


Tertiary students' attitude towards love, sexual relations, and marriage within the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The prevalence of trial marriages, cohabitation, and casual sexual relationships among young people has become a common phenomenon. While there is a dearth of literature specifically examining attitudes towards love in African culture, this study evaluates tertiary students' attitudes towards love, sexual relations, and marriage in the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana, West Africa.

Method: This research used a quantitative descriptive sample survey methodology. The study's sample size consisted of 350 respondents who were simply randomly chosen from five tertiary institutions located in the Tamale Metropolitan Area of Ghana. The respondents of this study were acquired using a combination of stratified, purposive, and random selection techniques. It adapted a questionnaire on attitude towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage.

Data analysis: The data collected for this research underwent statistical analysis using the statistical product for service solution 16.0 software. This analysis included calculating percentages, means, and standard deviations, doing independent sample t-test, and performing one-way ANOVA.

Results: It was found that there is a positive inclination among tertiary students towards love relationships. Also, tertiary students have a favourable attitude towards engaging in sexual activities. Finally, these students possess a favourable outlook on the institution of marriage.

Recommendations: It is imperative for governmental bodies and educational institutions to periodise the provision of comprehensive training programmes for peer educators in the domain of love, sex, and marriage.

Keywords: sexual relationships, love, marriage, attitude, tertiary students

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic realm of human civilization, the fundamental elements of reproduction, such as love, sexual encounters, and marriage, have always played a crucial role in guaranteeing the continuous survival and continuation of the human species (Olson & DeFrain, 2018). These core social institutions have shown impressive durability and flexibility, despite substantial changes in cultural views and customs.

People commonly acknowledge marriage and family as long-lasting and essential social institutions, with a significant history of development and adjustment into various shapes and structures (Olson & DeFrain, 2018). Throughout history, people have constantly created social groups like clans and families to obtain many types of assistance, including emotional, physical, and community-related resources (Olson & DeFrain, 2018).

Contrary to the forecasts made by certain social critics regarding the possible decrease of marriage and the family, these establishments have not only persisted but have also demonstrated an impressive ability to adjust and change in response to changing attitudes and perspectives (Olson & DeFrain, 2018). The 2022 Ghana demographic and health survey (GDHS) found that although the percentage of unmarried persons has risen, a considerable number of young people in Ghana are still participating in early marriages and sexual behavior (Ghana Statistical Service & ICF, 2023). This highlights the ongoing significance and necessity of comprehending the changing viewpoints on love, sexual relationships, and marriage within the Ghanaian culture.

In contemporary educational institutions, several manifestations of social conduct may be seen among teenagers and young people. The prevalence of trial marriage, cohabitation, and casual sexual relationships among young people has become a common phenomenon. It is reasonable to

speculate that this trend may be linked to a poor perception of love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The purpose of this study is to investigate this association.

Intimate connections have a pivotal position within the broader scope of human experience. Human beings possess an inherent and widespread inclination towards establishing a sense of belonging, which is effectively fulfilled via the establishment of many types of connections, including but not limited to those of a sexual nature. Relationships often include individuals whom we hold affection or love for, including romantic, agape, platonic, and other forms. Additionally, these relationships often involve those with whom we enter into marriage, providing emotional and personal assistance.

Marriage is often seen as the beginning of socially sanctioned engagement in sexual relationships and a mechanism for legitimizing the role of parents (United Nations, 1988). Marriages are often initiated and terminated on a regular basis due to a lack of understanding or clarity around significant aspects of meaningful partnerships, particularly among younger individuals. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of personal connections, regardless of whether they include individuals of the same gender or other genders (Akinade & Sulaiman, 2005). One potential approach to attaining this objective is examining the current state of affairs about societal perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage.

Parents tend to conceal sexual matters from their children due to the belief that exposure to such material may potentially stimulate their curiosity and interest in engaging in sexual experimentation (Akinade & Sulaiman, 2005; Olusakin & Parmer, 2007). According to Finger (2000), Waszak, a prominent scientist at Family Health International specializing in adolescent health, emphasizes that the desire in sex among teenagers is driven by biological changes that occur throughout their growth. The inherent biological curiosity about sexuality among young individuals, which is a natural progression during their transition into adulthood, necessitates appropriate consideration. It is imperative that any efforts to suppress or withhold information regarding sexuality, whether influenced by tradition or religion, be rejected by societies aiming to provide accurate and comprehensive knowledge. Such an approach ultimately contributes to the enhancement of moral conduct.

Olson and DeFrain (2006) posit that the notion of a robust marital and familial unit is posited as a noteworthy resource upon which people may depend under arduous circumstances. The authors further asserted that, in contrast, partnerships characterized by poor health or dysfunction might give rise to issues that have the potential to endure over several generations. It is crucial, therefore, to ensure that young people and the general population are provided with precise and dependable knowledge regarding love, sexual relationships, and marriage. This will enable them to effectively navigate and embrace perspectives and attitudes that can enhance the well-being of marriage and sexual life within society, ultimately ensuring the establishment of healthy marriages for future generations. Finger (2000) argues that Kirby underscores the need to scrutinize several factors that impact sexual behavior, such as beliefs, attitudes,

conventions, and talents. In light of this, it is crucial to develop a curriculum that specifically targets these variables.

It is important to acknowledge that information plays a crucial role in the process of perception and attitude formation, as it may contribute to the development of expectations and learning. These aspects, as shown by Houston and Barry (1989), have a significant impact on the construction of perceptions and can also influence changes in attitudes. Despite the inherent ambiguity surrounding the concepts of love, sexual encounters, and marriage, a widely sought-after objective for individuals is the cultivation of a mature identity and the establishment of constructive interpersonal connections (Akinade & Sulaiman, 2005). Hence, it is evident that an examination of the connections pertaining to love, sexual relationships, and marriage is necessary in order to make a meaningful contribution towards achieving the desired objective.

