Attitude towards Marriage and Family Formation among Ghanaian Tertiary Students: A Study of University for Development Studies

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Abstract

At the centre of Ghanaian society is the institution of marriage and family. These two well established institutions are acknowledged as the foundation of all social life. However, despite the importance of marriage and family, the stability of these two institutions is on the decline in Ghana. This is because of the changing attitude towards marriage and family formation[1]. This changing attitude is more prominent among the literate community in Ghana. The paper sought to assess the perception and attitude of Ghanaian tertiary students towards marriage and family formation. Specifically, the paper assessed the perception of students on marriage and factors they would consider in selecting a potential spouse, determined the opinion of students about family formation and also examined the challenges married students faced in managing the family and seeking higher education and how these challenges affect their family formation. The study revealed that majority of students did not intend to marry but wants to have children. It was also observed that marriage under the ordinance was the most preferred form of marriage by tertiary students while monogamy (single marriage) was the most preferred type of marriage among respondents. While educational status, ethnicity, religious affiliation and financial status came up as the top most factors students would consider in selecting a potential spouse, nuclear family remain the most preferred family type to the traditional African extended family type. The paper also discovered financial constraints, time management constraints, power relations and division of labour as key challenges married students face in their pursuit for higher education which affects not only their academic work but most importantly their marriage and family formation.

Keywords: marriage, family formation, cohabitation

Introduction

Marriage is an age-old tradition that derives its term from the Latin word "mass" which means male or masculine which incidentally goes hand in hand with the family institution. These two played and still play a pivotal role in society that laws had to be enacted to compel eligible but reluctant males of the society to marry and eventually form families. For instance, in ancient Greece, Solon (638-538 B.C) once contemplated making marriage compulsory, in Athens under Pericles (495- 429 B.C), bachelors were excluded from certain public positions and in ancient Rome, Augustus (63 B.C-A.D 14) passed drastic laws compelling people to marry and penalized those that remained single. These leaders obviously saw marriage and family formation as an integral component of the society if they went to such great lengths to ensure compliance with their directives.

The significance of marriage and family cannot be overlooked; these two institutions play a central role in governing the customs surrounding sex and reproduction, which is a biological phenomenon (Richley, 2002). In Africa and Ghana for that matter, the institutions of marriage and family are seen as the bedrock of all social life and are maintained through a series of kinship networks (Van de Walle and Mekeers, 1994). These institutions are not just

the basis for Ghanaian social life but are also the main source of security in old age, which could either be emotional or financial. Marriage is therefore a part of normal life, which takes precedence over other relationship that exists among humans.

During the pre-colonial era, the age of marriage followed biological development and certain customary requirements. For girls, apart from the physical maturity, the performance of puberty rites where applicable, was the principal consideration while for boys; a social maturity meant the attainment of a certain position determined by the society (Nukunya, 2003). Nukunya further asserts that among the Dagombas of Northern Ghana, one such requirement was the ability to make one hundred moulds of yam a day.

Over the years however, people's attitude and ideas towards these two institutions have gradually shifted from what they used to be (Richard, 2005). A changing attitude also abounds the types of marriages ranging from polygamy, monogamy to same sex marriage among Ghanaian educated elite. In Ghana the view and attitude people express towards these types of marriages keeps changing to the extent that same sex relationships are gradually being practiced. Just like the institution of marriage, the attitude towards the family institution has changed. According to Nukunya (2003) a married couple is not considered a family if they do not have children. Nevertheless, in Ghana now there are couples who do not have children and still refer to themselves as families.

Considering the fact that, formal education at the tertiary level allows individuals to travel far away from their towns to other places for study purposes; it usually results in new socialization process, which allows the sexes to interact more freely. This has led to the drastic decline in the choice of marriage partners by parents, in recent times many people especially the well-educated are more concerned with their spouse's quality instead of just tribal affiliations. Consequently, it is true to say that, the more education a person has the lesser the chances of the parents interfering in ones selection of a marriage partner. A vital result of individual rather than parental initiative in mate selection are inter-ethnic marriages, which is gradually on the rise, but inter-ethnic marriage is still opposed by most parents in the society (Nukunya, 2003). Apart from this, with inter-ethnic marriages a serious problem crops up especially when marriage is between a patrilineal line and a matrilineal one. The question of which the child should belong to remains a big dilemma. In a patrilineal society, married women bear children for their husband's lineage but in a matrilineal society the children a woman either bears in marriage or not belongs to her lineage.

In most societies and especially tertiary institutions where cohabitation is synonymous with marriage, the experiences most students have during relationships inform their decisions and attitude towards marriage and family formation. According to Turner (2006), people who live together without marrying stand a high chance of not marrying.

In addition, with education extending further into adult life, decisions about the timing of marriage and family formation are becoming more complicated and problematic. In this contemporary context, where education stand first to marriage and family, a problem arises since marriage is not only considered necessary but the age at which people especially women marry is very vital to Ghanaians. The more time an individual spends on education, it automatically delays the age at which the person marries (Nukunya, 2003).

