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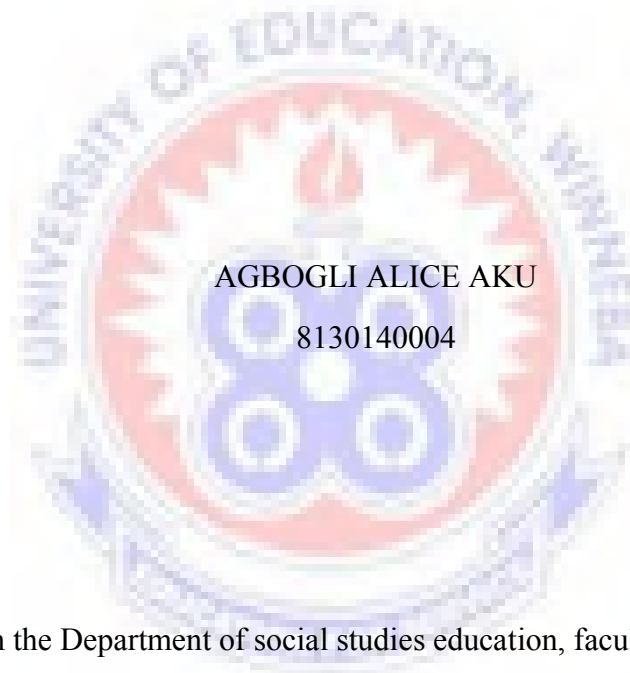
PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS ABOUT UNMARRIED WOMEN: A SURVEY IN

KWAEBIBIREM DISTRICT OF THE EASTERN REGION

AGBOGLI ALICE AKU

2015

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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A Thesis in the Department of social studies education, faculty of social sciences

education, submitted to the School Of Graduate Studies, University of

Education Winneba in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of

Philosophy (Social Studies) degree.

JULY, 2015

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, AGBOGLI ALICE AKU, declare that this Thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:……………………………………………

DATE:……………………………………………………

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. JIM WEILER

SIGNATURE:……………………………………………

DATE:……………………………………………………

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Christine Atteh and John Gbeve.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at discovering people of Kwaebibirem views about unmarried women in order to see whether their perceptions align with what was already in the literature about unmarried women in other countries. The study was conducted in Kwaebibirem district in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The participants of the study were 110 adults purposively drawn purposively from five towns that were conveniently chosen from the district. The study employed the mixed-method design. Data were collected through the administration of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings from study revealed that many of the participants had a negative perception about unmarried women while others showed positive perceptions about unmarried women. The findings also revealed that the married people especially, the married female had the most negative perceptions than the single males and the females. The study revealed that these negative perceptions were rooted in the idea that the unmarried woman is at fault but not the men or societal norms. From the study it was evident that the perception that unmarried women are unhappy was not about their marriage per se rather how others see them; what others say, think and do to them that make unmarried women unhappy. Furthermore, the study showed that people perceived too much education on the side a woman, lack of money on the side of her suitor and too much selectiveness on the side of the unmarried woman as causes of women delaying marriages. It is recommended that a change in societal norms to pave way for respect for people irrespective of their marital status. Besides, it is also recommended that laws on all manner of negative comments, marginalization and stigmatization of people especially, the unmarried women should be enforced by law enforcement institutions to help allow people to make life time choices they want to make.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Marriage is not a foreign concept to the African. It has been there long ago and has been embraced by many societies. Marriage in many societies is a means of transferring property, personal contacts, money, tools, livestock and women across generations and kin groups (Hunt, 1996). Nwobi (1997) wrote that marriage is a union between at least one man and a woman which must be culturally approved. He went further to show that through marriage, couples are guaranteed sexual endorsement and commitment with the expectations of bearing children and training the children on prescribed modes of behaviour. Gyekye (2002), argued that, in African culture, marriage is looked upon as a sacred duty which every normal adult is expected to perform. According to Lodonu (2009:22) "Unlike marriage in many other parts of the world, marriage in Ghana is seen as a requirement stage in life, rather than an option, and remains the most important social institution."

The concept of marriage is universal but varies in terms of the basis of the relationship and structures across cultures. Marriage is seen to be universally common in many societies. Gallagher (2004:465) argued that:

> Marriage exists in virtually every known human society …At least since the beginning of recorded history in all the flourishing varieties of human cultures documented by anthropologists, marriage has been universal human institution. As a virtual universal human idea, marriage is about regulating the reproduction of children. Family and society… marriage across societies is a publicly acknowledged and supported sexual union which creates kinship obligations and sharing of resources between men, women and children that their sexual union may produce.

In many societies in the past, marriage served as a transition to adulthood. According to Coontz (2004:4), "For all socioeconomic groups, marriage was the most

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important marker of adulthood and respectability." To Oppong (1974, cited in Lodonu 2009), marriage is a major transitional point in the lives of young people. For instance, in Ghana in the past whereby girl-child education was not common, as soon as a girl had passed through puberty rite rituals, she was married off (Francoeur & Noonan, 2004). Francoeur and Noonan (2004:471) continued to posit that:

> Since the social position of a person, especially a woman, is often dependent on marital status, single adulthood as a chosen option is hardly acceptable. The normal pattern of Ghanaian life is to marry and have children. Any alternative lifestyle is highly questionable.

Marriage is a socially constructed idea just like gender and gender role socialization. These socially constructed ideas ensure that individuals found in a particular society conform to them. Fanzoi (1996) argued that social role expectations are defined as cluster of socially defined gender expectations that individuals are expected to fulfill. According to Giddens (1993:165, cited in Crespi, 2003), "Gender socialization is a more focused form of socialization, it is how children of different sexes are socialized into their gender roles".

The gender role socialization is learnt as we are born and are carried out by our parents and other individuals in our various societies who matter in taking care of children (Crespi, 2003). Boateng, Adomako-Ampofo, Flanagan, and Yakah (2006); Barry, Bacon and Child (1973); Nabila (2001, cited in Dako-Gyeke & Owusu, 2013) all argued that girls are taught to look up to men and boys as stronger, wiser, and more responsible and boys are socialized to lead and control women. In view of this, girls carry the greater burden of domestic work and boys are permitted more time for play and to be away from home. Gender role socialization ensures that women are married, become mothers and housewives in order to take care of the home Humphrey (1987) in Etuk, Inyang, and Etusk, (2011). These gender role expectations of women being

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mothers and housewives take precedence over other roles as the primary/traditional role of women (Haralambos, 1980 cited in Etuk, et al. 2011)

Etuk, et al. (2011: 96), further argue that:

To ensure that women adequately perform this role, society employs the instrument of gender role socialization to transmit the values associated with the role into women. Consequently women render this role priority attention, not only in compliance with societal expectations, but also to ensure the wellbeing of the family, which is a peculiarly important unit of social organization (pp.96).

It is based on the ideology of marriage and gender role expectations that failure on the part of any individual to conform, is it seen to be a deviance (Kaufmann, 2008).

According to Pickens (2005:60), "Social perception is how the individual 'sees' others and how others perceive the individual." To Adler, (1991: 3), "Perceptual patterns are neither innate nor absolute. They are selective, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate." Perceptions of womanhood, refers to beliefs, notions and ideas people have about females in terms of what they represent in their relationship to men as well as expectations about their appropriate roles (Amadiume, 1987). Womanhood and femininity of women are determined by their relationship with men and having of children (Amadiume, 1987; Reynolds & Watherall, 2003; Sharp & Ganong, 2007). Generally, perceptions are culturally constructed and are therefore products of the socialization process. In a society where marriage is the norm, stigma and misconceptions about unmarried exist strongly (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Sandfield & Percy, 2003 in Macvarish, 2006).

Historically, unmarried or single women who were unable to marry at a certain point in their lives in many western societies were called spinsters (Glynn, 2013). The term tracing it to its origin was a derogatory word. It came from the act of spinning cloth a job that was first a task given to unmarried women in order to let them earn a living. Apart from the `term spinster which was used to call unmarried woman, there are other

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unfavorable words that were used and are still used in many societies against unmarried women. According to Byrne (2003:15)

> Social identities for single women revolved around stereotypes of fussy, selfish, choosy, particular, spinsters, women were dried up, 'staid, old, not living', single women who hated men, old maids, wall flowers, women who were left on the shelf and women who had something with them.

In the work of Simpson (2005:48) single people's lives are depicted by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim as paradigmatic of the negative consequences of modern market economies:

> The kind of existence led by single people is not a peculiar side-effect of social change; it is the archetypal existence behind a full market economy. According to the logic of the market we do not have any social ties and the more we accept this the less we can maintain close friendships (1995:144).Yet, while the logic of the market is responsible for the t*urnover* in relationships, people who prefer to live alone are portrayed as selfish and unhappy, "pursuing ideas like independence, diversity, variety, continually leafing over new pages of their egos, long after the dream has started to resemble a nightmare" (1995:4).

Reynolds and Watherall (2003:489) also argued that "The privileging of marriage and long-term partnerships contribute to the marginalization of single women."

Nevertheless, things are changing to the extent that ideology of marriage and motherhood which has promoted marriage has been questioned "ideologically and behaviorally in recent years" (Macvarish, 2006:2). Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014:6 quoted Markus and Kitayama 2010) that "Assertion that individuals are active shapers of the culture that shapes them brings to mind the notion that women are active in the determination of how womanhood is and will be interpreted and defined." Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014:7) stressed that, "As women embrace, reject, maintain, and champion changes in today's Ghanaian society, these behaviours impact how being a woman is perceived". Women presently in many societies have so many opportunities, choices

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available to them which make them not to be confined to roles and positions embedded in tradition of marriage (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008; Luscombe, 2010 in Ntiomo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2011). This implies that the idea that a woman needs a man for economic support no longer holds. There are opportunities available for them making them independent and therefore, many women would like to marry when they are ready and get the men of their choices.

Despite the fact that marriage is highly promoted and valued, in Ghana, within the past few years, however, an increasing number of women do not conform to social norms and remain single (Francoeur & Noonan, 2004). Ghana experienced a consistent increase in the number of never married women aged 30-34 from 1.3% in 1993, 2.3% in 1998, 5.1% in 2003 and 5.7% in (2008) (Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2011). Ghana's Population Census (2010) Report shows that, the proportion of never-married women from age 25-29 was 28.2%, 30-34 was 12.7%, 30-39 was 6.4, 40-44 was 4.3% and 45-49 was 3.1%. These figures on unmarried women in Ghana show that, there is an increasing number of women who are single; it is therefore, imperative to study how people perceive unmarried women in Ghana.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is considerable literature that unmarried women in many parts of the world are marginalized, stereotyped and stigmatized (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Besides, literature has also shown that in many parts of the world, colleagues, friends and relatives put pressure on the unmarried woman to marry (Sharp & Ganong, 2011). Evidence from the literature also indicates that in Ghana, particularly in the old Ashanti Kingdom women who remained unmarried from 15 years and above were captured by force for a man to marry (Allman, 1996).

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In Ghana, high value is placed on marriage that is why by age 18, a girl can marry and the singulate marriage age for females according to the 2010 Ghana population census is 24.2. Hence, it is assumed that many girls marry early in Ghana by age 25. Nevertheless, things are changing due to modernisation and social change to extent that those things that were seen in the past as abnormal are now seen and viewed differently or as normal. Available literature indicates that, presently, a sizable number of women in Ghana from age 29 and above remain unmarried at a certain point in their lives. This trend of an increasing rate of mature unmarried women according to the 2010 Ghana population census is as a result of education, urbanization and modernization. Given the rising number of unmarried women, the researcher was motivated to find out people's perceptions about women from age 29 years to 45 years who remain unmarried and also to find out whether Ghanaians perceptions about unmarried women are different from or similar to those in the existing literature.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover Ghanaian's perception about these single women which appear to be gaining grounds in the country.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore the perceptions that people hold about unmarried women.

2. Examine the similarities and differences in the perceptions between singles and the married about unmarried women.

3. Investigate perceptions of people about the causes of some women delaying marriage.

1.4 Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose and achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions were developed to guide the study**.**

1. What kind of perceptions do people have about unmarried women?

2. What are the differences and similarities between the perceptions of married and single people about unmarried women?

3. What are people's perceptions about the causes of delayed marriages?

1.5 Relevance of the Study

Firstly, this study will fill that gap of the scanty literature on unmarried women in Ghana. The results of this research will serve as a good source of knowledge or information for N.G.Os who are interested in women issues.

The study results will also provide useful information that may help education institutions to increase specialty areas concerning gender issues. The findings from this study will therefore, provide useful literature for academic discourse and it will also serves as a foundation for further research.

The result will also provide useful information to the general public especially women. This will help unmarried women especially, realize the need for involvement in decision-making, policy building, and legislative bodies in order to place women's agenda at priority levels.

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1.6 Limitations

The study was conducted in Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study targeted only adults from this district. Due to the low number of female literates in most of the institutions visited, one of the limitations encountered

was difficulty in finding an equal number of female literates in filling the questionnaires.

Besides, some people refused to fill the questionnaires and some procrastinated but never filled their questionnaires upon my return. Again, some of the participants demanded money before being interviewed or filling of the questionnaires. Since the researcher could not give them the money, they refused to participate.

Lastly, in some instances, interviewees phone calls interrupted some of the interview sessions, the interview was stopped for a short while then was regained after the end of the phone call interruption. These situations sometimes created some confusion because I had to restate what the interviewees started saying first to where the phone calls interrupted the interview before he/she continued.

The sample size, sampling procedure and setting however, made it quite difficult to generalize the results of the study to cover the entire adult population in the country.

1.7 Delimitations

The study was restricted to perceptions of people about unmarried women in Kwaebibirem District of Eastern Region. This district is just one out of the two hundred and sixteen (216) districts in Ghana. Participants sampled for the study comprised of adults who are residing in the districts. The reason why only adults were chosen for this study was that they are a bit advanced in age, they might have experiences in that regard, thus, it was expected that they should have 'adequate' knowledge about the issue which was investigated. A sample of 110 adult married men and women, single men and women, divorced and widows were purposively drawn from the districts while five (5) participating villages and towns were conveniently selected from the same districts.

1.8 Definition of Concepts

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were applied for the concepts below.

- **Unmarried/single woman**: Unmarried / single woman is a woman or young lady who has never married before from 29 to 45 years and getting to the end of her prime child-bearing age excluding Roman Catholic sisters, unmarried women who are seriously physically deformed and divorced old women.

- **Perception**: The way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted or a particular way of viewing or judging something without any scientific proof.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter. It comprises background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives, research questions, relevance of the study, limitations and delimitations, definition of concepts and organization of the study. Chapter two of the study includes the theoretical framework for the research, a thorough review of relevant or related literature in the research area, and identifiable gaps in the literature reviewed. Chapter three shows discussion of the methodology used to conduct the study. This includes the research approach and design, setting, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments and administration of the instruments, validity and reliability, and ethical issues. Chapter four comprises results and findings of the study. The discussion and results are presented in a prose form with references to tables and figures to support. Also, in the course of the discussion, relevant literature already identified, especially from chapter two are used as inferences to draw conclusions. Chapter five, which is the

final chapter, presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and the recommendations made based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The chapter presents a review of literature related to the issue under investigation. The review starts with a discussion of the theoretical framework that underpins the study. It also traces the history of marriage as an age old socially approved practice and outlines the various forms and transitions marriage has under gone over the centuries. This is followed with a review of the concept of marriage. It also underscores how marriage is perceived in many parts of the world. Among other things, the review shows how marriage is considered as a transition to adulthood, as a universal phenomenon, and as a social construction and an ideology. This section brings to the fore the meaning of perception and how it influences people's beliefs and practice, socio-cultural beliefs and expectations about unmarried women and some perceptions of people about unmarried women. Lastly, the review discusses the major concerns of people about women who delay marriage.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A major theory that has been used to study marriage and singleness is singlism (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). The theory was used by Morris and De Paulo (2005) to study singles and their place in society and science. They also demonstrated how American science seems to be shaped by the Ideology of Marriage and Family. They arrived at the conclusion that singles are stigmatized. Singlism is unchallenged and unquestioned set of beliefs, ideology of marriage and family. Its premises include the assumptions that the sexual partnership is the one truly important peer relationship and that people who have such partnerships are happier and more fulfilled than those who

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do not. As a result of ideology of marriage and family, adult unmarried women face many negative perceptions, stigmatisations and discrimination (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). This theory was used by DePaulo and Morris to study how marriage is valued so highly that people who seem to be unmarried are perceived negatively. They provided evidence of negative perceptions about unmarried women such as; singlehood is a stigmatized identity, the targets were described as 40 years old (compared to when they were described as 25), the singles were perceived as even more socially immature and maladjusted than the married targets, and single targets were also consistently viewed as more self-centred and envious than married targets and the likes.