The youth demographic represents a significant reservoir of socio-economic potential inside any nation. According to the National Population Council (2000) in Ghana, individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 constituted around 30% of the overall population. Consequently, doing research aimed at enhancing their well-being is considered a commendable endeavor. Powers and Baskin (1969) advocated for a heightened commitment by parents, schools, and community youth groups to educate young individuals about sexual hygiene and assist them in mitigating adverse inclinations in sexual conduct. Indeed, the findings of this research have potential significance in enhancing understanding and facilitating the education of young individuals in this domain.

Statement of the Problem

As per the GDHS conducted in 2022, HIV/AIDS is a major concern among adolescents and young adults in Ghana, resulting in notable inequalities in sexual and reproductive health outcomes. The frequency of marital and sexual issues among modern youths may be attributed to a noticeable absence of comprehensive sexual education and proper knowledge on sexual health and relationships.

A significant number of teenagers and young people have a strong inclination to satisfy their curiosity via participating in sexual experimentation, which might lead to negative consequences as a result of their limited knowledge and practice in this area. There is a widely held concept that enhancing individuals' perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage has the capacity to alleviate a substantial number of problems related to marital partnerships.

Recent research has emphasized the significance of attending to the sexual and reproductive health requirements of young individuals in Ghana. The 2022 GDHS findings revealed that a notable percentage of young individuals, namely 17.9% of women and 22.7% of males aged 15-19, were now married. This data highlights a substantial occurrence of early marriages and sexual engagement among the youth. In addition, the poll revealed that 35% of women and 51% of men have never entered into matrimony, indicating a requirement for comprehensive sexual education and relationship therapy.

A comprehensive psychological study has been undertaken by researchers to examine the viewpoints of African Americans regarding love and marriage in the present day. Nevertheless, there is a lack of comparable studies conducted in African countries, such as Ghana (Agyei-Sarpong, 2010; Stones & Philbrick, 1989). The pattern was initially detected by Philbrick and Opolot (1980) about twenty years ago. They observed that although there is an increasing number of studies on love and attitudes towards love across various American communities, there is a lack of literature explicitly investigating attitudes towards love in African culture. The current study in Ghana mostly centers on divorce and its underlying determinants.

Significant contributions in this field encompass the research conducted by Amoateng and Heaton (1986), Acquah (1989), and Burr's (1970) study on gender roles, and other relevant scholarly efforts. However, it is worth mentioning that the studies described before were not substantial research efforts aimed at investigating the dominant perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage especially in the context of Ghana.

This study seeks to evaluate the attitudes and beliefs of tertiary students in the Tamale metropolitan region regarding love, sexual relationships, and marriage in Ghana, due to the limited amount of existing research on this topic. The study aims to examine the variables that shape individuals' perspectives and assess the possible effects of comprehensive sexual education and relationship counselling on their sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

Objectives

1. Find out tertiary students' attitudes towards love.
2. Find out tertiary students' attitudes towards sexual relations.
3. Find out tertiary students' attitudes towards marriage.

Research Questions

The study aimed to investigate the research issues pertaining to the views of tertiary students regarding love, sexual interactions, and marriage.

RQ1.What is tertiary students' attitude towards love?

RQ2.What is tertiary students' attitude towards sexual relations?

RQ3.What is tertiary students' attitude towards marriage?

METHOD

The research used a descriptive sample survey methodology due to its suitability for investigating educational issues and gathering data on attitudes (Akimboye, 1983; Gay, 1992). The target market comprises students enrolled at the University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale Polytechnic, Nursing Training College Tamale, Bagabaga College of Education Tamale, and Tamale College of Education.

Three hundred and fifty students as mentioned earlier, was selected as the sample size for the study because it corresponds to the "table for determining sample size from a given population", developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as cited

by Sarantakos (1993, p. 149). From Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, 346 as a sample size is adequate for researching with a population size of 3,500. We therefore assume that for a population of 3,142 students, representing the total number of second year students in all the five tertiary educational institutes in 2020/2021 academic year, a sample size of 350 students with 70 students randomly selected from each school could be a large number for fair representation.

The usage of the same number of students (that is, 70 as a sample size) from each of the five selected tertiary educational institutions was done in acknowledgement of the assertion that the consequences of unequal variances are not serious if the sample size are the same (Walpole & Myers, 1985).

The various schools sampled for the study and the number of respondents selected for the study from each school has been shown. The data show that equal numbers were selected from each of the five tertiary educational institutions used for the study. Seventy respondents were chosen from the selected tertiary educational institutions.

The study employed stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling techniques generally are applied in order to obtain a representative sample (Kothari, 1994; Sarantakos, 1993). In this study the sample was stratified into four groups. They are, the level of higher education (that is diploma or degree); the religious affiliation of the respondents (that is, Christian, Muslim, traditionalist and free thinker); the marital status of respondents (that is, married or single); marital status of the respondent parent/guardian (that is married or single) he/she is in contact with; and type of residence (that is, either private hostel, school hostel or day student with guardians'/parents') were the basis of stratification.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) purposive sampling is a non-random sample, and it is used when those to be selected have the requisite information, in view of this, the researchers purposely select the five educational institutions. The five educational institutions selected were the only accredited tertiary educational institutions within the Tamale metropolis by the National Accreditation Board, that offer diploma and/ or degree courses. Seventy respondents were randomly selected from each tertiary educational institution from among the second-year students.

