to advancements in medical care, decrease in death rates and industrialization.

Conceptual Review

This part of the chapter reviews the concepts of marriage and fertility as the key concepts of the study.

Concept of Marriage in Ghana

Marriage is regarded as a social event in Ghana and it is guided by common and customary laws of the country (Awedoba, 2005). Three forms of marriage are pertinent in the country- customary marriage, religious marriage and ordinance marriage. The Marriages Act of 1884/5 gives legitimacy to customary marriage. The Act defines marriage as the exclusive union between a man's family and woman's family. Also, it is regarded as a contract between two people- a man and woman. This agreement ascribes certain rights and responsibilities to the couples (Awedoba, 2005). One important feature of customary marriage is the consummation of marriage by cohabitation and permits polygamy. Notwithstanding the level of exposure to Western ideals, polygamy (polygyny) is widely practiced in Ghana (Westoff, 2003). However, the Christian marriage is seen strictly as a union between one man and one

woman. Ordinance marriage is regarded as a mutual agreement between a man and a woman, that is, it is monogamous (Westoff, 2003).

The laws and customs governing Ghanaian marriages vary from one ethnic to the other. It is difficult to categorize these practices under one set of procedures. Among the majority of the ethnic groups in Ghana, the first or basic step in the marriage process is for the declaration of intent to marry by the man. Therefore, it is imperative for the necessary custom demanded by the women's kin in asking for their daughter's hand in marriage. According to Kumekpor (1972), this custom may involve a relatively inexpensive ceremony of local drink and gifts to the more expensive ceremony of imported drinks and gifts, depending in most cases upon the circumstances of the man and his kinsfolk.

Although contemporary factors have had an impact on marriage in Ghanaian societies especially partner selection (Manuh, 1997), the extended family plays a critical role in the marital process. Nukunya (2003) postulates that due to the presence of strong extended family ties and beliefs, passionate relationships were discouraged and treated with the greatest level of disdain. This predominantly practiced among the matrilineal Akans who form the majority of Ghanaian population (Hayward, 1979). There are a number of alternatives available to the couple once this custom is performed. These alternatives are often conditioned by the status or wealth rather than change in attitude or beliefs on the part of marriages in Ghana. These alternatives include but not limited to adding additional feature to the customary marriage such as performing Christian church ceremony, depending on whether the couples are Christians or not. Of all these however, it is imperative the couples perform a

traditional or customary marriage before any other alternative (Kumekpor, 1972).

Furthermore, couples can register their marriage under the Ordinance and climax it with a church wedding after the necessary customs have been performed. That is, couples can choose to marry under Ordinance, have an elaborative church wedding but they must also go through the traditional customary way of marriage. Marriage under the Ordinance is however is rarer as compared to church and customary marriage. This is because marriage under the Ordinance often involves the individual couples. In Ghana however, marriage is largely regarded as the union between two families and the society must recognize it (Nukunya, 1969). Ghanaians see marriage as a wide network of relatives, kinsfolk and friends. Nukunya (1969) gives us an appropriate description of the social atmosphere that surrounds a customary Anlo Ewe marriage ceremony.

“The elaboration of the marriage ceremony and the large number of kinsfolks taking part in the proceedings bring home to the couple and the relatives the seriousness of their undertaking; and at every stage the ancestors are invoked adding supernatural authority. This together with the high moral code of the past; the punitive measures of the traditional authorities and the strong parental authority, provide a suitable environment for marital stability.”

(Nukunya, 1969)

The elaborate marriage ceremonies and extensive participation of relatives emphasise the gravity of the commitment for the couple and their

families. Invoking ancestors at each stage adds a spiritual dimension, reinforcing the union's importance. This, combined with a high moral code, strict traditional authority, and strong parental influence, creates a supportive environment that fosters marital stability.

But it is worthy to note that, marriage has undergone changes from the strict traditional or customary way of contracting marriage to embracing new ideas and concepts (Addai & Adjei, 2014). In most cases, the marriage will be customary marriage, but in a smaller number of instances there will be a combination of custom with a Christian church ceremony, and in a still smaller number of marriages, one finds all three features combined, that is, where the couple perform the customary ceremony and in addition, they register their marriage under the Ordinance and have it blessed with a church ceremony.

Relationship Between Marriage and Fertility

The relationship between marriage and fertility has been studied extensively in demographic literature and it continues to gain the attention of researchers (Garenne, 2014; Hertrich, 2017; Lardoux & Walle, 2003; Shapiro & Gebreselassie, 2014). Studies have shown that there exists an inverse relationship between age at first marriage and total fertility. In instances where age at first marriage is higher, total fertility rate is at its lowest (Hertrich, 2017). The implication is that the timing of first marriage has become the catalyst for fertility change. For example, a study by Harwood-Lejeune, (2001) observed that countries like Kenya and Zimbabwe which had a well-established fertility decline had a higher age at first marriage and age of first birth with a small interval between the two.

The relationship between Age at First Marriage (AFM) and fertility has not been that consistent in demographic literature especially those on Sub Saharan Africa. Women who marry late have been observed to have a higher Mean number of Children Ever Born (MCEB), than those who married early (Nour, 2009). The late catch-up effect that is making up for the lost time before reaching the end of their reproductive period was evident here. To this end, women who marry late tend to give birth in quick succession so as to make up for the lost years and hence catch-up with their colleagues who had married early (Odimegwu & Zerai, 1996).

The decline in fertility according to Westoff (2003) proceeds in two stages: decline in fertility due to increasing age at first marriage on one hand, and adoption of contraceptive and change in fertility within marriage on the other. In this case, countries with higher age at first marriage are most likely to respond best to family planning practices than countries where women marry earlier. Evidence of increasing age at marriage in sub-Saharan Africa has been documented (Garenne, 2004; Shapiro & Gebreselassie, 2014; Westoff, 2003). If the fertility of women at a particular age is determined by the product of their marital fertility, and the proportion currently married in that age group, then the changes in age at first marriage would most likely affect the age composition of currently married women. The extent to which this change has contributed to the overall changes in Ghana's fertility decline is yet to receive scholarly attention.

Fertility Trends in Households

Fertility patterns in the world have changed dramatically over the last two decades since the International Conference on Population and Development

(ICPD) in 1994, producing a world with very diverse childbearing patterns (UN, 2014). Fertility plays an important role in population dynamics. Fertility has played a major role in changing the size and structure of population (Jara, et al., 2013; Weeks, 2008). Developing nations, particularly sub-Saharan Africa with most of its countries having a fertility rate higher than the global average of 2.53, are also adopting anti-natalist measures (contraceptive usage, family planning and educating its young females) to reduce fertility (Jara, et al., 2013; United Nations, 2013; Weeks, 2010). Fertility control had been a worldwide desire because of its impact on the standard living of the population (United Nation, 2013).

According to Jara, et al. (2013), in most countries where fertility is high, maternal, infant and child mortality rates are high, and also foetal deaths and low birth weight are associated with unregulated fertility. Nonetheless, fertility has been low among couples with high educational levels (Dejene, 2000; Vilaysook, 2009). Among couples with higher education, knowledge of contraception and its usage is improved; barriers to communications about family planning are mostly broken. Years spent in education lead to postponements of marriages and births (Derebssa, 2002; Azhar & Pasha, 2008). These social factors have a tendency to affect childbirth of couples. In extreme instances where couples cannot have their own children could lead to divorce.

Currently, almost all the developed countries are at the end of the transition (Weeks, 2008). In Japan and most of Eastern Europe, total fertility rate is around 1.5 and a total fertility rate of 1.4 in Southern Europe. Yet, a country like Ireland has been able to maintain its replacement fertility level (2.0) (PRB, 2013). According to Weeks (2008) countries in sub-Saharan Africa

(SSA) are classified as being in the process of transition. Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing fertility decline (1990: TFR=6.2) to (2010: TFR=5.1) in the number of children per woman (Bongaarts & Casterline, 2012).

Developing nations, including many sub-Saharan African countries are faced with the challenge of controlling and reducing their fertility rates. From the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), fertility has dropped from 6.4 children per woman in the 1988 GDHS to 4.2 children per woman in the 2014 GDHS—a drop of two births per woman over the past two decades. Also, rural women have a higher fertility rate of 5.1 children as compared to 3.4 children per woman in urban areas. Regional figures show that the Eastern region, from which Larteh can be located, has a fertility rate of 4.2 children per woman. This drop in the fertility rate is attributable to a number of changes societies are experiencing. This has triggered an increase in the rate of divorce because of the pressure exerted on couples by the extended family. In Larteh, a rural setting in Ghana, childbirth is believed to be a blessing hence, it is imperative for couples to have a number of children to ensure family sustenance. In urban settings across Ghana, there is a noticeable trend towards smaller families, in contrast to the traditionally larger families found in rural areas. However, this shift is progressively influencing rural communities as well. A growing number of local households in these areas are also opting for fewer children. This change is subtly reshaping Ghana's demographic landscape.

Effects of Changing trend on Marital Fertility

Changing trend is noted to have a considerable impact on the rate of fertility. Several reasons account for this phenomenon. This decline in fertility provoked many demographic studies in the sub-region (Agyei-Mensah, 2006;

Bongaarts, 2006, 2010, 2017; Casterline & Agyei-Mensah, 2017; Tabutin & Schoumaker, 2004). According to Parr (2014), the rising level of contraceptive use is found to be the main proximate cause of the decline in fertility. A woman's age, education, religion, place of residence and child mortality experience are found to be important factors affecting fertility indirectly. Hollander (1995) also opined that the change in Ghanaian fertility levels since 1988 has been accompanied by rising levels of contraceptive use, a rising proportion of women preferring a small family size and growing urban-rural and inter-regional fertility differentials.

Westoff, Bietsch and Koffman (2013) further investigated the indicators of trends in fertility in 24 sub-Saharan African countries and also confirmed the decline in fertility for most countries. In the study, they observed that the decline in the total fertility rate was strongly connected to declines in the desired number of children and increases in the use of modern contraception. Elondou et al. (2017) also explored the extent to which Africa's transition is different. Their study explained how and why fertility inequality changed during Africa's demographic transition. Expansion of education in countries such as Ghana provided supportive evidence that in the course of fertility transition, fertility inequality rises. In their observation, education played a vital role in Africa's fertility transition. Women with no formal education contributed very little to the divergence in fertility, whilst women with topmost educational levels were the leading group that contributed to fertility decline.

The issue of delayed marriage accounts for decreasing fertility rate (Bongaarts & Casteline, 2012). The influence of changes in union pattern on fertility decline was examined using the Bongaarts and Casteline (2012)

proximate determinants of fertility. It is observed that delays the entry into the first marriage were associated with the depression of the index of marriage, hence fertility. It is observed that reductions in the proportions married accounted for about 30 – 40 percent of the declines in the fertility of three countries, namely Ghana, Namibia, and Kenya. To this end, delayed marriage appears to have made an important contribution to fertility decline.

Becker (1974) argues that the gains from marriage are reduced by an increase in the earnings and labour participation of women. From this perspective, the recent upsurge in the proportion of women seeking formal education as a means of obtaining access to the labour market could account for the recent delayed transition to marriage in SSA for which Ghana can be located. There is growing evidence that first marriages are now delayed in SSA, whilst the proportion of never married is also increasing. This change in marital pattern has widely been attributed to the increasing formal education for women, rapid urbanisation, and more economic opportunities for women outside of marriage (Garenne, 2014).

All these factors examined above coupled with a woman's inability to have her own biological children have contributed to the declining fertility rate in Ghana. The fundamental unit of society is the family; the family is responsible for the care and up-bringing of all children. It is a cohesive unit which ideally provides economic, social and psychological security to all its members. Formation of the family is basically through marriage (Bella & Vogel, 1983). In light of the roles identified for family to play above, if marriages are being disrupted more often by divorce the family could then be said to be undergoing some serious crisis. Nonetheless, in typical Ghanaian

settings where premium is given to childbirth, a woman's inability to give might lead to divorce. This pressure is often exerted by the man's family to let go off the woman.

The Marriage in Ghana and the Changing Trends

Marriage is a social union or legal contract that establishes rights and obligations between the spouses, between spouses and their children, and between the spouses and their in-laws (Haviland et al., 2011). Traditionally, marriage is a recognized union between a man and woman but the institution is currently undergoing changes. Some countries such as Spain, South Africa and Norway have accepted same sex marriages and even legalized them. This has serious implications on society and on the general structure of marriage and family in particular.

Marriages are held in high esteem in Ghana. Three types of marriage are recognized in Ghana. These are marriage under ordinance, marriage under customary law and marriage of the Mohammedans ordinance (Kuenyehia & Ofei-Aboagye, 2004). Marriage under ordinance is monogamous while the two others are polygamous. Nonetheless, the Demographic and Health Surveys of Ghana of 2003, 2008 and the 2010 Population and Housing Census included individuals in informal unions like cohabitation as other forms of union which existed. This is because there has been a substantial increase in this type of union over the years. The institution of marriage is gradually being compromised by consensual and this could have so many implications on the former.

According to the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), "the total fertility rate for Ghana is 4.2 children per woman, a slight increase from 4.0 children per woman in the 2008 GDHS survey. Childbearing peaks

during age group 25-29 and drops sharply after age 39. Rural women have about 1.7 children more than urban women (5.1 children per woman compared with 3.4 children per woman). The pattern of lower fertility in urban areas is evident in every age group, and it is most pronounced for women in the 20-24 age group (121 births per 1,000 women in urban areas compared with 210 births per 1,000 women in rural areas). More than 3 in 10 women (35%) and men (31%) do not want any more children; another 2 percent of women but less than 1 percent of men have been sterilized. Women and men in Ghana prefer a big family: 4.3 children for all women and 4.5 children for all men, among those age 15-49. The preference among married women and men is for 4.7 and 5.1 children. Overall, Ghanaian women have about 0.6 children more than their ideal number, implying that the total fertility rate of 4.2 children per woman is 17 percent higher than it would be if unwanted births were avoided (GSS, GHS, & ICF, 2015).

Even though nationally there are no notable differences by residence, at all parity levels, urban women are more likely to want to limit childbearing than rural women. Another evident trend is the rise in the use of contraceptives in most married homes in Ghana. The percent distribution of all women by age of currently married women, and sexually active unmarried women age 15-49 by contraceptive method currently used is 23 percent among all women, 27 percent among currently married women, and 45 percent among sexually active unmarried women.”

Although marriage is highly cherished institution in Ghana, it is facing a number of changes due modernity. Men have undergone sterilization, most couples are ascribing to the use of contraceptives, urban women preference for

limited number of children and the inability of a woman to give birth (barrenness) are some factors affecting marriage in Ghana.

Current Discussion on Divorce and its Associated Discourse

Studies have shown that divorce was rare in the early and late nineteenth centuries but it has become the major mode of marital disruption beginning of the twentieth century (White, 1990; Furstenberg Jr., 1994). Divorce by definition is “the final legal dissolution of a marriage, that is, that separation of husband and wife which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and or other provisions, according to the laws of each country” (UN year book, 2006). Many researchers who have conducted studies on the family and marital instability have alluded to the fact that the rate of divorce all over the world is on the rise (Amato, 2000; White, 1990).

Even though there exists limited and unreliable information on the rate of divorce in Sub-Saharan Africa for which Ghana is part, available information (Tilsen & Larson, 2000) has shown an increasing rate in divorce. The unavailability of credible data on divorce is primarily due to limited studies conducted in the area of marital dissolution and the little coverage on registration of marriages and divorces. Somewhat limited, UN (2006) has shown that more than one-third of women in this region experience marital dissolution before they reach ages forty and sixty in their first marriages. Interestingly, many divorces in Africa take place at homes rather than the courts because most often the bride wealth of the woman is returned to the woman’s family by the man’s family. When this is done, the marriage is said to have finally ended. Nevertheless, as a result of urbanization and modernization in

Africa some divorces go through the legal process, i.e., those marriages recognized under ordinance.