DePaulo and Morris used claims that were published showing the greater happiness of married people and how the ideology of marriage appears to be influencing the scientific enterprise. They proposed that people who are "single particularly women and who always been single fare better than the ideology would predict because they do have positive, enduring, and important interpersonal relationships. They argued that single population is increasing, but it appears singlism still persists."

Ever since the theory had been documented, it has been applied by different researchers. For instance, Day, Kay, Holmes and Napier (2011) have applied this to show that discrimination practices against singles may have some roots in system-justifying needs.

Besides, Sharp and Ganong (2011) used the theory and evidence from their work showed that participants (the single women) used in their study messages indicated pressure from co-workers, relatives and friends to marry, strengthening the idea that women who remain unmarried or single are deviants.

Byrne and Carr (2005) also applied the theory and came out with the view that as more Americans are witnesses to the special qualities and knowledge of the

unmarried women. That as time goes on, they may begin to examine single status critically and challenge the ideology of marriage and family; hence radically change of singlehood from a second-class to one that is accepted as just as desirable and valuable as traditional marriage.

Though singlism was discussed in U.S.A where there are differences in cultural values, Ghana as a nation cherishes marriage highly. Thus, the researcher applying the theory to this study to find out how Ghanaians perceive unmarried women. The major variable in this work is perception of singleness. Even though this theory is quite new, its predictive power is not in doubt. The theory of singlism is therefore relevant to this study and it will serve as a guide to the study**.**

2.2 Historical Background of Marriage

Marriage is one of the societal requirements in most societies which is expected from the individuals. Histories of marriage revealed that marriage in the past in some societies was used as a tool for family enhancement rather than personal happiness based on love. The institution was used for acquisition of political power or forming alliance, economic empowerment and also an improvement of social status (Coontz, 2004). According to Coontz (2004: 3), "Marriage served so many political, social, and economic functions that individuals need and desire of its members (especially women and children, its subordinate members) were secondary considered." This shows that marital unions depending on the social class one belonged served several purposes to the individuals and their families. Marital alliances and arrangements were left in the hand of families who had their own motives.

However, during 17th to 19th centuries, a new trend began. Marital formations which were left in the hands of families to arrange for marriages for their children begun

to change or fade away. "The revolutionary new ideal of love match triumphed in most western Europe and North America" (Coontz, 2004:4). This ideal of love match led people to invest more of their emotional energy in each other and their children than in their natal families (Coontz, 2004). Burgess and Lock (1945 quoted in Cherlin, 2004:851) maintained that in early 20th century, marriage was transformed "from an institution to a companionship" which was based on companionship, friendship, emotional satisfaction, romance and sex. Africa is not left out in this revolutionary new ideal of love.

We are now in 21st century, and in many societies, individuals select their own match. Besides, this "new marriage revolution has produced a wave of options for both men and women. For women especially, reasons to marry no longer include economic growth and financial stability as these are accomplishments they are now able to achieve on their own in the absence of finding a husband"(Glynn, 2013 :10). This shows that there have been changes in terms of marriage.

2.2.2 The Concept of Marriage

The concept of marriage has been explained differently by different scholars. However generally, common notions of marriage are that it is a legal, social, political and economic union between a man and a woman who have agreed to live together as couple and their union has been recognized and approved by their societies through culturally accepted procedures (Coont, 2004; Nwobi, 1997). People in many societies marry for so many reasons. Some are for fulfilment of sexual desires, companionship, and economic support, adherence to social and cultural beliefs. In many societies, marriage is not a union only between couples but their families and the only accepted means of sexual fulfilment (Mahlangu, 1999; Shukri, 1981). Nwobi (1997) indicated

that marriage is a union between at least one man and a woman which must be culturally approved. He stressed that through marriage, couples are guaranteed sexual endorsement and commitment with the expectations of bearing children and training the children on prescribed modes of behaviour.

Marriage is very important in Africa and for that matter Ghana. This is because in many societies in Africa, marriage helps in ensuring the continuity of one's ancestral line and also promoting the welfare of one's tribe (Moler, 1982, cited in Kyalo, 2012). Due to the importance of marriage in continuing one's ancestral line to Africa people, Kyalo (2012: 214) showed that:

> Anything that deliberately goes towards the destruction or obstruction of human life is regarded as wicked and evil. Therefore anybody who under normal conditions refuses to get married is committing a major offense in the eyes of the society and people will be against him.

Kyalo further indicates that, "In some parts of Africa parents choose marriage partners for their children even before they are born. This is to make absolutely sure that they do get someone to marry" (Kyalo, 2012: 214). These views imply that many African societies cherish marriage so much that singlehood is discouraged. Thus, in some parts of Africa, parents choose potential suitors for their girl child before they become adults. The following sub-sections outline some of the conceptions of marriage as identified in the literature.

2.2.3 Marriage as a Transition to Adulthood

In many societies marriage is a rite of passage as well as a way of conferring adult status on the individual. For instance, in Ghana in the past when girl-child education was not common, as soon as a girl had passed through puberty rite rituals, she was married off (Francoeur & Noonnan, 2004). Francoeur and Noonan (2004:471) further posit that:

> Since the social position of a person, especially a woman, is often dependent on status, single adulthood as a chosen option is hardly acceptable. The normal pattern of Ghanaian life is to marry and have children. Any alternative lifestyle is highly questionable.

Marriage was used as a tool for transition to adulthood. According to Coontz (2004:4), "for all socioeconomic groups, marriage was the most important marker of adulthood and respectability. It was the primary way of organizing work along lines of age and gender." Hackstaff (1999 as cited in Glynn 2013) described marriage as an institution that everyone should enter in order to become an adult. He said this is based on the idea that marriage appears to be a given that is, something that is supposed to be forever. The view indicate that, in the past, irrespective of advancement in one's age whether the individual is independent or not, one is not qualified to be called an adult unless he/she is married. However, due to education and other factors that raise individual's status, many people who are seen to be single are independent but the women will still want to fulfil those societal values like marriage (Glynn, 2013).

2.2.4 Marriage as a Common and Universal Phenomenon

Marriage is seen to be universally common in many societies. Gallagher, (2004:465) supports the commonest of marriage when he describes that:

> Marriage exists in virtually every known human society…At least since the beginning of recorded history in all the flourishing varieties of human cultures documented by anthropologists, marriage has been universal human institution. As a virtual universal human idea, marriage is about regulating the reproduction of children. Family and society… marriage across societies is a publicly acknowledged and supported sexual union which creates kinship obligations and sharing of resources between men, women and children that their sexual union may produce.

To Gallagher, in many societies there is existence of marriage; sexual relationships are endorsed among couples and they are also expected to have children.

Universally, marriage is also seen to be a legal and social union between men and women (Coontz, 2005). Again, marriage is a universal phenomenon because many societies in the world allow heterosexual relationships in the form of marriage but many societies also forbid people to marry family members (Ubesekera & Luo, 2008). To Ubesekera and Luo (2008), universality of marriage again means that at least people marry once in their lifetime and also every society practises marriage. However, marital practices and customs differ from society to society.

The above assertions imply that in most parts of the world a man and a woman are said to be married when their union is backed by law and recognized by their societies. Though many societies approve of heterosexual relations, marriage within families is forbidden by many societies. However, evidence from literatures showed that many women and men are going contrary to universality of marriage by not marrying at all (Byrne, 2005).

2.2.5 Marriage as a Social Construction and Ideology

Due to the strong ideology of marriage and beliefs of marriage, many societies and families encourage their children to marry. The literature reveals that in the United States of America, due to the socially constructed nature of marriage, many women as compared with men are pressured more to get married (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Faludi (2007) argued that the idea of women being pressured to marry may be especially true after 9/11, when mainstream messages strongly promoted traditional ideologies of gender and families in North America (cited in Sharp & Ganong, 2011).

Perceptions of womanhood to Amadiume (1987) refers to beliefs, notions and ideas people have about females in terms of what they represent in their relationship to men as well as expectations about their appropriate roles. Amadiume seems to say that many people expect women to marry in order to fulfil their duties as women. Similarly,

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Hays (2004); Sharp and Ganong (2011) and Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) advanced that in many societies femininity and motherhood are based on the idea of women having connection with men. Due to this, many societies do not approve of unmarried status because women are supposed to have a relationship with men in the form of marriage to have children. Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) argued further that the idea of women having connection with a man is based on the belief that women need men to protect and care for them. This is the reason why a woman irrespective of her position in a society, without heterosexual relationship with a man is perceived to be incomplete (Sharp & Ganong, 2011).

In Ghana no matter how much money a woman has and how independent she is, she must have a connection with a man to be complete. Women's lives are linked to their spouses and the extended families; and proverbs are used to emphasize this (Dzokoto & Darkwah, 2014). Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014:7) state that:

> While the proverbs reviewed indicate that the idea of a working woman appears consistent with traditional expectations of womanhood in Ghana, women's lives are inextricably linked with their spouses and extended families. Traditional values espoused that no matter how much money a woman made, she was generally not expected to have an independent existence. Clearly, women were expected to have lives that were far from independent. They were expected to rely upon their extended family and/or their husbands.

The available literature on unmarried women in colonial Ashanti kingdom in Ghana also revealed that being unmarried during the olden days was not allowed. Women in the past Ashanti kingdom who remained unmarried were captured by force to select someone to marry. Allman, (1996:465) affirmed that:

> They [Women who remained unmarried] were captured forcedly to their supposed husbands who paid little tokens to make the marriage formalized. Between 1929 and 1933, in a number of villages and towns throughout this region of the former Gold Coast, chiefs were ordering the arrest of all women who were over the age of 15 and not married.

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This shows that women in many societies as well as Ghana are expected to marry. According to Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014: 7), "Marriage is a societal expectation across the ten geopolitical regions of the country regardless of ethnicity." This quote implies that, among all the ethnic groups in Ghana, marriage is highly cherished. Failure to marry may cause people in various Ghanaian societies to talk about those who are unmarried because being single is believed to be deviance against societal rules.

However, things are changing to the extent that ideology of marriage and motherhood which has promoted marriage has been questioned "ideologically and behaviorally in recent years" (Macvarish, 2006:2). Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014: 6) quoted Markus and Kitayama (2010) who espoused that "Assertion that individuals are active shapers of the culture that shapes them brings to mind the notion that women are active in the determination of how womanhood is and will be interpreted and defined." Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014: 7) stressed that, "As women embrace, reject, maintain, and champion changes in today's Ghanaian society, these behaviours impact how being a woman is perceived".

It is important to note that women presently in many societies have so many opportunities, choices available to them which make them not to be confined to roles and positions embedded in tradition of marriage (Ntiomo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2011). Ntiomo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2011 cited Haralambos and Holborn (2008:513) who espoused that "Within the limits of the opportunities available to them, people can increasingly shape who they are and who they think themselves to be." This implies that the idea that a woman needs a man for economic support no longer holds. There are opportunities available to them making them independent and therefore, many women would like to marry when they are ready and get the men of their choices.

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Contrarily, in Ghana men who are unmarried grown adults are negatively perceived to be impotent (Francoeur & Noonman, 2004). This is because society thinks a man's responsibility is to marry, have children and take care of them. Thus, a man who is fully mature and refuses to marry, generally, is perceived to be impotent. Francour and Noonman, (2004:472) maintain that:

> Men who continue as single right up to late ages are viewed with suspicion, and may even be thought to be impotent. A middle-aged man who cooks on his own, or eats outside his home, is in an awkward position, because society does not tolerate his position as a single adult. In villages, children may refuse to go on his errands. A Ghanaian child is trained to go on errands and some impertinent children can boldly tell him to have children of his own if he requires the services of those younger. He is normally regarded as irresponsible. He cannot assume responsibility of a wife and children. This may impair his social esteem, and can become an issue for gossip at his work place, especially if he holds a responsible position.

The above quotation shows that in some Ghanaian societies, men to some extent are marginalized. That is, an adult man who is not married at a certain point in his life commands less respects from his peers, colleagues and children. Children show their disrespects towards him by refusing to run errand for him.

According to Baden, Green, Otoo-Oyortey and Peasgoody (1994) in Ghana, "women are generally expected to marry, and most women do so before their 30s" (p.55). Nevertheless, Francour and Noonman, (2004:472) showed that "within the past few years however, an increasing number of women do not conform to social norms and remain single." This view indicates that many Ghanaian women used to marry early but recently new phenomenon is happening whereby many adult women are seen to be single. Francour and Noonman, (2004:472) emphasize this point when they note that:

> It is worth noting that most of the few voluntarily single women are not without children. Some had unwelcome pregnancies at early ages, while others with experience from previous unions find married life distasteful and men untrustworthy. The fact that most single women choose to do

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so after having had children underscores the importance Ghanaian women attach to their reproductive roles.

The point being stressed here is that things are changing in terms of marriage. That roles that were strictly defined are also changing.

2.3 Meaning of Perceptions and how it Influences People's Beliefs and Practices

The process of interpreting information about another person is what is referred to social perception (Nelson & Quick 1997). This implies that an individual may have an opinion about another person, the same opinion can also be formed by other people about the same person, but when it comes to interpretation of the opinion each individual has, they may interpret it differently.

According to Pickens (2005:60), "Social perception is how the individual 'sees' others and how others perceive the individual." This implies each individual views another differently. According to Adler (1991: 3), "perceptual patterns are neither innate nor absolute. They are selective, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate." The writer implies that human beings are not born with how to perceive; rather individuals learn from their culture how to perceive and what to perceive.

Aldler (1991:3) explains perceptual patterns that:

Perception is selective. At any one time there are too many stimuli in the environment for us to observe. Therefore, we screen out most of what we see, hear, taste, and feel. We screen out the overload and allow only selected information through our perceptual screen to our conscious mind. Perceptual patterns are learned. We are not born seeing the world in one particular way. Our experience teaches us to perceive the world in certain ways. Perception is culturally determined. We learn to see the world in a certain way based on our cultural background. Perception tends to remain constant. Once we see something in a particular way, we continue to see it that way. We therefore see things that do not exist, and do not see things that do exist. Our interests, values, and culture act as filters and lead us to distort, block, and even create what we choose to see and hear. We perceive what we expect to perceive. We perceive things according to what we have been trained to see, according to our cultural map.

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The above quotation means that perception is influenced by cultural values. Thus, in societies where individuals are expected to abide by the cultural values, failure to do that means others will perceive that particular person differently. An individual's culture therefore plays a major part in an individual's perceptions. Individuals in Ghanaian culture are taught to marry through gender roles socialization. Therefore, people in a given society will like to see their members marry. Thus when an individual appears to be going contrary to the norm, others are ready to perceive him/her differently unless he/she is a Catholic priest/sister. Beside, perceptual process are selective because perceptions work in short cut judgement of others. Due to the reason, one cannot assimilate all that s/he observes. As a result, information is taken in bits and pieces. But the bits and pieces are not taken randomly. However, are selectively chosen according to the interest, attitudes and background experiences of the perceiver.

Furthermore, Hiedler (1958), a psychologist tried to use attribution theory to help explain behaviour of others by describing ways by in which people make casual explanations for their actions (cited in Pickens, 2005). Pickens (2005) in explaining Heidler's attribution theory posits that people have two behavioural motives; (i) the need to understand the world around them, and (ii) the need to control their environment. To Heidler, (as cited in Pickens, 2005) people act on the basis of their beliefs whether or not these beliefs are true. This can be used to explain perceptions that are formed about unmarried women. This is because when a given society holds tight to their belief systems like that of marriage, making it compulsory for every woman to marry at all cost whether she is ready or get the man she wants or not, they begin to act on the basis of their beliefs by forming all sort of misconceptions about the unmarried whether such perceptions are valid or not. Pickens (2005:60-4) argued further that:

> Social perception is accomplished through various means such as classifying an individual based on a single characteristic (halo effect), evaluating a person's characteristics by comparison to others (contrast effect), perceiving others in ways that really reflect a perceiver's own attitudes and beliefs (projection), judging someone on the basis of one's perceptions of the group (stereotypes), causing a person to act erroneously based on another person's perception (Pygmalion effect).

