

## Shaping Hearts and Minds: Understanding the Factors Influencing Young People's Perspectives on Marriage in Sefwi Debiso, Ghana

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to look into the factors that influence young people's attitudes toward marriage in Sefwi Debiso, Ghana's Western North Region. For the study, the quantity approach was used. The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. In total, 210 young people were chosen through convenience sampling to participate in the quantitative portion of the study. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data. According to the study, respondents indicated that respect, personal values, financial constraints, and religious beliefs influenced their views on marriage. Respect, personal values, and financial constraints, on the other hand, are major factors influencing young people's attitudes toward marriage in Sefwi Debiso. Loneliness, fear of losing the opportunity, family values, and cultural values were also identified as factors influencing respondents' attitudes toward marriage. It is recommended that religious leaders in the Sefwi Debiso Community, such as pastors, Imams, accredited marriage counsellors, and community leaders, collaborate and organise marriage training workshops for the youth in the community to equip them with the right ideas and views so they can approach marriage in the right way.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural values, Financial constraints, Personal values, Religious beliefs, Respect*

### I. Introduction

Marriage is regarded as a very important institution in West Africa [1]. Marriage is a social rather than a private affair because it is of interest not only to the spouses but also to the man and lady's extended families. He noted that these families' interests are manifested in marriage negotiations, the offering and receipt of marriage payments, the selection of partners for their children of marriageable age, and their participation in marriage rites. Marriage has always been regarded as a natural process, with everyone expected to marry upon reaching adulthood [2]. Even though everyone is expected to marry when they reach adulthood, each person has a unique reason for doing so. According to studies, people marry for procreation, love, companionship, prestige, material possessions, and wealth [3].

In general, marriage goals and motivations change over time. Young people are increasingly delaying marriage [4]. holding more negative attitudes toward marriage, engaging in premarital cohabitation [5], and emphasising marital self-expression and independence over more "traditional" values such as obligation and commitment [6]. Furthermore, as gender roles have shifted, traditional marriages in which the man is the breadwinner and the woman is responsible for household chores and childrearing have evolved [7].

Individuals may form perspectives and expectations about marital life throughout their lives by observing their parents' relationship, their own romantic experiences, or simply observing the process of courtship and marriage of others [8]. According to Johnson [9], factors influencing young adults' attitudes toward marriage include, but are not limited to, the media, parental influence, a person's own relationship experiences, and gender. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated in the literature that having marriage modelled through parental relationships or the media shapes one's perspective and beliefs about marriage [10].

Perspectives on marriage have shifted in most societies as a result of generational differences in socioeconomic characteristics such as education, employment, and urban origins [11]. Education exposes students to

non-traditional ideas about family and gender roles, which has long-lasting effects on their perspectives [12]. In many countries, highly educated women postpone marriage, have fewer children, and regard family roles as less important in their lives [13]. This is because, according to Gubernskaya [13], despite being expected to finish their education and pursue a career, women are still primarily responsible for raising children, caring for elderly relatives, and doing housework. As a result, they are less enthusiastic about marriage and family than men. Similarly, it has been confirmed that most young people tend to postpone marriage and, in some cases, relationships entirely in exchange for freedom, independence, and more attention paid to education and a focus on their careers before entering into marriage [14].

Furthermore, marital perspective differs depending on family structure. Children from divorced families are more likely to hear negative messages about marriage and thus have more negative perspectives on marriage than children from intact families; however, they are not likely to dismiss marriage completely, and parental remarriage mitigates the negative effect parental divorce has on children's marital perspective [15] [16].

It has been established that aspirations for higher educational attainment are thus correlated with the expectation of marrying later in life, because marriage is delayed until educational attainment is complete [17]. Individuals who have completed their educational careers and begun working have a higher likelihood of marrying as they transition from the student role to adult roles such as spouse and parent [18]. Marriage is important in Africa because it is regarded as the foundation of all social life [19]. Similar reports are made in Ghana, where marriage takes precedence over all other human relationships [20].

Marriage attitudes can be a major determinant of interpersonal relationships [21]. This is due to the fact that a strongly embedded positive marital perspective can influence behaviour and improve relationships by viewing them as happy and successful, whereas a strongly embedded negative marital perspective can affect beliefs about relationships and have fewer positive expectations [8]. The implication is that young people's desire to marry and interpersonal relationships are influenced by their marriage perspective.