The second-year students were chosen because they had experienced one academic year at the tertiary educational level and were in a better position to bring their experience to bear in responding to the instrument regarding their attitude towards love, sexual relations and marriage. Purposive sampling was used to select the second-year students for the study.

The first-year students were not considered for the study because, they were yet to settle for both academic and social life on campus and hence they might not have crystallized their attitude towards love, sexual relations and marriage as pertain in the tertiary educational institutions. The third year were also not used because they were busy preparing for their exams with the exception of the third year in UDS but for uniformity the researcher ignored them and went for the second year.

Instruments

The data was collected via a questionnaire. This is due to the fact that, as indicated by Kerlinger (1973), questionnaires are extensively used in educational research for the purpose of data collection and are specifically designed to address research inquiries. In line with this convention, the present study also centers on three distinct research questions. Kerlinger's (1973) findings suggest that the questionnaire is a very successful tool for obtaining factual information on the practices and circumstances that the respondents are assumed to possess knowledge about. Additionally, it is used to investigate the perspectives and dispositions of individuals. In this context, the use of a questionnaire as a research tool was deemed very suitable for the purposes of this study.

The use of a questionnaire as a research instrument has many benefits. Firstly, it is worth noting that a well-designed questionnaire, coupled with a literate respondent pool, as shown in the present study, may provide a high response rate. Additionally, the implementation of suitable follow-up techniques further enhances the efficacy of the questionnaire in data collection. Furthermore, when comprehended and executed correctly, the approach serves to streamline the data analysis phase. The questionnaire exhibits a greater level of openness or accountability in comparison to the interview method. Based on Kerlinger's (1973) perspectives and the benefits associated with the use of questionnaires, the researcher determined that using questionnaires would be a suitable method for data collection in this study.

Nevertheless, despite these benefits, the questionnaire does have several drawbacks. The cost, both in terms of financial resources and time allocation, might be substantial, particularly when considering the dispersion of respondents throughout a wide geographical region. Respondents may also fail to offer suitable responses to the posed inquiries. Therefore, the inquiries may result in more surface-level data compared to a comprehensive interview. And further drawback is to the potential inclination of respondents to engage in behaviors such as previewing, skipping, or making comparisons with the responses of their acquaintances and peers when undertaking the completion of surveys. Therefore, the research instrument was designed in a structured manner to allow respondents to choose from a set of predetermined options that best aligned with their answers to the questions. Additionally, the researcher was physically present at each school to ensure that the respondents provided unbiased and independent responses.

The researchers used a five-point Likert scale to get answers from the participants. The surveys mostly consist of remarks pertaining to topics such as love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The 51 instruments were organized in a systematic and consistent manner, using basic syntax and phrasing that was easily comprehensible to the respondents, so minimizing any difficulty they may have had in providing their responses.

Each questionnaire consisted of two primary sections, namely parts I and II. The first section of the study focused on providing an overview of the demographic characteristics and contextual factors pertaining to the participants. The study primarily examined the following variables: the identities of

the participants, the tertiary educational institution they attended, the sorts of degrees they were pursuing, their gender, age range, the type of hostel they resided in, the marital status of their parents or guardians, and their own marital status.

The second part of the study focused on the participants' perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage. This portion was afterwards separated into three subsections, namely sections A, B, and C. The aforementioned sections addressed the respondent's perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage, in that order.

The instruments' validity was proved by their submission to experts in research, namely professors from the Educational Foundation Departments of the University of Cape Coast and the Counselling Center. The instruments were modified via the process of correction, deletion, and the introduction of more suitable alternatives. Subsequently, the questions underwent a thorough evaluation process by the supervisors to ensure their substance and face validity. Furthermore, the instrument underwent a pilot test at the University of Cape Coast.

The reliability of the questionnaire used in the research was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency. Given that a significant proportion of the questions were scored using multiple responses, particularly on the Likert scale with five points, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was considered the most suitable measure.

The selection of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was based on the rationale provided by Ary et al. (1990), who argue that Cronbach's alpha is appropriate for measures that consist of multiple-scored items. According to McDaniel (1994), the alpha coefficient has the potential to be used in several types of assessments, including traditional exams that include binary scoring (i.e., "right" or "wrong") as well as assessments that involve Likert-type responses such as "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the instruments yielded a value of 0.62, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability for the instrument.

According to Donald (1990), the importance of doing pilot testing lies in its ability to assist researchers in determining the feasibility and value of continuing with a particular project. Additionally, it provides the chance to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of the data gathering tool. Gay (1992) concurred with the notion that doing a pilot test is essential for the purpose of revising any questions in the guide that may be deemed confusing or elicit unfavorable responses from participants. According to Fraenkel and Warren (2000), it is suggested that doing a "pre-test" of the questionnaire or interview schedule may serve the purpose of identifying any ambiguities that may not be comprehended by the participants. Additionally, this pre-test can also provide insights on the clarity of the instrument for the respondents. Therefore, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test at the University of Cape Coast.

The survey for this research was pilot-tested on a sample of 40 students, consisting of 20 men and 20 females. The participants were selected using a systematic approach from Valco Hall, located at the University of Cape Coast. The participants from the institution had comparable features to those included in the primary investigation. The primary objective of conducting the pilot test was to ascertain the

validity of the instrument being used for the main investigation. Based on the findings of the pre-testing phase, revisions were made to questions 12, 41, and 42, since they were found to be incomprehensible to the respondents. Additionally, a correction was made to item 14, which had a misspelt word.

The data were gathered over a period of three months, namely from August to October 2009. This time frame was chosen due to variations in the academic calendars of the several higher educational institutions that were included in the study. The researcher got formally acquainted with the leaders of several institutions via a letter of introduction provided by the director of the Counselling Center at the University of Cape Coast. The researcher sought assistance from the leaders and lecturers at other universities to facilitate the administration of the questionnaire.