The concern of most people is; what will happen to the society if people decide not to have children? Despite the seriousness Ghanaians attach to marriage, not all societies are able to achieve marital stability, which seems to be cherished all over the country (Nukunya, 2003). More recently, university students in an attempt to prepare for marriage and eventually form families are involved in one form of romantic relationship or the other. These relationships usually starts out on promise of a lasting future together and each time these relationships are put to the test, they hit the rocks leaving individuals involved emotionally hurt.

In Africa and Ghana for that matter, bride price is an important component of marriage, Goody and Tanbial (1973) provides a simple definition of this terminology as transfers from the groom's family to the bride's family. According to Nukunya (2003), in Ghana, this ranges from Kola to physical cash and differs from society to society. He further elaborates that the payment of bride wealth has always been an essential part of Ghanaian marriage. Social change, education and urbanization have done little to diminish its importance if anything, the value of the bride wealth has rather increased drastically.

Because of this, the number of men able to marry has reduced. Comparatively, women look out for men who can pay more for their bride price, since the bigger her bride price the more she is pleased, for her husband evidently values her highly (Hutchinson, 2001). This has resulted in the number of people being able to marry also reducing drastically.

In African societies and Ghana for that matter, women are naturally expected to marry. Therefore, it comes as a shock when women chose not to marry. For instance since the 1970s, the proportion of women married in Ghana has declined from 72% in 1971 to 52% by 1998. This is associated with modernization of which education is inclusive (Amatey and Heaton 1989; Boateng 1995).

The family plays an important role in the society, but generally, people's attitude towards this institution has affected their behaviour. Research shows that more and more people now prefer the nuclear family to the extended family (Nukunya, 2003).

Consequently, marriage and family formation as the two most vital and sacred institutions are gradually losing its stability in the literate community. The paper therefore set out to investigate the attitude of Ghanaian tertiary students towards marriage and subsequently family formation. Specifically, the study aims at attaining the following objectives:

- To find out perceptions of tertiary students on marriage and family formation
- To assess factors students are most likely to consider in selecting potential spouse(s)
- To examine the challenges married students face in their combined roles as students and couples and how these challenges impact on their marriage and family formation

Literature Review

The universality of marriage as an institution has resulted in numerous and varied writings on this concept. According to Suzanne et al (1990) marriage is a union between a man and a woman that is created by a legal ceremony. This is clearly idealistic since the definition fails to take into consideration some critical issues associated with marriage in contemporary times. If marriage is defined by Suzanne et al (1990) as above, the questions are; what about those that consider themselves married without any legal backing?, must the relationship be between a man and woman? The definition therefore renders a union, which allows an individual to have more than a spouse as not marriage. A relationship between men or between women and other forms of traditional marriage especially in Africa are considered outside the box of marriage.

Richley (2002) gives a more inclusive definition of marriage. In his book "*Cultural Anthropology*", he defines marriage as a socially accepted sexual and economic union involving a lasting commitment between two or more people who have parental rights and obligations to any children of the union. This definition outlines some basic functions of marriage; these functions include; channelling sexual behaviour into a stable relationship, fulfilling the economic needs of marriage partners, providing an institution for the care of children to a stage where they become self-sufficient and finally promoting a society's kinship group. The definition is not without problems since it assumes that marriage provides a basis for being responsible for any children in the union. It is evidently clear that not in

every marriage do spouses take care of children, some children are not self-sufficient and in some cases, these children are responsible for the spouses.

An appropriate definition for the purpose of this study is by Nukunya (2003), he defines marriage as any union in which the couple undertakes the necessary procedures acknowledged in the society for the purpose of sexual intercourse, raising of a family or companionship. To be acknowledged, the union must pass through some recognized customary procedures in a society. These procedures differ from society to society and even within societies. Before attempts at defining what a family is, a clear distinction should be made between family and kinship. Kinship is a state of being related to someone, a kin therefore is anybody you are related to. This is not just biologically or maternally determined since for instance adoption creates a kinship tie, this tie is legally and socially accepted (Richard, 2005). Therefore, for Suzanne et al (1990), a family is a unit of interdependent individuals who share some values, goals, resources and responsibility for decisions as well as a commitment to one another overtime.

For Richley (2002), family is a group for raising children; he further divides a family into two, which are; family of orientation and family of procreation or conjugal family. A family of orientation is the family in which a person is born and bred whiles a conjugal family is a family formed when an individual marries. A family for Nukunya (2003) is a group of individuals related to each other by ties of consanguinity, marriage or adoption and the adult members of this union are responsible for the upbringing of children. Typically a family performs the following functions; reproduction, protection, socialization, regulation of sexual behaviour, affection, companionship and provision of social status (Richard, 2005). Forming a family generally depends on the individual's attitude. Who to include in a family varies from culture to culture and within cultures. There are so many variations in a family today that, generally, it is becoming more and more complicated for people to decide whom to include in their families. A typical family of an African will be a combination of a person adopted, married and one from a common ancestor. An unmistakable trend in mate selection is the fact that the process happens to be taking longer than in the past. A variety of factors accounts for this, they include; concerns about financial security, personal independence, and societal expectations. Most people are now well into their twenties before they marry (Richard, 2005).