According to Choi and Luo [22], the various notions or views about marriage continue to increase every twenty-four (24) hours as a result of our orientation, parental and guardians training, education, culture, and societal influence. Marriage is viewed by some as a means of preserving family and culture. The wealth one values in society and the value of education received from one's parents/guardians. This means that people form opinions about marriage based on the environment in which they find themselves. A person raised in a society that views marriage as a respectable institution, for example, will have that in mind and marry for that reason. Those who come from a family that views marriage as a continuation of family ties will develop a perspective that sees marriage in that light. Nowadays, the processes leading up to and following a marriage are costly in our churches and societies [23]. According to Heward Mills [23], the cost of entering into a marriage contract in today's society is so high that prospective couples find it difficult to marry. Aside from the cost of getting married, raising a family in modern Ghana is difficult. Marriage is a God-ordained institution, and it must be simple to enter into in order for couples to benefit.

Despite its numerous benefits, research has shown that the institution of marriage is losing its value in society [12]. Divorce, cohabitation, remaining single, having children outside of marriage, or not having children at all are all becoming popular alternatives to marriage, and the stigma associated with these options appears to be fading [13]. One-third of adults report having mixed feelings about marriage [12]. This suggests that people's attitudes toward marriage are evolving.

Marriage is one of the most important rites that a person goes through during his or her lifetime in Ghana. However, there are factors that influence young people's attitudes toward marriage. Many people see it as a source of many problems, as a lifelong relationship, a family value, a religious value, and so on. An interaction between the researcher and some young people in the Sefwi Debiso Community, where the researcher works as a teacher, confirmed that there are various factors influencing young people's perspectives on marriage. Even though some studies on marriage attitudes have been conducted around the world, the same cannot be said of Ghana. A review of the literature revealed that the study of Km and Faisal [20] was the most similar to the current study. However, the current study concentrated on the factors that influence young people's attitudes toward marriage in Sefwi Debiso, a town in Ghana's Western North region.

## II. Objective of the Study

The study's goal is to look into the factors that influence young perception toward marriage in the Sefwi Debiso Community in Ghana's Western North Region.

### III. Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which he proposed in 1977. It was originally known as Social Learning Theory before being renamed Social Cognitive Theory. This theory is a learning theory that states that learning occurs in a social context and includes observational learning, imitation, and modelling [24]. It is called social cognitive theory because individuals do not simply assimilate their social environments, but are more likely to model positive behaviours and avoid negative behaviours [25].

According to social learning theory, the family is the first and most important socialisation environment [26]. As a result of observing parental relationships, children's behaviours mimic those of their parents. Furthermore, family experiences are thought to shape a young adult's relationship preferences. Young people, on the other hand, do not simply copy their parents but also incorporate their own beliefs from their own romantic relationships and peers in relation to their own perspectives on marriage. Arnett [27] demonstrated in the literature that 18-22-year-olds still value their parents' approval more than romantic relationships and their peers in terms of how important it is to gain their approval. As a result, rather than other life courses, the social environment and family members influence young adult relationship decisions.

According to Bandura [24], social learning theory suggests that as children and young adults observe what happens in their families, including their parents' relationship, they will begin to form their own perceptions of what marriage and divorce are. Children will form their own beliefs and values about marriage based on the relational model provided by their parents as they observe the quality of their parents' marriage [28]. In the context of the current study, it can be deduced that young people's attitudes toward marriage may be influenced by observations they make about marriage in their social environment.

### IV. Review of Literature

#### *Factors influencing young people's attitudes toward marriage*

Some studies have looked into the factors that influence young people's attitudes toward marriage. This section has discussed some of these studies. Trotter [10] investigated how college students' perspectives on their own romantic relationships are influenced by their parents' romantic relationships. According to Trotter [10], marriages are in danger of failing due to an increase in unhealthy relationships based on unhealthy parental models. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that the media is constantly sending out messages illustrating examples of "casual perspectives" on relationships. On this basis, the media reinforces the notion that engaging in sexual relationships with no strings attached is normal.