Moore (1994) opines that the family in recent decades has undergone changes; one such change is the increasing rate of divorce. This is gradually disintegrating the family institution and the strong foundations of society itself. Amoateng & Heaton (1989) for example in their comparative analyses of Ghanaian divorces in 1950 and 1970 concluded that divorce in 1970 were two times more than those in 1950. The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey [GDHS] (2003, 2008) reported divorce rates to be 7.3 percent and 7.4 percent in 2003 and 2008 respectively which are obviously high. Barring to the causes of divorce, Rootalu (2010) found that individuals with no children are more likely to end their marriages than those who have children. Studies done by (Andersson, 1993; Bracher et al, 1993; Isiugo- Abanihe, 1998; Takyi, 2001 & Reiners, 2003) corroborates with this assertion. Lyngstad, (2004) have also attested to the fact that the existence of children could highly predict the stability of the marriage. This gives room for one to understand the degree to which African families place premium on childbirth.

The findings of Tilsen and Larson (2000) in Ethiopia indicated that a larger proportion of women (95%) were divorced due to childlessness during their first five years of marriages. In his article, Adekoge (2010) expounded that while in some countries people choose not to give birth and do not see childbearing as a priority, the opposite is the case in many societies in Africa including Nigeria and Ghana. Many African societies regard children as the central reason for marriage because marriage serves as the legal grounds to procreate children. In addition, children born perpetuate the family lineage

(Whiteley, 1964). It can be deduced from the available literature that the inability of a woman to give birth can highly compromise the stability of her union.

Marriage and fertility trends in Ghana are shaped by a blend of traditional values and modern influences. While customary practices remain significant, modern factors such as education and contraception are driving changes in marital and fertility patterns. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing culturally appropriate policies to support the social and demographic development of Ghanaian communities.

Empirical Review

A substantial fall in the rate of fertility in Ghana has occurred since the mid-1980s (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 1993). The premium placed on childbirth has seen tremendous change due to changing trend (Garenne, 2004, 2014; Shapiro & Gebreselassie, 2014; Nonvignon & Novignon, 2014). Available literature shows that the use of contraceptives, education, delayed marriage (age at first marriage) and even the inability of some women to give birth (barrenness) are some major causes of the declining fertility (Fortes, 2013; Parr, 2014).

Since the 1980s, gender has emerged as a key explanatory factor in demographic and reproductive health behavior, as highlighted by numerous scholars (Abadian, 1996; Bras & Schumacher, 2019; Folbre, 1983, 1994; Greenhalgh, 1995; Hollerbach, 1980; Riley, 2019). Gender is defined as societal expectations and norms regarding appropriate behavior, characteristics, and roles for males and females (Blanc, 2001). This growing interest in gender's role is largely due to the consistent observation that women's education is a major

factor in fertility reduction (Diamond et al., 1999; Glewwe, 1999; Jejeebhoy, 1995; Lloyd et al., 1999). Early research primarily examined how women's education and status affect fertility levels, with theories like those of Mason (1986, 1987) linking female status to fertility. Key aspects of this relationship were women's education, their familial status, and the intersection of these with their economic independence and social status, which in turn influenced childbearing decisions and costs.

More recent studies have shifted focus to feminist perspectives, examining the relationship between women's empowerment, fertility, and reproductive health (Das Gupta, 2013; Lee-Rife, 2010; Prata et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2013; Upadhyay et al., 2014; Upadhyay & Karasek, 2012). Empowerment, diversely defined and measured (Malhotra et al., 2002; Narayan, 2005), commonly refers to the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices where previously restricted (Kabeer, 1999). This concept, central to development initiatives promoting gender equity for economic growth, especially in low- and middle-income countries, has shown positive correlations with reproductive health and negative correlations with fertility (Nussbaum, 2011, 2000; World Bank, 2012; Lee-Rife, 2010; Prata et al., 2017; Upadhyay et al., 2014). However, despite these advancements in understanding, gaps in knowledge persist.

The majority of gender and reproduction research has been conducted in South and East Asia, regions with traditionally strong gender biases (Madjidian & Bras, 2016). Contrarily, African women, often active in agriculture, were presumed to have more bargaining power than their Asian counterparts (Boserup, 1989). Yet, recent studies indicate a more complex

scenario, suggesting that gender-based power imbalances may significantly affect African women's reproductive agency, potentially contributing to stalled fertility declines and poor reproductive health outcomes (DeRose et al., 2010). Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) continues to experience high fertility rates despite the onset of fertility transition in some countries during the 1970s and 1980s (Askew, Maggwa, & Obare, 2017; Blacker, 2002; Burger, Burger, & Rossouw, 2012; Houle et al., 2016; Indongo & Pazvakawambwa, 2012; Letamo & Letamo, 2001; Mbacké, 2017; Mturi & Joshua, 2011; Palamuleni, 2017). Fertility transitions in these countries have often been characterized by stalling (Bongaarts, 2006; Garenne, 2011; Garenne & Joseph, 2002; Shapiro, 2013; Shapiro & Gebreselassie, 2009).

Scholars like Bongaarts (2017, 2015), Kravdal (2012, 2002), and others have explored various determinants, including education, religious beliefs, and gender inequalities, in reproductive decision-making. Notably, family planning services and the adoption of modern contraceptives have been identified as critical influences on fertility transition in SSA (Beguy et al., 2017; Casterline & El-Zeini, 2017; Hartmann et al., 2012; Mbacké, 1994; Mbizvo & Adamchak, 1991; Parr, 2002).

Although the relationship between age at first marriage and fertility has evolved over time, with contraception now playing a more central role in determining family size (Henry and Piotrow, 1982), studies using World Fertility Survey data have shown that fertility declines with increasing age at marriage (Clelland & Scott, 1987). Hern (1992) found a negative relationship between polygyny and community fertility in the Peruvian Amazon and Tanzania, while Timothy (1993) observed higher fertility among

monogamously married women compared to polygynously married women. However, Bean and Mineau (1986) found that in 19th century Utah, the first wives in polygynous marriages had higher fertility than monogamous wives or subsequent wives in polygynous unions.

Regional studies, such as those by Kriel et al. (2019) in KwaZulu-Natal, have examined partners' influence on women's contraceptive use, although these findings may not fully represent broader contexts such as South Africa as a whole. Mutumba et al. (2018) confirmed that community factors significantly impact young women's contraceptive use across 52 middle-income countries. In Ghana, studies by DeRose and Ezeh (2005) and Ezeh (1993) have highlighted the predominance of male influence on fertility decisions during the country's fertility transition.

The interconnectedness of marriage and fertility within the framework of the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) is noteworthy. Marriage patterns directly influence fertility (Bongaarts, 2015), with most societies normatively restricting childbearing within marriage (Fletcher & Polos, 2017; Harwood-Lejeune, 2001). Changes in marriage patterns, therefore, directly impact childbearing patterns (Ahmed, 2020). Various studies have observed significant differences in fertility levels between rural and urban residents (Ayele & Melesse, 2017; Bbaale, 2014; Sennott et al., 2016; Maluleke, 2017).

Furthermore, while the influence of family systems on family size and birth timing has been widely studied, the effects of these systems on fertility intentions remain less explored (Burch & Gendell 1970; Nag 1975; Dyson & Moore 1983; Das Gupta 1997; Skinner 1997; Veleti 2001; Chen 2006; Harknett et al. 2014). Fertility intentions, often precursors to actual fertility behaviour,

present a different dimension, especially in developed societies where intentions often go unrealized (Liefbroer 2009; Régnier-Loilier & Vignoli 2011; Spéder & Kapitány 2009, 2015). The impact of strong family systems on fertility intentions, particularly in regions where social pressure and normative beliefs are more relevant, such as Italy, Spain, or the Czech Republic, warrants further investigation (Ongaro 2001; Livi-Bacci 2001; Billari et al. 2002; Možný & Katrňák 2005).

Research Gap

Since the mid-1980s, Ghana has experienced a significant decline in fertility rates (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 1993). This trend is influenced by several factors, including increased use of contraceptives, higher levels of education, delayed marriage, and issues such as infertility (Fortes, 2013; Parr, 2014). Gender has become a crucial factor in understanding these demographic changes, with women's education emerging as a key element in reducing fertility (Diamond et al., 1999; Glewwe, 1999). Research highlights the role of women's empowerment in influencing reproductive health and fertility rates (Das Gupta, 2013; Upadhyay et al., 2014). Empowerment, often linked to increased education and economic independence, allows women greater control over their reproductive choices, leading to lower fertility rates (Nussbaum, 2011). However, most studies on gender and fertility have focused on South and East Asia, leaving a gap in understanding the dynamics in African contexts, where women's roles in agriculture and family structures differ significantly (Boserup, 1989; DeRose et al., 2010).

Despite some progress, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) continues to experience high fertility rates. The fertility transitions that began in the 1970s

and 1980s have often stalled, with persistent high rates in many regions (Bongaarts, 2006; Garenne, 2011). Factors such as education, family planning services, and gender inequalities significantly impact fertility decisions and outcomes (Beguy et al., 2017; Parr, 2002). The influence of male dominance on fertility decisions remains strong in many SSA countries, including Ghana (DeRose & Ezech, 2005).

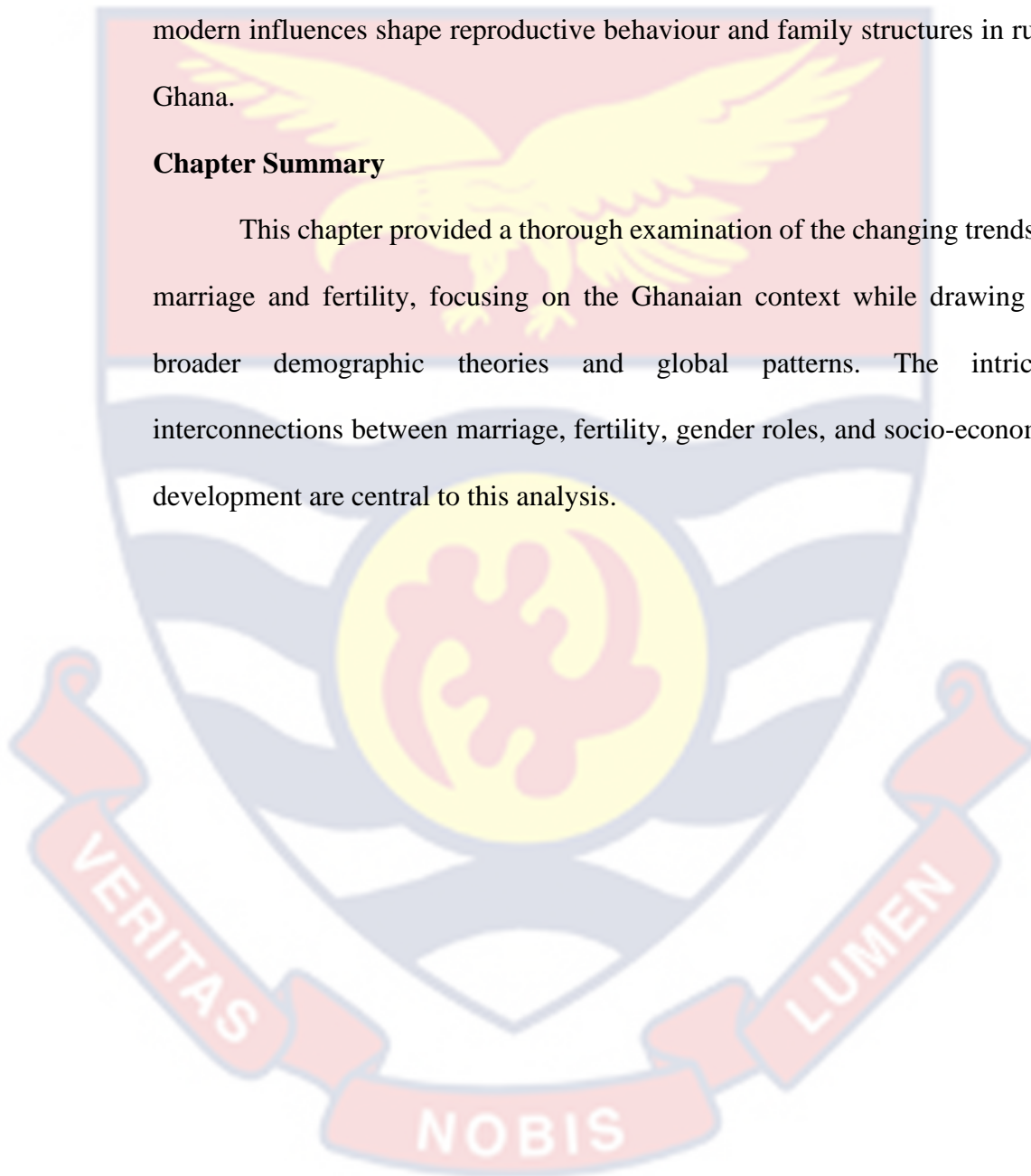
The relationship between marriage and fertility is complex and influenced by various factors, including age at first marriage, education, and cultural practices. Studies have shown that higher ages at first marriage correlate with lower fertility rates (Clelland & Scott, 1987). However, the influence of polygyny and community norms on fertility varies, indicating the need for context-specific studies (Bean & Mineau, 1986; Hern, 1992).

While there is substantial research on marriage and fertility trends globally and in urban Ghana, there is a gap in understanding these dynamics in rural settings like Larteh. The Larteh community, with its rich cultural heritage, presents a unique case for studying the interplay between traditional practices and modern influences on marriage and fertility. Investigating how these trends are manifesting in Larteh can provide insights into the broader demographic transitions in Ghana. This study aims to explore how global trends in marriage and fertility are reflected in the Larteh community. It will examine the balance between traditional customs and modern socio-economic changes, the role of extended family, and the impact of education and contraceptive use on fertility decisions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing culturally appropriate policies and interventions to support the community's social and demographic development.

Addressing the gap in knowledge about marriage and fertility trends in Larteh is essential for understanding the broader demographic changes in Ghana. By focusing on the unique cultural and social context of Larteh, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on how traditional and modern influences shape reproductive behaviour and family structures in rural Ghana.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a thorough examination of the changing trends of marriage and fertility, focusing on the Ghanaian context while drawing on broader demographic theories and global patterns. The intricate interconnections between marriage, fertility, gender roles, and socio-economic development are central to this analysis.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The chapter provided detailed information on the research path followed in the examination of the changing trends of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This section described the research design of the study. It explored the population, sample and sampling methods. In addition, data collection and data analysis procedures as well as ethical issues considered in the study had been discussed.

Study Design

The exploratory qualitative research design was employed in the study. This design was appropriate for the study because it provided a systematic and essentially narrative perspective of the social and cultural phenomenon of teenage fatherhood (Ulin et al., 2005). Further, the design was suitable for the study because the researcher did not know much about the phenomenon hence, the design helped the researcher explore more about the phenomenon of the changing trend of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Saunders et al., 2007). The purpose of the study was to provide participants the opportunity to share their experiences regarding the issues of marriage and fertility within their households, hence, employing this design helped me to explore the research topic with varying levels of dept.

The study adopted a qualitative approach in order to illuminate and provide an insight into the changing trends in marriage in Larteh. Indeed “qualitative research involved studying the meaning of people’s lives under real world conditions, and has the ability to represent the views and perspectives of

participants in a study” (Yin, 2011). Silverman (2013:13) indicated that, “if you are concerned with exploring people’s life histories or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be favoured”. Bernard (1996) has indicated that qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviour and social contexts of particular populations. The qualitative approach was preferred because it enhanced the researchers’ ability to obtain a more empirical view of the lived world that cannot be understood or experienced in numerical data but rather descriptive data without being restricted by figures as in physical and natural sciences.

The qualitative approach was also useful because it allowed for open ended questions as noted by Denzin (1993). This approach helped the interviewees to talk more through which the relevant responses were noted, recorded and analyzed to suit the aims of the study. Also, the qualitative approach also helped in the process and understanding of the various perceptions people have regarding teenage pregnancy and teenage parenthood and the meanings they attach to it. This approach best fits the study as it emphasized the interpretive process of people creating meanings from their experiences with being teenage fathers (Riesman, 1990).

Study Area

The study was conducted in Larteh Akuapem, a community in the Akuapem North District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The municipal area is located in the south-eastern part of the Eastern Region and is about km from Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The Akwapem North Municipal shares boundaries to the northeast with Yilo Krobo, north with New Jauben Municipal,

southeast with Dangbe West, southwest with Akwapem South District, and in the west with Suhum-Krabo-Coaltar District. The district covers a land area of about 450 sq. km representing 2.3 percent of the total area of the Eastern Region. The Akwapem North Municipal has about 230 settlements (GSS, 2010).