Every culture includes various rules that influence the factors to consider for selecting a potential spouse. Some of these rules restrict the choices made by an individual by presenting certain persons as possible partners, that is; prescribed marriages, whiles other rules simply requires the individual to marry within a defined social group or category. These rules are not as bad as they may seem because in the end, they are meant to help us narrow down the range of appropriate mates from which the selection is made (Nukunya, 2003; Richley, 2002).

These rules are categorized in to exogamy and endogamy. Exogamy is from a Greek word "exo" which means "outside". Exogamy requires mate selection outside certain groups, which usually include ones immediate family, or kinfolk. When marriages are of practical significance to a family, the culture often has recognized guidelines about whom a person ought to marry. Incest taboo, a social norm common to virtually all societies prohibits sexual relationship between certain culturally specified relatives. Rules of exogamy are more than just mere extensions of incest taboo. Incest taboo specifically governs sexual behaviour, exogamy on the other hand groom marriage rights. Consequently, if sex between parents, children, and siblings is forbidden then marriage between these two persons is impossible (Nukunya, 2003; Richard, 2005; Richley, 2002). Exogamy manifests preferential marriages, which are widely spread in Ghana. The rule of exogamy here ensures that first cousins are permitted to marry but should belong to different lineage. However, in the Islamic

communities of the northern parts of Ghana, preference is given to patrilineal parallel cousins (Nukunya 2003).

In contrast, Endogamy also from a Greek word "endo" which means "within" specifies a group in which the bride or groom must be found and prohibits marriage with others. This may require that people marry from their own kinship, social or local group. Endogamy is intended to reinforce the cohesiveness of the group by suggesting to the young that they should marry someone of their own kind (Nukunya, 2003; Richard, 2005; Richley, 2002). These two rules of mate selection plays a pivotal role in the type of partner an individual seeks, in as much as this is the case, contemporary issues such as education has influenced people and for that matter students to form different opinions about whom to marry or not. For instance, endogamy could also imply ethnic marriages but due to education, more and more people prefer certain qualities in their partners apart from just being tribe mates or kin mate. In an effort to fulfil responsibility or prescriptions, students consider certain factors in their mate selection process and consequently these processes may either identify with existing rules of mate selection or simply defy them.

In more recent times people and for that matter students prefer partners that are financially sound and can contribute meaningfully to the economic wellbeing of the union. At the very beginning of the marriage , most women prefer fat bride prices paid by their suitors to their family members, as Hutchinson (2001), puts it, women are happy when huge bride prices are paid in their name because it means her husband evidently values her higher. Current economic conditions have resulted in most men preferring a woman and for that matter a potential wife who will be able to earn her own income (Suzanne et al 1990; .Nukunya, 2003). Most importantly, today's generation of university students prefer to marry educated people. This implies that the educational level of a potential spouse is of serious consideration to the individual. O'Neil (2006) explained that education is an important factor in marriage partner's choice in many societies today. In addition, Kalmijn (2001) revealed that college graduates like themselves. However, female graduates also like to marry men that are educationally advanced than them.

Consequently, the attitude of female students is always upward looking with a little bit of a horizontal look that is mostly peculiar to male students in the factors considered for the selection of a potential spouse. A factor most students consider before selecting a potential spouse is the type of marriage their potential partners will prefer. According to Nukunya (2003), because of the perceived numerous disadvantages associated with polygamous marriages as suggested by the educated people in the society, most students consider a partner marriageable if the person does not intend to practice a polygamous relationship and subsequently a polygamous marriage. Decisions associated with children can also influence the choice of a potential partner or spouse. There are students that will like to marry and have so many children and those that simply embrace the idea of marriage but somehow, dread the prospect of having children in the process. Therefore, the choice of a life partner will be determined by the similarities in the ideas as to how the marriage will be managed. Religious background, descent line and the type of family of a person can serve as a basis for the selection of a potential spouse by students. At this point in history where marriage is seen as second to education, various attitudes are formed as a result. For some student marriage is compulsory and universal, for others marriage is a choice to make.

Methodology

The research design was basically the mixed approach. Key informant interviews and self-administered questionnaires were used in collecting data from respondents for this study. With the University for Development Studies offering programmes ranging from Diploma, Degree and Post-Graduate studies, stratified sampling was employed in allocating sample

sizes to each strata comprising of 30 respondents offering Diploma programmes, 60 respondents undertaking first Degree programmes and 9 respondents offering various Post-Graduate Masters and PhDs. The Assistant Registrar of the University in charge of Counselling was however purposively sampled due to his in-depth knowledge on the subject matter. The sample was further narrowed down to married and unmarried respondents, comprising forty-nine (49) and fifty (50) married and unmarried students respectively.