In societies where members belonging to a similar age groups have married, those who remain unmarried in similar age group, contrast type of perceptions may be applied to them.

2.4 Societal Expectations of Men and Women

Traditionally, in many societies there are gender roles that are assigned to both males and females. These gender roles come with great expectations from every individual in the society. Mitchell (2014) quoted Davidson and Moore (1996: 49), who defined gender roles as "Traits, behaviors, and attitudes socially prescribed and (proscribed) for women and men in a given society." This implies that as an individual is born into a family s/he is given some roles depending on whether the person is a boy or a girl. These roles are expected by the society to be performed. Traditionally, feminine gender is a social orientation that emphasizes closeness and solidarity, whereas the traditional masculine gender role is a social orientation that emphasizes power and status (Tannen, 1990).

According to Crespi (2003: 1), "The way we are, behave and think is the final product of socialization. Since the moment we are born, we are being molded into the being the society wants us to be." Through socialization we learn what is culturally appropriate and improper for both genders. This means that in every society, individual behaviours and desires are determined by the society, the family and the individual as well. Thus, socially assigned roles for boys/men and girls/women must strictly be adhered to by the individual; failure to do so comes with many perceptions about that

particular individual. Each individual must be what the society wants him/her to be; not what he/she wants to be. Even though individuals try to conform to what society expects of them, in trying to conform to gender roles, they deal differently with the tension of conforming.

According to Vuorinen and Tuunala (1997 in Crespi 2003:49), "Socialization is the process, through which the child becomes an individual respecting his/her environment's laws, norms and customs." Gender socialization is a more focused form of socialization, it is how children of different sexes are socialized into their gender roles (Giddens, 1933:65 in Crespi 2003). This implies that just as an individual finds himself/herself in a given society, he/she is automatically taught what to do and what not to as a boy/man or a girl/woman. Women/girls are taught to follow particular behaviours and attitudes and boys/men are also taught to follow particular behavoiurs and attitudes supposed to be observed by men.

Traditionally, men are to marry, become heads of families, and be adventurous, assertive, aggressive, independent and task-oriented, bold, hardworking so that they can take care of their families. Women on the other hand, are expected to attract a man and marry, belong to the home, be good mothers; they are expected (by our culture) to be giving, emotional, unstable, weak, and talkative about their problems; they are valued for their looks or charm or smallness but not their strength or brains. They are considered unfeminine ("bad") if they are ambitious, demanding, and tough or rough; they are expected to follow "their man" and give their lives to "their children," and so on (Hetherington & Parke, 1999; Pogrebin, 1980 in Crespi, 2003). Crespi argued further by quoting Basow in Witt (1997) that in domestic chores, parents sometimes expect children of different gender to perform different kind of tasks; boys are assigned to do maintenance chores, such as moving the lawn and girls are assigned to do the cooking

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or doing the laundry. These are the reasons why traditionally women are supposed to marry early because it is the responsibility of their husbands to take care of them.

The Ghanaian society is organized around notions that males and females are different but complimentary. Males and females have different upbringing, tendencies, inclinations and capabilities. These differences are clearly emphasised in gender roles definitions and the processes of socialization within the family. Boateng, Adomako-Ampofo, Flanagan and Yakah, (2006 in Dako-Gyeke & Owusu 2013) posit that girls are taught to look up to men and boys as stronger, wiser, and more responsible and boys are socialized to lead and control women. In view of this, girls carry the greater burden of domestic work and boys are permitted more time for play and to be away from home. Besides, Adomako-Ampofo (2001); Boateng et al. (2006) in Dako-Gyeke and Owusu (2013), argued that in order to ensure that males and females recognize and respect their appropriate gender positions in society, proverbs are often used in daily discourse to explain, describe and reinforce stereotypes about men and women. This means that both male and women are supposed to go strictly according to the roles assigned to them to perform. So a situation whereby they seem deviating, especially women, from their prescribed roles that is, getting married they are likely to be perceived differently. This is because people think a woman has a time limit due to her biological make-up.

In Ghanaian society like any other society, the assigned male and female roles that are expressed in community norms and values are often used to maintain social control over females (Nukunya, 1992). Every individual in Ghanaian society is expected to conform to marriage which is a norm for everyone to do as well as the most cherished idea by everyone in the society. Marriage and child bearing are important gender roles expected from both men and women especially women. In this vein,

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Lorimer (1969) quoted in the Ghana Population and Housing Census Report (2010: 4) showed that:

> Deeply ingrained and highly valued was this child-bearing duty that the woman was made to believe right from birth, through a mixed process of socialisation and indoctrination that the main "raison d'être" for her existence on this earth was to ensure the continuity of the lineage by producing children. The woman who therefore failed to achieve this objective was viewed, even by her own fellow women, with considerable scorn and/or pity.

Individuals especially women who refuse not to conform to the social norm like marriage is pressured by friends, relatives and colleagues to do so.

Lorber (1994), also argued that gender is such a familiar part of daily life that usually takes deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to act and pay attention. Lorber (1994) supported his argument by quoting West and Zimmerman (1987:146) who espoused that:

> For human beings there is no essential femaleness or maleness, femininity or masculinity, womanhood or manhood, but once gender is ascribed, the social order constructs and holds individuals to strongly gendered norms and expectations. Individual may vary on many of the components of gender and may shift genders statuses their society recognizes. In the process, they re-create their society's version of women and men. If we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements…if we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individual – not the institutional arrangement- may be called to account (for our characters, motives and predispositions.

The above quote implies that what the individual does is directly or indirectly influenced by what roles a woman is supposed to do and what a man is also supposed to do. Society expects that individuals behave according to their gender roles that are assigned to them. Behaviours associated to maleness are created by society and behaviours associated to femaleness are also created by the society. Individuals in a given society are called to account for their characters, motives and predispositions

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when they are seemed to be going contrary to what their societies expect of them as women and men. Nevertheless, many individuals challenge these gender roles expectations in so many situations.

In support of the above argument, Lorber (1994) cited Bourdieu (1990) that the gendered practice of everyday life reproduces a society's view of how women and men should act. Nevertheless, since such conceptions of how women and men are broadly thought of to be, to look, to behave, to act, this is also how society will tend to expect them to be, to look, to act. And people know they will be perceived by others and assessed against expectations, which can be called gender norms (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2003). Through gender socialization processes individuals also form certain stereotyped beliefs about their gender roles. A stereotype can be defined as "A cognitive structure that contains a perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about a human group" (Hamilton & Trolie, 1986: 133 cited in Melissa & Spencer-Rodgers, 2010).

The Women's Manifesto for Ghana (2004) showed that at all levels of Ghanaian society, women are often held to a higher level of cultural compliance than men. This means people expect that women conform to gender roles more than men. It is in the same vein that is why a woman is supposed to marry early in order to seem conforming to the cultural norms of her society. When a woman gets close to the end of her prime child-bearing age and yet unmarried or without any man, people begin to form some stereotype beliefs and perceptions about her. This is because of women's biological make-up and also due to patriarchy nature of many societies.

Conclusively, in Ghana, culture and gender socialization play major roles in shaping the life of an individual. Marriage as one of the shared beliefs of Ghanaian culture is supposed to be performed by everyone especially women. Men and women

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usually marry at different ages because while for the women, the basic requirement is proof of fecundity, the requirement for the man is not only physical maturity but also the ability and capacity to assume responsibility for the wife and their offspring. This means that men usually marry at an older age than their wives (Ghana's Population Census, 2010). Gender role socialization is so strong in Ghana that any attempt by any individual to deviate from any of the societal values like marriage is highly questionable. Because individuals in Ghana are expected to observe socialization roles, prolong singlehood comes with perceptions about such people especially women. Baataar and Amadu, (2014:3), surmise that "In African societies and Ghana for that matter, women are naturally expected to marry. Therefore, it comes as a shock when women choose not to marry." The beliefs and values of marriage suggest that anyone who is not married may be called to question (Morris, Sinclair & DePaulo, 2007).

2.5 Demographic Trends of Singlehood in Ghana and some Countries

Despite the ideology of marriage as normative, literature on single women has revealed increasing number of unmarried women in many societies. Ghana Population and Housing Census Report (2010) shows that in Ghana, age is a major determinant of when one enters into a marital union, starts and exits the reproduction age, or becomes widowed. The singulate mean age at marriage is 28.2 years for males and 24.2 years for females (Ghana Population and Housing Census Report 2010). The singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) is the average length of single life expressed in years among those who marry before age 50 (World Marriage Data 2008). Although a higher proportion of Ghanaians marry, numbers also suggest a new development, changing family processes in the country.

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In addition, an examination of trends in marital structure from 1960 to 2010 also shows some striking features which have remained virtually unchanged. Indeed, in each census year there has been a lower percentage of never married females than males and conversely, a consistently higher percentage of married females than males (Ghana Population Housing Census Report, 2010). There are however some interesting changes over the last fifty years. The proportion of never married females has dramatically increased from 8.5% in 1960 to 29.5 % in 2010, more than a three-fold increase. The proportion of never-married males also increased from about one third in 1960 to 43.6% in 2010, but the increase was only about ten percentage points. This is as a result of education, modernization, and urbanization (Ghana Population Census Report, 2010). Even though the percentage of reported unmarried women was higher in the national sample (29.5%), it is necessary to note that this statistic is based on a national representative sample of females aged 15 and above. Indicating the exact trend of an increasing number of older unmarried women, the Population Census Report, (2010) shows that the proportion of never-married for age 25-29 was 28.2%, 30-34 never married females was 12.7%, 30-39 was 6.4, 40-44 was 4.3% and 45-49 was 3.1%.

The Demographic and Health Surveys (2011) conducted in various countries in West and Sub-Saharan Africa revealed a trend in the proportion of never married women. In La Cote d'Ivoire never married women aged 30-34 increased from 6.1 percent in 1994 to 7.7 percent in 1998-1999 (DHS, 2011 cited in Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2011). In England and Wales, the proportion of older women age 35-44, the proportion single (unmarried, not widows) increased from 8 percent in 1991 to 15 percent in 1999 and 25 percent in 2007, (UK Office of National Statistics, Population Trends Spring, 2009, quoted in Ntoimo, & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2011). The above statistics

show that being single is more and more becoming the norm globally and for that matter Ghana.

2.5.1 Historical Points of View of Perceptions of Unmarried Women as Spinsters

During the nineteenth century, women who remained single past the age they were supposed to marry were called spinsters (Glynn, 2013). The term spinster as indicated early on is not a favourable term. It came from the act of spinning cloth; a job that was first a task given to unmarried women in order to let them earn a living. Haskel (1988 in Glynn 2013: 2) showed how spinsters were depicted in this way:

> Like witch, spinster, was a scare word, a stereotype that served to embrace and isolate a group of women of vastly different dispositions, talents, situations, but whose common bond, never becoming half of a pair, was enough to throw into question the rules and presumed priorities on which society was found.

The above is indicating that unmarried women were viewed in many societies as people who appeared to be *abnormal* to their societies irrespective of their abilities and talents. Again, during the twentieth century in British Columbia, Dicken's Classic novel, "Great Expectations," which featured Miss Havisham appeared to promote negative remarks about unmarried. Miss Havisham in the novel was a rich woman who was jilted by a supposedly husband on her wedding day (Tallentire, 2006). As a result of this, she decided to be cruel to her family and towards men thinking they were just interested in her money. Consequently, Tallentire (2006:7), showed that:

> Miss Havisham in British Columbia, was a name that meant a woman who evokes pity or disquiet, having no dreams beyond the wedding day (that never comes). A figure of malice, officious interference or superfluity/marginality in the community; and a symbol of the tragic end to family lines and fortunes. The above testifies to the images carved for many unmarried women in the past in British Columbia.

A Similar view was espoused by Coralie, (2013: 13-4) that:

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The term spinster is not to be mistaken with the contemporary idea linked to it, that of an "old maid". Spinsters, at the time, were single women of marriageable, childbearing age. These single women had no place in Victorian society; they did not meet the traditional standards for women at the time and were simply not fitting in the Victorian family model. They became an object of pity because they were unable to fulfil their domestic role, as a wife and a mother….This surplus of single women was considered, by many, as utterly "abnormal" and was held responsible for many problems in society… These women who failed to bring anything to society were labeled as "superfluous"; they were considered useless to the others and to Victorian society. Spinsterhood was a failure. They were in fact voluntarily marginalized, criticized and finger-pointed at because they represented a danger to the Victorian strict order in society and its rigid values. Seen at the time by most people as an abnormality and a failure, spinsterhood was a curse.

In Victorian society as it was at that time, parents deliberately socialized their children towards marriage and bearing of children (Coralie, 2014). Due to this, females' roles in the family were geared towards domestic activities and their dependency on males. Thus, unmarried status to Victorian society, was considered to be a misfortune and a kind of bad luck which a woman must not suffer from. Those unmarried women were seen as less human, unfortunate souls and accusing fingers were pointed at them as if they did something wrong.

Lewis (1994) quoted in Reynolds and Wetherell, (2003) maintained a similar view that spinster and old maid are terms still used in Western culture to designate a woman's never married status. According to him, the language that people use further functions to enhance stigma in the sense that people are referred to as unmarried or never-married; the terms have negative connotations meaning a state of lacking. This implies that until a woman is married, it appears she may be viewed as a woman who is lacking something that is necessary for her to have. Marriage is tied to a woman's sense of having everything she needs for her to live as a normal human. The above testified to the images carved for many unmarried women in the past in British Columbia.

The above also shows that unmarried women in some parts of the world in the past were generally called spinsters. The history of the term *spinster* does not depict positive image but rather negative connotations as alluded to above. In Summary, one can say that many societies cherish marriage so much that in the past, women who did not marry tend to be viewed negatively. There are other labels of unmarried women, a few of these are identified in the following sub-sections.

2.5.2 Singlehood as a State of Immaturity and a State of Lack

According to Singerman (2007: 8), "The cultural meaning of adulthood is still defined by marriage. A girl becomes a woman when she is married, whether she is sixteen or sixty." An unmarried woman is seen not to be mature enough to be an adult until she finds a husband. This idea comes about as a result of conventional marital ideology which perpetuates the notion that a woman does not have an adult identity except in relation to another. A woman must be a daughter, a wife, or a mother in order to exist (DePaulo & Morris, 2006).

The views of Sharp and Ganong (2007) showed that societies perceive femininity of woman based on her connection with a man to protect and care for her. This implies a woman who is unmarried is likely to be seen as abnormal woman, and someone who may lack protection because a man in a woman's life is her protector. Sharp and Ganong (2007), stressed that society perceives a woman not fully accomplished despite her accomplishing education unless she says "I do." To Sharp and Ganong irrespective of a woman's achievement in life, society still sees her not to be accomplished unless she ties the knot with a man. According to De Paulo and Morris (2006: 251), "Singles were often described as immature, lonely, ugly and in-secure as compared to married women who were likely to be viewed as mature, stable, honest,

kind and loving." Dalton (1992) similarly indicates that unmarried women are viewed as lonely and not having someone there for them. At another breath, he argues that singleness has a positive side because it makes people to be self-reliant quoted in (McErlean, 2012).

In summary, many societies in the world tend to see unmarried woman as lonely that is someone who does not have any one there for her, someone irrespective of her position in the society, as immature because she is single, and someone who is not truthful, those who are financially constraints.

2.5.3 Singleness as a Fault on the Part of Unmarried Women

To Byrne and Carr (2005), single people are likely to be denigrated if they are deemed responsible for their single status. Byrne and Carr, (2005 :85) continued their argument by quoting Davis and Shong (1977) and Morris et al. (2004) who opined that "Unmarried persons often are viewed as responsible for their single status due to some characterological flaw or *blemish* such as promiscuity, immaturity, self-centeredness, or a lack of personal discipline."