On the whole, three major languages are spoken in the Municipality-Twi (Akwapim Twi), Kyerepong and Guan. Akwapem-Twi speaking people are the largest ethnic group in the Municipal, representing 51.6 percent of the population, 42.3 percent are of Kyerepong and Guan, while only 6.1 percent constitutes Ewes, persons speaking languages of northern ethnic groups, Krobo and other ethnic groups. With Akwapem Twi spoken by almost all the residents in the Municipal and the most widespread medium of mass communication and functional education as well as development information dissemination in the district (GSS, 2010). All the major types of religious groups in Ghana are found in the district: Traditional worshippers, Christians and Moslem. However, the predominant religion in the municipal is Christianity, constituting 86.8 percent. This is followed by Islam (10.2%) and the remaining 3 percent belong to the other religious groups, including Traditional worshippers (GSS, 2010).

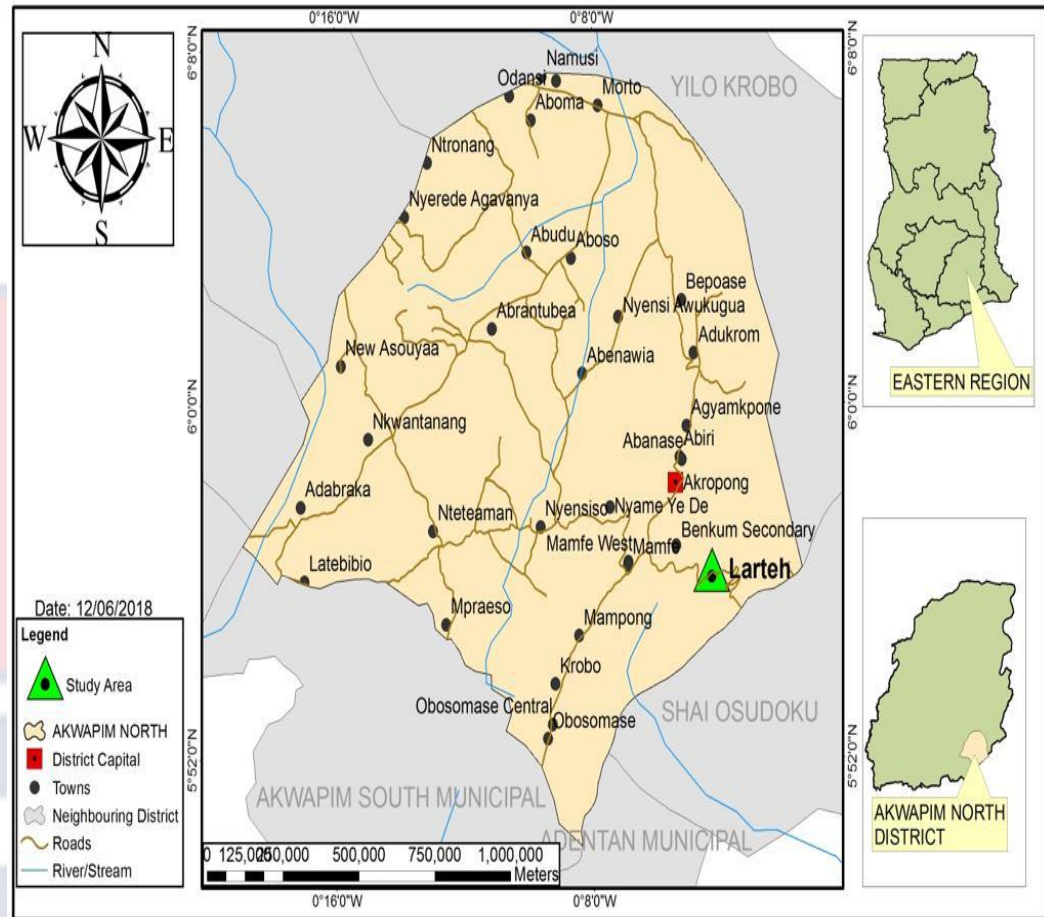


Figure 2: Map of Akwapim North district showing the location of Larteh

Source: U.C.C (2018)

Population of the Study

According to (Ogula, 2005), a population refers to the group of persons, artifacts, or entities that describe a common characteristic of the investigation objects. In this study, the population comprised of all residents in the Larteh community. A total of 30 participants took part in the study. All participants were reached through the purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. I was able to reach participants through referrals from some couples and community members who knew those who were married. The 30 participants were involved in interviews and focus group discussion. Specifically, 22

participants were interviewed while eight participants were engaged in focus group discussion. The description of participants is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Characteristics	Frequency (n=22)	Percent
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	10	45.4
Female	12	54.6
<i>Age (years)</i>		
20-39	6	27.27
40-59	11	45.46
60+	6	27.27
<i>Level of education</i>		
Junior High School	4	18.18
Senior High School	7	31.81
Training College	8	36.36
University	3	13.65
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	4	18.18
Married	9	40.90
Divorced	3	13.65
Widowed	2	9.090
Separated	4	18.18
<i>Occupation</i>		
Farmers	7	31.81
Teachers	5	22.72
Students	4	18.18
Carpenters	2	9.090
Traders	2	9.090
Undertaker	1	4.55
Sprayer	1	4.55
<i>Religion</i>		
Christian	14	63.63
Traditionalist	8	36.37
<i>Number of years stayed in Larteh</i>		
20-40	9	40.90
41-59	8	36.36
60-70	5	22.74
<i>Number of children</i>		
No child	11	50
1-3	5	22.73
4-7	4	18.18
8-11	2	9.09

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

In all, 22 participants were involved in the face-to-face in-depth interviews. Out of the 22, participants constituted more females (n=12) than males (n=10).

Specifically, data were gathered from 10(45.4%) males and 12(54.6%) females in Larteh. This was because the females in the study area showed interest in the subject of study coupled with the fact that they had a lot of personal experiences to share with respect to marriage and fertility issues than the males. Also, females were directly affected by fertility issues and for that matter showed more concern. They were therefore willing to share their experiences as far as marriage and fertility was concerned. The participants were therefore female dominated.

The age of participants was grouped into three categories, namely youthful age (20-39 years), middle age (40-59 years) and old age (60 years and above). As shown in Table 2, the age specifics of participants ranged from 25 to 70 years. Thus, the least recorded age was 25 years and the highest recorded age was 70 years. The age range of participants showed that most (11) of the participants were within their middle ages (40-59 years) while the six participants were between 20-39 years and above 60 years respectively.

In terms of the educational level of participants, the study revealed that most of the participants [8(36.36%)] had completed training college. This finding reflected with their occupation as some participants [5(22.72%)] were employed as teachers. Participants who completed Junior and Senior High Schools [4(18.18%)] and [7(31.81%)] respectively; hence had lower qualifications, worked as farmers, traders, an undertaker and a sprayer. The reason was that one need not have formal education or certification to venture into such economic activities. The least [3(13.65%)] participants had completed university education. Another important characteristic of participants was their marital status. Most of the participants were married. It was further revealed that four participants were single and separated respectively. Two of the participants were widowed. It can therefore be deduced that most of the participants were married. As far as religion was concerned, the study had the majority of the participants (63.63%) being Christians with eight identified as traditionalists. None of the study participants identified as a Muslim.

To understand the trends of marriage and fertility in Larteh over the years largely depended on the number of years participants had stayed in the area. It was therefore essential to find out, from the participants, the number of years they had stayed in the community. While some were residents by birth, others were settlers. From the data distribution, nine (40.9%) of participants had stayed there between 20-40 years while eight (36.36%) had lived there from 41- 59 years. Five (22.74%) had stayed in the community between 60-70 years. Participants had stayed for more than 20 years, which was long enough to share their experiences with the regards to marriage and fertility trends in Larteh.

While some of the participants of the study had children, others did not. Eleven participants constituting half (50%) of the study participants had no children. These categories of participants were able to give account on their experiences on fertility and marriage, different from those who had children. In relation to those who had children, the study revealed that one participant had four children, another had five children, two participants had a kid each. Based on the groupings, five participants had between 1-3 children, four had between 4-7 children and two had 8-11 children. It can be deduced that half the participants had children.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used in this study. Purposively, I reached out to individuals whom I knew were married with children and those without children within the Larteh community. Purposively, I contacted these married couples to illicit information from them. Also, through these married individuals whom I purposively contacted, I was able to reach out to other potential individuals who resided within the Larteh community who were married with or without children.

The purposive sampling technique was useful in the study because it helped in effectively identifying potential participants that were engaged in the

study (Bryman, 2008). The purposive sampling was useful because it helped us identify samples with particular characteristics such as married couples who had children or were without children and resided in the Larteh community and were of interest to the study. The snowballing technique on the other hand through referrals helped me to reach other potential participants who were willing to participate in the study. The snowballing technique was used to reach out to other possible participants who were referred, interested in and willing to participate in the study. Although the snowballing method is sometimes criticized for producing samples of the same characteristics, employing this technique in the study helped me reach participants who were difficult to reach taking into consideration the stigma attached to being married and not having children and also their availability at the time of the study.

In this study, a total of 30 participants participated in the study. This included 15 males and 15 females (i.e., married couples with or without children). A total of 20 participants were reached through the purposive sampling and 10 participants reached through snowball. The choice for this sample size was dependent on the willingness of the participants and saturation. The willingness of participants was based on their own voluntary after they have understood the nature and purpose of the study. Thus, they then decide whether or not to participate in the study. In qualitative studies, there are no strict rules for sample size determination, however, the sample size needed is dependent on the questions to be asked, data to be gathered as well as the available resources needed for the study (Patton, 2002).

The sample sizes for qualitative research are therefore often limited to allow for a thorough analysis of a particular subject (Patton, 2002). The

standard is that the study has to provide enough information to answer the questions of the research. Moreover, the concept of saturation was applied in the study when no new information or themes are observed in the data being obtained (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Thus, I ended the sampling of new participants when subsequent interviews were not bringing in new information regarding the research questions.

Background Characteristics of Focus Group Discussants

The background characteristics of the focus group discussants are presented in Table 3. In addition to the interviews, the qualitative data was gathered from a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion constituted three males and five females of different age categories. Females were more than the males.

Table 2: Background Characteristics of Focus Group Discussants

Participant	Sex	Age (years)	Marital status	Occupation
One	Male	40	Married	Teacher
Two	Male	27	Single	Unemployed
Three	Male	31	Married	Carpenter
Four	Female	45	Separated	Trader
Five	Female	25	Single	Student
Six	Female	70	Widow	Pensioner
Seven	Female	63	Separated	Trader
Eight	Female	58	Married	Farmer

Source: Field work, 2021

The age of the participants involved in the discussion were between 27 and 70 years. Most of the participants were in their middle ages. Out of the eight

participants, three were married, two were single, two were separated and a widow. Their occupation covered teaching, trading, farming and the unemployed.

Data Collection Instruments

The study made use of an in-depth interview (IDI) guide and a focus group discussion guide as the instruments for the collection of data. The in-depth interview guide was used to collect data from participants on a face-to-face basis. The study used the in-depth interview technique because it offered the researcher the opportunity to use questioning techniques so that insight into responses can be obtained through further probing and explanations. Using the IDIs helped me get a better understanding and the experiences of married couples on issues related to fertility and childbearing in marriage relationships. Using this method provided an opportunity to explore specific opinions of married couples, in particular, using interviewing questions as a follow-up on what they are going to say to make them 'open up' more on the issues that might arise in the course of the discussion.

Similarly, the focus group discussion also provided me with a useful technique on exploring the collective opinions of individuals on fertility and childbearing in marriages within the Larteh community. It also provided me with an insight to explore the non-verbal forms of communication, and observe how individuals behave and react when in a group. The focus group discussion was useful because it allowed me to simultaneously obtain information from multiple individuals within a given period.

The questions that guided the study were semi-structured and based on the objectives of the study. The data collection instruments were structured into

four sections. The first section was about the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. This included participants' age, sex, educational level, occupation, and marital status. The second section focused on the relationship between marriage fertility dyad in Larteh. Some of the questions that were asked included: For how long have you been married? What are your views about marriage without child? How do members in the societies see and treat you with or without a child? What role does childbirth play in marriage? These were some of the questions that were asked in this section.

The third section also examined the fertility trends among households in Larteh. Some of the questions included: What are some of the causes of increase/decrease in fertility rate in Larteh to the best of your knowledge? What will be your reaction when you realize your partner is not fertile? What is your opinion about people who divorce their wives/husbands because of childlessness? These are some of the issues that were addressed in this section. The final section also examined the effects of changing trend on marital fertility in Larteh. How did you deal with your marriage dissolutions as a result of your inability to give birth? What are the causes of infertility to the best of your knowledge? Have you sought treatment for your infertility? These were some of the issues explored among some married participants within the Larteh community.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began by familiarizing myself with the study area from October to November 2023 through the help of opinion leaders and the Assemblymember for the area. The purpose of doing this was to announce my presence in the community. The key informant is a member of the

community and knowing the terrain helped me reach out to some potential participants within the community.

In collecting the data for the study, participants who were referred to me by the key informant were approached and the nature of the study explained to them. The researcher asked that participant takes us to a place where they will be convenient discussing issues regarding marriage and fertility. In doing that, I sought their consent before we started the interview process. I explained the nature and purpose of the study to them so that he could have a full grasp of the issues to be discussed. I further ensured that the information to be shared with me remains confidential and anonymous. In doing this, I made sure that the interviews were conducted at places chosen by the participants where no third party will intrude.

Before the start of the actual interview, I began by having some informal conversation with the participants to keep them interested in the conversation, and through this informal conversation, the main issues to be discussed in the study were introduced. I then proceed to ask them about their views on the matter. I first began by asking them some questions about their socio-demographics such as age, sex, educational level, marital status and occupation. Following that, participants were asked some questions about the relationship between marriage fertility dyad in Larteh. Also, questions on fertility trends among households in Larteh were asked and finally, participants were asked about the effects of changing trends on marital fertility within their community.

The interview sessions took the form of one-on-one discussion and a focus group discussion with the various participants. The format of the interview process was also explained to them including their rights as a

participant. The information obtained was captured on the tape recorder. Based on the objectives of the study, the interviews followed the structure as captured in the interview guide. Because of the flexibility that comes with the semi-structured interview, all interview sessions followed its format and made use of the probing questions where necessary.

Data Analysis Procedure

The field data were transcribed first. The transcripts were carried out in the Microsoft Word document for all participants. The participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and to maintain student confidentiality. The following names were chosen: Mrs. Latebea Amponsah, Madam Adobebe, Mrs. Alice Darko, Mr. Amponsah, Wofa Mensah, Akosua Sackey, Kofi Mensah and Mr. Koranteng. The transcribed data were double-checked and updated to ensure that all the answers and information provided were correct for all the questions posed to participants. The qualitative approach was used to analyse the data acquired for the study. This methodology was appropriate because the data collection method produced qualitative data. Also, the study presented, interpreted and discussed qualitative data among the various study objectives to ensure a meaningful organization.

In order to establish connections for empirical conclusions, the research findings were linked and compared with the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed for the study. Themes such as Marriage Processes, fertility in Larteh society were then developed manually based on the research objectives. The themes developed were coded and results were presented based on the study's themes and objectives.

Ethical Considerations

According to Babbie (2007), all forms of social research put researchers into immediate and frequently personal contact with their subjects. This raises ethical issues. To ensure that ethical principles are followed in this study, I obtained approval from my supervisor before proceeding to the field. The issue of informed consent was strictly adhered to in this study. Participants were assured of a high level of confidentiality thus, information obtained from them was not be shared with anybody. Audio recordings and transcriptions of the interview were kept safe. The issue of anonymity was also upheld in this study. Participants were assured that their identities would not be revealed. By so doing, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant so that the information obtained cannot be traced back to them.

Chapter Summary

This chapter thoroughly discusses the numerous approaches used for the study, focusing on the methodology that were employed in the study. The subsequent chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The chapter is structured into four sections and guided by the themes derived from the specific objectives. The first section focuses on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. This included their age, sex, marital status, educational level and occupation. The second section examine the relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh; the third section explores the fertility trends among households in Larteh in the last decade; and the final section focuses on the effects of changing trends on marital fertility among the people of Larteh.