Snowball sampling was used to select the sample of 99 respondents. With this technique, specific respondents with the desired characteristics for this research were selected for administering the questionnaire after which these respondents suggested other samples that could be used to conduct the research. Although this non-probability sampling procedure is critiqued as not ensuring representativeness, it is the ideal procedure for this research as the students for the various programs (Diploma, Degree, Masters) and married or unmarried students can be identified through students of the same program and marital status.

Findings
Age and Marital Status of Respondents

Out of 99 respondents sampled for this study, 49 were married whiles 50 were unmarried students. Respondents in the age bracket of below 20 years were 14 while those of 41 years and above were 8 *(all married).*

Table 1.1: Age and Marital Status of Respondents

Age of Respondents	Marital Status of Respondents		Totals
	Married	**Unmarried**	
Below 20 years	3	11	14
20-30 years	22	39	61
31-40 years	16	0	16
41 years and above	8	0	8
Totals	**49**	**50**	**99**

Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Religious Affiliation of Respondents

Out of the 99 respondents sampled for this study, 47.5% of the respondents were of the Islamic faith while 48.5% were Christians. 4.0% of the respondents were however believers in the African Traditional Religion

Fig. 1.1: Religious Affiliation of Respondents
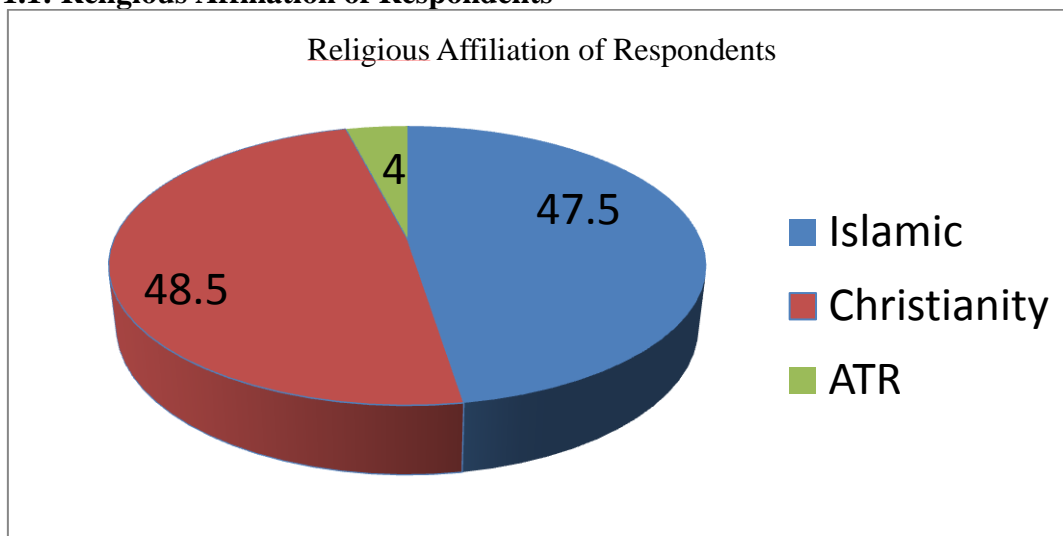
Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Influencing Factors in the Selection of Potential Spouse by Tertiary Students

Table 1.2: Likely factors unmarried students consider in selecting potential spouse(s)

Factors	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Educational Status	22	3	14	11	**36**	**14**
Ethnicity	13	12	12	13	**25**	**25**
Religion	22	3	21	4	**43**	**7**
Descent Lines	15	10	20	5	**35**	**15**
Financial Status	24	1	7	18	**32**	**18**
Family Type	25	0	7	18	**32**	**18**
Similarities in marriage and family formation ideas	25	0	19	6	**44**	**6**

Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Analysed data revealed that, 22 of the female respondents representing 61% and 14 (38.9%) of the male respondents representing 38.9% will consider education as a factor in the selection of a potential spouse as against 3 female respondents representing 21.4% and 11 male respondents representing 78.6% who would not consider education as a factor in the selection of a potential spouse. In considering education as a factor in spouse selection, respondents gave varied reasons ranging from the need for respect to security. However, respondents who felt education was not a factor in their potential spouse selection generally based their reason on love and character.

From the statistics presented above, it is revealing that educated female students (22 respondents) put much value on education as a factor in the selection of a potential spouse than male students (14 respondents). General, majority of tertiary students (72% of the 50 respondents) consider education as a vital factor in selecting potential spouse(s).