All students who were chosen for the study were assembled in a lecture hall at each of the tertiary educational institutions involved in the research. The respondents were provided with an explanation of the study's goal, after which they were given copies of the research instrument. The participants were advised to carry out their tasks autonomously. The researcher actively engaged with the respondents in order to clarify any potential misconceptions and fostered autonomous work by providing direct supervision. The questionnaires were collected from each of the tertiary educational institutions on the same day after the completion of the activity. The purpose of this measure was to guarantee a return rate of 100%.

Data Analysis

The data collected for the research underwent statistical analysis using the statistical product for service solution 16.0 software. This analysis included calculating percentages, means, standard deviation, doing independent samples t-tests, and performing one-way ANOVA. As stated by William (2006), the independent samples t-test is used to evaluate the statistical significance of the difference between the means of two distinct groups.

Tables were used as a means of strengthening the analysis and enhancing its clarity. The researcher developed a scoring rubric to assess the different replies provided in the surveys. During the scoring process, a unique code number was assigned to each questionnaire in order to streamline the identifying process.

The data obtained from the different items were systematically analyzed and organized by coding and tabulation. The purpose of this document is to provide comprehensive guidance for scoring and calculating complimentary scores for the different outcomes. When assigning scores to the questions on the Likert questionnaire using a five-point scale, each item was assigned a specific weight, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Likert scale

Scale	Abbreviation	Value
Strongly agree	SA	5
Agree	A	4
Uncertain	U	3
Disagree	D	2
Strongly disagree	SD	1

Table 2. Frequency distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	217	62.0
Female	133	38.0
Total	350	100

Note. Source: Field Work 2020/2021

Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondents by certificate pursued

Certificate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Degree	70	20.0
HND	70	20.0
Diploma	210	60.0
Total	350	100

Note. Source: Field Work 2020/2021

A mean score was calculated for each statement using a five-point scale. Participants who obtained mean scores of 2.6 and above were deemed to exhibit agreement with the provided statements, indicating a good attitude. Conversely, participants who obtained mean scores of 2.4 and below were considered to demonstrate disagreement with the provided claims, indicating a negative attitude. A mean score ranging from 2.41 to 2.59 suggests a state of neutrality or uncertainty.

These studies allowed the comparison and determination of whether the participants had a favorable or unfavorable disposition towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The discussion regarding the frequency distribution of the responses assumes that combining the various categories of the five-point Likert scale into three distinct categories, namely agreed (consisting of strongly agree and agree), uncertain, and disagree (comprising strongly disagree and disagree), provides a more coherent representation of the response patterns.

RESULTS

Analysis of Demographic Data About Respondent

Details of frequencies and percentages for the personal information of the students are presented in tables. **Table 2** shows the distribution of respondents according to their sexes.

The sex distribution as given in **Table 3** shows clearly that 217 (62%) of the respondents were males and 133 (38%) were females. This is to be expected in that, in the 2005/2006 academic year, the male to female enrolment ratio was 65:35 for the universities and 70:30 for the polytechnics (Kwapong, 2007).

Numerous studies (Compura, 2003; Evans, 1995; Plummer, 2004; Przymus, 2004) proved this ratio with the findings that societal perceptions of women and their productive and reproductive roles affect their participation in formal education. Society perceives women as homemakers and childminders; therefore, any activity that takes them away from such normal schedules is frowned upon. As a result, women find it difficult to embark on further studies, especially at their adult stage when they have begun building families.

Table 4. Frequency distribution according to marital statuses of respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	14	4.0
Single	336	96.0
Total	350	100

Note. Source: Field Work 2020/2021

The distribution of respondents according to type of certificate pursued in school (that is, degree, higher national diploma, and diploma) is shown in **Table 3**.

Out of the total respondents of 350, 70 (20%) were on degree programs, 70 (20%) on higher national diploma programs, and 210 (60%) pursued diploma programs.

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents according to marital status. The majority (96% were single), while 4% were married.

Analysis of the Main Data Responding to Research Questions

The following research questions are presented in terms of results and discussion:

Research question one

What is the tertiary students' attitude towards love? The research questionnaire was used to find out tertiary students' attitudes towards love. Responses in part II, section A, specifically items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 (see **Appendix A**), were employed to address this question. They encompass statements on love.

Results of the analysis of tertiary students' attitudes towards love have been presented using means and standard deviations. The results show that tertiary students' generally have a positive attitude towards love since the means for various statements on love were above 2.6, which suggests general acceptability.

The statement that was most popular and recorded 66% of students agreeing to it (36.0% strongly agreed, 30.0% agreed; mean [M] = 3.7800, standard deviation [SD] = 1.20655) was the one that suggested that "only date someone you love" the study further revealed the statement "love is important in sexual relationships" as the next-ranked statement with a 56% affirmation (34.0% strongly agreed, 22.0% agreed; M = 3.6600, SD = 1.19519) response.

Furthermore, 52% of the majority (32% strongly agreed, 20% agreed; M = 3.5600, SD = 1.25335) of respondents agreed with the statement "I believe that it is important to be in love before having sex". Likewise, 58% affirmation (32% strongly agreed, 26% agreed, M = 3.5400, and SD = 1.37616) was the statistical value obtained for the statement "sex is a demonstration of love between couples". In the same vein, 62% of students responded positively (20% strongly agreed, 42% agreed; M = 3.4600, SD = 1.25415) to the statement "you would not divorce your married partner for someone you love".

Finally, 50% of respondents agreed (30% strongly agreed, 20% agreed; M = 3.3800, SD = 1.38603) to the statement "if you love your partner, wait till you marry," and this statement attracted the least mean value among all the statements on

love. An indication that waiting for marriage before making love is not well accepted by the youth.