From the statement above, one can say that if a woman is seen to be responsible for her own single status, it implies such a woman might have done something wrong for her hence her inability to get a man, she might seem to have some faulty life style, or she might appear to her society as someone who is too timid and shy and for that reason unable to get close to a man. Besides, unmarried women are blamed because people think they are responsible for their own lives including their marital status. This can also mean that people do not really care, so far as a woman remains single, to society, she must be having some character problems. Byrne (2000) argued that

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singlehood is a hated and unapproved social identity in contemporary Ireland. Byrne (2003:15) further argues that:

> Social identities for single women revolved around stereotyped of fussy, selfish, choosy, particular, spinsters, dried up, 'staid, old, not living', women who hated men, old maids, wall flowers, women who were left on the shelf and women who had something with them.

The above connotations are derogatory, and perhaps insulting. The unmarried is said to be particular when she appears not to compromise on any man at all just in the name of marriage or not to settle for any man that she does not like. When it is said that unmarried women hate men it might implies they do not want to have anything to do with any man. Besides, when the unmarried woman is viewed as wall flowers and left on the shelf, it may imply many people see the unmarried as people who seem have problems with men, old looking, and women who are not interested in men, people who have been forgotten by other people in theirs societies.

In the work of Simpson (2005:48) single people's lives are depicted by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim as paradigmatic of the negative consequences of modern market economies:

> The kind of existence led by single people is not a peculiar side-effect of social change; it is the archetypal existence behind a full market economy. According to the logic of the market we do not have any social ties and the more we accept this the less we can maintain close friendships (1995:144). Yet, while the logic of the market is responsible for the t*urnover* in relationships, people who prefer to live alone are portrayed as selfish and unhappy, "pursuing ideas like independence, diversity, variety, continually leafing over new pages of their egos, long after the dream has started to resemble a nightmare (1995:4).

The arguments developed above are an additional confirmation of how unmarried women are blamed for their status. Unmarried women who choose to stay alone are considered to be unhappy and self-centered.

Byrne (2000: 20) argued that:

> Single women's heterosexuality is openly and publicly scrutinised by others: women are reminded about their lack of sexual relationship with a man in the constant comments and queries of family, friends and strangers. A woman's sexuality is scrutinised whether she is celibate or seeking a sexual relationship. Single women said they are perceived as either *man-haters* or *man-hunters*. Married women's perceptions of single women as *seductress* and as a threat to their own marital relationships in particular, is also spoken about. 'Being on the single scene, looking for a partner is acceptable up to a certain age: a younger woman looking for *"Mr Right"* fulfils gender expectations. Being on the scene as an older, sexually available single woman however, is not accepted, both by single women, as well as others. The problems of looking for a partner can no longer be talked about openly with friends or family, as older women do not want to be seen as *looking for a man or that desperate.*

The above perceptions of unmarried women make it difficult for unmarried individuals to have cordial relationship with many men because their married counterparts may see them to be seductive. Unmarried women who try to have friendship with many men are openly scrutinized by others who think they might be having illicit sexual relationship with such men. Besides, if an unmarried woman decides not to have friendship with men she is constantly asked to have relationship with a man in order to marry. Unmarried women have many questions to answer from friends, relatives, and even strangers. However some are also perceived as hunters who are desperately looking for people's husband if they cannot find their own. These attitudes make it difficult for unmarried women to openly tell friends about their desires for a lover because she might be perceived to be desperate by their married counterparts or other members of the society.

2.5.4 Singlehood as Stigmatized, Marginalized Identity

Literature on unmarried women and singlehood reveal that stigmatization and marginalization are still the dominant marks of singlehood (Sandfield & Percy 2003 cited in Macvarish, 2006). Sandfield and Percy (2003:476) further argued that:

> Traditional discourses of the female life plot cast heterosexual romance and marriage as the ultimate success…obscure(s) women's agency and selfhood beyond heterosexual relationships…constitutes an obstacle to unmarried women's acceptance of their lifestyles as valid.

The quotation above shows that singlehood is a stigmatized identity. This is because marriage status is highly accepted and respected than singlehood.

The extent to which singlehood is stigmatized is closely tied to context (Hertel, Schütz, DePaulo, Morris & Stucke, 2007). Hertel et al. (2007:156) conducted a research on singles and married and concluded that "It is true that singleness is still regarded and commonly accepted as a transitional state at a younger age. A forty-year-old single is much more stigmatized than a 25-year-old one". To them the degree to which singlehood is stigmatized is closely linked to context. The reason being that women whose ages are within twenty-something in many societies are regarded to be age appropriate for marriage; whilst women who are age forty and above are perceived by their societies as too old for a man to marry. This implies that many societies perceive marriage as something that is having a *deadline* in terms of women's marriage. Thus, women in their forties appear to people in their societies as having certain *flaws* when it comes to women's expectations of marriage; thus, they are people who seem not marriageable.

Krishnakumary, (1987:166 as cited in Somjee, 1990: 887) maintained the view that single women are "Socially boycotted and victimised, psychologically they are subjected to innumerable mental tensions, sexually they are totally vulnerable. He posits that if single women are economically dependent they find themselves doubly abused and exploited". This simply means socially unmarried women are regarded by people as people who are different humans, they are forbidden to do certain things that their married counterparts may do and also people shun their company.

To Reynolds and Wetherell (2003), unmarried women have many explanations and questions to answer in regards to circumstances behind their single status. They argue that:

> Women in long term relationships do not tend to be asked (in a concerned tone of voice), for example, "how did you end up married?" Apology and confessions are not the dominant discursive genres for these accounts. The single woman, in 'contrast is expected to have an explanations for her 'condition', preferably a story of 'circumstances' and 'missed opportunities' or one that blames herself for being 'unable to hold on to her man (p.2).

This quote implies unmarried women must be ready to answer questions in relation to their status. They must be ready to answer the question why? What? And how come they are unmarried while members of their societies think at certain point in their lives they must be married. They are expected to tell the circumstances behind their status or certain behaviours of theirs that led them to still be single. Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) quoted Jerffrey, (1990) who argued that unmarried women are stereotyped as lesbians which is a sexual deviance as well as spinsterhood which is also a social deviance.

Literature also reveal that when people want to maintain self-esteem and status quo, they resort to use of discrimination and stigmatization. A research conducted by Yamamoto (2013), showed that, because singles are seen as threats to ideology of marriage, they tend to be discriminated against. Yamamoto stressed that, married people tend to discriminate negatively against single women than singles. Yamamoto (2013:5), continues to stress that "Maintaining self-esteem is one motivation which impels married persons to discriminate. This motivation is universal. People often try to justify their status quo and derogate out-groups to sustain their self-esteem." Yamamoto (2013:5) supported his view by citing Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong and Dunn

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(1988), who found out that "those who face threats to self-esteem activate negative stereotype against out-group members."

2.5.5 Single or Unmarried Women as Less Feminine

Cockrum and White (1985:155 cited in Gordon 2003) argued that an unmarried woman is seen to be barren so she does not know how to nurture babies. In their views, although it is somewhat acceptable for a man to choose to remain single, women who choose this path are often "seen as less feminine, less loving and nurturing, less sexually attractive and more selfish". From the view of Cockrum and White (1985), one can say that a less feminine person might be a person who is more or less selfish and it may also mean a state of unmarried women thinking about themselves rather than sharing their love with men. Unmarried women are also seen not to be beautiful to appeal to the eye of men that is why they are single. Meanwhile in most societies men, who decide to remain single, do not have issues with negative perception as compared with women.

Similarly, Byrne and Carr (2005) cited Krueger, Heckhausen and Hubdermark, (1995) argued that research conducted over the past twenty years showed that unmarried women are viewed as less likeable. To summarize, when an unmarried woman is seen as less likeable, it means many people in her society are likely to hate her because she seems not to do what everyone does.

2.6 Changing Trends of Perceptions about Marriage and Single Women

Currently, the perceptions of unmarried women are changing from that of derogative type to a more positive type as a result of social change. According to Hertel, Depaulo, Morris, Schütz and Stucke (2007:154):

> The stereotypes about singles seem less pervasive than they were year ago. This tendency for positive aspects corresponds to greater opportunities for single people to lead full and rewarding lives. The

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changing place of singles in society is especially evident for women. Compared to decades ago, women have more job opportunities, which afford them greater economic independence. Many women can support themselves, and even some children, without relying on a husband. Perhaps these societal changes are contributing to the perceptions of singles – at least among some segments of the population – as sophisticated (self-assured, independent, intelligent, interesting, adventurous, career oriented) and sociable (outgoing, has lots of friends, happy, attractive, and in love with life). The changes in society have probably had a greater impact on the lives of single women than those of single men.

To Mustard (2000:6), a "Single woman's ability to make choices that married women are unable to make because they have given up a part of their freedom when being tied to someone else."

Besides, a research conducted by Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1998) concluded that as singlehood becomes more common and there are more single role models, the negative sentiment for being single diminishes (cited in Mustard 2000).

Marriage in the past seemed to serve as a transition to adulthood to the extent that single status on the part of the unmarried puts them at a position of immature state. Nevertheless, presently, there are alternatives and more varied and other life events such as a career that can signal the transition to adulthood, while more and more pregnancies are occurring outside of marriage (Popenoe & Whitehead, 1999 in McErlean, 2012). In the same vein, research conducted by Furstenberg, Kefalas and Napolitano (2005:16) concluded that:

> Many adults no longer regard marriage as an event that needs to occur during the transition to adulthood. Instead, a growing number of young people and even adults in their parents and grandparents generation think of marriage as something that takes place after other transitions have occurred.

The above arguments nullify the idea that unmarried status is a state of immature status. McErlean (2012) went on to cite Thornton and Freedman (1982), that people have now begun to accepting those who remain ever-single and people who have

chosen to remain single are less bothered by their status. She also went on to cite Cherlin (2005) who indicated that marriage is no more the only legitimate choice of people but rather, it is just part of a range of options from which people can choose.

2.7 Causes of delayed Marriages among women

Literature on late marriage among women has revealed that many women tend to marry getting to the end of their prime child bearing age. The literature identifies educational attainment, personal factors, culture, growth in urbanization, the decline in arranged marriages, economic/or cost of marriage presently, mate selection/shortage of partners and so on as some of the causes of late marriage.

2.7.1 Education

Research has shown that educational attainment prolongs time of marriage among women. Mensch, Grant, and Blanc (2005) showed that increased educational attainment is a possible factor in delaying women's age at first marriage. This implies the higher women's educational attainment the lower their chances of marrying early. The Ghana Population and Housing Census Report (2010) showed that education among other factors account for some women marrying after 30 years. The longer the years of schooling, therefore, the later the likelihood of marriage (Nukunya, 2003; Ghana Population & Housing Census Report, 2010). Education leads young women to having greater influence over the timing of marriage and choice of marriage partners (Jejeebhoy 1995 in Mensch, Singh & Casterine, 2005). This can be said so because educational attainment seems to keep most women in the schooling system for some number of years than their counterpart who are not schooling thus ready to be married after puberty. Thus as the girl stays in school, she will likely finish her education before marrying. Similarly, Lloyd and Mensch (1999) quoted in Mensch ,et al (2005) argued

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that a girl's exposure to education helps to broaden the girl's perspective on the world, increasing her aspirations; and present her with a more Western outlook on life, which can include wanting to have a greater influence on choice of her husband.

Nevertheless, while longer stay in school delays marriages among women, research has also shown that women who have fished their education, have better jobs and become highly successful appear to scare men away from them because most men feel intimidated as a result of their success. A research conducted by Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2011) in Nigeria revealed that women with high educational status and higher financial standings tend not to get men to marry them because the men become intimidated by their positions. This is because such women are seen as unmarriageable, arrogant and too independent, and also too confident.

Berg-Cross,Scholz, Long, Grzeszcyk and Roy (2004:39) supported this argument when they posit that:

> It is becoming increasingly clear that the challenge of finding a mate once one has a profession is not confined to America. If you are "too accomplished" and female, chances are higher, on a global scale, that you will remain single than if you are less accomplished in the workplace. This is true in Poland and Germany, American and Japan, and in virtually every other country where there are increasing ranks of professional women. Worldwide, educated women are finding it more and more difficult to find a mate of the opposite sex.

This quote shows that a woman's education alone does not delay her marriage. However, as she finishes her education, gets a successful career, men tend to shun away from her because of her status.

2.7.2 Decrease in Availability of Potential Suitors

Research has shown that many women marry late as a result of them not getting men in their age bracket to marry. Turker and Mitchell Kernan (1998) quoted Lichter,

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McLauglin, Kephart and Landry (1992:797), "That women's marital timing is directly linked to the availability of men of similar age, race and economic circumstances. They concluded that mate unavailability in local marriage markets is a significant factor contributing to delayed marriage among women." This implies that many women will either want to marry people that are either in the same age range with them or people who are older than them or someone in the same ethnic group. So when a woman is of age and most of the men coming her way are far younger than her, she will not want to marry them. Besides, many people would like to marry people from similar background so when they do not get what they want, they tend to remain unmarried. To support this, argument, Soutt (1991) quoted in Raley and Bratter (2004) revealed that women are least willing to marry men who cannot hold a steady job, who are of a different race, or who are younger by five or more years but are most willing to marry men with more education and higher earning.

Again, the unavailability of quality marriage partners can also be a factor just like searching for jobs (Oppenheimer, 1988). The search for a romantic partner involves trying to get information about a partner in terms of opportunities and accepting the best taking into account the searcher's qualification and attractiveness. In a marriage market which is favorable, an individual is likely to attract a high quality partner thus lower his or her search for a partner of her standard. However, when a woman fails to get the quality of a partner she wants this may extend her time in searching for a quality partner (Harnett, 2008). Generally, the population of women is more than that of men in many countries. When it comes to marriage, not all men are marriageable. That is, not all men are having the means to marry thus leading to decrease proportion of committed men who are ready to marry leading to delay in many women's marriages.

2.7.3 Decline in Arranged Marriages

Research on timing on marriage revealed that decline in arranged marriage has resulted in late marriages. Mensch et al. (2005) quoted Hull, (2002) who posit that decline in arranged marriages is leading to increase in women's age at first marriages. In particular, the movement away from arranged marriages is considered to have contributed to the delay in marriage. To Hull (2002) as cited in Mensch, et al. (2005), in Indonesia, the rise in the age at marriage has come about due to the shift of the locus of marriage decision making from parents to children, which, incidentally Hull attributes to expansion in educational attainment among young women. So to Hull, most young women would not continue schooling if their parents would still continue to arrange marriages for them. But since parents have left this job to children to make, it leads to increase in their ages at first marriages. This shows that in societies where arranged marriages are customs, many girls are married off early. However, since there is a decline in arranged marriages, it has created opportunity for women and men to choose their own partners especially, women. As a result of that, the possibility of getting a partner that will match one's desire will be low because many criteria might be put in place in choosing the desired partner leading to the delay in settling down at the end. Mensch, et al. (2005) concluded that generally, parental male selection is less time consuming than that of individual searching.

However, in Ghana, Dzokoto and Darkwah (2005) quoted Takyi, (2003) observed a decline in parental involvement in spousal selection. Manjistha (2008:4) quoted (Takyi 2003) who argued that:

> In the most recent years for which data is available, it is apparent that individualistic ties, as opposed to communal ties, are becoming the norm when it comes to mate selection. […] a sizable proportion of men and women who were surveyed in southern Ghana reported selecting their own partners, a finding that is at odds with earlier ethnographic evidence. Among those sampled, 75.9% of the men and

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69.0% of the women reported selecting their current partners themselves.

The above quotations show that, in many Ghanaian societies, parents are allowing their single adults to select their own partners rather than parents doing that for them.