For ethnicity as a factor in mate selection, 13 (52%) female respondents and 12 (48%) male respondents think it is necessary to be considered in the selection of a potential spouse. However, 12 (48%) female respondents and 13 (52%) male respondents holds an opposite view. Therefore, it can be deduce that, a student may not consider ethnicity in the selection of a potential spouse. Whiles some respondents cited cultural belief systems as reasons for considering ethnicity in mate selection; almost an equal number did not see the need as long as the person's behavior suits him or her.

86% of the 50 unmarried respondents would consider religion as a factor in the selection of potential spouse(s) for reasons that include family unity and bringing up children with a strong faith. However, 14% of the respondents under this category disclosed they would not consider same religion as a factor because they believe all mankind worship one God. This implies that religion is considered as an important factor in mate selection among tertiary students. Between male and female respondents however, 51.2% of female respondents and 48.8% of male respondents consider religion as a factor in mate selection whiles 42.9% of female and 57.1% of male respondents said they would not consider religion as a factor for mate selection. This implies that female students put premium on religion as a factor in selecting a potential spouse than the male students.

Out of the 50 unmarried respondents questioned, 70% think descent line is important in selecting potential spouse whiles 30% think otherwise. Respondents considered issues of whom the child should belong to as a vital reason for a similar descent line spouse. The

statistics above indicates that male students put much preference on descent line as a factor in selecting a potential spouse than female students. This could be attributed to the notion that a child is born to the man in Africa.

Generally, 62% of the respondents considered financial status as a factor in selecting potential spouse(s) basing their arguments on having responsible spouses who can contribute to the upkeep of the family. On the other hand, 48% think education, good health and love are more important than financial standing. Whilst students in general place great importance on financial status as a factor in mate selection, female respondents (77.4%) seem to lead the chat in seeking for partners who are financially sound and capable as against their male counterparts (22.6%).

All 25 unmarried female respondents thinks similarities in marriage and family formation ideas is important in choosing potential spouse but for the male respondents, it really does not carry much weight.

## Similarities in Marriage and Family Formation Ideas

A number of factors to be considered by respondents under the similarities in marriage and family formation ideas were ranked in order of importance. Of the six factors presented to respondents, majority ranked number of children their would-be spouse desires as major factor in their spouse selection. They argued that, the number of children a spouse desire if not well discussed has the potential of disrupting the marriage and creating marital instability. In order of preference, family type, marriage type, sex of children, residence pattern and forms of marriage were ranked accordingly. Respondents claimed that the consideration of these factors in spousal selection were necessary since it had a direct impact on marriage life.

Perception on Marriage

This presents data on the perception held by students on marriage. It looks at respondents' intention to marry, respondents who are cohabiting and those who are cohabiting with or without the intention of marrying their current partners.