Coutinho [29] also investigated how socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural factors shape young people's attitudes toward marriage as they enter adulthood. The multi-method approach combined Latent Class Analysis, Ordinal Logit Regression, and in-depth interviews with national representative data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (2007/2008) to examine different perceptions and profiles of perspectives toward marriage, as well as predictors of these perspectives. The findings revealed that race, religion, income, and pre-marital living arrangements have a significant impact on pre-marital milestones such as completing education or cohabiting. Happiness, love, relationship quality, commitment, and duration, in addition to life satisfaction, may weigh more heavily when deciding when to marry. This is especially true when things like a good education and a good income appear to be guaranteed by one's early socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, Mohammadi, Khojastehmehr, Pour, and Tabej [30] investigated the experience process and formation of marriage perspectives in married students. Purposive sampling was used to select the study's sample of 18 married students. The data was gathered through an in-depth and semi-structured interview. When the data reached saturation, it was analysed using the content analysis method, which yielded 588 concepts in primary coding, 81 subthemes in open coding, and 15 final and main themes in axial coding from the analysis of the obtained data. The study's findings revealed that young men and women require financial and moral support, government support in cultural and social planning, and adherence to religious, traditional, and ethnic values regarding marriage. Barrie [31] also investigated African American men's attitudes toward marriage. A total of 17 African American men aged 24-34 years were interviewed in focus groups. Participants were asked questions about their feelings toward marriage, how they learned about marriage, and what they learned about marriage. Axial coding data analysis, guided by a phenomenological premise, highlighted some findings. Men have a positive attitude toward and about marriage, but external factors create ambivalence about their personal efficacy beliefs about establishing and maintaining a successful marriage union. The findings also indicated that the men were aware of the negative aspects of marriage but still had a positive attitude toward the institution.

Fallahchai and Fallahi [32] investigated gender differences in marriage perspectives, expectations, and goals among university students in Bandar-Abbas. From the available population, 627 participants (62.8% female and 37.2% male) were chosen to participate. They were asked to fill out the Socio-demographic Characteristics Form, a semi-structured interview about their marriage intentions and purposes, and the Marital Scales, which measure perspectives and expectations of marriage. According to the findings, 90.2% of the participants planned to marry. Marriage was shown to have three main purposes: emotional, religious, and sexual. It was also discovered that there were significant differences in the priorities of marriage purposes between men and women. The findings also revealed significant differences in men's and women's marriage perspectives and expectations.

Furthermore, Hippen [33] investigated how attitudes toward marriage and long-term relationships change throughout emerging adulthood. Discrete-time survival analysis and latent basis growth curve analysis were used to assess the change and predictors of such change in three measures of relationship perspectives using five waves of data from the Centre on Young Adult Health and Development's College Life Study. Over 900 college students participated in the study. The findings revealed a positive shift in all three measures of perspectives, with most emerging adults desiring and prioritising marriage and long-term relationships from the start of college. Sex, race, parental death experience, student status, educational aspirations, and total number of sex partners were all predictors of perspective change.

According to the studies reviewed, attitudes toward marriage can be influenced by a variety of factors. These factors may also be contextual, and thus the current study is not without foundation.

## V. Methodology

The study used a quantitative research method to assess the factors that influence young people's perceptions of marriage in Debiso. As a result, a cross-sectional descriptive survey was used as a research design because the researcher wanted to cover a large number of participants while also getting a sense of what was going on in the town. The population in Debiso, Ghana's Western North region, was made up entirely of young people aged 18 to 25. Debiso was chosen because it is the capital town of Bia West District and is home to people from various cultural, religious, economic, and socio-cultural backgrounds. The study's 210 participants were chosen using a convenient sampling technique. The self-reporting questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect data for the study. The researcher created the questionnaire based on previous studies in the literature. The questionnaire originally included eighteen items to which respondents were asked to respond on a four-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree(1). To ensure the questionnaire's validity, the researcher distributed it to five tutors at colleges of education to be validated. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability, it was pilot-tested at Eluokrom with 126 carefully chosen participants. Following the pilot testing, five of the items with low loading were removed from the questionnaire, resulting in a Chronbach Alpha of 0.82 reliability index. Prior to collecting data, the researcher obtained permission from the Chief and elders of Sefwi Debiso. Furthermore, consent is obtained from respondents by having them sign or thumbprint a consent form. Because some of the participants were unable to read and understand the content of the questionnaire, the researcher was required to read and interpret the questionnaire to some of the respondents in Sefwi and Twi. Each questionnaire took ten to fifteen minutes to complete for each participant.

## VI. Data Analysis

The data was exported into SPSS 20.0. Screening of the data was done first, then analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used to further analyse the data.

## VII. Results and Discussion

The results discussed the factors that influence perspective of young people towards marriage in Sefwi Debiso.

### Factors influencing Perspective of Young People towards Marriage

This objective was meant to find out which factors influenced the perspectives of the respondents towards marriage. The respondents were given a list of factors to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements. Higher mean scores imply that the respondents viewed the specific factor highly. The results are shown in Table 2.

From Table 1, it can be seen that factors such as respect ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ) and personal values ( $M=2.82$ ,  $SD=0.74$ ) were highly viewed by the respondents as being influential factors in their perspectives towards marriage.