Table 3: Themes Derived from the Changing Trend of Marriage and Fertility in Larteh

Relationship Between Marriage-Fertility Dyad	Fertility Trends Among Households	Changing trend on Marital Fertility
Number of years married	Description of fertility rate in Larteh	Resolving marriage dissolution due to infertility
Marriage without children	Causes of (in/de) crease in fertility rate in Larteh	Causes of infertility
Challenges in decision making	Correlation between age and number of children	Social and cultural factors affecting marital fertility
Number of children preferred	Reaction to partners infertility	Treatment options for infertility
Effect of childbirth in marriage	Ideal number of children in marriage	

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Research Question One

Relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh?

Research question one which is What is the relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh? sought to explore and understand how marital status influences fertility rates and decisions within the Larteh community. It seeks to uncover the interconnectedness of marriage and childbearing, and how cultural, social, or economic factors specific to Larteh impact these aspects of life. The findings provide insights into the demographic patterns and social dynamics of the community, contributing to a broader understanding of family planning and population trends in the context of local customs and practices.

The Marriage Process in Larteh

The marriage process in Larteh, a community in the Eastern Region of Ghana, is a rich theme to explore, especially in the context of changing trends in marriage and fertility. In African societies, marriage is defined as the union between two families that is the families of both lineages who have agreed to perform the necessary rites recognized by the people in the society to live together as husband and wife.

marriage in Larteh is the union between a man and woman who are matured while Bro Kofi also said that marriage is a union between a man and a woman and their families

(Interview Session with Mrs. Latebea Amponsah).

From this definition of marriage, it supports the views of all the interviewees in the study. From their responses it is clear that marriage is between two consenting adults with support from their families. Madam Adobebe said that in

the past, the parents of the man get a woman whom they think is of good character and also from a family of good reputation and free from any family related illness for their son to marry.

Marriage was almost a prerequisite for social status, and large families were common. But now, there's more emphasis on the quality of life for the children rather than the quantity. This affects how we approach both marriage and family size
(Interview Session with Madam Adobea).

A participant said:

In my time, marriages were arranged early, and many children followed. Now, youth seek love matches and often delay both marriage and children for education and career **(Interview Session with Mr. Koranteng).**

This was corroborated by another participant who said:

Traditionally, marriage and childbirth went hand-in-hand. Now, even after marriage, couples in Larteh are waiting and planning their families. This reflects broader societal changes **(Interview Session with Auntie Mansah).**

The perspectives on marriage and family within the community of Larteh have undergone a significant evolution, echoing broader societal changes. Mrs. Latebea Amponsah's statement encapsulates a traditional view of marriage as primarily an alliance between a mature man and woman. This viewpoint underscores the individualistic aspect of marriage, focusing on the direct relationship between the spouses. Conversely, Mr. Koranteng's perspective widens this scope, asserting that marriage is not merely a union of two

individuals but also an amalgamation of their families. This reflects a more communal understanding of marriage, where familial ties and obligations play a crucial role. Such a viewpoint is resonant with many African societies, where family and community are integral to social structures (Amoah, 1997).

The shift from quantity to quality in family planning is a significant cultural shift. Historically, large families were common, partly due to the social status conferred by marriage and the number of children. However, modern sensibilities are pivoting towards a focus on the quality of life for children. This shift suggests an increasing emphasis on child welfare and the resources available to nurture each child, aligning with global trends towards smaller family sizes as a means of ensuring better life quality (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015).

The evolution in attitudes towards marriage timing and family planning is another notable change. Previously, marriages were often arranged early, and a rapid succession of childbirth was common. This was partly influenced by the social and economic structures of the time, where early marriage and childbearing were seen as necessary for social stability and economic survival. However, contemporary youth in Larteh, similar to global trends, are increasingly seeking 'love matches' and delaying both marriage and childbirth. This delay is often for the sake of education and career advancement, reflecting a broader shift in societal values towards personal development and economic stability before family formation (Bongaarts, 2001).

The traditional intertwining of marriage and childbirth is also evolving. In Larteh, as in many other societies, it is now more common for couples to wait and plan their families even after marriage. This change reflects a broader

societal transformation where family planning is becoming more deliberate and strategic. Couples are increasingly considering factors such as financial stability, career progression, and personal readiness before deciding to have children (Miller, 2011).

The perspectives on marriage and family in Larteh mirror a global shift towards more individualistic and strategic approaches to family formation. These changes are influenced by broader societal transformations, including increased emphasis on education, career development, and quality of life. Frimpong-Nnuroh (2002) called this the mutual spying period.

From this, one can say that the consent of both families of the couple is needed; and that without the consent of the parents, marriage cannot be contracted. Parents play a major role in the selection and influence of spouses in Larteh. In the past, custom demanded that before a date will be set for the marriage ceremony, the families take pains to investigate the man's family. This is to select the right family for their daughter. By the right family it means, a family that has no bad records of crime, or issues of chronic diseases, poverty or even madness. Amongst the Larteh there is high emphasis on the importance of possession of some virtues which serve as a plus to the individual being accepted by the family.

During the focus group discussions, participants had this to say:

Participant A *There's a noticeable delay in both marriage and childbirth. It seems to be driven by a desire for financial stability and personal readiness."*

Participant B *"I think there's a growing awareness about the challenges of large families. This awareness influences how we approach marriage – it's not just about starting a family immediately."*

Participant C *"In the past, marriage was immediately followed by childbirth. But now, there's a gap. Couples spend time understanding each other before bringing children into the picture."*

Participant D *"It's also about changing gender roles. Women are more career-oriented, and this affects when and how many children a couple decides to have."*

Participant E *"The trend reflects a broader societal shift towards valuing quality of life over traditional expectations of marriage and fertility."*

The discussion among participants highlights several key trends and perspectives regarding changes in marriage and fertility patterns:

Participant A notes a noticeable delay in both marriage and childbirth, attributing this to a desire for financial stability and personal readiness. This perspective aligns with research indicating that economic factors and the pursuit of financial security are significant drivers of delayed marriage and childbearing (Cherlin, 2010; Becker, 1981). Participant B points out a growing awareness of the challenges associated with large families, which influences contemporary approaches to marriage. This awareness shifts the focus from starting a family immediately to considering the long-term implications of family size. Studies have shown that increased knowledge about the economic and social challenges of raising large families impacts fertility decisions (Bongaarts, 2001; Morgan, 2003).

Participant C observes that in the past, marriage was typically followed by immediate childbirth, but now couples often wait, spending time understanding each other before having children. This change reflects a broader trend where couples prioritize building a strong marital relationship before

expanding their family, which is supported by research on delayed childbearing and its impact on family dynamics (Shapiro & Gebreselassie, 2014). Participant D highlights the impact of changing gender roles, noting that women are increasingly career-oriented, affecting decisions about when and how many children to have. This aligns with studies that link women's increased participation in the workforce and higher educational attainment to delayed marriage and lower fertility rates (Giddens, 1992; Diamond et al., 1999).

Participant E suggests that these trends reflect a broader societal shift towards valuing quality of life over traditional expectations of marriage and fertility. This shift is evident in the increasing emphasis on personal fulfilment, career development, and balanced family life over merely adhering to traditional norms (Nussbaum, 2011; World Bank, 2012).

The transformation in attitudes towards marriage and childbirth in contemporary society is a multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by various socio-economic and cultural factors. The observed delay in both marriage and childbirth can largely be attributed to a growing prioritization of financial stability and personal readiness. This shift reflects an increased emphasis on ensuring a stable and secure foundation before embarking on the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood. The pursuit of financial security before starting a family aligns with broader economic trends, where financial stability is increasingly challenging to attain for younger generations (Becker, 1981).

The awareness of the challenges associated with large families plays a significant role in shaping contemporary attitudes towards marriage. There is a growing recognition that having fewer children allows for more resources, time, and attention to be devoted to each child, potentially leading to better outcomes

in terms of health, education, and overall well-being. This perspective is supported by research indicating that smaller family sizes can contribute to improved quality of life for all family members (Blake, 1981). The evolution of marital dynamics, where there is now often a gap between marriage and childbirth, reflects a shift towards a deeper understanding and strengthening of the marital relationship before introducing children. This trend suggests a more cautious and planned approach to family life, where couples spend time developing their relationship and ensuring mutual readiness for parenthood (Lesthaeghe, 2010).

Changing gender roles, especially the increasing career orientation among women, have had a profound impact on family planning. As women pursue higher education and professional careers, the timing and number of children in a family are increasingly influenced by these factors. The rise in dual-income households and the need to balance work and family life necessitate a more calculated approach to childbirth (Goldin, 2006). Finally, the overarching societal shift towards valuing quality of life over traditional expectations of marriage and fertility is a critical component of this transformation. This shift reflects broader changes in societal values, where personal fulfilment, career success, and life satisfaction are prioritized alongside or even above traditional family structures and roles (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). In conclusion, the delay in marriage and childbirth, changing approaches to family size, and the evolving dynamics of marital relationships are indicative of broader societal changes. These include economic considerations, changing gender roles, and a reevaluation of traditional expectations, all contributing to a more strategic and individualistic approach to family life.

the father of the woman is responsible for giving the woman's hand in marriage (Interview Session with Mrs. Alice Darko).

Another also said

in case the woman's father is not alive, the person who inherited the father stands in as the father to offer the woman's hand in marriage. The consensus position of the interviewees was that due to the matrilineal nature of Larteh kinship system, the mother's brother of the woman can also stand in to officiate on the woman's father's behalf. It is seen that it is the men who handed over the woman's hand in marriage (Interview Session with Mr. Koranteng).

The customary practices surrounding marriage in the Larteh kinship system reveal interesting dynamics regarding the roles and responsibilities of family members, especially in the context of giving a woman's hand in marriage. Traditionally, it is the father of the woman who holds the responsibility of officiating this aspect of the marriage ceremony. This practice is consistent with many cultures worldwide where the father's role in a daughter's marriage is symbolic of blessing and transferring guardianship (Goody, 1973).

In instances where the woman's father is deceased, the responsibility falls to the individual who inherits the father's role. This succession often adheres to the patrilineal lineage, reflecting the patriarchal structures prevalent in many societies, where male relatives typically assume such responsibilities (Levine, 1988). However, in the matrilineal kinship system of Larteh, there is an interesting deviation from this patrilineal norm. The mother's brother, or maternal uncle, can stand in for the woman's father. This practice underscores

the significance of the matrilineal lineage in Larteh, where kinship and familial responsibilities are traced through and centred on the mother's side of the family. The involvement of the mother's brother in marriage ceremonies is a reflection of his importance in the matrilineal family structure, often having a central role in the upbringing and welfare of his sister's children (Oppong, 1983).

Despite these nuances, it is predominantly men who are involved in the formal handover of the woman's hand in marriage, be it the father, the inheritor of the father's role, or the mother's brother. This aspect of the marriage ritual reflects broader gender roles and expectations within the society, where men are often seen as the custodians of family traditions and the ones who officiate and sanction key familial events (Kuper, 1982). The practice of giving a woman's hand in marriage in the Larteh kinship system, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, illustrates the complex interplay of cultural, familial, and gender dynamics. While the specific roles may vary, the overarching theme is the prominence of male figures in these ceremonial roles.

Category of persons qualified to get married in the past

The theme of the category of persons qualified to get married in the past in Larteh, a community in Ghana, presents an intriguing exploration into the cultural and social norms that historically governed marriage eligibility. These norms reflect broader societal values and structures, particularly regarding age, lineage, and social status. In traditional Larteh society, as in many other African societies, marriage was not merely a personal choice but a significant social event, involving the families and the community at large. The qualifications for marriage were deeply rooted in cultural customs and social expectations.

Age was a primary factor in determining marriage eligibility. Traditionally, individuals were expected to reach a certain age, signifying maturity and readiness for the responsibilities of marriage and family life. In many African societies, including those in Ghana, this often coincided with puberty or the completion of certain rites of passage, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood (Nukunya, 2003). Lineage and clan affiliations played a critical role in marriage eligibility. Marriages were often arranged to strengthen familial ties or to forge alliances between clans. In matrilineal societies like Larteh, particular attention was paid to the lineage of the prospective bride and groom, ensuring that marriages did not occur between individuals from the same matrilineage, which was culturally taboo (Fortes, 1969).

Social status was another determining factor. Marriages often served to reinforce social hierarchies, and individuals were generally expected to marry within their social stratum. The practice of bride wealth, where the groom's family provided gifts or payments to the bride's family, was a common feature in many African marriages, including in Larteh. The bride wealth served as a token of respect and appreciation towards the bride's family and also as a means of validating the groom's ability to support a family (Oppong, 1973). Physical and mental health were also considered important for marriage eligibility. Prospective brides and grooms were often expected to be in good health, to ensure they were capable of fulfilling the physical and emotional demands of marriage and parenthood (Anarfi, 1987). Lastly, moral character and behavior were essential criteria. Individuals with a good reputation and who adhered to societal norms and values were considered more eligible for marriage. This

included expectations around chastity, especially for women, and industriousness and responsibility, particularly for men (Nukunya, 2003).

The categories of persons who qualify to get married in Larteh are a matured and a working man and a matured woman who is capable of taking care of the home. In the past, any girl who has completed her puberty initiation rites was eligible for marriage

(Interview Session with Mr. Amponsah)

According to the widow,

In the past, marriage in Larteh was predominantly arranged by families. Eligibility was based on family connections, social status, and often, the ability to bear children. As a young girl, your family's decision was paramount, and fertility was a crucial aspect of marriage.

Another participant said:

Marriage used to be a union between families, not just individuals. A person's lineage, family reputation, and their capacity to contribute to the family's wealth, which included having many children, were key. Young men and women from 'good' families were the ideal candidates. Eligibility for marriage was heavily influenced by social norms. For women, it was about age, virginity, and family background. Men needed to prove they could provide. These factors were thought to ensure a prosperous marriage, traditionally seen through the lens of fertility and children

The institution of marriage in Larteh, a community in Ghana, historically reflected deep-rooted cultural values and social norms that prioritized family involvement, social status, and fertility. This traditional approach to marriage emphasized the collective over the individual, aligning with broader African matrimonial customs. In the past, marriages in Larteh were predominantly arranged by families, a practice common in many African societies. This approach ensured that the families were compatible in terms of social status, values, and expectations. The involvement of the family in arranging marriages was not merely a formality but a fundamental aspect of ensuring the union's success and sustainability (Nukunya, 2003).

Eligibility for marriage heavily relied on family connections and social status. Marrying someone from a 'good' family - one with a solid reputation, respectable lineage, and social standing - was highly desirable. This emphasis on family background ensured that marriage alliances would strengthen social ties and enhance the family's status in the community (Fortes, 1969). Fertility was a crucial aspect of marriage, especially for women. The ability to bear children was often a non-negotiable criterion in marriage arrangements, as children were viewed as a means to continue the family lineage and as a source of labor and support for aging parents. This focus on fertility is consistent with the agrarian and kinship-based societies in Africa, where large families were often equated with wealth and security (Oppong, 1973).

The criteria for marriage eligibility were distinctly gendered. Women's eligibility was often judged based on their age, virginity, and family background. Young girls were expected to marry at an age deemed suitable for childbearing. Virginity was highly valued, symbolizing purity and honor. For

men, the ability to provide for a family was paramount. This meant having the resources or skills necessary to ensure the family's financial stability and well-being (Anarfi, 1987).

In Larteh, marriage was traditionally viewed as a union between families rather than just individuals. This perspective meant that the implications of a marriage extended beyond the couple to include both families. The capacity of a prospective partner, especially in terms of contributing to the family's wealth and having many children, was a key consideration. Such unions were often strategic, aimed at consolidating wealth, securing social alliances, and enhancing family prestige (Goody, 1973). In essence, marriage in traditional Larteh society was a complex social institution, governed by stringent norms and expectations. These norms, centered around family involvement, social status, fertility, and gender-specific roles, were designed to ensure not just the union of two individuals but the merging of families in a manner that upheld and propagated societal values and structures.