Respondents' Intention of Marrying
Fig. 1.2: Intention of Respondents towards marriage
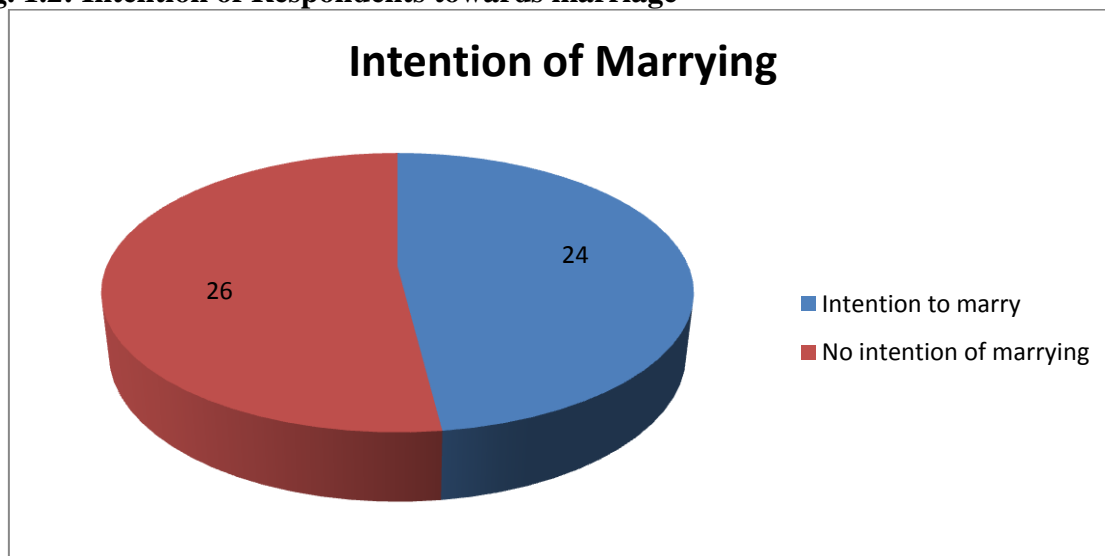
Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Of the 50 unmarried respondents questioned, 24 intended to marry whiles 26 had no intention of marrying. Respondents who had the intention of marrying assigned the following reasons:
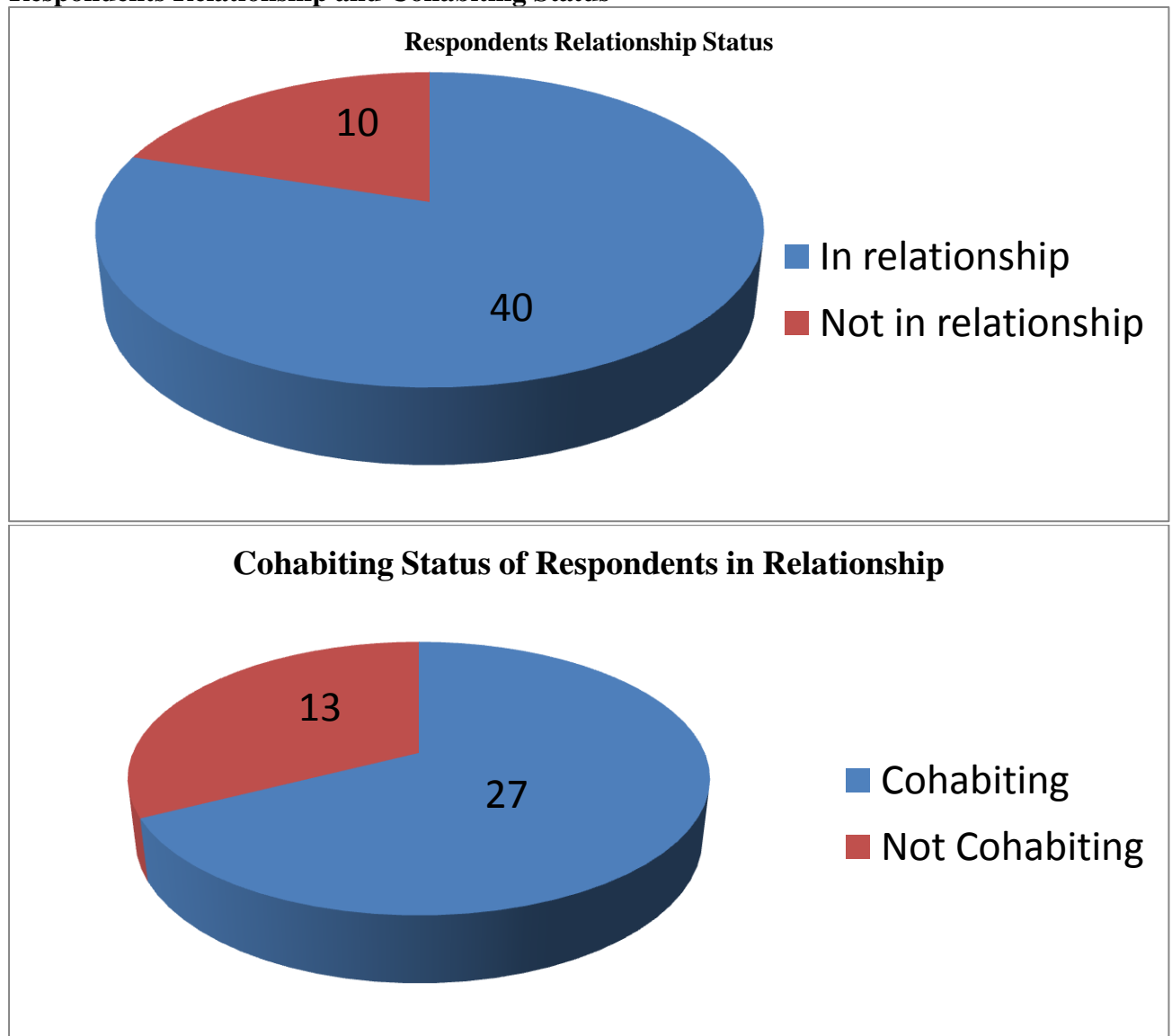
- For procreation
- For companionship
- Cultural reasons
- For a satisfactory life

For students who did not have the intention to marry these were the reasons given:

- Marriage is problematic
- No intention to have children therefore no reason to marry
- Freedom

This implies that a higher number of the respondents have no intention of marrying but a few do. This confirms that, there are people who want to remain single. This results confirms Richard (2006) and Jonathan (2005) findings that the proportion of people who choose to remain single increases as they pursue higher education.

Respondents Relationship and Cohabiting Status

Respondents Relationship Status

10

40

- In relationship
- Not in relationship

Cohabiting Status of Respondents in Relationship

13

27

- Cohabiting
- Not Cohabiting

Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Figures 1.2 illustrate two diagrams depicting the relationship status of respondents and their cohabiting attitudes. Out of the 50 unmarried respondents questioned, 40 representing 80% were in a romantic relationships whiles 10 (20%) were not. For the 40 who were in a romantic relationship 27 (54%) cohabitate with their partners whiles the remaining 13 (26%) do not cohabitate with their partners. This indicate that most tertiary students in romantic relationship cohabitate with their partner. Respondents indicated that cohabiting with their partners afford them the opportunity of knowing each other better and being there for each other at all time.