Research question two

What is the tertiary students' attitude towards sexual relations? This research question was used to find out tertiary students' attitudes towards sexual relations. Responses in part II, section B, specifically to items 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39 were employed to address this question (refer to **Appendix A**).

The results of the analysis of tertiary students' attitudes towards sexual relations have been presented using means and standard deviations. The results show the responses of students' attitudes towards sexual relations. The results show that tertiary students' generally have a positive attitude towards sexual relations since the means for various statements on sexual relations were above 2.6, which suggests general acceptability.

The statement that was most dominant with a 60% affirmation rate among the students (34.0% strongly agreed, 26.0% agreed; M = 3.7800, SD = 1.20655) regarding their attitude towards sexual relations was the one that suggested that "premarital sex could ruin a relationship".

Responding to the statement "premarital sex is part of a normal relationship," 42.0% strongly agreed while 22.0% agreed (M = 3.7000, SD = 1.39123), and this is the next ranked

The remaining statements on sexual relations are reported in descending mean values. 62% of respondents agreed (34.0% strongly agreed, 28.0% agreed, M = 3.6600, and SD = 1.24452) to the statement "premarital sex causes an increase in teen pregnancy". Also, 62.9% of respondents agreed (32.0% of students strongly agreed while 30.9% agreed, M = 3.6571, SD = 1.26995) to the statement "participation in premarital sex promotes promiscuity".

Reacting to the statement "any type of homosexual behavior is wrong", 64% of respondents agreed (34.0% strongly agreed, 30.0% agreed, M = 3.6400, SD = 1.32492) in response. Likewise, 62% of respondents agreed (30.0% strongly agreed, 32.0% agreed, M = 3.6400, and SD = 1.24693) that "premarital sex is a good way to get to know someone on a deeper level". In like manner, 58% of respondents agreed (30.0% strongly agreed, 28.0% agreed, M = 3.6200, and SD = 1.21648) that "sex is important in a relationship".

The statement "sexual intercourse between the same genders should be illegal" attracted 60% of positive responses (38.0% strongly agreed, 22.0% agreed, with M = 3.6200 and SD = 1.40043). It is remarkable to state here that the trend of response for items 19 and 22 (that is, "any type of homosexual behavior is wrong" and "sexual intercourse between the same genders should be illegal") pulled 64% and 60% affirmation, respectively.

The results further reveal that 60% of students accept (40.0% strongly agreed, 20.0% agreed; M = 3.6000, SD = 1.44429) the statement "I believe that premarital sex increases the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases". Likewise, 60% of respondents agreed (30.0% strongly agreed, 30.0% agreed; M = 3.5800, SD = 1.26815) to the statement "there can be negative consequences when you have premarital sex". In like manner, 54% of students agreed (30.0% strongly agreed,

24.0% agreed; $M = 3.5200$, $SD = 1.28621$) to the statement "having sexual partners before marriage is natural".

Furthermore, 58% of students believed (30.0% strongly agreed, 28.0% agreed; $M = 3.5000$, $SD = 1.31718$) in the statement "premarital sex is acceptable with contraceptives". Similarly, 52% of students agreed (24.0% strongly agreed, 28.0% agreed; $M = 3.4800$, $SD = 1.18897$) to the statement "a person's decision to engage in premarital sex is greatly influenced by culture". Likewise, 54% of respondents agreed (30.0% strongly agreed, 24.0% agreed; $M = 3.4800$, $SD = 1.30171$) to the statement "premarital sex happens because of peer pressure".

The statement "pornographic materials cause males to be aggressive sexually" revealed a 49.4% affirmation (32.0% strongly agreed, 17.4% agreed, $M = 3.4686$, and $SD = 1.33624$) response. The mean value of 3.4686 suggests agreement.

The statement "premarital sex can lead to a healthy relationship between two individuals" attracted 54% of students' affirmation (24.6% strongly agreed, 29.4% agreed; $M = 3.4640$, $SD = 1.23567$) in response. In the same vein, 48% of respondents accepted (24.0% strongly agreed, 24.0% agreed; $M = 3.2600$, $SD = 1.37032$) the statement "there is nothing wrong with premarital sex".

Similarly, 54% of students were in favor (28.0% strongly agreed, 26.0% agreed; $M = 3.2200$, $SD = 1.52914$) of the statement "premarital sex shows commitment to one another". In like manner, 44% of students favored (24.0% strongly agreed, 20.0% agreed; $M = 3.1200$, $SD = 1.41113$) the statement "bi-sexuality is acceptable". Moreover, 38% of students believed (22.0% strongly agreed, 16.0% agreed; $M = 3.1200$ and $SD = 1.29243$) that "premarital sex is acceptable with only one person". Likewise, 38.9% of students agreed (16.0% strongly agreed, 22.9% agreed; $M = 3.0229$, $SD = 1.29559$) that "premarital sex helps you pick a partner for marriage". Finally, the statement "premarital sex is acceptable if you love your partner" recorded the least mean value of 3.0000 with a 40% affirmation (22.0% strongly agreed, 18.0% agreed; $SD = 1.41624$) response.

Research question three

What is the tertiary students' attitude towards marriage? This research question was used to find out tertiary students' attitudes towards marriage. Responses in part II, section C, encompassed statements on marriage specifically to items 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, and 51 (refer to **Appendix A**). Results of the analysis of tertiary students' attitudes towards marriage have been presented using means and standard deviations. The results show that, to a large extent, tertiary students have a positive attitude towards marriage; since the means for various statements on marriage were above 2.6, the mean therefore suggests general acceptability.