2.7.4 Ethnic Preference before Marriage

Disproval of marriage outside one's culture accounts for more men and women remaining single. A research conducted in Kwawu in Eastern Region of Ghana by Acheampong (2010) revealed that Kwawus prefer marrying from their tribe to people from other ethnic groups. Besides, this situation is not peculiar to Kwawus alone but cuts across many ethnic groups in Ghana. For instance, Baataar and Amadu, (2014) quoted Nukunya (2003) argued that inter-ethnic marriage is still opposed by most parents in Ghana. Dugsin (2001) quoted in Gordon (2003) that Indian women are expected not only to marry, but also marry within the culture so that Indian core values can be maintained. In Korea, the decision to go against social values emphasizing the importance of marriage often reflects negatively on the family. In the same vein, Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2011) also revealed that in Nigeria, cultural practices are found to play prominent roles in determining singlehood. Cultural forces are defined as the norms, values, and preferences that people have regarding interaction and marriage with members of their own group (Kalmijn 1998, quoted in Kalmijn and Van Tubergen, 2010). In societies where marriage out of one's ethnic group is forbidden it may lead to delayed marriages if a woman does not get the man she wants within her ethnic group.

Globally, cultural practices like people marrying from the same ethnic groups, same family line account for late marriages. Many women would like to marry people that who speak the same language and share similar cultural values and beliefs with.

Thus if they are unable to get suitor, they are unlikely to marry early. This may not be different from Ghana although there are exceptions where people defy the above tradition by marrying outside their ethnic origin.

2.7.4 Idealized images of Marriage

Kalmijn (1998) also argued that idealized image of marriage and suitable marriage partner and unwillingness to accept compromise as a strategy for forming relationship is a reason for singlehood. Berend (2000) showed that in the nineteenth century in New England, older never married women were those who were less willing to compromise their values on marriage and family life. The single women as well as married women take the ideals of marriage and love seriously, and they consider a happy marriage as the happiest condition of human life, and would rather have the best or none. Siegel (1995), similarly reprint that marriage and unwillingness to accept compromise are found to be reasons for the increasing number of single never married mothers. There is an increase number of older never married women in countries such as Egypt, USA, Poland, Germany, and India, where highly educated women do not want to lower their desiderata for an ideal marriage mate, just to marry (Berg-Cross et al. 2004). This shows that many highly educated women have certain images about marriage thus they do not want to accept anything that falls short of their idealized image of marriage. Many would not want to lower certain criteria that they have of marriage. So in case men come their way and they think they will not do things to meet their idealized image, they will not accept them to marry.

This is a positive sign that many women are no more settling for any man at all when it comes being a good spouse. Rather they are trying to settle for what they truly want.

2.7.5 Family Background

Family background is also a contributing factor. For instance, seeing marriages of relatives such as parents, guardians and other close relatives, in terms of birth order, domestic violence, divorce and separation can be used as yardsticks to one's marriage. Daughters who observe unhappy and conflictual parents' marriages, may have a negative desire and opportunity to marry in ways that prolong marital delay and lead to permanent voluntary or involuntary singlehood (Ferguson, 2000; Siegel, 1995; Wa karanja, 1987) quoted in Ntoimo, and Isiugo-Abanihe, (2011). Growing up in a mother-only family is linked to remaining single. A research found that females raised in a one parent family, whether it is the father or mother, tend to remain single probably due to greater family responsibilities and recognition of the advantages of singlehood (Forsyth & Johnson 1996) as in Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, (2011). So family background in terms of good or bad marital relations between parents can inspire children to marry or not to marry. This is because when children see their parents regularly quarrel without showing any love towards each other, children grow up to see marriage as a means of quarrelling, fighting, conflict and so on. This demotivates children especially the girls to decide not to marry in future.

2.7.6 High Cost of Marriage and Urbanization

Singh and Samara (1996) in Mensch, et al. (2005) indicated that urbanization is associated with late marriages because of the nature of urban life. To them, women in urban areas are exposed to modern values and they are also less likely to be under the influence of kin who control the timing of marriage and choice of spouse; thus urbanization encourages later marriage. Thus, when one compares women in rural settlements and urban areas, one can say that those who live in urban areas are exposed

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to so many things like modernization, education and other modern lifestyles. These are predominant factors of urban life thus women in cities tend to enjoy urban lifestyle therefore encouraging late marriages. Besides, as people stay in cities, they are less likely to be influenced by relatives who will put pressure on them to marry and who to marry and at what time.

Furthermore, the cost of marriage coupled with expensive dowry is also another factor for late marriage. It is also known that the cost of marriage has escalated in a wide range of settings. A research conducted by Sajeda and Bajracharya (2011:4) showed that "In many parts of the world, the costs of marriage are drivers of social change. Even while practices are widely varied, the consequences for women are overwhelmingly negative." Sajeda and Bajracharya (2011) argued further that traditional courtship that involved a large bride price were viewed as a burden for young men. Customary practice of large bride price is a disincentive to formal marriages, and contribute to the erosion of traditional marriage and family formation in Ghana. In a series of rigorous data assessments, the introduction of dowry or its escalation cost over the past several decades has been linked to marriage squeeze (the excess of marriageable girls relative to boys). It is known that the cost of weddings is becoming very expensive scaring most potential men around to be committed in long lasting relationships leading to late marriages among many grown up women. For instance according to the Ghana Population Census Report (2002), among the elite or highly educated families in the urban areas, it is becoming increasingly fashionable and almost obligatory for their children to conclude the marriage rites with a wedding or church ceremony. This creates huge financial burdens just after marriage for couples to deal with. A similar view has been expressed by Hutchinson (2001 in Baataar & Amadu 2014:3) that:

> 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. This has resulted in the number of people being able to marry also reducing drastically.

2.8 Summary of the Literature Reviewed

The literature began a with theoretical frame work that indicates that single women face a particular discrimination called singlism. Singlism is a pervasive ideology of marriage and family. It premises on the assumption that heterosexual relationship is the only and truly important peer relationship. That those who are married are happier and fulfilled than the unmarried. This theory has been applied to reasons behind people acting in some ways to ensure that a cherished value is maintained rather than defied Day, Holmes, Kay and Napier (2011); Sharp and Ganoong (2011) also showed that participants (the single women) used in their study messages indicated pressure from co-workers, relatives and friends to marry, strengthening the idea that a woman who remains unmarried or single is a deviant. The theory fits into this study because the study is about people's perceptions about unmarried women which the theory seemed to talk about.

Besides, the concept of marriage was reviewed and it was identified that, marriage was considered as a transition to adulthood (Hackstaff, 1999). Thus individuals who are adults are not considered adults until they marry. Marriage was also perceived as a social construction and marriage appeared to be a social phenomenon because many societies practice marriage and approve of its practices even though there are varieties in its performances and activities in different cultures (Ubesekera & Luo, 2008). Again a review was done on histories of marriage and it showed that marriage in the past was left in the hands of parent to arrange, thus marital alliances were based on family interest more than personal interest (Coontz, 2005).

However, as time went on, that kind of family arrangement fade way paving ways for personal interest based on love (Coontz, 2005.)

The literature reviewed showed the meaning of social perceptions and how it influences people's behaviour and attitudes and also societal expectations of men and women. It was evidenced in the literature that due to societal expectations of men and women, any deviation by individuals from what people from a given society approve as highly acceptable leads to social perceptions.

Again, the review also showed that unmarried women are perceived differently in many societies. Some of these perceptions are; they are incomplete, lonely, immature, selfish and choosy as to mention but few (Byrne & Carr, 2005; DePaulo & Morries, 2005; Sharp & Ganoong, 2011). Nevertheless even though many unmarried women are perceived negatively, the literature review showed that things are changing from gender roles socialization. Women are no more confined to traditional roles of housekeeping alone (Haralambos & Hollborn, 2000) but take up careers which supposedly were the work of men. Men on the other hand are now helping their wives in the kitchen as well as doing some domestic activities which in the past was a preserve to women. Also, because things are changing, some of the negative perceptions of unmarried women are changing as well. For instance, the review has shown that many societies are now accepting single status; thus people who have chosen to remain single are less bothered (Thornton and Freedman, 1982) in McErlean (2012). Besides, in the past single status was immature state; thus marriage had been regarded as a transition to adulthood; however, alternative like a career can automatically make people adults presently.

Lastly, the literature reviewed showed that women marriages are delaying these days as a result of education, lack of potential suitors, ethnic considerations in marriage, high bride price demands, urbanization and family backgrounds.

2.9 Gap(s) in the Literature

The literature has shown that many abundant researches conducted on people's perceptions about unmarried women are all from the western countries such as U.S.A, Canada, Britain and the like where their cultures are different from that of Ghana. Besides, the nature of their societies, educational backgrounds and socializations processes are quite different from that of Ghana's. This accounted for the lack of literature on perceptions of people about unmarried pertaining to Ghana. The researcher's role is to replicate these similar researches in Ghana in order to find out whether Ghanaians share similar or different perceptions about adult unmarried women. This study also sought to explore to find out if perceptions about singlehood have changed in light of these demographic shifts and general evolution of societal norms.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter shows the framework that guided data collection, codification, synthesis and analyses. It gives a detailed explanation of the research approach and process, methods of data collection, sampling procedure, size and methods, background of the study area and method of data analysis. The researcher concluded with a detailed outline of the research phases. A researcher's choice of a suitable research methodology is guided by the theoretical underpinning of the study goal and objective, the nature of the research problem, how data would be interpreted, analysed and presented. Thus, a researcher's choice of deploying a particular research approach would depend on a number of reasons: the purpose of the research, its specific objectives, research questions, the skills of the researcher in data interpretation and data analysis, and the social organisation among others. The research approach in this study is a mixed method approach. This involves a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

3.1 Methodology

According to Kothari (2004:8):

> Research methodology involves not only the research methods but consideration of the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explaining why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others**.**

The general approach employed in this study was the mixed method approach.

Creswell (2009) defined a mixed method as a methodology in which the researcher collects, analyses, and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and

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qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase programme of inquiry. Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska and Creswell (2005) quoted Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2003:212) who indicated that "Mixed method is the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research." Therefore, mixed methodology research means using a research strategy that more than one type of research method is used and working with different types of data.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) indicated that conducting mixed method research is not easy. They argue that mixed method studies are a challenge because they are perceived as requiring more work and financial resources as well as more time. For example, they stipulate that increased time demands arise from the time it takes to implement both aspects of the study. Besides, mixed methods research also demands that researchers develop a broader set of skills that span both the quantitative and the qualitative methods (Molina- Azorin, 2011).

Creswell, Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark and Petska (2005) noted that in the relatively short period of existence mixed method research has gained considerable impetus because of the relative virtues it possesses. They note further that mixed method enables researchers to simultaneously generate results from a sample to a population which helps to ensure a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

Giving a careful consideration to this research, I employed a mixed method approach. This approach helped me to combine multiple methods or tools to collect different kinds of data to answer complex research questions (Creswell, 2009). Combining both quantitative and qualitative approach in this study was useful because it helped me in balancing out potential weaknesses in each of the perspectives. I also

used a mixed method based on the idea of viewing the problem from multiple perspectives to give a clearer meaning to my study. Again, I decided to choose this approach because of the idea that, collecting different type of data best provided an understanding of a research problem and thus added reliability and depth to the research data (Creswell, 2009; Gorard & Taylor, 2004). Therefore, in my study, the quantitative data (collected with the questionnaire) gave me the platform to identify how widespread the phenomenon was since it allowed for wide coverage of respondents. The qualitative data (collected through interviews) also helped me to identify and have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Cresswell (2003) quoted in Harwell (2011) espoused six mixed method designs. These are the sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, the concurrent triangulation, extreme case analysis, concurrent nested and the concurrent transformative design.

3.2 Research Design

According to Draper (2004:13), a "Research design is the overall plan of how the researcher intends to implement the project in practice". She went on to quote Parahoo (1997:147) who defines research design as "A plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed". To Kothari (2004:32), "Decisions regarding what, where, when, how much, by what means concerning an inquiry or a research study constitute a research design. Kothari explained further that, a "Research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. As such the design includes an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to the final analysis of data" (p.32). After a careful consideration of the nature, purpose and research questions of this study as outlined in

chapter one, the sequential explanatory mixed-method design was employed for the study.

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009:271) argued that:

> A fully mixed sequential dominant status design involves conducting a study that mixes qualitative and quantitative research within one or more of, or across the stages of the research process. In this design, the quantitative and qualitative phases occur sequentially at one or more stages or across the stage.

According to Creswell, Hanson, Creswell, and Plano Clark and Petska (2005:229):

> There are three types of sequential designs: sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, and sequential transformative. Sequential explanatory designs do not use an explicit advocacy lens. In these designs, quantitative data are collected and analysed, followed by qualitative data. Priority is usually unequal and given to the quantitative data. Qualitative data are used primarily to augment quantitative data. Data analysis is usually connected, and integration usually occurs at the data interpretation stage and in the discussion. These designs are particularly useful for, as its name suggests, explaining relationships and/or study findings, especially when they are unexpected. Sequential exploratory designs also do not use an explicit advocacy lens. In an explanatory design, mixing occurs at the qualitative data analysis stage. At this stage, the data collected via interviews is analysed for codes and themes, which are then used to develop the items and scales of the survey instrument to be used in the second, quantitative phase of the study. And lastly, the results from the entire study are integrated during the discussion of the study outcomes.

Generally, the sequential explanatory mixed-methods procedures seek to elaborate on or expand on the findings of one method (qualitative or quantitative) with another method (Creswell, 2009), with the intent of "enhancing generalizability and may or may not be guided by a theoretical perspective" (Harwell, 2011: 154).

To address the research questions in this study, I employed the sequential explanatory mixed-method strategy. In adherence to this strategy, quantitative data was first collected from adults from 20 years and above from five (5) towns conveniently chosen from the district. I used the descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS to help me in analysing the quantitative data. This was followed with a collection of qualitative

data through interviews which were also then analysed thematically. The data collected and analysed separately were then interpreted together using the entire results.

3.3 Setting of the Study

This study was undertaken in Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern region of Ghana. Kwaebibirem District was chosen because the researcher had a working knowledge about the district. Five (5) towns were conveniently chosen from the district where the adults were purposively sampled. The first town to be sampled was Kade. This town is the district capital and therefore very a busy town. As a district capital, it has so many facilities and institutions that a district can boast of. It is a fast -growing town because of the district status with many hotels, hospitals, markets, banks as to mention but few.

The second town is called Asuom, the second biggest town in the district. This town is a commercial town with one company which purposely uses palm nuts to make several finished products for local use and export. It has a secondary school, post office, police station, and more than forty basic schools comprising private and public. It also has a clinic and market and is also a very busy town. The third town is Pega. It is a small community consisting of workers of a giant company that also use palm nuts as its raw material. It supplies the finished products such as palm oils of different varieties to some companies in Ghana and export the rest. This community has a school, Ghana Commercial Bank, a clinic and a well-structured environment. Tweapiasi is the fourth town. This town consists of members who are predominantly farmers, with few teachers and community health nurses. It is situated on the road side leading to Anyinam and other surrounding towns. It has few schools and a health post. Lastly, Bomso a small town but very popular due to a particular private school that has students from many parts from the district was sampled. Apart from this private school, there

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are other government schools. It has some health workers; but majority of the people are predominantly farmers. This town is also on the road side like Asuom and Tweapiasi.

The population of Kwaebibirem is based on the 2010 Population and Housing Census is 113,721 including children. Males constitute about 49.0% and females constitute about 51.0%

3.4 Population of the Study

According to Babbie and Mouton (2005: 164), "The population of a study is usually the group of people whom the researcher would like to study and to draw conclusions". The accessible population comprised adults in Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern region of Ghana. Kwaebibirem District has about 222 settlements (Ghana Population Census Report, 2010).

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample comprised one hundred and ten (110) adults purposively selected from five (5) towns in the district. These adults consisted of married, singles, divorced and widows from the Kwaebibirem District.

First, from each of the 5 towns chosen conveniently, adults including married (both males and females), singles, widows, semi-divorced were chosen purposively (22 each from each town). Two non-probability sampling techniques, convenience and purposive, were used to sample the adults for the study. The towns chosen for the study were conveniently sampled in the district because they were easy to access as a result of their availability and closeness to the investigator (Wisker, 2008). Convenience sampling helps the researcher to choose a group of people that are readily accessible to, and convenient for the researcher (Adler & Clark, 2008). These five towns were chosen as a fair representative of the whole district.