For the remaining 10 respondents who are not in any form of relationship yet, 5 of them disclosed they would like to cohabitate when they get into relationship whilst the other 5 thinks staying apart would be their best option when they get into relationship.

Opinion of respondents who cohabitate towards marriage
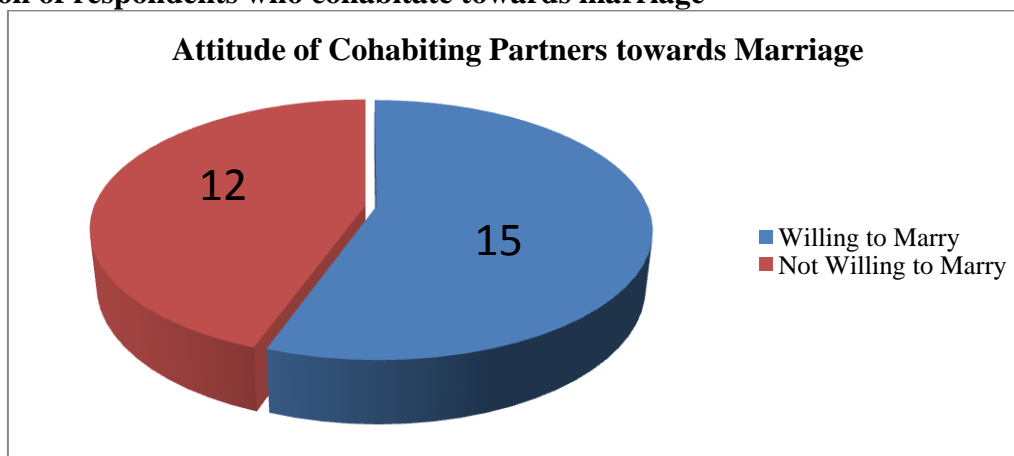

From the above figure, out of the 27 unmarried students who cohabitate, 15 of them are willing and have the intention of marrying whiles 12 respondents do not have the intention of marrying. This finding negate Jonathan (2006) conclusion that "people who live together without marrying stand a high chance of not marrying" as majority (15 out of 27) of the cohabitating respondent intended to marry due to the sweet experience from cohabitation.

Perception on Forms of Marriages

Marriage under the ordinance is the most preferred form of marriage among respondents for this study. From the available data, religious marriage came second while a combination of marriage under ordinance and religious marriage ranked third most preferred forms of marriages. Customary marriage was however ranked fourth. In a key informant interview with the Assistant Registrar in charge of Counselling, he disclosed that students would prefer marriage under the ordinance principally due to the security it guarantees the spouse and child upon the death of a partner and for the female students especially, the prevention of polygynous marriage. This finding also affirms Nukunya (2003) assertion that: "marriage under the ordinance is becoming more popular among the literate community in Ghana".

**Opinion on Family Formation**
Childbearing

Of the 99 respondents (married and unmarried) questioned, 34.3% had children as against 65.7% who did not have children. This indicates that with education extending in to adult live the number of students willing and able to have children keeps decreasing.

Childbearing Status of Respondents
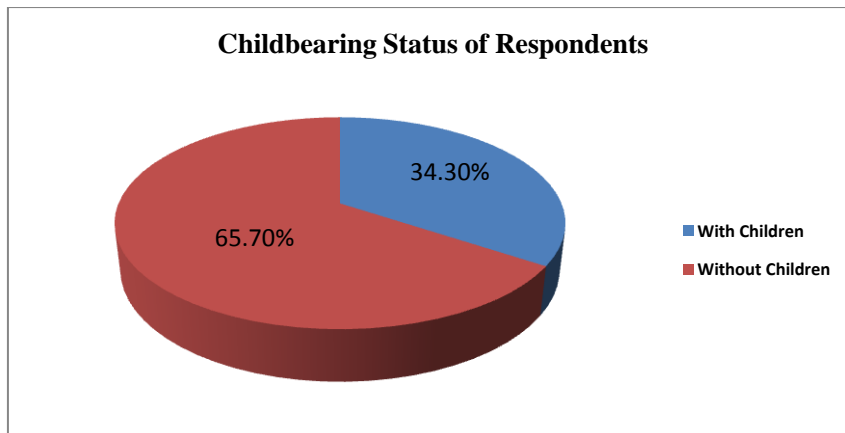
Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Intention to Have Children