In the view of the eighteen interviewees, in Larteh society, it is matured people who get married and also people who are capable of taking care of the home and their basic needs. Maturity is key in Larteh marital organization. My key informants were of the view that the items needed by custom to institute marriage are one metal trunk (now *echolac*), six pieces of cloths, toiletries for the bride to be, knocking schnapps, greeting envelope, father and mother – in law gift (cash envelope), bride wealth, brother – in – law gift (cash), crates of minerals, Bible, ring, thank-you schnapps, gifts for the invited guests and other cash commitments that will be demanded during the marriage rites. Fortes

(2013) called the items needed before the ceremony as the contingent prestation and the payment of bride wealth as the prime prestation.

All these items are very important. If any of these is not provided, it means the marriage is not complete. Thus, for the marriage to be complete one needs to provide all the items listed above or as provided by the families to complete the marriage. This is what Bohannan (1949, p.273-287) gave the implications of the payment of matrimonial goods as the rights in uxorem and rights in genetricem. He explained rights in uxorem as the rights which are recognised and that where they are recognised the status of the husband is regulated vis a vis his wife; he is also socially recognised father of her children. Rights in genetricem may be vested in (a) in the wife or in the husband's lineage, (b) in an office, 'title', or woman's children- rights which may later be transferred without prejudice to the rights held in the mother and other children.

Processes one needs before getting married in Larteh

The processes leading up to marriage in Larteh, a community in Ghana, are intricate and deeply rooted in cultural traditions. These processes not only signify the union of two individuals but also represent the coming together of families and the adherence to longstanding social customs. The marriage process in Larteh can be broadly categorized into several key stages, each with its unique significance and set of practices. There was the need for investigating both families before the marriage can begin and also both the man and the woman will have to see the old woman (*abrewa tia*) of both families. This background check serves to assess the family's reputation, lineage, and any potential social or health issues that could affect the marriage. Such investigations are crucial in societies where the family's history and standing

significantly impact the marriage's perceived suitability and success (Nukunya, 2003). The *abrewa tia* teaches both spouses. The woman should be of good character, respectful, neat and possibly calm but most importantly must be able to cook.

Likewise, a man should be nurtured, focused, ambitious and respectful. This is because as the interviewees believed, charity begins at home and one's family should be able to give a good socialization process. In analysing the above, it can be said that family is an important agent of socialization. It provides the individual a sense of belonging and a part of a more extensive group. The family gives the individual an identity and personality. This leads to the three distinct phases in marriage where Frimpong-Nnuroh (2002) elaborated the search stage, exchange stage and the consummation stage.

Mrs. Latebea Amponsah indicated that in Larteh, marriage begins with the knocking ceremony, which is a respectful way to ask for a bride's hand.

This process, steeped in tradition, reflects our community's values. But with modern influences, I've noticed a shift. Couples are now often more concerned about their readiness to support a family, both financially and emotionally, before taking these steps, which naturally affects their decisions about fertility

(Interview Session with Mrs. Latebea Amponsah).

The process of marriage and family planning in our community is deeply rooted in tradition, reflecting the long-held values and customs that have been passed down through generations. Traditionally, marriage was seen not just as a union between two individuals but as a vital social contract involving extended families and the community at large. This cultural backdrop emphasized early

marriages and high fertility rates, with significant importance placed on having children to continue family lines and uphold social status.

However, with the advent of modern influences, there has been a noticeable shift in how couples approach these life stages. As Mrs. Latebea Amponsah observes, contemporary couples are increasingly mindful of their financial and emotional readiness before embarking on marriage and starting a family. This pragmatic approach contrasts with past practices where such considerations were often secondary to cultural expectations and family pressures. Today's couples are more likely to delay marriage and childbearing until they feel confident in their ability to provide a stable and supportive environment for their future children. This includes securing stable employment, achieving educational goals, and ensuring emotional maturity. These modern considerations naturally influence their decisions about fertility, leading to trends of later marriages and lower birth rates compared to previous generations.

This shift signifies a broader transformation within the community, where traditional values are being reinterpreted in light of contemporary realities. The interplay between maintaining cultural heritage and adapting to modern socio-economic conditions is evident in the evolving attitudes towards marriage and family planning. Couples are navigating this balance, striving to honor their cultural roots while also embracing the benefits of thoughtful and prepared family life. In essence, the community is witnessing a blend of tradition and modernity, where the time-honored significance of marriage and family is upheld, but approached with a modern sensibility that prioritizes readiness and sustainability. This evolution reflects a broader global trend

towards more deliberate and informed family planning, highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural practices in response to changing times.

The elaborate steps leading to marriage in Larteh - from the knocking ceremony to the dowry negotiations - signify the importance of family and societal blessings. These traditions used to lead directly to childbearing as a natural next step. However, nowadays, there's a growing trend of couples waiting before having children, focusing on strengthening their marital relationship first. This change is reshaping our understanding of the marriage-fertility link **(Interview Session with Madam Adobea)**

In Larteh, the journey to marriage is a richly elaborate process, steeped in tradition and cultural significance. It begins with the knocking ceremony, a formal request for the bride's hand in marriage, followed by intricate dowry negotiations. These steps are not merely formalities but are imbued with deep meaning, underscoring the importance of family and societal blessings in the union. The involvement of extended families and the community at each stage reflects the collective nature of marriage in Larteh, where individual unions are seen as integral to the social fabric.

Historically, these traditions paved the way for immediate childbearing, as having children was considered the natural and expected next step following marriage. The arrival of children was not only a personal joy but also a fulfillment of familial and societal expectations, ensuring the continuation of lineage and the strengthening of familial bonds. However, as Madam Adobea notes, there is a discernible shift in contemporary practices. Many couples today

are choosing to wait before starting a family, prioritizing the strengthening of their marital relationship first. This modern approach is reshaping the traditional understanding of the marriage-fertility link in Larteh. Couples are increasingly focusing on establishing a stable and harmonious marital foundation before introducing children into their lives.

This change reflects broader societal transformations, where economic, educational, and emotional preparedness play significant roles in family planning decisions. Couples are taking the time to ensure they are financially secure, emotionally mature, and mutually supportive before embarking on parenthood. This delay in childbearing allows them to build a stronger, more resilient relationship, which can ultimately provide a more stable environment for their future children. The evolving trend of postponing childbearing highlights a significant cultural shift in Larteh. While traditional practices are still respected and observed, modern influences are encouraging couples to adapt these practices to fit contemporary realities. This blend of tradition and modernity is creating a new narrative around marriage and family life, where the quality of the marital relationship is given as much importance as the act of childbearing itself.

Larteh is witnessing a transformation in its marriage customs, where the age-old rituals and societal blessings continue to hold value, but are now complemented by a modern understanding of readiness and relationship building. This nuanced approach is reshaping how marriage and fertility are interlinked, reflecting a dynamic and evolving cultural landscape that honors the past while embracing the present.

I've always been fascinated by our traditional marriage processes, like the engagement ceremony where families exchange gifts. These rituals are beautiful, but they're evolving. My fiancé and I, like many young couples here, see marriage as a partnership where decisions about children are made with careful consideration of our lifestyle and aspirations, not just cultural expectations **(Interview Session with Mrs. Alice Darko).**

Mrs. Alice Darko's reflection on traditional marriage processes highlights a dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and contemporary values. Her admiration for the engagement ceremony and the exchange of gifts underscores the beauty and significance of these rituals. These ceremonies are deeply rooted in cultural traditions, serving as important markers of social bonds and familial alliances. However, Mrs. Darko also acknowledges that these rituals are evolving. This evolution reflects broader societal changes where young couples increasingly view marriage as a partnership. In this partnership model, decisions about having children are made with careful consideration of lifestyle and personal aspirations, rather than strictly adhering to cultural expectations. This shift indicates a move towards more individualistic and pragmatic approaches to family planning.

Traditional marriage processes, such as engagement ceremonies, are rich in symbolism and cultural significance. They often involve elaborate rituals where families exchange gifts, symbolising the union of two families and their mutual support (Nukunya, 2003). These ceremonies are not just social events but also serve to strengthen community ties and uphold cultural heritage. The

evolving perspectives on marriage and family planning among young couples reflect significant changes in societal norms and values. Factors such as higher educational attainment, career aspirations, and a desire for financial stability influence how couples approach marriage and family life (Becker, 1981).

Modern couples often see marriage as a collaborative partnership where both partners have an equal say in decisions, including those about children.

Balancing traditional customs with modern aspirations can be challenging but also enriching. Couples like Mrs. Darko and her fiancé are finding ways to honour their cultural heritage while also adapting to contemporary realities. This balance allows them to maintain a connection to their roots while also forging a path that aligns with their personal goals and values (Giddens, 1992). The adaptation of traditional practices to fit modern contexts is a natural part of cultural evolution. As societies change, so do their customs and rituals. This adaptation ensures that traditions remain relevant and meaningful for new generations. It also highlights the dynamic nature of culture, which is not static but continually evolving in response to new influences and circumstances (Nussbaum, 2011).

Mrs. Alice Darko's perspective encapsulates the ongoing transformation in how marriage and family are viewed in contemporary society. While traditional rituals remain cherished and significant, there is a growing trend towards viewing marriage as a partnership where decisions about children and family life are made collaboratively. This shift reflects broader changes in societal norms and values, emphasising personal aspirations and practical considerations alongside cultural heritage.

During the focus group discussions, participants indicated that traditionally, marriage was the gateway to starting a family immediately. But now, there's a noticeable delay in childbearing post-marriage. Couples prioritize other aspects of life, like careers or personal development.

Exactly, and with the evolving roles of women in our society, there's a shift. Marriage isn't seen solely as a means to procreate but as a union where both partners have goals and aspirations, including decisions about children (Participant B).

However, a participant said he had observed that the younger generation views the rituals leading to marriage as more symbolic than prescriptive.

They respect traditions but adapt them to fit their perspectives on family planning and career balance (Participant C).

This discussion highlights the dynamic interplay between the cherished marriage traditions of Larteh and contemporary views on marriage and fertility. It's evident that while traditional customs continue to be celebrated, there is a gradual shift towards a more balanced approach to marriage and family planning, influenced by factors like education, career aspirations, and changing societal roles. The marriage process in Larteh, deeply rooted in tradition and ceremony, is experiencing a transformative shift influenced by modernity and evolving societal roles. This shift reflects a broader change in how couples view marriage, fertility, and the balance of family and career.

The traditional marriage process in Larteh, reflective of the community's values, is being reinterpreted in light of modern influences. Couples are increasingly prioritizing their financial and emotional readiness to support a family. This pragmatic approach impacts decisions surrounding fertility, with a

growing emphasis on ensuring a stable and nurturing environment for future children. This trend aligns with global shifts where individuals are more focused on achieving a certain level of stability before starting a family (Bongaarts & Casterline, 2013). The elaborate steps leading to marriage, such as the knocking ceremony and dowry negotiations, have long been cornerstones of the marital process, symbolizing the importance of family and community approval. Traditionally, these steps led directly to childbearing as the expected next phase. However, there is a noticeable trend towards couples waiting to have children, choosing instead to focus on strengthening their marital bond. This change signifies a redefinition of the marriage-fertility link, with a growing appreciation for the marital relationship independent of immediate childbearing (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987).

The traditional engagement ceremony, involving the exchange of gifts and symbolizing the union of families, is evolving. Many young couples in Larteh now view marriage more as a partnership, where decisions about children are made considering lifestyle and aspirations, not just cultural norms. This shift indicates a more individualistic and egalitarian approach to marriage, where personal goals and mutual agreement are paramount (Oppong, 2006). The changing roles of women in society significantly impact how marriage is perceived. Marriage is increasingly seen not just as a means to procreate but as a union where both partners pursue individual goals and aspirations, including decisions about children. This reflects a broader shift towards gender equality, where women's career ambitions and personal goals are given equal importance alongside traditional family roles (Allendorf, 2013).

While there is respect for traditional marriage customs, there is a clear trend of adapting these traditions to contemporary perspectives on family planning and career balance. Couples are blending respect for cultural heritage with modern values, reflecting a nuanced approach to marriage and family life (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The marriage process in Larteh is a vivid example of how traditional practices can evolve to reflect changing societal values and personal aspirations. This evolution underscores a shift towards more balanced and considered approaches to marriage, fertility, and family planning.

Importance of Marriage in Larteh Society

The interviewees were unanimous that marriage in Larteh instils unity among families in the township, it brings about family progression and also it reduces teenage pregnancies in the society.

In Larteh, marriage is more than a union between two individuals; it's a fusion of families and a celebration of our heritage. Traditionally, it has been the expected path leading to procreation and the continuation of lineage. However, there's a shift. Young people are now viewing marriage beyond just a means to have children. They're focusing on companionship, mutual growth, and are more deliberate about when and how many children they want **(Interview Session with Wofa Mensah)**

Mrs. Alice Darko views was that Marriage in our society is a revered institution, a rite of passage that signals adulthood and responsibility.

In the past, this inevitably meant having children soon after. But now, there's a growing trend towards valuing quality of life and personal readiness over immediate fertility. Couples are more career-oriented and conscious about their economic stability before starting a family **(Interview Session with Mrs. Alice Darko).**

Meanwhile, another participant indicated that as a newlywed, she sees marriage as a partnership where both individuals' goals and aspirations matter.

The decision to have children is becoming more of a joint and planned choice, rather than a societal expectation. This change is shaping how we, as a community, view the marriage-fertility relationship **(Interview Session with Mrs. Latebea Amponsah).**

It is evident that marriage is a communalistic affair between two families as a result of two people coming together. Looking at Larteh society, marriage goes beyond the bond between two people that is a man and a woman because before a marriage could be completed, it should be recognized by the members of both families and the society and that brings those families together. When a couple is married, their offspring join the already made family to continue the generation therefore high interest is built in marriage by the families. The perception and purpose of marriage in Larteh, a community with deep-rooted cultural heritage, are undergoing a significant shift in light of contemporary societal changes. This shift reflects a broader global trend in the understanding and expectations of marriage.

Traditionally, marriage in Larteh has been more than just a union between two individuals; it represents the coming together of families and is a celebration of cultural heritage. This view aligns with the communal values prevalent in many African societies, where marriage is not just an individual choice but a communal event involving families and symbolizing the continuation of lineage and family traditions (Nukunya, 2003). There is a noticeable change in how young people in Larteh view marriage. While traditionally seen as the expected path leading to procreation, young people now increasingly view marriage as a partnership based on companionship and mutual growth. This shift echoes a global trend where marriage is increasingly seen as a partnership for personal and mutual development rather than solely for procreation (Bumpass & Lu, 2000).

The growing trend towards valuing quality of life and personal readiness over immediate fertility is significant. Couples are more career-oriented, prioritizing economic stability before starting a family. This change reflects a broader societal trend where individuals seek to achieve a certain level of financial and emotional stability before embarking on parenthood (Becker, 1981). The decision to have children is increasingly becoming a joint and planned choice among couples, rather than merely adhering to societal expectations. This transformation indicates an evolving view of the marriage-fertility relationship. Couples are now more inclined to deliberate on the timing and number of children, factoring in aspects such as career goals, economic conditions, and personal aspirations (Mills et al., 2011). This change in attitudes towards marriage and family planning is reshaping how the community in Larteh views the relationship between marriage and fertility. It signifies a move

towards more individualistic and egalitarian approaches within the traditional marriage framework, balancing respect for heritage with contemporary values and aspirations (Allendorf, 2013).

The evolving perceptions of marriage in Larteh reflect a dynamic interplay between traditional values and modern influences. This shift towards viewing marriage as a partnership for companionship, mutual growth, and a more deliberate approach to family planning highlights a broader societal transformation in understanding the roles and purposes of marriage.

Changing Trends and Larteh Marriage

According to the interviewees, changing trend is the change that have occurred in Larteh marital system over time. Changing trend manifests as the influence of western culture in Larteh marriage.

In Larteh, the traditional view of marriage as primarily a means to family expansion is evolving. Many of us now see marriage as a partnership based on love and mutual goals. As a healthcare professional, I've noticed a significant increase in couples seeking family planning advice, which shows a more deliberate approach to fertility (Interview Session with Ms. Akosua Sackey).

Another participant said:

Growing up in Larteh, marriage was seen as the immediate precursor to having children. But now, as an educator, I see young people prioritizing their careers and personal development first. They're getting married later and are more thoughtful about when to start a family (Interview Session with Wofa Mensah).