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A purposive sample of hundred and ten (110) adults were drawn from the five (5) towns chosen. The total number of the adults sampled included 10 interviewees. Purposive sampling, also called judgmental sampling, was used because the researcher was convinced that the respondents that were included in the sample possessed characteristics that satisfactorily met the researcher's needs (Kwabia, 2006). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:713) quoted in Teddlie and Yu, (2007) "defined purposive sampling technique as selection of certain units or cases "based on a specific purpose rather than randomly". To Parahoo (1997:232) purposive sampling is "A method of sampling where the researcher deliberately chooses who to include in the study based on their ability to provide necessary data".

Ideally, most researchers recommend the use of probability sampling techniques for the selection of a research sample. They argue that probability sampling techniques ensure that every member of the target population is given an equal chance of being selected to be part of the sample, thus ensuring representativeness (Kumekpor, 2002; Kwabia, 2006). Nonetheless, non-probability sampling techniques, such as purposive sampling has also been acknowledged as being useful in educational research (Kwabia, 2006; Babbie, 2007). Neuman (1994) argues that, purposive sampling is appropriate when the researcher wants to select a sample that is especially informative, and when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation. Purposive sampling was chosen due to the sensitive nature of the study. Besides, I chose purposive sampling because I was seeking knowledge about the people's opinion of unmarried women from 29 years to 45 years, which I thought the participants would provide by virtue of their experience and their relationships with such women in their communities.

To add to that, the researcher wanted to allow people to remain anonymous and have a free mind and atmosphere to express themselves in regard to the study. Thus, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to visit respondents at their homes and work places for easy identification. Purposive sampling was used in sampling participants for the questionnaire, and also in sampling of participants for the interviews. This is because, for the questionnaire I needed literates who would be able to read and understand the statements on the questionnaire and hence tick the item they think they agreed or disagreed with based on their perceptions/beliefs. Again, I chose purposive sampling for interviewee because l was looking for both illiterate and literate groups to be interviewed in order to see divergence in the responses given. I also considered the kind of work they do to check whether participants will be literates, semi-literates or illiterates; hence my choice of purposive sampling.

3.6.0 Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

The data collection instruments used in this study were two. They were questionnaire and interview. The instruments were used to collect primary data for the study.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

According to Harvey (2012:1), "A questionnaire is a structured means of posing a standardised set of consistent predetermined questions in a given order to respondents for self-completion in a sample survey." It is sets of questions that are devised to be self-completed by respondents (Harvey, 2012). It provides a tool that is used in finding out information for evaluation and tabulation (Taylor-Powell, 1998). I used a closed-ended type of questionnaire whereby the respondents were asked to provide answers that fall along an implied continuum i.e.as in a rating scale (Taylor-Powell, 1998).

As a way of soliciting information from respondents, the questionnaires were self-administered to literate respondents in order to have a direct contact with the respondents though most often I sat a bit farther away from them and watched them tick. Before I gave out the questionnaires, since they did not know me, I had to first introduce myself. Where I met the participants at their work place, I first went to seek permission from the headmaster/headmistress especially at the basic schools I visited. The headmaster/headmistress then invited the respondents to inform them of my mission. This was mostly done during their break-time.

I took the opportunity of the gatherings to explain that I came from University of Education, and a student doing a research on people's perceptions about mature unmarried women from 29 to 45 years. So the questionnaires that would be given to them were just for academic purposes but nothing else. Thus, I assured them that their confidentiality would be highly guaranteed. Where I met the participants at home and other work places individually, similar assurances were replicated.

I often told the respondents that, the questionnaires that I would give to them contained a few perceptions that I wanted them to also show their perceptions by ticking from 'agree' to 'disagree'. I also informed them that the questionnaires were of two sections. Section A involved basic information about themselves and section B contained statements in the form of perceptions before they began.

The questionnaire had an introductory front page (Section A) and with a four (4) sectional table (Section B). The section A sought background information on the participants. These included gender, age, marital status, educational level, religious denomination and how religious the participants are. Section B collected information on people's perceptions. This was done in perception rating scale form. This section was made up of twenty (24) statements comprising 12 positive and 12 negative

statements in a Likert type scale to which participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. I asked the participants to indicate their choices at the most appropriate point on a scale of five.

Each scale item had four (5) response categories ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) including a neutral line ambivalent. For purposes of scoring, each statement in the Likert scale (in section B) was assigned a numerical score ranging from 1 to 2. Positive statements were rated as SA =2, A=1, Am= 0, D = -1 and SD = -2. Negative statements were rated as SA = -2, A = -1 Am = 0, D = 1, SD=2. A respondent's score was computed by summing these numerical values. This represented an individual participant's perception. The total score of respondents was obtained by aggregating the individual scores of respondents. In other hands, individual perception scores were obtained by summing the values of their choices on the scale. This total score of participants revealed the people's perceptions about unmarried women in Kwaebibirem district of the Eastern region of Ghana. Administration of the questionnaire preceded the semi structured interview of a few people (ten participants from the five towns, two participants each from each town). The full questionnaire can therefore be seen in Appendix A.

3.6.2 Interview (semi-structured)

According to Kumar (2005: 123), "Any person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview". "Interview data is an appropriate inter-subjective way for participants and researchers to exchange meanings and interpretations of particular events or actions" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995: 72). For an in-depth understanding of the situation, semi-structured interviews were conducted to probe into people's perceptions about unmarried women. Using an interview guide in all, ten (10) participants were sampled (from the five

towns) and interviewed. Seven (7) of the participants were married, one (1) cohabitating, one (1) divorced and one (1) single lady. Three (3) of the respondent had no primary education, one had J.H.S education, three (3) were Middle school leavers and three (3) had diplomas. Many of the respondents that is, nine (9) out of 10 were Christians and just 1 belonged to the Islamic religion.

Interviews generally have been described as very useful when they are applied to the exploration of more complex and subtle phenomena (Denscombe, 2007). Denscombe argued that interview is a more suitable method of data collection when a researcher needs to gain insights into things like people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences.

The semi-structured interview was adopted because by their nature interviewees are allowed to develop their ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the interviewer (Denscombe, 2007). The answers were open-ended, and there was more emphasis on the respondents elaborating on points of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered. However, as consistent with semi-structured interviews, the researcher was flexible in terms of the order in which questions were considered. The form of the interview was a one-to-one interview. Thus, it involved a meeting between the researcher and the participants. This format makes it relatively easy to control, and also transcribing and recording becomes relatively easy ((Denscombe, 2007).

The interview guide had an introductory section stating the purpose of the interview and assuring interviewees of anonymity and confidentiality. Since I carried the interview guide, I told them that they needed to tell me certain basic information about themselves before the start of interview. I then told them that the participants that

they would give were just for academic purposes rather than being used against them. I assured them of their anonymity and confidentiality in regard of their responses.

It also had two sections; 1 and 2. Section one provides biographical information about the respondents. This included their gender, age group, marital status, educational levels, and religious denominations and how religious they are. Section two dealt with the participant's perceptions about unmarried women from 29 to 45 years. The interview lasted between 9 and 14 minutes. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and transcription excerpts quoted to support analysis and interpretation. In all, the interview guide contained ten (10) items. The ten (10) items were just some questions that sought responses from the participants in terms of their perceptions. I recorded the interviews using my mobile phone recorder. I also ensured that, no interruptions or distractions took place during the interview sessions. All the interviews were conducted in the participants' residences and work places. A sample of the interview guide has been included in this research as appendix B.

3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected were quantitatively and qualitatively presented and analysed. The data collected with the questionnaire was quantitatively presented and analysed. The questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentage with the aid of SPSS. Data collected from the interview were thematically analysed. Participants that were interviewed were assigned pseudonyms (Maame Efuah, Mr Kofi, Miss Linda, Alhaji, Mr. Attah, Miss Adwoa, Madam Janet, Mr. Bright, Mr. Moses and Papa Owusu) appropriate to their sex for ethical reasons. The data presentation and analysis were guided by the research questions formulated to guide the study as stated in chapter one, and in line with the research instruments

used to collect the data. A presentation of data analysis and discussion of findings thereof have been thoroughly presented in chapter four of this research report.

3.8 Validating the Findings

According to Denscombe (2002: 100) "Validity refers to the quality of data and explanations and the confidence we might have that they accord with what is true and what is real". Validity involves the demonstration that the researcher's data and his/her analysis are firmly rooted in the realm of things that are important, genuine and real. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was used. This was done by triangulating the result of the data collected with the different research instruments. Creswell and Miller (2000:126), cited in (Hussein 2009) described triangulation as a "Validity procedure where researchers look for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study." Hussein (2009) quoted Jick (1979) who defined triangulation as the use of multiple methods mainly qualitative and quantitative methods, in studying the same phenomenon for the purpose of increasing study credibility. Denzin (1978) cited in Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, (2007) was the first to outline how to triangulate research methods. Even though triangulation had been advocated far earlier (Johnsons, Onwuegbuzie &Turner 2007). Polit and Hungler (1987) in Manasra (2003) espoused that understanding of human behaviour is best when a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis (triangulation) is used judiciously and that these two approaches can be combined in the same study.

Apart from defining the concept, Denzin (1978) outlined four types of triangulation. These are data triangulation which involves the use of a variety of sources in a study, and investigator triangulation which also involves the use of several different

researchers. The other two are theory triangulation, that is, use of multiple perspectives and theories to interpret the results of a study; and lastly methodological triangulation (sequential explanatory) which involves the use of multiple methods to study a research problem. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) note that triangulation has a lot of advantages. These include making researchers to be more confident of their results; stimulating the development of creative ways of collecting data; and ensuring thicker and richer data. According to Creswell and Miller (2000:126) cited in (Hossain 2012), triangulation helps in "increasing credibility of scientific knowledge by improving both internal consistency and generalizability through combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study". In this study triangulation was used among others to validate the findings of the research. To fulfil this purpose, the methodological triangulation (sequential explanatory) was used. This involved the use of more than one method or instrument to collect data for the study. Though, I employed sequential explanatory mixed method, I made use of a feature in sequential exploratory mixed method which was pilot testing of the tools. According to Creswell (2003) quoted in Harwell (2011:154) when using this design, instrument constructions is one example and that:

> Draft of an instrument (survey, test) is piloted with a small number of cases who often provide important qualitative feedback about their experience with the instrument, followed, after appropriate modifications of the instrument, by using the instrument to collect quantitative data. The quantitative results are then used to enhance, complement, and possibly extend the earlier pilot results.

Thus, based on Creswell idea above, I did pilot testing of my instruments prior to the actual collection of data. I pilot tested 20 questionnaires and seven items on the interviews guide. This was done in two towns from the district. These towns were Twaepiasi and Abodom respectively. This enabled me to make amend to some of the statements and the questions. This gave me a clue as to how to restructure some of the

statements and the questions. I even got additional ideas from the pilot testing to add to what I already had. Many of the items that were agreed to, and disagreed to, with responses from the questionnaire were confirmed in the interviews. This gave me much interest to find out more. After some weeks, I went to collect the actual data. From the data, it has shown that many of the questionnaire responses were confirmed in the interviews. Thus, the triangulation was sequentially done using the data from the survey by the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are about being clear about the nature of agreement a researcher has entered into with the research respondents and contacts (Bell, 2005). According to Creswell (2003:64), "As researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants and sites for research". The main ethical issues considered during the research stage include: *confidentiality* and *anonymity*. Confidentiality in research is an assurance that the respondent will not be identified or presented in any identifiable form, while anonymity is a guarantee that the responses of the respondents will not be disclosed as to which information came from which respondent. In its strict form, even the researcher should not be able to tell which responses came from which respondent (Sapsford & Abbott, 1996).

To Creswell (2009) ethical practices in research involve much more than merely following a set of static guidelines, such as those provided in educational and professional associations. He says that researchers need to protect their research participants, guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organisations or institutions, and promote the integrity of research.

To ensure that ethical standards were followed, the researcher sought consent from all the participants who took part in the study. On few instances, participants were

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sceptical and suspicious of the questionnaire and their responses to the interview questions; hence needed detailed information and reassurance about confidentiality and the purposes of the study. That was customarily done prior to filling of the questionnaire and commencement of the interviews.

Again, both research instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) had an introductory information that clearly stating the intent and purpose of the study. The introductory section also assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity. Lastly, the researcher did self-introduction of herself to the participants before any of the research instruments was administered to the participants. The self-introduction was to ensure that participants were not afraid of what they were going to say. All information that concerned the participants in terms of their names, where they work, their residences including references that revealed the participants' identities were kept secret.
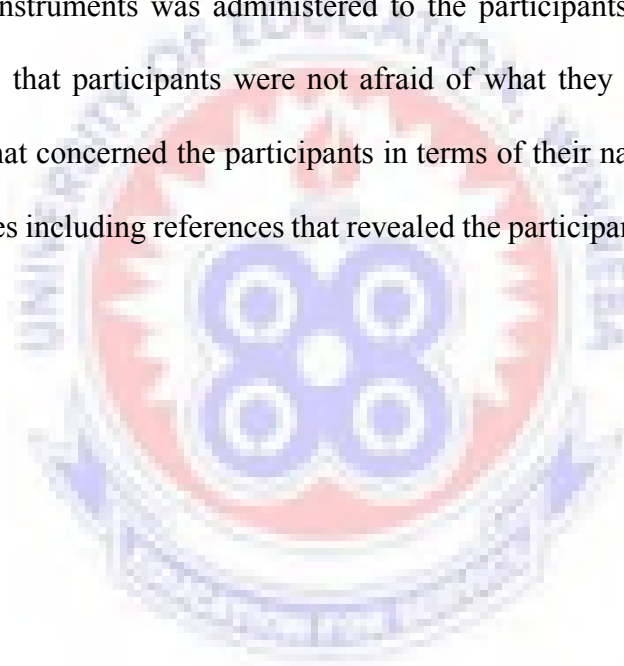
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with methodologies through which the findings and the results for chapter four were obtained. In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings on the study through the use of the two research instruments taking into consideration the objectives and research questions of the study. The presentations begins with a biographical background of the respondents, data related to the research questions and lastly a discussion of the results obtained. The presentation is done under the following research questions:

1. What kind of perceptions do people hold about unmarried women?

2. To what extent are the perceptions different from and similar between single and the married about unmarried women?

3. What are people's perceptions about the causes of delaying marriages of some women?

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Items	Variables	Frequency (*f*)
Gender	Male	66
	Female	34
Age	Under 20	0
	21-29	31
	30 years and above	69
Educational level	J.H.S	0
	S.H.S	13
	Diploma/Cert	45
	1st Degree and above	42
Marital status	Single	37
	Married	58
	Divorced	3
	Widowed	2
Religion	Christian	87
	Muslim	9
	Traditionalist	2
	Others	2
Degree of religiosity	Extremely religious	59
	Fundamentalists	11
	Casually religious	27
	Others	3

Source: Field data, February, 2015

Table1above shows that respondents for the questionnaires consisted of 100 adults purposively drawn from five towns from the district (Kwaebibirem). Thirty-four (34) of the participants were females and 66 males. Sixty-one 61% of the participants were 30 years and above, and 31% were between the ages of 21-29 (twenty-one to twenty-nine). More than ten participants representing 13% possessed S.H.S. certificate, 45% had Diploma/Certificates, and 42% possessed degree certificate. The marital status of participants indicated on Table 1 shows that 37% of the respondents were single, 58% were married, 3% had divorced and 2% were widows.

Majority of the respondents representing 87% were Christians. Just 9% and two 2% were Muslims and traditionalists respectively. Two percent (2%) of the respondents belonged to other religious denominations. Lastly, 59% were extremely religious, 11% were fundamentalist, 27% were casually religious and just 3% were not religious.

I decided to choose 100 participants in filling the questionnaires because this number shows a fair representative of the whole district. Besides, due to the structure of the questionnaire, I needed a literate group to administer the questionnaires to. Thus, it appeared there were more male participants' than females participants. This is because I went to the participant's work places to administer the questionnaires. At these work places there were more male than female workers.

4.2 Perceptions of People in Kwaebibirem District about Unmarried Women

This section presents findings of the study pertaining to the first research question, which was stated as "what kind of perceptions do people have about unmarried women in Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern region of Ghana"?