From the diagram below, it was observed that, out of the 34 respondents who had children, 16 still intended to have children whiles 18 did not intend to have children. This indicates that the more one attains higher education, the lesser number of children the person is willing to have. However, for the 65 respondents who did not have children, 56 intended to have children as against 9 who had no intention of having children. This implies that while more students are willing to have children, they are likely not to encourage larger family sizes.
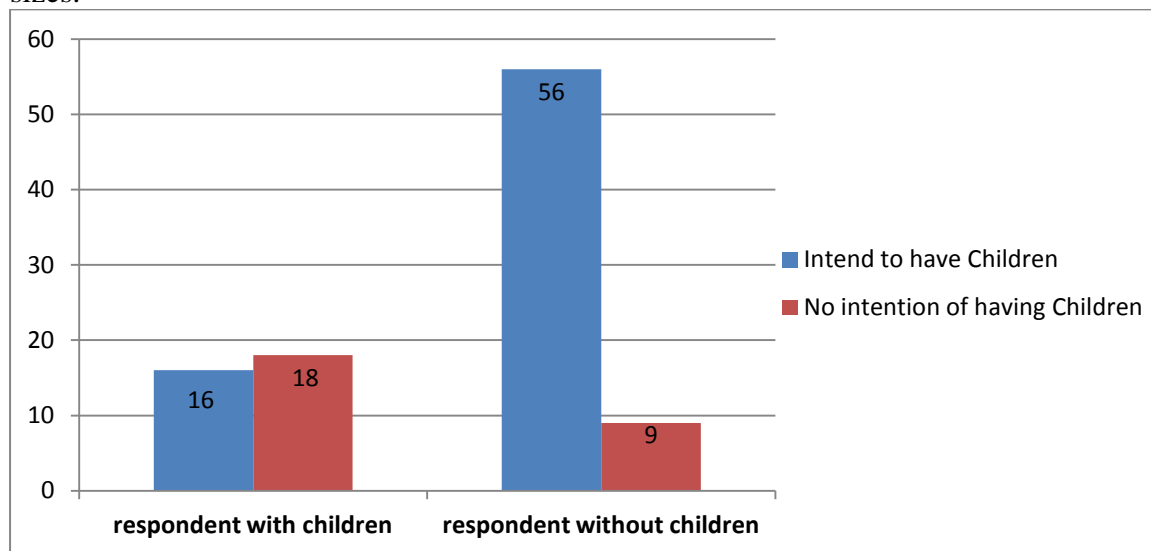
Source: *Field Survey, 2014*

Challenges Married Students Face and its Effects on their Family Formation

All the 49 married students questioned indicated that they face challenges in their marriage and these challenges have an adverse effect on their family formation. These challenges according to the respondents include:

- Time constrain
- Division of labour
- Financial constrain
- Unequal power relations

Challenges Married Students Face, its Effects on the Number of Children they have

Out of the 49 married students questioned, 24 had children whiles 25 did not have children. With the 24 who had children, they disclosed that the challenges they face as married students has influenced them to have below 4 children. This implies that, as married people seek higher education, the challenges of married life and school life become eminent and this compel them to reduce the number of children they would have desired to have without further education.

Conclusion

Though the institution of marriage is relevant among Ghanaian tertiary students, would-be spouses would always consider some pertinent factors in selecting their potential spouse. Educational status, religious affiliation and financial status of a potential spouse are key factors Ghanaian tertiary students would generally look out for when deciding on marriage so as to maximize the benefits that the institutions of marriage and family offer. It is also important to note that, these three factors are more likely to be considered by female students than male students.

Interestingly, the issue of interethnic or cross-cultural marriage is very popular among Ghanaian tertiary students. While cohabitation is almost a normal thing among tertiary students in Ghana, most students equate cohabitation to marriage. The rough and painful experience from this kind of relationship then builds up the notion that, marriage is a difficult institution to engage in. This has the tendency of breaking down the institution of marriage if not well monitored and controlled. Students also generally hold a wrong perception about the extended family system which is the crust of African family hood. If this notion persists albeit, the Ghanaian extended family system would gradually break down for the preferred elite nuclear family system.

Recommendations

Married students should strike a balance between academic work and the obligations that comes with being married and or having children to reduce the negative effects, which results from being married, and or having children whiles in school.

Attitudinal change is vital in reversing the negative perceptions students have about marriage and the family institution so as to preserve these two age-long institutions. The National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) need to be proactive in this regard by instituting University-wide sensitization programmes to educate, inform and persuade the maintenance of good relationship culture and awareness programmes on the institutions of marriage and family formation.

Universities in Ghana should endeavour to strengthen the Guidance and Counselling Units. This unit should be well resourced and empowered to embark on vigorous advocacy campaigns to preserve the institutions of marriage based on the Ghanaian culture. Guidance and Counselling Units should be readily available to assist students in relationships as well as married couples who are seeking higher education to deal with the challenges that confronts them. Regular and periodic orientation sessions should be organised to increase the awareness level of the functions of the guidance and counselling unit, which will further ensure that students are able to seek professional advice on issues related to marriage and family formation.

N.G.O's like Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) should include University students in their activities so as to sensitize them on the role of family planning in reducing the effects which results from combining education and the obligations of marriage and family institutions.

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