This means that the respondents' view of marriage was influenced by the respect they would be given in society as well as their own personal values. In some societies, when people marry, there is some recognition given to such people as being responsible. This can influence the decisions of young people towards marriage. Concerning personal values, there are some individuals who because of their values to stay away from inappropriate behaviours are likely to have more favourable views about marriage.

Table 1- *Factors influencing perspective of young people towards marriage*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Feelings of insecurity	2.31	0.89
Financial constraints	2.72	0.60
Fear of losing the opportunity	2.55	0.92
Force marriage	2.45	0.96
Cultural values	2.50	1.05
Family values	2.53	0.81
Religious beliefs	2.69	1.09
Personal values	2.82	0.74
Loneliness	2.56	0.72
Lack of autonomy in decision making	2.46	0.69
Respect	2.88	0.85
Status	2.01	0.62
Influence of patriarchal ideology	2.48	0.90
Childbearing	2.37	0.80
Partnership	2.31	0.65

Source: Field survey (2021)

The respondents indicated that Respect (Mean=2.88, SD=0.85), financial constraints (Mean=2.72, SD=0.60) and religious beliefs (Mean=2.62, SD=1.09) are the major factors influencing young people perspectives towards marriage. Respect has the highest mean score among the other factors influencing young people perspective towards marriage. This could be as a result of the respect given to married couple in Ghanaian society. Also, in Ghanaian society, marriage is considered as the most important aspect in every person's life and those that are married get some level of respect from their family and the society as a whole. In addition, their level of financial freedom also influences their views about marriage. This is because in Ghana, marriage is an expensive venture. Therefore, if an individual is financially constrained, he or she is likely to view marriage as something not to be involved in. This is more particular for men. Also, the religious beliefs of respondents could influence the ways they view marriage. Different religions have different views about marriage and this can influence the views of young people about marriage. For example, there are views about marriage which are common among Christians such as avoiding divorce, sticking to one spouse and avoiding adultery.

Other factors identified by the respondents were loneliness (Mean=2.56, SD=0.72), fear of losing the opportunity (Mean=2.55, SD=0.92), family values (Mean=2.53, SD= 0.81) and cultural values (Mean=2.50, SD=1.05). People are more likely to have a favourable opinion of wanting to get married when they are lonely. Additionally, when people feel like they are wasting time, they may pass up the chance to get married. This may influence respondents' opinions on marriage. An individual's views on marriage may also be influenced by their cultural values and the family values of their upbringing. For instance, young people may view marriage as necessary in a family where it is prioritised highly. In a similar vein, young people in cultures where marriage is valued would have a favourable opinion of marriage in that particular culture.

According to the findings, the respondents' perspectives on marriage were influenced by respect, individual values, financial considerations, religious convictions, loneliness, family values, and cultural values. The study's findings in relation to objective two supported those of numerous earlier studies. For instance, the results support those of Riggio and Weiser [8], who investigated how children's attitudes toward their own intimate relationships can be influenced by their parents' marital interactions and how they treat one another. They found that people's attitudes toward marriage will have an impact on their personal relationships if they believe that marriage is not advantageous or positive. This implies that a person's personal values regarding marriage can affect how they perceive marriage. People who have these kinds of attitudes toward marriage are therefore less likely to care about getting married or, if they do, less likely to rule out getting a divorce.

The results also support Joo's [34] findings that young people's views on marriage are strongly influenced by their religious beliefs. This implies that people's attitudes toward marriage will be influenced by their religious

convictions. In their 2016 study, Mohammad et al. also looked at how married students' experiences shaped their attitudes toward marriage. They discovered that young men and women had different views on marriage due to financial, religious, familial, and cultural factors. In their 2019 study, Fallahchai and Fallahi looked at the attitudes, expectations, and goals of marriage among university students in Bandar-Abbas. The results showed that 90.2% of the participants planned to get married, with emotional, religious, and sexual motivations.

### VIII. Conclusion and Recommendation

In Sefwi Debiso in Ghana's Western North, young people's perspectives on marriage are influenced by respect, cultural values, family values, personal values, financial considerations, religious beliefs, and loneliness. However, the main elements that influence young people's perspectives on marriage in Sefwi Debiso are respect, personal values, and financial constraints. Loneliness, the fear of missing out, family values, and cultural values were also cited by the respondents as influences on their views on marriage. These elements might apply to young people from various social groups. Therefore, it is advised that religious and community leaders in the Sefwi Debiso community work together to plan workshops on marriage education for the community's youth. This will give them the knowledge and perspective they need to approach marriage in the proper manner. It was also discovered that significant influences on the views of the youth in Sefwi Debiso about marriage included religion, respect, family, and cultural values.

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