The perceptions of the respondents were measured using a five-point Likert scale with options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). A neutral line (Ambivalent) was included. The participants were to obtain a possible

rating score from a low of 24 to a high of 48 due to 24 statements. For purposes of scoring, each statement in the Likert scale in section B was assigned a numerical score ranging from 1 to 2. Positive statements were also rated as SA =2, A=1, Am= 0, D = -1 and SD = -2. Negative statements were rated as SA = -2, A = -1 Am = 0, D = 1 SD=2. Individual perception scores were obtained by summing the values of their choices on the scale.

When the researcher did the individual scores, any negative score meant negative perception and any positive score represented a positive perception. Thus, those who had negative scores had negative perceptions, those who had positive scores had positive perceptions and those who scored zero were neutral. However, negative and positive perceptions were further categorized as highly positive which ranged from (48 - 25), positive (24 - 1), highly negative (48- 25), and negative (24 - 1) and the neutral line or zero (0 – 0) scores as neutral. The summary of the categorizations of the perceptions is shown on Table 2 below.

Table 2: People's Perceptions about Unmarried Women in Kwaebibirem District of The Eastern Region of Ghana

Range of scores	Frequency (*f*)	Percentage (%)	Perceptions
25 - 48	1	1	Highly positive
1 - 24	35	35	positive
0 - 0	2	2	Neutral(ambivalent)
1 - 24	61	61	Negative
25 - 48	1	1	Highly negative
Total 100	**100**	**100**	

From Table 2, just 1 participant (1%) had highly positive perceptions and a significant number of respondents (35%), had positive perception showing a general positive perception towards unmarried women.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, (1%) of the respondents had a highly negative perception, a significant proportion of the respondents (61%), showed a greater negative perceptions about unmarried women. The descriptive data as presented in Table 2 above indicated that 62 out the 100 respondents had negative perceptions. This was confirmed by the number of respondents who had scores ranging from 24 - 1 and 48 - 25 negative perceptions categories respectively. To describe whether they have negative perception or positive perceptions, the data showed that overall majority of the respondents had negative perceptions. This is because overall, (62%) out of hundred respondents as against (36%) out of hundred respondents had negative perceptions. This is because individually out of the total number of the respondents, (62%) had the higher percentage as against (36%) respondents. Just (2%) were neutral.

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It could therefore be concluded that, the statistical analysis showed many participants had negative perception about unmarried women. This finding supports other studies that found similar results (Byrne, 2000; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Hertel, Depaulo, Morris, Schütz, & Stucke (2007). Participants' ideas about unmarried women appeared to have been limited to a narrow definition of singlehood which largely influenced their perceptions.

4.3 T**his section presents findings of the study pertaining to the second research question, which was stated as:** "To what extent are perceptions of singles and married about unmarried women different and similar?

To address the research question stated above cross tabulation was used to compare the perceptions among the various groups based on some items. The findings have been drawn based on the perceptions of the participants.

Table 3 Cross Tabulations of the Trends of Respondents Views Based on Their Gender/Marital Status on Selected Items

Item	Gender /Marital Status	Degree Of Perception And Number Of Respondent				
		SA	A	AM.	D	SD
Marriage should be a priority in every woman's life.	Male	22 33.%	10 16.2%	5 7.5%	18 27.3%	11 16.7%
	Female	13 38.2%	14 41.2%	1 2.9%	3 8.8%	3 3.8%
	Single	10 27.0%	6 16.2%	5 13.5%	8 21.6%	8 21.6%
	Married	25 43.1%	16 27.6%	1 1.7%	10 17.2%	6 10.3%
	Divorce	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%	2 66.7%	0 0.0%
	Widow	0	1	0	0	1

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		0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%
Women should marry early.	Male	12 18.2%	27 40.9%	3 4.5%	18 273%	6 9.1%
	Female	9 26.5%	20 58.8%	2 5.9%	2 5.9%	1 2.9%
	Single	8 21.6%	14 37.8%	1 2.7%	10 27.0%	4 10.8%
	Married	12 20.7%	31 53.4%	4 6.9%	8 13.8	3 5.2%
	Divorce	1 33.3%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%
	Widow	0 0.0%	1 50.0%	0 0.0%	1 50.0%	0 0.0%
Unmarried women over 30 years have bad characters	Male	13 19.7%	17 25.8%	6 9.1%	19 28.8%	11 17.7
	Female	11 32.4%	12 35.3%	3 8.8%	3 8.8%	5 14.7%
	Single	15 40.5%	12 32.4%	1 2.7%	8 21.6%	1 2.7%
	Married	26 44.8%	17 29.3%	1 1.7%	10 17.2%	4 6.9%
	Divorce	0 0.0%	2 66.7%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%
	Widow	1 50.0%	1 50.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Single older women have more life choices than married women.	Male	5 7.6%	15 22.7%	14 21.2	30 45.5%	2 3.0%
	Female	1 2.9%	4 14.7%	7 20.6%	16 47.1%	5 14.7%
	Single	3 8.1%	9 24.3%	9 24.3%	14 37.8%	2 5.4%
	Married	3 5.2%	11 19.0%	11 19.0%	31 53.4%	2 3.4%

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	Divorce	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%	1 66.7%
	Widow	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 50.0%	1 50.0%
Women from 29 years and above and still single should be pressured to marry.	Male	28 42.4%	9 13.6%	0 0.0%	12 18.2%	17 25.8%
	Female	18 52.9%	9 26.5%	1 2.9%	2 5.9%	4 11.8%
	Single	14 37.8%	6 16.2%	0 0.0%	9 24.3%	8 21.6%
	Married	30 51.7%	11 19.0%	1 1.7%	5 8.6%	11 19.0%
	Divorce	1 33.3%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%
	Widow	1 50.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 50.0%
Unmarried women over 30 years look pitiful, hopeless and desperate	Male	23 34.8%	22 33.3%	2 3.0%	16 24.2%	3 4.5%
	Female	19 55.9%	10 29.4%	0 0.0%	3 8.8%	2 5.9%
	Single	15 40.5%	12 32.4%	1 2.7%	8 21.6%	1 2.7%
	Married	26 44.8%	17 29.3%	1 1.7%	10 17.2%	4 6.9%
	Divorce	0 0.0%	2 66.7%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%
	Widow	1 50.0%	1 50.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%

Field data, 2015

Table 3 showed a general outlook of perceptions of respondents on some items.

This particular table depicts the trends of participants' perceptions in terms of

differences and similarities. In order to show which group of respondents show similar or different perceptions, more additional tables have been provided below. These subsequent tables categorized the respondents into two groups (married and singles) to make it simpler for easy comprehension and interpretations.

Table 3.1: A Breakdown of the Views between Singles and Married on the Item, Unmarried Women Suffer Lesser Stress than Their Married Counterparts

Item	Marital Status		Degree Of Perception				
Unmarried women suffer lesser stress than their married counterpart.	Gender of Respondents		SA	A	AM	D	SD
	Single	Male	12.5%	9.4%	3.1%	43.8%	31.2%
		Female	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%
	Married	Male	12.5%	12.5%	3.1%	50.0%	21.9%
		Female	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	50.0%	46.2%

Field data, 2015

From Table 3.1 cross tabulation was used to compare the views of married and singles about unmarried women on the first item which talked about *unmarried women suffer lesser stress than their married counterpart*. Seventy-five percent (75%) representing (24) out of (32) single males as against 71.9% representing (23) out of (32) married men disagreed. This is an indication that for the single male and married male, unmarried women suffer emotionally than the married. For single women 40%

representing (2) out of (5) agreed that unmarried women suffer less emotional stress while 60% representing (3) out of (5) single women disagreed to that. However, to the married female 96.2% representing (25) out of the (26) married females disagreed with this statement. Just 3.8% representing (1) out of the 26 agreed to the same statement. Since the number of married females, married males and single men who disagreed with the above statement form a significant proportion of the total number of the participants, it could be concluded that both married females and the married men as well as the single men indicated that many unmarried women suffer emotionally than the married their married counterparts. The interesting aspect of this is that, many married females than the married males disagreed with this statement.

Table 3.2: A Breakdown of the Views between Singles and Married on the Item, Unmarried Women Over 30 Years Are Selfish, Choosy/Selective and Immature

Item	Marital Status		Degree of Perception				
Unmarried women over 30 years are selfish, choosy/selective and immature.	Gender of Respondents		SA	A	AM	D	SD
	Single	Male	40.6	21.9	3.1	18.8	15.6
		Female	0.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	20.0
	Married	Male	34.4	21.9	3.1	25.0	15.6
		Female	65.2	23.1	0.0	4.5	0.0

Field data, 2015

On item two from Table 3.2 above the statement, *unmarried women over 30 years are selfish, choosy and immature*, 88.4% (23) out of (26) married females agreed to that statement as against 20% (1) single females. This is an indication that many married women appeared to have more negative perceptions about unmarried as

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compared to the 56.3% (18) out (32) married male who agreed to the same statement. As for single women 40% (2) out of (5) disagreed with the above statement while 40% were neutral just 20% (1) agreed to this. On the side of the single male, 61.5% (20) out of the (32) singles males agreed to this as against 56.3% (18) out (32) married male who also agreed to the same statement. Two respondents from single males' group and the married males' group were neutral, while 11 single male and 13 married disagreed respectively.

Table 3.3: A Breakdown of the Views between Single and Married on the Item, a Woman Can Be Unmarried, Independent and Happy

Item	Marital Status		Degree of Perception				
A woman can be unmarried, independent and happy.	Gender of Respondents		SA	A	AM	D	SD
	Single	Male	12.5%	25.0%	3.1%	28.1%	31.2%
		Female	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%
	Married	Male	25.0%	28.1%	6.2%	25.0%	15.6%
		Female	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	50.0%	30.8%

Field data, 2015

On the item, *a woman can be unmarried, independent and happy*, the interesting aspect is that 37.7% (12) out of (32) single males agreed to this as against 60% (19) out

(32) single male who disagreed. From the married males' group, 53.1% (17) out of the (32) agreed to this statement while 40.6% (13) out of 32 married male disagreed. Only 6.2% (2) were neutral. On this item, 80% (4) out of (5) of single female agreed to this statement while 20% (1) out of (5) disagreed. As many as 80.6% (21) out of (32) married female disagreed with the same statement while 7.7% (4) of married women agreed. Just 3.8% (1) out of 26 married females were neutral. This result indicates that many single women, single men and married males believed that unmarried women can be happy without marriage if they are independent. This is a positive perception contrary to the view of the married females who indicated that unmarried women cannot be happy even if they are independent. This is so because majority of the married participants representing 80.6% disagreed with the above statement.

Table 3.4: A Breakdown of the Views between Singles and Married on the Item, Unmarried Women above 30 Years without Husbands Are Husband Snatchers

Item	Marital Status		Degree Of Perception				
Unmarried women above 30 years without husbands are husband snatchers.	Gender Of Respondents		SA	A	AM	D	SD
	Single	Female	40.6%	21.9%	6.2%	18.8%	12.50
		Male		20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%
	Married	Female	21.9%	25.0%	6.2%	28.1%	18.8%
		Married	50%	34.6%	3.8%	11.5%	0.0%

Field data, 2015

Again, from the Table 3.4 above on this statement, *unmarried women above 30 years without husbands are husband snatchers,* 62.5%(20) out of (32) single men supported the statement as against 31% (10) out of (32) single male who disagreed and

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6.2% were neutral. Within the married male group, 46.9% (15) out of the (32) married male agreed as against 46.9% (15) out of (32) who disagreed with the statement. Only 6.2% were neutral. However, for the single women, 20% (1) out of (5) agreed to the statement, while in this same group 20% (1) was neutral as against the remaining single female which constituted 60% (3) out of five disagreed that unmarried women snatch people's husbands. Nevertheless, 84.6% (22) out of (26) married female agreed that unmarried women are husband snatchers, 3.8% (1) of the married was neutral and just 11.5% (3) disagreed with the statement. From the above findings, it appeared that married males were divided in terms of their perceptions. Fifteen participants from the married male group as against another 15 married male agreed and disagreed concurrently on that perception. More than half i.e. 3 out of (5) of the single females disagreed with same statement. However, majority of the married females agreed that unmarried women snatch people's husbands.

Table 3.5: A Breakdown of the Views between Singles and Married On the Item, Women Who Wait To Get Married Show Wisdom and Maturity

Items	Marital Status		Degree Of Perception				
Women who wait to get married show wisdom and maturity.	Gender Of Respondents		SA	A	AM	D	SD
	Single	Male	25.0%	18.8%	21.9%	28.1%	6.2%
		Female	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Married	Male	25.0%	25.0%	15.6%	28.1%	6.2%
		Female	7.7%	11.8%	26.9%	38.5%	11.5%

Field data, 2015

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From table 3.5 above, 43% (14) out of (32) single males agreed to the item that women who wait to get married show wisdom and maturity as against 34.3% (11) single males out of (32) who disagreed. 21.9% (9) of singles males were neutral. To the married male, 50% (16) respondents out of (32) married males agreed to the above statements as against 34.3(11) out of (32) married males who disagreed. On this same group 15.6% (6) married males were also neutral.

To the female group, 60% (3) out of the (5) single females agreed to the statement that women who wait to get married show maturity and wisdom while 40% (2) of the single females were neutral. However, 50% (13) out of the (26) married females disagreed to the above statements as against 19.2% (5) out of the (26) married females who agreed while 30.7% (9) married were neutral.

Table 3.6: A Breakdown of the Views between Singles and Married on the Item, Unmarried Women Over 30 Years Look Pitiful, Frustrated, Hopeless and Desperate

Item	Marital Status		Degree Of Perception				
Unmarried women over 30 years look pitiful, frustrated, hopeless and desperate.	Gender Of Respondents		SA	A	AM	D	SD
	Single	Male	37.5%	37.5%	3.1%	21.9%	0.0%
		Female	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.1%
	Married	Male	34.4%	28.1%	3.1%	25.0%	9.4%
		Female	57.7%	30.8%	0.0%	7.7%	3.8%

Field data, 2015

From table 3.6 on the item *unmarried women over 30 years look pitiful, frustrated, hopeless and desperate*, 75% (24) out of (32) single males agreed to the

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statement as against 21.9% (7) out of (32) single males disagreeing to the same statement. Just 3.1% of the respondents were neutral. Some single women constituting 60% (3) out of (5) agreed to this statement as against 40% (2) single women who disagreed. From the male married group, 62.5% (20) agreed to this statement as against 34.4% (11) out of (32) married male disagreed but (2) were neutral. On the side of the married females, 88.5% (23) out of the (32) married women agreed to the statement above while just 11.5% (3) out of the (26) married females disagreed.

In conclusion, the findings showed that many single males and females appear to have a more positive perception of unmarried women. Nevertheless, it is very interesting that the married people especially, the married females appeared to have most negative perceptions about unmarried women than any single group. This finding supports Yamamoto (2013:5) whose findings showed that "Maintaining self-esteem is one motivation which impels married persons to discriminate. This motivation is universal. People often try to justify their status quo and derogate out-groups to sustain their self-esteem." This is an indication that the married females have a stronger case for maintaining the marital norm or idea about marriage which to them, the single females seem to be defying; hence, the married females having more negative perceptions about single status.

4.4 Results from the Interviews

To find out people's perception about unmarried women, ten (10) respondents were interviewed from the five towns conveniently chosen.

Table 4: Summary of Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender of respondent	Age	Marital status	Educational level	Religion	Religious level
Maame Efuah	Female	54	Married	No primary education	A Christian	Casually
Miss Linda	Female	24	Single	J.H.S.	A Christian	Casually
Miss Adwoa	Female	33	Married	Diploma	A Christian	Extremely
Madam Janet	Female	45	Married	Form-four	A Christian	Extremely
Mr. Kofi	Male	30	Cohabitating	No primary education	A Christian	Not religious
Alhaji	Male	45	Married	Diploma	A Muslim	Extremely
Papa owusu	Male	55	Married	No primary education	A Christian	Casually
Mr. Bright	Male	40	Married	Form-four	A Christian	Extremely
Mr. Moses	Male	48	Divorce	Diploma	A Christian	Casually
Mr. Attah	Male	65	Married	Form-four	A Christian	Casually

Source: Fieldwork data (2015).