The opinion that changing trend can be referred to as the changes that have occurred in the contraction of marriage and also the influence of Western culture on the traditional culture was dominant. There have been changes in contracting marriage in Larteh society such that now men get their own wives without any family investigations and some even get ladies pregnant without first seeing the families. Marriage is now seen as a tool for income generation because items needed are now of high prices to the extent that parents now request for cars and huge sums of money as marital payment. The key informants opined that marriage has always been an evolving institution, taking account of societal changes. The prevailing view towards marriage today is that it is based on a legal covenant recognizing emotional attachment between the partners who enter into it voluntarily.

With the changing times, the institution of marriage has undergone some changes. According to Wells (1979), the economic base of traditional marriage was eroding much faster and quicker than the ideological base. Marriage involves commitment to companionship whereby one learns to put other's needs before one's own self. In the past this institution was characterized by agreed sincerity, understanding and compromise where the supreme value was sacrifice for others and finding happiness thereof. The trend today is more individualistic; where individuals seek happiness which in a way has given rise to selfishness.

In Larteh, marriage has historically been a cornerstone of social and cultural life, closely linked to family expansion and community continuity. However, recent shifts in societal attitudes, education levels, and economic factors are reshaping this traditional view. The focus group discussion brought a different perspective to the changing trends in Larteh.

Participant A *There's a noticeable shift. Marriage is no longer just about having children. It's about building a life together, where decisions about children are more considered and planned.*

Participant B *I agree. The economic challenges and the rising cost of living in Larteh make it practical to have fewer children. Young couples are more conscious of their financial stability before expanding their families.*

Participant C *Traditionally, a large family was a sign of wealth and blessing. But with education and awareness, the youth are redefining what prosperity means in marriage, often choosing quality over quantity in family size.*

Participant D *The role of women in Larteh has changed significantly. They're more educated and career-oriented, which influences their approach to marriage and decisions about children.*

Participant E *As a young woman, I see marriage as a partnership of equals. Deciding when and how many children to have is a joint decision, with considerations for our career aspirations and personal readiness*

Participant A highlights a significant shift in the conceptualisation of marriage.

It is no longer primarily about having children but about building a life together.

Decisions about children are more considered and planned. This perspective aligns with contemporary trends where marriage is increasingly seen as a partnership that prioritises mutual goals and personal readiness over traditional expectations (Cherlin, 2010; Giddens, 1992). Participant B points out the practical considerations driven by economic challenges and the rising cost of living in Larteh. Young couples are more conscious of their financial stability before expanding their families. This reflects a broader global trend where economic factors significantly influence family planning decisions (Becker,

1981). In Ghana, financial stability is becoming a critical consideration for young couples before having children (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Participant C notes that traditionally, large families were seen as a sign of wealth and blessing. However, with increasing education and awareness, the youth are redefining prosperity in marriage. They are often choosing quality over quantity in family size. This shift mirrors global trends where higher educational attainment and better access to information lead to smaller, more planned families (Bongaarts, 2001; Morgan, 2003). Participant D discusses the significant changes in the role of women in Larteh. Women are more educated and career-oriented, which influences their approach to marriage and decisions about children. Education and career opportunities for women are crucial factors in the decline of fertility rates and changes in family planning practices (Diamond et al., 1999; Glewwe, 1999). Educated women are more likely to delay marriage and childbearing to pursue career goals (Jejeebhoy, 1995).

Participant E emphasises the view of marriage as a partnership of equals. Decisions about children are made jointly, considering career aspirations and personal readiness. This perspective underscores the importance of gender equality in modern marriages, where both partners have a say in family planning decisions (Nussbaum, 2011; World Bank, 2012). The shift towards egalitarian relationships is linked to improved outcomes in reproductive health and family stability (Upadhyay et al., 2014).

The perspectives shared by the participants illustrate a significant transformation in marriage and family planning in Larteh. Economic considerations, changing gender roles, and increased education influence young couples to prioritise financial stability and mutual aspirations over traditional

norms of large families. These changes reflect broader global trends towards more planned and considered approaches to family life, emphasising partnership and equality in marriage.

There is a discernible shift in the perception of marriage, moving beyond the traditional view of it being primarily for procreation. Marriage is increasingly seen as a journey of building a life together, where decisions, especially concerning children, are more deliberate and planned. This transition aligns with global trends where the emotional and companionship aspects of marriage are given more importance (Cherlin, 2004). The rising cost of living in Larteh has become a practical consideration for young couples contemplating family expansion. Financial stability is now a more significant concern, influencing decisions about the number of children to have. This is reflective of a worldwide phenomenon where economic factors play a crucial role in family planning decisions (Becker, 1991).

The traditional belief that a large family signifies wealth and blessing is undergoing reevaluation. Educated youth in Larteh are redefining what prosperity means in marriage, often favoring quality over quantity in terms of family size. This change is indicative of a shift towards valuing the well-being and quality of life of each family member (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2002). The changing role of women in Larteh is a significant factor in this transformation. With more women becoming educated and career-oriented, their approach to marriage and decisions about children has evolved. This mirrors a global shift where women's increased participation in education and the workforce influences their choices in family life (Goldin, 2006).

For many young women in Larteh, marriage is viewed as a partnership of equals. Decisions about the timing and number of children are made jointly, taking into account both partners' career aspirations and personal readiness. This perspective reflects a move towards more egalitarian relationships and shared decision-making in marriages (Allendorf, 2013). These changes in Larteh are part of a global trend where economic, educational, and gender dynamics influence the perception and reality of marriage and family life. The shift towards considering marriage as a partnership for mutual growth, coupled with more deliberate family planning, highlights significant socio-economic and cultural transformations.

Factors of changing trends in Larteh marriage today

The majority view was that modernization, peer pressure, migration and indiscipline and lack of moral virtues have combined to cause the changing trends in Larteh marriage today. Furthermore, because of modernization, people have copied the new trends in performing marriage rites thus making modern appearance and the behaviour that comes with it the norm rather than the exception. In the view of the key informants, peer pressure on the other has also caused changes. Indeed, nowadays, people copy from others and through migration they move to the urban centre and copy the new trends in their marriage ceremony. It became clear that both males and females are not ready to listen to the elders and family members of the society so they eventually end up having problems in their marriage. However, all these points raised can be factors that affect marriage in Larteh except that colonization, education, religion, technology and money economy are the factors of changing trend.

Society today expects the wife-giving family to train a woman to be responsible. Thus, she should not end up giving birth before marriage, hence, it encourages other family members to wait for the appropriate time.

Traditionally, marriage was an early-life event, closely followed by the expectation of children. Now, with many prioritizing education and career, the age of marriage has risen, which naturally delays childbearing. This change is altering family structures and sizes, with many couples opting for fewer children

(Interview Session with Mr. Koranteng)

Traditionally, marriage occurred early in life and was quickly followed by the expectation of children. However, contemporary priorities such as education and career advancement have led to an increase in the age of marriage, which in turn delays childbearing. This shift is significantly altering family structures and sizes, as many couples are now opting for fewer children. The trend towards delayed marriage and reduced fertility is well-documented in demographic research. The prioritisation of higher education and career goals among young adults contributes to this shift, as individuals seek to establish financial stability before starting a family (Cherlin, 2010; Becker, 1981). The increased age at first marriage and subsequent delay in childbearing result in smaller family sizes, reflecting a global trend towards more planned and considered approaches to family planning (Morgan, 2003).

Additionally, the rise in female educational attainment plays a crucial role in this demographic transition. Educated women are more likely to delay marriage and have fewer children, balancing their career aspirations with family responsibilities (Jejeebhoy, 1995; Glewwe, 1999). This change in family

dynamics underscores a broader societal shift towards valuing quality of life and personal fulfilment over traditional expectations of early marriage and large families.

The shift is clear. Nowadays, couples in Larteh are taking more time to decide when to have children. There's a greater focus on financial stability and personal readiness, rather than the societal pressure to start a family immediately after marriage. There's a balance that's being sought now. While marriage is still highly valued, the approach to starting a family is more calculated. Couples are looking at their capacity to provide and nurture, rather than just adhering to traditional norms of large families (Interview Session with Mr. Amponsah).

Married people are more likely to give and receive support from their parents and are more likely to consider their parents as means for possible support in case of an emergency. The wife-giving family educates their daughter to conform to established practices in the Larteh society. That is to learn how to cook, not to engage in pre-marital sex, to be of good character and to be submissive to their husband. In the early years of marriage, a man is expected to go out of his way to help the wife-giving family with the farm work, in house-building, or in other ways, and should not neglect opportunities of giving them small presents.

One negative effect is that the wife giving family sometimes becomes worried because they think they are losing their daughter to the man forever. Due to the modern trend where people want to live in the urban centres, the wife's family sometimes does not get the chance of meeting the daughter again

and if they suffer domestic abuse from the man's family the natal family may be oblivious to it. Secondly, the children born to the couple sometimes get abused by other family members.

Key informants said that changing trend has had both positive and negative effects on the institution of marriage in Larteh. Some negative effects include the fact that some young women do not want to get married because they do not want to be abused by either the man or his family members. Furthermore, some think that they will be enslaved in marriage. so, in other to avoid that they will not give in to marriage. All these notwithstanding people are using marriage as the measure of responsible adulthood.

Suggestions to Improve Marriages in Larteh

Key informants were unanimous that the man's family should not think that they have bought the woman and can abuse her. This is because they think they have paid the prime prestation of the woman. Some men are of the view that because they have paid the bride wealth, they have bought the woman but that should not be the case. The prestation is not a sell-out as some men assume, but it is progeny price and solely to be seen as compensation to the wife giving family.

To improve marriages, there should be a stronger emphasis on communication and mutual understanding between partners.

Nowadays, with both partners often pursuing careers, it's crucial to balance work and family life. Additionally, understanding and planning fertility together can strengthen the marital bond, as it encourages shared decision-making and respect for each other's aspirations. (Interview Session with Ms. Akosua Sackey)

To improve marriages, a stronger emphasis on communication and mutual understanding between partners is essential. In contemporary society, where both partners often pursue careers, balancing work and family life becomes crucial. Effective communication helps couples navigate the complexities of dual-career relationships, ensuring that both partners feel heard and supported (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Mutual understanding and shared decision-making, particularly regarding fertility, can strengthen the marital bond. When couples plan their family together, they foster a sense of partnership and respect for each other's aspirations. This collaborative approach to family planning encourages equality in the relationship and aligns with the modern trend towards more egalitarian marriages (Giddens, 1992; Nussbaum, 2011). Research indicates that couples who engage in open discussions about their goals and expectations are better equipped to manage the challenges of marriage and maintain a strong, supportive relationship (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

One key area for improvement is education about marriage and family life, especially for younger couples. We need to integrate life skills and family planning education into our school curriculum. This will prepare individuals better for the realities of marriage, including the challenges and responsibilities associated with raising a family. (Interview

Session with Wofa Mensah)

The advice was given that the family of the woman should see the man as their own son and desire the best for him. Also, the family of the woman, especially the mother and siblings of the woman should not see the man as a “bank” to take care of them and settle all their debts for them. She also said that

sometimes, the family expects to be accommodated in the man's house at any time with or without the consent of the husband. This puts the man in a tight spot and affects his pocket and authority. Thirdly, the wife's family should observe marriage as a means of enlarging the family rather than to see it as a loss. Most times the family of the woman perceive that they have lost the services of their daughter to the family into which she is married thus they seek to charge the man exorbitant prices as prestation or compensation for the woman's economic worth that they have lost. These actions of some of the wife's family make the initial stages of marriage life hard for the couple especially the man because these actions result in financial burden on the man. This eventually derails the happiness the newly married couple could have gained.

Furthermore, the key informants said that both families should take the children as theirs and treat them as such. If the society is matrilineal, the family of the man does not provide help in raising the children and the reverse is also true for patrilineal societies.

Improving economic stability is essential. Many marital issues in Larteh stem from financial pressures, which also affect decisions about having children. Encouraging entrepreneurship and providing financial literacy training can empower couples to make informed decisions about their family size based on their economic situation. (Interview Session with Mrs. Latebea Amponsah)

The admonishing was given that irrespective of which lineage the society is, both families should help raise the children. The children of the spouse should be the responsibility of the whole family. Furthermore, the couple

should be responsible for the upbringing of their children. Parental irresponsibility should be avoided and that they must take interest in the upbringing of their children. Parental neglect causes problems for the children, resulting in them becoming wayward but if the right care is given to the children, they will grow up to become good members of the society.

The modern trend of marriages does not reflect the culture of the Larteh people so the key informants said. They argued that people do not go through the proper ways of courtship in modern times. The enhancement of marriage quality in Larteh, as in many communities globally, can be approached through various dimensions: communication, education, and economic stability. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in fostering healthier, more resilient marital relationships. A stronger focus on communication and mutual understanding is pivotal in modern marriages, particularly where both partners are career-oriented. Balancing work and family life demands effective communication and the ability to understand and support each other's aspirations. The emphasis on shared decision-making, especially regarding fertility, can significantly strengthen the marital bond. This approach is in line with contemporary relationship theories that stress the importance of open communication and partnership in marriage (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Integrating life skills and family planning education into the curriculum can significantly prepare individuals for marriage. Education that includes realistic portrayals of marriage, addressing both its rewards and challenges, and information on effective family planning is essential. This approach can help younger couples develop the skills necessary for a successful marital life. Research shows that comprehensive relationship education can positively

impact marital satisfaction and longevity (Markman et al., 2010). Financial pressures are a common source of marital strain, not just in Larteh but globally. Economic stability is, therefore, essential for improving marriage quality. Initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship and provide financial literacy training can empower couples. These initiatives can help couples make informed decisions about their family size, considering their economic capacity. Studies indicate that financial stability contributes to marital satisfaction and reduces the likelihood of conflict (Dew, 2009).

Planning fertility together can strengthen a couple's relationship. This approach promotes respect for each other's aspirations and acknowledges the importance of shared goals. The collaborative decision-making process in family planning is linked to increased marital satisfaction and a stronger sense of partnership (Miller, 2011). Improving marriages in Larteh involves a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing communication, providing education on marriage and family life, and improving economic stability. These measures not only address the immediate needs of couples but also contribute to the long-term health and stability of families in the community.

Research Question Two

Fertility trends among households in Larteh in the last decade?

The focus of the second research question was to map out demographic shifts in Larteh over a significant period. Fertility rates are a crucial component of demographic studies, influencing factors like population growth, age distribution, and future projections of the population structure. By examining these trends, the study can shed light on shifts in attitudes towards family planning, marriage, and gender roles. Changes in fertility can indicate evolving

perspectives on education, career prioritization, and the role of women in society. The questions uncovered the relationship between fertility trends and the health and welfare of the community.

Fertility in Larteh Society

Although, marriage is socially mandatory requirement in the life of the Larteh people, where marriage is used as a one of the scales in measuring adulthood and determining societal positions and roles, it goes without saying that marriage with no childbearing is another issue altogether in the Ghanaian society. When asked about fertility in the Larteh society, all the interviewees consented that it is just as important as marriage with some even saying that childbearing was even more important than marriage. Below are the responses of the participants concerning fertility.

Mr. Koranteng *Fertility has always been a cornerstone in our society. It ensures the continuity of our lineage and is a source of labour, especially in agriculture. But recently, I've noticed a shift towards smaller families, perhaps due to economic and educational developments.*

Wofa Mensah *As an educator, I see the importance of fertility evolving. Previously, a large family was a sign of prestige. Now, there's a growing emphasis on quality of life and education for children, which is influencing family size decisions.*

Mr. Amponsah *In Larteh, fertility is not just about children; it's about community and familial legacy. However, with the*

changing economic landscape, couples are considering the financial implications of having many children

Mrs. Latebea Amponsah *I observe that people are more aware of reproductive health. This awareness is changing how we view fertility, making it more about informed choices rather than societal expectations.*

Kofi Mensah *In my generation, there's a balance we're trying to achieve. We respect our traditions, which value fertility, but we're also mindful of our capabilities and desires to provide a certain lifestyle for our families.*

Mrs. Alice Darko *Being an entrepreneur, I think about how the size of my family will impact my career. There's a trend towards planning and spacing childbirth, which was not very common in the older generations in Larteh*

Madam Adobea *Fertility is a blessing in our culture. It's about heritage and pride. While modern influences are evident, the fundamental values around fertility remain strong in many families.*

Akosua Sackey *The relationship between marriage and fertility is becoming more flexible. Couples are openly discussing family planning, which was once a taboo subject. This openness is crucial for healthy marital relationships.*

The theme of fertility in Larteh, as in many societies, is historically pivotal, symbolizing lineage continuity, community integrity, and economic utility, particularly in agrarian contexts. However, recent shifts in societal

values and economic conditions are influencing the perception and practice of fertility. The traditional importance of fertility, especially in maintaining lineage and providing labour, particularly in agriculture, is being reassessed in light of economic and educational developments. Smaller families are becoming more common, possibly driven by economic considerations and a desire for a higher quality of life. This trend is consistent with global observations where economic development and educational opportunities lead to lower fertility rates (Bongaarts, 2002).