The statement that was most popular with the students regarding their attitude towards marriage was the one that suggested that "individuals should remain virgins until marriage", 60% of students agreed (22.0% strongly agreed, 38.0% agreed; $M = 3.5000$, $SD = 1.20588$) with this statement.

The second most popular statement among the students was "couples who engage in premarital sex are less likely to cheat on their partners in marriages". In response to this

statement, 54% of students agreed (28.0% strongly agreed, 26.0% agreed; $M = 3.4800$, $SD = 1.28621$). The rest of the results are presented in descending order of mean values. Furthermore, 56% of respondents affirmed (22.0% of students strongly agreed, while 34.0% agreed; $M = 3.4600$ and $SD = 1.20522$) that "premarital sex establishes a closer relationship before marriage". However, 46% of students agreed (28.0% strongly agreed, 18.0% agreed, $M = 3.3600$, and $SD = 1.29429$) to the statement "sex after marriage is worth waiting for".

In reference to the statement "premarital sex devalues sex after marriage," 54% of students agreed (20.0% strongly agreed, 34.0% agreed, $M = 3.3400$, and $SD = 1.29196$) to it. Similarly, the statement "practicing abstinence until marriage makes a stronger marriage" recorded 56% affirmation (26.0% strongly agreed, 20.0% agreed; $M = 3.3200$, $SD = 1.28932$) from respondents. In like manner, 52% of respondents agreed (20.0% strongly agreed, 32.0% agreed, $M = 3.3200$, and $SD = 1.28902$) to the statement "a woman who is not a virgin is less desirable as a marital partner".

The statement "trial marriage is good", recorded a 44% affirmation (24.0% strongly agreed, 20.0% agreed; $M = 3.1800$, $SD = 1.38314$) response from respondents. When the statement "if love disappears from marriage, make a clean break" was brought to bear, 48% of students responded favorably (16.0% strongly agreed, 32.0% agreed; $M = 3.1200$, $SD = 1.35308$) to it. Similarly, 38% of respondents agreed (16.0% strongly agreed, 22.0% agreed; $M = 3.0800$, $SD = 1.23205$) to the statement "there is nothing wrong with living together with your partner before marriage." In like manner, 46% of students agreed (16.0% of students strongly agreed while 30.0% agreed, $M = 3.0800$, $SD = 1.35604$) to the statement "premarital sex can cause damage to future marriages". Finally, the statement "I recommend marriage with all qualities without love" was the least popular, indicating as little as 28% agreement (14.0% strongly agreed, 14.0% agreed; $M = 2.9200$, $SD = 1.19904$).

DISCUSSION

Research Question One

The primary objective of study question one was to investigate the views of tertiary students regarding love within the Tamale metropolis of Ghana. The findings of the survey indicate that a significant proportion of tertiary students residing in the Tamale metropolis of Ghana had a favorable disposition towards love. This is evident from the fact that the average scores for several statements pertaining to love exceeded 2.6, indicating a widespread acceptance of these sentiments.

As a matter of fact, the high percentage of affirmation to statement "only date someone you love" and "love is important in sexual relationships" was to be expected, in that, as opined by Leman (2005), sex life colors marriage from top to bottom, and it is also a powerful marital clue couples have. This assertion is generally the opinion of the public, and hence, love has become the focus of sexual relationships.

These also align with the findings of Goode (1959), Urdu (1974), Rasaan (2005), and Olusakin and Parmer (2007), indicating that in contemporary Nigeria, love plays a crucial

role in the formation and sustenance of marital unions, similar to its significance in Western societies.

Research Question Two

The objective of this study was to investigate the perspectives of tertiary students on sexual relationships within the Tamale metropolis of Ghana. The findings indicate that students enrolled in higher education within the Tamale metropolitan of Ghana exhibit a mostly favorable disposition towards sexual relationships. This is evident from the mean scores above 2.6 for the different statements pertaining to sexual interactions, implying a widespread acceptance among the student population.

The statement that exhibited the highest level of prevalence, with a 60% rate of agreement among the student participants (34.0% strongly agreed, 26.0% agreed; $M = 3.7800$, $SD = 1.20655$), pertained to the notion that engaging in premarital sexual activities had the potential to detrimentally impact a romantic relationship. This discovery provides evidence in line with the claim made by Nzioka (2001), whereby it is suggested that engaging in premarital sexual activity might result in unintended pregnancies. These pregnancies may be ignored by the individuals involved, ultimately leading to detrimental consequences for the relationship and the future prospects of the female party involved. The students have recognized this fact, since the bulk of them are unmarried.

In response to the assertion that premarital sex is a component of a typical relationship, 42.0% of participants expressed strong agreement, while 22.0% indicated agreement ($M = 3.7000$, $SD = 1.39123$). This is the subsequent highest proportion of agreement among the respondents. The observed acceptance rate of 64% aligns with the results reported by Abogunrin (2002). According to Abogunrin's (2002) research, there has been a notable shift in moral norms in Ghana, leading to a growing acceptance of extramarital sexual encounters among unmarried individuals.

The assertion that "same-gender sexual intercourse should be deemed illegal" had a 60% overall approval rate, with 38.0% strongly agreeing and 22.0% agreeing. The mean answer was 3.6200, with a standard deviation of 1.40043. It is noteworthy to mention that the survey results indicate a significant level of agreement with statements 19 and 22, which express disapproval towards homosexual behavior and advocate for the illegality of same-gender sexual intercourse. Specifically, 64% of respondents affirmed statement 19, while 60% affirmed statement 22. These findings align with previous research conducted by Yang (1997, 1998), who reported consistent disapproval rates for homosexual behaviors ranging from 60% to 68%. According to a study conducted by Vega et al. (2003), it was shown that individuals tend to support the civic rights of homosexuals, but they exhibit a lack of acceptance towards their sexual behaviors.