As an educator, the changing perception of fertility is apparent. While large families were once seen as a symbol of prestige, there is now a growing focus on the quality of life and education for children. This shift suggests that the value placed on fertility is evolving, influenced by changing societal norms and priorities (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). In Larteh, the broader economic landscape is influencing couples' approach to fertility. There is a growing recognition of the financial implications of having many children. This change reflects a broader trend where economic stability is becoming a critical factor in family planning decisions (Becker, 1981).

People are becoming more aware of reproductive health, and this awareness is altering the traditional view of fertility. Fertility choices are increasingly informed and deliberate, moving away from mere compliance with societal expectations (Miller & Pasta, 1995). The current generation is seeking a balance between respecting traditions that value fertility and being mindful of their capabilities and desires to provide a certain lifestyle for their families. This balancing act represents a nuanced approach to family planning, blending respect for cultural heritage with personal aspirations (Rindfuss & Brewster,

1996). Entrepreneurs, particularly, are considering how family size impacts their career. There is a trend towards planning and spacing childbirth, reflecting a shift from past practices where larger families were more common (Bloom & Canning, 2003).

Despite modern influences, the fundamental values surrounding fertility, viewed as a blessing and a matter of heritage and pride, remain strong in many families. This enduring value highlights the deep-rooted cultural significance of fertility in Larteh (Fapohunda & Todaro, 1988). The relationship between marriage and fertility is becoming more flexible. Couples are increasingly discussing family planning, a subject once considered taboo. This openness is vital for healthy marital relationships and reflects a global trend towards more egalitarian and communicative partnerships (Raley, 2001).

Fertility in Larteh is undergoing a transformative phase, influenced by economic, educational, and health awareness factors. While traditional values remain influential, there is a noticeable shift towards smaller families, informed reproductive choices, and a balance between respecting heritage and adapting to modern realities.

Importance of fertility in Larteh Society

All participants agreed that childbearing is important in the Larteh society and in the event where one can does not give birth such individuals are subject to abuse, ridicule, teasing and sometimes even causes the dissolution of marriage. Mrs. Latebea share her experience saying that although marriage is good and all, without children the marriage relation becomes a little strained. She said two years into her marriage without children, her mother started putting pressure on her to give her grandchildren and she was getting the cold shoulder

also from her in-laws. She said she felt unappreciated then no matter how she worked or contributed in the house there was always the trace of ridicule. However, as soon as she gave birth and then also to a baby boy, the atmosphere changed. She was showered with gifts, complimented everywhere she went and even had some leeway when it came to some of her roles and responsibilities because her mother and her mother-in-law come around often to assist her with her daily chores.

Another participant, Wofa Mensah also told of his experience when he was young. He said he had a child out of wedlock when he was 18 years. He said although his parents and family hounded him for his carelessness and irresponsible behaviour when they found out he had impregnated someone's daughter. Their attitude changed once the child was born. And when he married (not to the lady he impregnated) later in his twenties and no child came forth in their earlier years he was not given a hard time because he already had a child.

Mr. Koranteng said that childbirth is very important in marriage and without it the marriage is not complete saying *we eat food to be satisfied the same way we married for children* in a jovial manner. He said he remembers given his wife the cold shoulder when after a year of marriage, she had not gotten pregnant. He said he had confidence in his performance thus he suspected the problem is from his wife if she could not get pregnant. Although he is not proud of it now, he really mounted pressure on her and did not support or defend his wife when his family and friends ridicule his wife. He said his uncle even suggested he goes in for another wife who can give him children.

Fertility is very important in the Ghanaian society, some of the women interviewed even said that given birth is not enough and that one had to give

birth to more children. Among the five participants who have 1 – 3 children, three are women and two are men, of the two men, one has 2 children and the other has 3 children. Among the women, two has 2 children and the third one has only 1 child. The two men said they wish for more children and are still trying to get their wives pregnant again. Madam Adobea, the woman with only one child said she was very happy when she gave birth to a baby boy, however, it has been eight years now and she has not gotten pregnant since. She said although her husband is happy with their son, he keeps pressuring her to have more babies. Sometimes she gets frustrated, she said, because it was not like they are not trying.

Research Question Three

Effects of changing trend on marital fertility among the people of Larteh?

This research question focused was on finding out the effects of changing trend on marital fertility among the people of Larteh

Changing trends in fertility in Larteh Society

The changing trends in marital fertility among the people of Larteh, a community in Ghana, reflect significant socio-cultural and economic transformations. These shifts are impacting the way families are formed and how children are raised, indicative of broader changes seen in many parts of the world. One of the most noticeable effects of changing trends in Larteh is a decrease in family size. This shift aligns with global trends where increased urbanization, education, and access to family planning lead to smaller family sizes. Smaller families often result from deliberate choices by couples to focus on quality of life and the well-being of each child (Bongaarts & Casterline, 2013).

The shift in fertility trends is notable in Larteh. As a teacher, I see more parents focusing on quality education for fewer children, a sign of changing priorities from quantity to quality in family planning **(Interview Session with Mrs. Alice Darko)**

In Larteh, as in many other communities globally, there is a growing emphasis among parents on providing quality education for their children. This trend often correlates with smaller family sizes. As families choose to have fewer children, they can allocate more resources to each child's education, aiming for better educational outcomes and opportunities. This shift from quantity to quality in family planning is consistent with global demographic trends where increased access to education and improved economic conditions lead to lower fertility rates (Becker, 1991). The preference for fewer children, enabling a focus on quality education, signifies a shift in parental priorities. This change indicates a deeper understanding of the long-term benefits of education, both for individual children and for the family as a whole. In many societies, including Larteh, education is increasingly viewed as a key to future economic stability and success, influencing family planning decisions (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987).

This shift in fertility trends and the consequent emphasis on education have profound socio-cultural implications. By focusing on the quality of life and education for their children, parents in Larteh are contributing to a cycle of improved educational attainment, which can lead to better job opportunities and, ultimately, economic growth for the community. This approach reflects a broader recognition of the role of education in socio-economic development (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004).

Couples in Larteh are increasingly delaying childbirth. This delay is often associated with factors such as higher education, career aspirations, and the desire for financial stability before starting a family. This trend reflects a shift in priorities, where personal and professional development takes precedence over early childbearing (Becker, 1981). The evolving roles of women in Larteh, particularly regarding education and career, significantly influence marital fertility. As women pursue higher education and engage more in the workforce, their approach to marriage and decisions about children has evolved, often resulting in later marriages and fewer children (Goldin, 2006).

In the past, having many children was essential for farming households like mine. But now, with modern farming techniques and different economic challenges, the trend is towards smaller families. The relationship between marriage and fertility is becoming more flexible. Where once it was expected to have children immediately after marriage, now couples take time to plan and decide. (Interview Session with Ms. Akosua Sackey)

Historically, in many agrarian societies, including those in Larteh, having a large number of children was seen as essential. Children were not only a source of labour on farms but also a means of ensuring economic security and familial support, especially in old age (Boserup, 1965). However, with the advent of modern farming techniques and mechanization, the need for manual labour has decreased. This technological advancement has reduced the necessity of having many children for farming purposes.

The relationship between marriage and fertility is undergoing a significant change. Where it was once customary to have children immediately

after marriage, there is now a growing trend for couples to take time to plan and decide when to have children. This change is part of a global shift towards viewing marriage as not just a means to procreate but as a partnership where decisions about children are made jointly, considering factors such as financial stability, personal readiness, and mutual aspirations (Rindfuss & Brewster, 1996).

Increased Use of Family Planning

The decision to have children is becoming more informed and deliberate. Couples are increasingly aware of the implications of their fertility choices on their lives and the lives of their children. This shift is facilitated by greater access to family planning information and services, allowing couples to make choices that align with their circumstances and goals (Cleland et al., 2006). The trend towards smaller families in farming households in Larteh, and the increasing flexibility in the relationship between marriage and fertility, are reflective of broader societal transformations. These changes underscore the impact of modernization, economic considerations, and evolving perceptions of marital roles on fertility decisions.

There is a growing awareness and usage of family planning methods in Larteh. This increase is partly due to better education and access to reproductive health services, allowing couples to make more informed decisions about the timing and number of children (Cleland et al., 2006).

Access to healthcare and family planning has played a big role.

Couples are more informed and are making conscious decisions

about the number of children they have (Interview Session with

Mrs. Alice Darko)

Enhanced access to healthcare has profoundly influenced couples' fertility choices. With better healthcare, there is a reduced need for larger families, a trend historically driven by higher child mortality rates. When children are more likely to survive into adulthood, parents tend to opt for fewer offspring, focusing on providing better care and resources for each child. This shift aligns with the theories of demographic transition, which link improvements in healthcare and decreased mortality rates to lower fertility rates (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). The availability and use of family planning methods play a crucial role in enabling couples to make informed decisions about their families. With access to contraception and reproductive health education, couples can effectively plan the timing and size of their families. This empowerment allows them to consider various factors, including their financial situation, career goals, and personal readiness, before having children (Cleland et al., 2006).

The availability of reliable information on reproductive health and family planning has led to more informed decision-making among couples. They have the knowledge to understand the implications of their reproductive choices, both for their well-being and that of their children. This informed decision-making is essential for achieving desired family sizes and spacing children in a way that aligns with the couple's aspirations and capacity (Miller & Babiarz, 2016). The shift towards making conscious decisions about family size is a significant change from past practices where larger families were the norm, often due to limited access to family planning and lower levels of reproductive health knowledge. Modern couples are more likely to have the

number of children they desire and can adequately support, contributing to the overall well-being of the family unit (Bongaarts & Casterline, 2013).

The access to healthcare and family planning has fundamentally altered how couples approach fertility. These changes have led to more informed, deliberate, and conscious decisions about family size, reflecting a global trend towards smaller, more sustainable families aligned with the couple's abilities and aspirations.

Shift in Societal Perceptions

Societal perceptions regarding family size and the importance of childbearing are changing in Larteh. There is a growing recognition that having many children is not the only marker of a successful marriage. This change is indicative of a broader shift in values, where personal fulfilment and economic considerations are increasingly prioritized (Casterline, 2001). The changing trend in marital fertility has significant economic implications. Smaller family sizes can mean more resources available for each child's education and health, potentially leading to better outcomes in terms of human capital development. However, it also raises concerns about aging populations and the sustainability of traditional support systems for the elderly (Lee & Mason, 2010). Harsh economic, increase in contraceptive use, high education status of women, decline of polygamy, investment in children's education, ideological and religious factors are some of the few factors that has affected fertility in Larteh society.

Economic factors are definitely influencing fertility trends. As a business owner, I see young couples prioritizing financial

stability before expanding their families, unlike in previous generations. (Interview Session with Wofa Mensah)

In the context of modern family planning, financial stability plays a crucial role. Unlike previous generations, where larger families were more common and often not closely tied to economic status, contemporary couples, including those in Larteh, are placing a greater emphasis on achieving financial stability before expanding their families. This shift is indicative of a broader understanding that raising children requires significant financial resources, not just for their basic needs but also for education, health, and other aspects of well-being (Becker, 1991). The decision to delay or limit family size until achieving economic stability is a reflection of changing priorities. Young couples are increasingly aware of the financial implications of childrearing. This awareness is partly driven by the rising cost of living and the desire to provide a certain quality of life for their children. In an era where both parents often work, the economic considerations of childcare, education, and healthcare are paramount in family planning decisions (Lesthaeghe, 2010).

Compared to previous generations, where the number of children in a family was often higher and less influenced by the parents' economic status, there is a noticeable shift among younger couples. This change can be attributed to several factors, including increased access to education and family planning, a greater focus on career development, and a deeper understanding of the economics of childrearing (Casterline, 2001). This trend is part of a larger socioeconomic shift observed globally. As societies develop economically, fertility rates tend to decline. This phenomenon is linked to several factors, including urbanization, increased educational attainment, particularly among

women, and the rising costs associated with raising children (Bloom & Canning, 2003).

Of the male participants interviewed, 70% mostly the older generation said they did not use any contraception while the younger generation 30% said they used condoms intermittently. On the other hand, 40% of the women especially the younger generation and some of the middle aged confessed their use birth controls. Most of the women expressed their desire to use birth control but refrain from doing so because they have heard some negative side effects. Some of men stated that the use of condoms was for unmarried men and not for married men.

Impact on Marital Stability and Satisfaction

The changing trends in fertility may also have implications for marital stability and satisfaction. Couples who make joint decisions about family planning and have children when they feel ready and able may experience higher levels of marital satisfaction and stability (Miller, 2011).

In our tradition, large families were a source of pride. But there's a growing realization that with fewer children, you can provide better opportunities and care, which is changing the way we think about fertility. There's a balance we're trying to strike now. We value our traditions that emphasize fertility, but we're also adapting to the realities of modern life, which often means fewer children. (Interview Session with Mr. Koranteng)

Traditionally, large families were often seen as a symbol of wealth and a source of pride in many cultures, including those in Larteh. This perception was rooted in various factors, including the need for labour in agrarian societies

and the assurance of support in old age (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). However, there is a growing realization among modern families that having fewer children can lead to better opportunities and care for each child. This shift is reflective of global demographic trends, where smaller family sizes are becoming more common due to changes in economic conditions, lifestyle preferences, and access to education and healthcare (Bongaarts, 2002). The current generation in Larteh is actively trying to strike a balance between upholding traditional values that emphasize fertility and adapting to the realities of modern life. This adaptation often translates into having fewer children, influenced by the understanding that it can lead to improved quality of life for the family. Factors like the rising cost of living, the increasing importance of education, and the desire for financial stability are crucial in this re-evaluation of family size (Lesthaeghe, 2010).

The change in how families in Larteh and similar societies perceive success and prosperity is pivotal. While traditionally, the number of children was directly correlated with a family's success, there is now an increasing emphasis on the quality of upbringing, education, and overall well-being of each child (Miller & Babiarz, 2016). This balancing act is a delicate process of adapting age-old traditions to fit the realities of contemporary life. It involves reinterpreting cultural norms to align with current socio-economic environments while preserving the essence of cultural heritage. This trend is evident in various parts of the world, where traditional societies are negotiating the complexities of modern life while retaining their cultural identity (Bloom & Canning, 2003).

The changing trends in marital fertility among the people of Larteh mirror shifts seen globally. These changes are characterized by smaller family sizes, delayed childbearing, evolving gender roles, increased use of family planning, and shifting societal perceptions. While these trends offer benefits like improved quality of life and better resource allocation per child, they also present new challenges and considerations for the community. All the participant stated that due to increase in education, many people do not marry early now and many still do not give birth early and even when they decide to give birth, they limit the numbers to below 4 children. The economy situation also is not favourable for having plenty children, apart from feeding and clothing, one must educate their children thus having many children is not advisable.

In the past, fertility in marriage was not given prominence but in recent times fertility is an important factor in marriage. Women who were not fertile were not pressured in the past as compared to modern times. This is because the society supported polygamous marriage. The study recommended that parents and families must insist on going through the traditional marriage first before any social ceremonies that involve huge costs that cripple the economic foundation of the marital union.

Chapter Summary

The chapter explores the evolving dynamics of marriage and fertility in Larteh, a community in Ghana's Eastern Region, highlighting a shift from traditional practices to modern approaches influenced by socio-economic and cultural changes. Traditionally, marriage in Larteh symbolized the union of families and was key to social status, with arranged marriages based on factors

like character, family reputation, and health. These marriages involved significant family involvement and emphasized early marriage and childbearing.

The role of women in Larteh has evolved, with more women becoming educated and career-oriented. This change affects decisions about marriage and fertility, leading to more strategic family planning and discussions about the timing and number of children. Customary practices, such as the role of the woman's father or male relative in officiating the marriage, reflect the patriarchal nature of society.

Eligibility for marriage traditionally depended on age, lineage, social status, health, and moral character, ensuring alignment with societal values. Modern couples in Larteh balance traditional values with contemporary realities, often resulting in smaller families. This trend is attributed to increased awareness of reproductive health, the desire for financial stability, and changing societal perceptions of successful marriages. Overall, the marriage process in Larteh illustrates the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, with traditional customs adapting to reflect global shifts in societal values and personal aspirations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The chapter present the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study on the changing trend of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh in the Eastern Region. It begins with the summary of the findings, and the conclusions deduced from the findings. The chapter ends with providing recommendations based on the conclusions drawn.

Summary of the Study

Marriage in the African setting has assumed changes over the years. These changes have the ability to affect the African society for better or for worse. The changes can either affect the couple involved in the marriage or the customs and traditions of the society. The study generally was to describe in detail marriage and changing trend in Larteh. The study was structured under chapters from which themes emerged. Themes and questions that came up gave insight to my research topic. An interview guide was designed for some selected eighteen people who served as key informants. In chapter five, the entire study and summarized and recommendations made to guide policy makers.

The researcher used qualitative research methods to collect the relevant data for the study that was based in Larteh society in relation to the following research questions: What is the relationship between marriage-fertility dyad among the people of Larteh? What are the fertility trends among households in Larteh in the last decade? What are the effects of changing trend on marital fertility among the people of Larteh? The study population comprised married, unmarried and divorcees. The researcher selected interviewees to represent the

study population based on the available resources. The interview guide was used to make the data collection process easier. The researcher discussed and analyzed information from the field interviews and the following key findings were made: In contemporary time marriages end easily, the reason being that less effort is made during the periods of investigation of the other spouse.

Family no longer plays a very important role in the choice of partners of their children. Marriage is now seen as a tool for income. Items needed are now of high prices to the extent that parents now request cars and huge sums of money as bride wealth. In my opinion marriage has always been an evolving institution, taking account of societal changes. The prevailing view towards marriage today is that it is based on a legal covenant recognizing emotional attachment between the partners who enter into it voluntarily. With the changing times, the institution of marriage has undergone some changes.

Key Findings

The study found that the relationship between marriage and fertility in Larteh was deeply interconnected. Marriage was a critical milestone for social status, and large families were the norm, reflecting cultural expectations. However, over time, these views have evolved. There is now a shift from valuing the quantity of children to prioritising the quality of life for each child, aligning with global trends towards smaller family sizes to ensure better living standards.

It was further found that modern influences have significantly altered perspectives on marriage. The traditional practice of early, arranged marriages is increasingly replaced by love matches. Young couples are now delaying marriage and childbirth to focus on education and career advancement. This

shift is particularly notable among women, whose increased career orientation and higher educational attainment have led to delayed marriage and lower fertility rates.

Again, economic considerations play a pivotal role in modern family planning. Economic challenges and the high cost of living drive couples to prioritise financial stability before expanding their families. This pragmatic approach results in smaller family sizes, as many couples opt for fewer children. Additionally, improved access to family planning information and reproductive health services enables couples to make more informed and deliberate decisions about the timing and number of children.

Traditional and modern practices now coexist in Larteh. Marriage customs, such as the knocking ceremony and dowry negotiations, remain significant but are often viewed more symbolically than prescriptively. Couples blend respect for cultural heritage with modern values, reflecting a growing trend towards smaller, more planned families. This shift indicates a preference for quality of life and personal readiness over strictly adhering to traditional norms.

The role of families in marriage processes continues to evolve. While extended families remain involved, there is a growing recognition of marriage as a partnership where both partners have goals and aspirations, including decisions about children. Couples who plan their families together tend to experience higher levels of marital satisfaction and stability. Shared decision-making in family planning strengthens the marital bond and fosters mutual respect.

Educational attainment and health awareness significantly influence fertility trends. Increased education, especially among women, leads to delayed marriage and fewer children, balancing career goals with family responsibilities. Awareness of reproductive health and access to family planning methods enable more informed decisions about family size, contributing to the trend of smaller families.

The economic implications of these changes are profound. Smaller family sizes allow for better resource allocation per child, leading to improved educational and health outcomes. This focus on quality over quantity reshapes family planning decisions. Financial stability is crucial for improving marriage quality, and financial literacy training and support for entrepreneurship can empower couples to make informed decisions about their family size.

Implications of the Study

The study on the changing trends of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh in the Eastern Region of Ghana holds significant implications for various aspects of society, culture, and policy. Understanding these trends is crucial for several reasons, each contributing to a comprehensive picture of how traditional and modern influences intersect in this community. First, the study offers valuable insights into the social evolution of Larteh. By examining how marriage and fertility practices have changed over time, we gain a deeper understanding of how traditional values are adapting to modern influences. This knowledge is essential for policymakers, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists who are interested in the dynamics of cultural change and continuity. It helps to document how communities maintain their cultural heritage while integrating new practices and ideas.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of balancing cultural preservation with adaptation. As traditional practices evolve, there is a risk of losing cultural heritage. However, by documenting these changes, the research underscores the need to respect and preserve cultural traditions while accommodating the inevitable influences of globalisation and modernisation. Economically, the study has significant implications for resource allocation and planning. The shift towards smaller family sizes, as identified in the research, allows for better resource distribution per child. This can lead to improved educational and health outcomes, which are critical for the long-term development of the community. Policymakers can use this information to optimise investments in education, healthcare, and social services, ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

Additionally, understanding the economic motivations behind family planning decisions can guide economic policies and initiatives aimed at improving financial stability among families. Promoting financial literacy and entrepreneurship can empower couples to make informed decisions about their family size, contributing to broader economic development and stability in the region. The study also has important health and educational implications. Improved access to reproductive health services and family planning information, as highlighted in the research, is crucial for promoting informed decisions about family size. This can lead to better maternal and child health outcomes, aligning with broader public health goals.

Moreover, the correlation between higher educational attainment, particularly among women, and changes in marriage and fertility trends underscores the importance of education in empowering individuals. This

finding supports policies aimed at increasing educational opportunities for women, promoting gender equality, and enhancing overall societal development.

In terms of policy and governance, the study provides an empirical data base that can inform the creation of targeted policies. Policymakers can use the insights from this research to support family planning, education, and economic development initiatives that are tailored to the specific needs of the Larteh community. This evidence-based approach ensures that policies are relevant and effective. Furthermore, the study identifies specific areas where interventions are needed, such as improving access to reproductive health services or providing financial literacy training. These targeted interventions can address the unique challenges faced by the community, leading to more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

The research also sheds light on evolving family structures in Larteh. As family dynamics shift towards nuclear families and shared decision-making in family planning, understanding these changes is crucial for social workers, community leaders, and organisations that support family wellbeing and cohesion. Insights from the study can inform marriage counselling and family support programmes, promoting shared decision-making and mutual respect within families. This, in turn, can strengthen family units and enhance overall social stability.

Carrying out this study on the changing trends of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh is vital for multiple reasons. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving social, cultural, economic, and health dynamics within the community. The findings can inform targeted

policies and interventions, support cultural preservation and adaptation, and promote overall societal wellbeing. By documenting and analysing these trends, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how traditional societies navigate modern influences, ultimately fostering more resilient and adaptive communities. This research is not only important for the academic community but also for practitioners and policymakers working towards the sustainable development of Larteh and similar communities.

Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations to guide future researchers on traditional customs of the Larteh people.

1. There should be modifications in some of the practices of marriage in Larteh so that it could rekindle the interest of the youth to get married.
2. Parents and families must insist on going through the traditional marriage first before any social ceremonies that involve huge costs that cripple the economic foundation of the marital union.
3. Leaders of the community should be abreast with the emerging changing trend in marriages to enable them stand against such practices that might dilute the accepted norm for the contraction of marriages in the traditional area.
4. Leaders should be able to decipher the effects of changing trend and acculturate such good effects into their culture to allow for the dynamic nature of culture to take its course.

Furthermore, these suggested areas of study would contribute significantly to the understanding of the complex and evolving dynamics of marriage and

fertility among the people of Larteh, offering valuable insights for cultural, social, and policy considerations.

1. Longitudinal approaches to track changes in marriage and fertility trends over time in Larteh. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these trends evolve in response to socio-economic and cultural shifts.
2. Investigating the evolving gender roles and their influence on marriage and fertility decisions is crucial.
3. A comparative study of traditional cultural practices versus modern influences on marriage and fertility would provide insights into the balance between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to modernity.

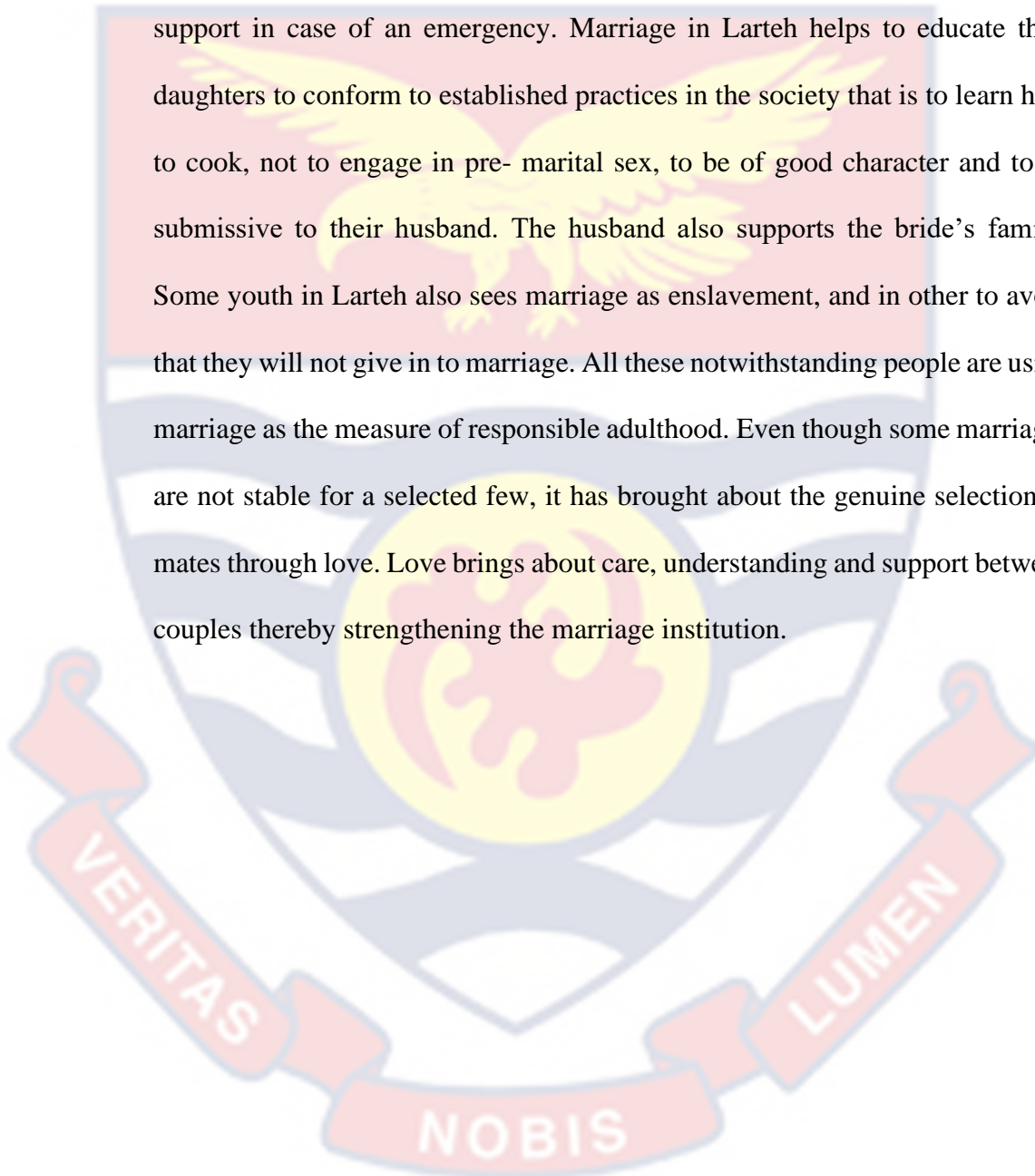
Conclusions

This study sought to identify marriage and changing trend in Larteh. The moral and traditional significance of marriage has been a tool of morality in strengthening Larteh individuals. In Larteh society, marriage is seen as a transitional institution for young people who are of age and matured. Before that the individual must inform the parents about his intentions of marriage and there should be full knowledge of what marriage and its requirements entail. It is seen not just as two people in love but a sacred one that lasts forever irrespective of the odds.

Recently time has played heavily on the institution such that many things have been taken for granted and some are totally ignored. This has led to the reduction in the importance of the true essence of marriage. Many go into marriage for selfish reasons leading to the rise in divorce rate. What is true and

realistic about Larteh society is that marriage enhances an adult's chances of gaining favour in the sight of the parent.

Married people are more likely to give and receive support from their parents and are more likely to consider their parents as means for possible support in case of an emergency. Marriage in Larteh helps to educate their daughters to conform to established practices in the society that is to learn how to cook, not to engage in pre-marital sex, to be of good character and to be submissive to their husband. The husband also supports the bride's family. Some youth in Larteh also sees marriage as enslavement, and in other to avoid that they will not give in to marriage. All these notwithstanding people are using marriage as the measure of responsible adulthood. Even though some marriages are not stable for a selected few, it has brought about the genuine selection of mates through love. Love brings about care, understanding and support between couples thereby strengthening the marriage institution.



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APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CENTRE FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I am a postgraduate student in the Centre for African and International Studies, collecting data for my thesis on *the changing trend of marriage and fertility among the people of Larteh in the Eastern Region*. I would be grateful if you take time off your schedule to partake and answer these questions as candidly as you can. The information collected for the study is solely for academic purposes. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study if you no longer wish to continue. Please respond as honestly and accurately as you can. Your responses will be held in strict confidence.

INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Statement by the Interviewer

I have read out the above information to the potential participant. I have given a copy of this form to the participant.

Name of interviewer: _____

Signature of Interviewer: _____

Section A:**Demographic Characteristics**

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Marital status
4. Educational level
5. Occupation

Section B:***To those with a child/ren and those without a child/ren***

What is the relationship between marriage fertility dyad in Larteh society?

1. How long have you been married?
 2. Did you have quality time with your spouse before getting children? If yes/no why?
 3. How would/do you feel in your marriage without having a child? Probe.
 4. How do society members see and treat you without a child or with a child/dren? Probe.
 5. In the mega family, what challenges do they face in relation to family involvement in decision making etc.? if yes, describe what happened? If no, what decisions were you involved in? (without a child or with a child/dren)
 6. Most couples nowadays prefer to have fewer children as compared to the older generation. What is the situation in Larteh community?
 7. What role/effect does child birth play in marriage? NB. Divorce, conflict, etc
- What are the fertility trends in the typical Larteh households in the last decade?
1. How would you describe the fertility rate in Larteh?

2. What are some of the causes of increase/decrease in fertility rate in Larteh to the best of your knowledge?
3. Does the age at which one gets married determine the number of children the couple have? Can you explain your response?
4. What will be your reaction when you realize your partner is not fertile?
5. What is your take on the number of children you have or intend to have in your marriage?
6. What is your opinion about people who divorce their wives/husbands because of childlessness?
7. What is Larteh society's impression of the use of contraceptives for the control of childbirth in this society?

To divorcees

What are the effects of changing trend on marital fertility in Larteh society?

1. How did you deal with your marriage dissolution as a result of your inability to give birth?
2. What are the causes of infertility to the best of your knowledge? Probe
3. Have you sought treatment options for infertility? If yes, how? If No, why?
4. What are some of the social and cultural factors affecting marital fertility in Larteh [The use of contraceptives (modernity), men/women seeking long formal education, desire of couples to have reduced number of children, place of residence (rural/urban), woman's desire to seek decent job and be active in the labour market (industrialization)].

Thank you for your time.