The results of the survey indicated that 49.4% of respondents agreed with the statement "pornographic materials cause males to be aggressive sexually" (with 32.0% strongly agreeing and 17.4% agreeing). The mean score for agreement was 3.4686, with a standard deviation of 1.33624. The calculated mean value of 3.4686 indicates a level of consensus, so supporting the findings of Lo et al.'s (1999)

study including 1,585 high school students from Taiwan. Their research established a noteworthy association between exposure to pornographic media and the development of sexually permissive views.

In a more recent study conducted by Lo and Wei (2005), it was shown that individuals who are exposed to online pornography tend to exhibit a higher level of acceptability towards sexual permissiveness and are more inclined to engage in sexually permissive behaviors. Hence, this finding aligns with the existing body of scholarly research.

Research Question Three

The primary objective of this inquiry was to ascertain the perspectives of tertiary students towards marriage within the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana. The findings indicate that there is a significant level of favorable inclination towards marriage among tertiary students residing in the Tamale metropolis of Ghana. This is evident from the mean scores above 2.6 for the different statements related to marriage.

Consequently, the overall mean reflects a widespread acceptance of the institution of marriage among the participants. The statement that garnered the highest level of popularity among the student participants in terms of their attitude towards marriage was the proposition advocating for people to maintain their virginity until marriage. A significant majority of students, including 60% of the sample, expressed agreement with this statement (22.0% strongly agreed, 38.0% agreed; $M = 3.5000$, $SD = 1.20588$). The strong validation of this assertion provides support for Oniye's (2008) argument that the intimate aspect of marriage is included within the sexual experiences of the couple. According to Nwoye (1991), marriage is widely seen as a holy institution. Additionally, the United Nations (1988) suggests that marriage is often considered as a socially sanctioned avenue for engaging in sexual relations.

The students express a strong inclination towards maintaining this practice, likely due to its alignment with their religious obligations and its perceived role in upholding moral values (Munroe, 2003a, 2003b), thus explaining the high level of affirmation.

The phrase "I recommend marriage with all qualities without love" had the lowest level of popularity, with just 28% agreement (14.0% strongly agreed, 14.0% agreed; $M = 2.9200$, $SD = 1.19904$). This finding supports the previous claim that love has emerged as the primary emphasis in the institution of marriage (Goode, 1959; Olusakin & Parmer, 2007; Rasaan, 2005; Urdu, 1974) throughout the majority of Ghanaian society.

The mean values of the three study questions that were presented and addressed were found to be above 2.6, indicating a generally acceptable level for each item. It can therefore be unequivocally said that university students have a favorable disposition towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage.

CONCLUSION

The results presented in the study provide insights into the attitudes of tertiary students towards love, sexual

relationships, and marriage within the Tamale metropolis of Ghana. The primary outcomes of the research inquiries were, as follows: To the inquiry of tertiary students' attitude towards love, the findings indicated that there is a considerable degree of favorable attitude towards love among university students in the Tamale metropolitan of Ghana. This is evident from the fact that the mean values for several statements related to love were over 2.6, suggesting a broad acceptance of these assertions. This finding suggests that there is mostly a favorable disposition among tertiary students towards love relationships. In essence, there is a positive inclination among tertiary students towards romantic relationships.

The findings from the examination of the second research inquiry, "What is the perspective of tertiary students towards sexual relationships?" The findings suggest that there is a significant inclination among tertiary students to have favorable attitudes about sexual relationships. This implies that tertiary students have a favorable attitude towards engaging in sexual activities. Lastly, the findings from the study of the third research question, which explores the attitudes of tertiary students towards marriage, mostly suggest that these students possess a favorable outlook on the institution of marriage. The aforementioned suggests that those pursuing higher education often have a favorable attitude towards the institution of marriage.

The three study questions that have been presented and addressed indicate a broad level of approval for each item. Hence, it can be unequivocally said that tertiary students in the Tamale metropolis of Ghana have a favorable disposition towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The study also highlights the prevalence of certain beliefs and attitudes, such as the recognition of the potential detrimental impact of premarital sexual activities on romantic relationships and the importance of maintaining virginity until marriage. Additionally, the study reveals a significant level of disapproval towards homosexual behavior and same-gender sexual intercourse among the student participants.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study discussed in this text contributes to knowledge by shedding light on the attitudes of tertiary students in the Ghanaian City of Tamale towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The study's results have the potential to contribute to the development of policies and interventions that seek to enhance healthy relationships and sexual behaviors among the youth population in Ghana. Furthermore, the research underscores the pervasiveness of certain ideologies and perspectives, like the condemnation of same-sex relationships and the significance attributed to maintaining sexual abstinence until marriage.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the current academic literature by presenting novel insights into the views held by tertiary students in Ghana regarding love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The findings of this research have the potential to enlighten and guide future investigations and interventions in the field of counselling, psychology and social science. In its whole, the research offers a significant scholarly addition by offering useful insights into the perspectives of Ghanaian tertiary students towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned observations and conclusions, the following suggestions are proposed: One of the significant discoveries that has considerable importance in shaping attitudes regarding love, sexual encounters, and marriage is the impact of peer relationships. The research findings indicate that a significant majority of students tend to associate closely with their peers throughout the academic year. Consequently, it is imperative for governmental bodies and educational establishments to prioritize the provision of comprehensive training programs for peer educators in the domains of love, sex, and marriage.

This approach aims to effectively shape and sustain a favorable mindset regarding love, sexual relationships, and marital unions among students. It is recommended that curriculum writers and policymakers include advice and counselling, sex and family life education, and other human value courses, such as human rights, into the curriculum of higher educational institutions, mandating their inclusion as obligatory topics for all students. This will facilitate the acquisition of accurate knowledge pertaining to sexuality and marriage among adolescents and young adults, so fostering the cultivation of a constructive mindset. Overall, the study highlights the need for continued research and education on these topics to promote healthy attitudes and behaviors among young people in Ghana.

Potential Areas for Further Research

This research investigated the perspectives of tertiary students in the Tamale city of Ghana towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The following suggestions for further research are presented:

A potential avenue for further research may be doing a replication of the study across several urban locations within the nation. Interview schedules may be included as a component of the primary research instrument in a study of this kind.

A potential avenue for investigation is in exploring the potential association between individuals' perceptions of love, attitudes towards sexual encounters, and perspectives on marriage.

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Ethics approval: The author obtained ethical clearance from the College of Education Studies Ethical Review Board of the University of Cape Coast before conducting the study. In addition, prior to the initiation of the research, consent was obtained from respondents. All stakeholders and respondents were informed of the objectives, purposes, and probable publication of the study's results. The respondents were assured access to a copy of the final product upon request. Respondents in the study were given anonymity and secrecy about the dissemination of the study's results.

Availability of data: All data generated or analyzed during this study are available for sharing upon request. Interested parties are encouraged to direct their inquiries to the corresponding author, who will facilitate the provision of the data in a timely and appropriate manner.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Topic: Tertiary Students' Attitude Towards Love, Sexual Relations, and Marriage: A Case Study in Tamale Metropolis

Thank you for considering participating in this survey on the topic stated above. Without your participation, the valuable information generated from this investigation would not have been possible. Please remember that your participation in this research endeavor is confidential and anonymous.

The research is being carried out as partial fulfilment of a master's thesis at the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential; do not put your name on any part of the survey. No one other than the researchers involved with this project will have access to the completed questionnaires. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge.

On the following pages, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that assesses your attitude towards love, sex and marriage. There are no known risks associated with participating in this survey. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without receiving any negative consequences. Your completion of this survey indicates your willingness to participate. Any questions regarding the conduct of this research or your rights as a research participant may be directed to the researchers on telephone number 0244715660. We anticipate your usual co-operation.

Direction

For each item, tick [] the appropriate box which indicates your choice or the appropriate response(s) in writing.

Part I: Background Information About Respondent

1. Name of your school?.....

2. The level of certification you are pursuing

Master's degree

Degree

Higher national diploma

Diploma

Others specify

3. Gender

Male

Female

4. Age

5. I live with my when in school

Parents

Father only

Mather only

Guardians

Husband

Wife

Boyfriend

Girl friend

Others specify

6. Marital status of parents?

Single mother

Single father

Divorce

Married

Others specify

7. Are you from a monogamous home?

Yes

No

8. Presently, I am resident in

School hostel

Private hostel

Family hostel

My spouse residence

9. Marital status

- Married
- Single
- Divorce
- Engaged
- Others specify

10. Religious affiliation

- Christian
- Islam
- Traditional
- Others specify

11. Your tribe

- Akan
- Morshi-dagomba
- Ga/Adange
- Ewe
- Others specify

Part II: Attitudes

Regarding your attitude towards love, sex, and marriage, you are required to respond strongly agree (SA), agree (A), uncertain (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) to the following questions by ticking [$\sqrt{\quad}$] the cell that indicates your degree of agreement

Section A: Attitude towards love

Table A1. Attitude towards love

	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
12	Only date someone you love					
13	Sex is a demonstration of love between a couple					
14	Love is important in sexual relationship					
15	I believe that it is important to be in love before having sex.					
16	You would not divorce your married partner for some you love					
17	If you love your partner wait till you marry					

Section B: Attitude towards sex

Table A2. Attitude towards sex

	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
18	Sex is important in a relationship					
19	Any type of homosexual behavior is wrong					
20	Bi-sexuality is acceptable					
21	Pornographic materials cause males to be sexually aggressive					
22	Sexual intercourse between same genders should be illegal					
23	I believe that premarital sex increases the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases					
24	A person's decision to engage in premarital sex is greatly influenced by culture					
25	Participation in premarital sex promotes promiscuity					
26	Premarital sex is a part of a normal relationship					
27	Having sexual partners before marriage is natural					
28	Premarital sex is acceptable with only one person					
29	Premarital sex happens because of peer pressure					
30	Premarital sex can lead to a healthy relationship between two individuals					
31	Premarital sex is a good way to get to know someone on a deeper level					
32	Premarital sex shows a commitment to one another					
33	Premarital sex could ruin a relationship					
34	Premarital sex is acceptable if you love your partner					
35	There is nothing wrong with premarital sex					
36	Premarital sex helps you pick a partner for marriage					
37	Premarital sex causes an increase in teen pregnancy					
38	Premarital sex is acceptable with contraceptives					
39	There can be negative consequences when you have premarital sex					
36	Premarital sex helps you pick a partner for marriage					

Section C: Attitude towards marriage**Table A3.** Attitude towards marriage

	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
40	Couples who engage in premarital sex are less likely to cheat on their partners in marriages					
41	Premarital sex establishes a closer relationship before marriage					
42	I recommend marriage with all qualities without love					
43	If love disappears from marriage make a clean break					
44	A woman who is not a virgin is less desirable as a marital partner					
45	Trial marriage is good					
46	There is nothing wrong with living together with your partner (cohabitation) before marriage					
47	Individuals should remain a virgin until marriage					
48	Practicing abstinence until marriage makes a stronger marriage					
49	Sex after marriage is worth waiting for					
50	Premarital sex can cause damage to future marriages					
51	Premarital sex devalues sex after marriage					