4.4.1 Methods

Table 4 above depicts the participants who were involved in the semi-structured interview. They were 10 participants. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling technique. Participants included both men (N=6) and women (N=4). Participants that were interviewed were assigned pseudonyms (Maame Efuah, Mr Kofi, Miss Linda, Alhaji, Mr. Attah, Miss Adwoa, Madam Janet, Mr. Bright, Mr. Moses and Papa Owusu) appropriate to their sex for ethical reasons. Seven (7) of the participants were married, one (1) cohabitating, one (1) divorced and one (1) single lady. Three (3) of the respondents had no primary education, one had J.H.S education, three (3) were Middle - school leavers and three (3) had diplomas. Nine (9) of respondents were Christians and only one belonged to Islamic religion.

Mamme Efuah is a 54 year old woman and married for more than 20 years, a Christian, casually religious and had no primary education. Mr. Kofi is a 30 year old man who is cohabitating, a semi-literate because he just finished junior high school and he is self-employed. He is a Christian and casually religious. Miss Adwoa, is a 33 year old women, a teacher by profession and a Christian, casually religious and had just got married six months ago. Alhaji is a middle aged man, forty-five years and had a diploma in education. He is married for 20 years. He is a Muslim and extremely religious. Again, Linda is a 24 year old girl who is semi-literate, a Christian and casually religious, currently doing some menial job and single. Mr. Moses is a forty – eight (48) year old man, he is currently divorced, a Christian and was able to finish a Middle - school and casually religious. Papa Owusu, 55 year old man, a Christian, casually religious and had no primary education. Mr. Bright a 40 year old married man, a Christian and extremely religious, a Middle-school leaver and self-employed. Besides, Mr Attah is a 65 years old man, married and casually religious and pensioner.

Lastly, Madam Janet is a married woman. Extremely religious Christian and had a Middle-school certificate. She is self-employed and 45 years of age.

Data were analysed by identifying common themes from participants' answers and grouping these common responses into categories basing these responses on the research questions. The analysis began with open coding, and then went into focused coding, looking for common themes and patterns among the interviews and creating labels to classify information according to these themes juxtaposing the views against the research questions. For instance, I wrote the first research questions. Also, I tried to group the ideas from the interviews which seemed to be similar under the research question. This method was replicated to other research questions until I finished with all. When I finished, I finally wrote themes for the interview that I would analyse taking into consideration the research questions. This means for each research question, I found some themes related to it.

4.5 Findings

This Section relates to Findings for The Research Question, R.Q. 1., "What kind of perceptions do people have about unmarried women"?

4.5.1 A High Time Lifestyle, a Common Lifestyle of Unmarried Women

One of the perceptions that was shared by many participants was that unmarried women are *high time people* and thus live a high *time* lifestyle. According to them, a *high time* woman is a woman who likes dressing loudly from head to toes. That is, to them unmarried women dress in expensive clothing, shoes and accessories. As a result of this, many men fear to approach them thinking that they will not be able to afford these expensive clothes when they should marry them. Here is the excerpt from Mamme Efuah:

> A woman who is over 30 years unmarried many of them like "high time" life that is why they don't want to marry. Perhaps they don't want to stop enjoying life. The way they dress, the high heels and the make ups that they wear make men to be afraid of them. Because the men think if they should marry them they have to be buying all those expensive dresses and stuffs which will drain their coffers. Some of the men use their dresses to predict their spending so they won't approach them.

Mr Kofi shared a similar perception when he also said that:

> If a woman is very grown but unmarried it may be because of her "high time type "of behaviour. A woman who likes too much dressing (like wearing expensive and fashionable clothing) may end up scaring men away from her because of that attitude. Men may fear to approach her because they may think they are not her type of men she may want. The way she dresses and her dressing styles can prevent men from marrying her.

Again Miss Adwoa, who just got married six months ago confirmed how people were thinking negatively about her because they thought she had a bad behaviour and also was high time person as at the time she was not married. Here is the excerpt from her:

> I just got married 6 months ago and I was 32 years before marrying. As at that time, many people around me were thinking I was a bad woman that was why I could not find a partner. A bad woman in the sense that I don't have good character and I like high time too much so men were afraid of me. Some were insulting me with all of these because they were married. I went through a lot as a result of people's behaviour towards me.

The above excerpts suggest the perception that, unmarried women are responsible for their single status. The excerpts also depict the idea of people blaming women for their own marital status. This finding supports (Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Ritter, 2004). Besides, it also suggests a perception that women should lower themselves in order to get attracted to men with lower incomes.

4.5.2 People's Negative Attitude: A Problem to an Independent Unmarried Woman's Happiness.

Many of the respondents also shared the perceptions, that happiness is tied to marriage. Independence here means being able to make decisions concerning one's life as an unmarried woman, provide one's needs, being economically and financially stable and not under any man's, parent's or friend's control due to any economic and financial support. Six respondents shared this perception. To them a woman will not be happy without a man even if she is independent. According to them, a woman who is independent and economically sound will be unhappy especially if she does not have any child. Besides, they indicated that, irrespective of an unmarried woman's independence and money, she cannot *sleep* with her money unless she has a man in her life.

Below is an excerpt from Mr. Kofi:

> It is good an unmarried woman works but she cannot "sleep with her money". This is because, at a point in many people's lives, they would like to fulfil their sexual desires so irrespective of woman's independence, she needs to marry. In our society, a woman is not complete until she is having a man in her life.

The views of Alhaji were not different from those of Mr. Kofi.

> In our society, a woman can have all the money but if she is not married she won't be happy. This is because in our society we cherish marriage so much so gossip from people around her won't even give her a piece of mind until she is married especially if she does not have children.

Again, Linda confirmed this when she said:

> A woman is incomplete without a man. To her, her 41 year aunt is always harsh, frustrated, and moody because she thinks she is still single. If that my aunt were to marry I don't think she will be behaving like that so to me a woman needs a man in her life.

In addition, Miss Adwoa also talked about this when she said it depends on the unmarried woman involved. According to her when she was by then single as at 32 years, to her she was working and independent but not happy because of the way people

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most often were gossiping about her, sounding to her about marriage and child birth.

Below is an excerpt from her:

> Yes she will be happy depending on the individual. There are some people who have been disappointed in life so they will decide not to marry but they will date. But in this society that we are from the experience I had, I was not happy even though I was working. This is because of people's attitude towards me. I want to marry just to avoid all those gossip about me but it was not happening until six month ago. If I had not been bothered by people through their utterances and the insult, I would not be so sad those days because I was working. Besides too, I was worried about having children since my marriage was delaying so people's attitude made me sadder.

Mr. Moses had this to say:

> Yes or no. Yes because she can provide all her needs. No because she has feelings, also in our custom a woman is not complete without a man. Besides, she will not have her peace of mind because of the way others around her may be suspicious about her and be gossiping about her. It is better she is hooked to a particular man that people know about even if she is not officially married unless she is a Roman sister.

Lastly, according to Papa Owusu, such an unmarried woman is "having some kind of short falls. To him, the short fall is lack of a man in her life". This particular finding aligns with Dzokoto and Darkwah (2014:7) that "women's lives are inextricably linked with their spouses and extended families. Traditional values espoused that no matter how much money a woman made, she was generally not expected to have an independent existence. Clearly, women were expected to have lives that were far from independent." This finding also aligns with DePaulo and Morris (2005) that marriage is tied to a woman's happiness. Those women who are married are considered to be happy and more fulfilled than their unmarried counterparts.

It appears from the excerpts that a single women's unhappiness is not about their marriage per se rather how others see them, what others say, think, and do to do them or about them. Again, the above excerpts appear to suggest that a woman needs a man/family to be happy. This idea is limited thinking and problematic, because an

individual's happiness may not necessarily depend on the presence of family members or a man. But this seems to be what many respondents thought.

4.5.3 Unmarried Women have Character Flaws

Respondents showed that a woman's character was a necessary factor for marrying early. Due to this, many of the respondents shared a perception that many unmarried women are having character problems. That is, unmarried women were perceived to have led bad life styles like chasing men when they were quite younger. As a result of unmarried women's bad character, when they are finally of age to marry, it may be very difficult for them to get a partner. Apart from that, respondents indicated that many unmarried women are unfriendly thus men find it difficult to approach them. Here is an excerpt from Alhaji:

> If a girl began to chase all kinds of men early as she grows up, men may not be willing to marry her because they think she is a prostitute so some women grow up not marrying due to their promiscuous life style. Again, some do not know how to respect, be submissive and also some like chasing men around. So if men around her know such behaviour for her they won't want to marry her.

Miss Linda said**:**

> It depends on their character or behaviour. Some women are not approachable so men find it difficult to approach them. Some are not friendly and look moody. If you are unmarried but always move alone, frown, and you don't smile to people, it will be very difficult for a man to approach you. I have an aunt who is not married at the age of 41. She is always rude and always criticizing. At this age, they become frustrated. A little thing makes them angry. My aunt, if you are not careful, you approach her in a public place she may disgrace you.

Again, Mr. Bright was so particular about unmarried women's bad character when he contended that:

> Sometimes some unmarried women do not have good characters because they were not brought up well so they do not know how to respect, talk to people and behave well besides some unmarried ladies are anti-social so they find it difficult to get married.

This perception aligns with Morris et al. (2004) which were quoted in Byrne and Carr,(2005 :85) whose findings showed that "Unmarried persons often are viewed as responsible for their single status due to some characterological flaw or *blemish* such as promiscuity, immaturity, self-centeredness, or a lack of personal discipline."

The above excerpts depict participants' idea of how they thought "some women" i.e. unmarried women fit a particular mold of behavior but failed to talk about how "other women" (remaining single women) do not fit that mold. From the participants' points of view, all human beings do not behave in the same way. Thus, negative behaviours of one woman does not mean all unmarried women show same negative behaviours. Nevertheless, the participants seemed to blame all single women for their circumstances i.e. they are single because something is wrong with them but not that something is wrong with the men or the society.

4.5.4 Singlehood a State of Emotional Stress

The results from the interviews showed that many respondents believed that unmarried women suffer emotionally more than their married counterparts. As result of the emotional stress they look sad and think many times. According to a respondent, some unmarried women even go to the extent of drinking too much alcohol. Here are some of the excerpts that attest to this evidence of people's perceptions.

Miss Adwoa:

> Yes because before I married some months ago I went through a lot of emotional stress as a result of how people talk to me and they behave towards me. Those days I wish I had my way out to perform magic to get a man early. I was emotionally tortured and afraid because I thought I was growing old. I did not know whether I will be able to conceive. People's behaviours towards me as at that time had worsened the situation. So many women especially if they are in their 30s and unmarried suffer emotionally.

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Besides, Mr Bright also confirmed this by saying:

> Yes of course. This is because some might have indulged in relationships that they had disappointments so when they are alone they think about the past. They feel unhappy and sad."

Papa Owusu also shared the same perception that:

> Yes they tend to think a lot about their delay marriages often. They may tend to ask certain questions as to why they are unmarried. They feel unhappy and begin to ask certain questions.

Mr Moses perceived that:

> Yes if she sees her friends and all have married she tends to think a lot. The married women think but they concentrate on their children. Unmarried women think so much in so many ways than their married counterparts. Sometimes emotionally they suffer because they think they don't have any one due to that, they tend to be harsh toward other people's children. They can be cruel because they think they don't have so they don't care about others.

The above excerpts indicate that many respondents are of the view that, women who remain single tend to think more than their married counterparts. This thinking affects their emotions than a woman who is married. Hence, many of them look sad and think more than their married counterparts do.

4.5.5 Single Status as a Normal Lifestyle

The findings presented above from the interviews showed more negatives perceptions that have been expressed by many of the respondents however, some of the respondents' views were on the contrary. These perceptions seemed to be more positive than the negative. For instance, some of the participants thought if a woman is mature enough to marry but is still single, there is nothing wrong with it. The perception is that, perhaps that particular woman does not want to marry or she has not gotten her lover.

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One of the participants that said the above views was Madam Janet. Here is an excerpt from her:

> If someone is old and not married and not having children there is nothing wrong with that. I see them to be normal people. I see their lifestyle as normal lifestyle especially if the person is mentally sound. Because these days there some mature unmarried women around. I think they have not gotten the man they want so or perhaps they do not like marriage. I see it to be a normal life style. There are some strong Christian ladies in our church that are not married but have dedicated to God's work. I think their time will come when they will also marry.

Besides, Mr Attah expressed similar views when he said that:

> Ooh unmarried mature woman to me I see it to maybe she does not like marriage or she does not get the man that will marry her. It is not wrong at all because she has not gotten her lover. I see them to be normal.

The above excerpts are indicative that though many participants seemed to have more negative perceptions, other participants said contrary to what others had said. When they were asked whether an unmarried woman who is independent can be happy, below is what Madam Janet said:

> Yes, a woman can be happy if she is independent. To my point of view it can happen. That is, if that individual can decide not to marry. The only issue I may have with that person is if she will not be engaging in promiscuous act that will make people talk about her she can be happy. It depends on the individuals. Sometimes that person may have a lot of friend that she talks to so she can be happy.

Moreover, Mr. Attah also shared similar sentiment by saying that:

> Unmarried women who are independent can be happy especially, if they have children. To me my daughter is happy and unmarried because she already having children.

When the question was asked whether unmarried women suffer more emotional stress than their married counterparts, Madam Janet said something different from what many other participants talked about which seemed to be more negative.

Below depicts Madam Janet's views:

> Not at all, because if a woman is unmarried, she thinks less than married women. This is because she may probably only think about her delayed marriage but a married woman has a lot of thinking to do especially if the husband is disturbing her by not performing his responsibilities, chasing women and emotionally maltreating her. Emotionally, those who are unmarried do not suffer emotional stress than married people.

She was so positive that unmarried women can have friendship with a married woman or man because these married women will try to advise her and thus the unmarried woman may get more experiences from them and apply them when she marries.

This is how Madam Janet puts:

> Yes they can be trusted. There is nothing wrong with that. Some singles will want advice from married persons to get experience from such people. There are single women who are good and are not interested in any negative lifestyle to make people talk about them. They can easily have friendship with married men or women.

Furthermore, Madam Janet continued to say that:

> These days many women are staying single because it seems these days many people do what they want especially, those who live in cities. But in this our society, many people will see remaining single as strange. But in Accra and other cities where due to nature of Accra lifestyle, it is hard for people to be monitoring others like that so many women remain unmarried.

From these findings, it is evident that some participants showed a subtle or slight degree of difference in the way participants viewed unmarried woman. That is, these sets of participants indicated a fairly positive perception. The nuance in regard to the participants' perceptions is indicative that a smaller proportion of people have begun to single status as a normal way of life thus suggesting a little acceptance of single status.

4.**6** This section presents findings of the study pertaining to the third research question which states that, "what are the causes of some women delaying marriages"?

4.6.1 Too much Education: A Problem for a Woman's Marriage

The results from the interviews appeared that, when a woman continues to chase education too much it delays her marriage. This is because to the participants, such women who are schooling will like to finish before marrying hence delay in their marriages.

Below are the views of Mamme Efuah:

> For some it is because of education and some it is because of their behaviours. During my time of growing up, education among girls was not common. So during those days many parents married off their girl-child early. But now, many parents want to educate their children, likewise the girls too. So now a lady will finish her education before settling for marriage. This thus, delays their marriages.

Kofi also indicated that:

> Yes it is good but a woman must not chase education alone but marry. Because women have time to give birth so too much education delays a woman's marriage.

Miss Linda shared a similar view:

> When a woman attends school to the higher level sometimes she tends to be too selective. She will want to choose a man who has a higher qualification than her or the same qualification like she has. So if she is not getting the man she wants she may not marry.

Madam Janet also attested to the above view by saying that:

> Education these days delays many women's marriages. Because many women are attending school up to the highest levels just like the men. So as a lady continues schooling for a long time, she may not be thinking of marriage unless she finishes.

From the above excerpts, it is evident that many participants believe that too much education on the side of a woman is a cause to delaying a woman's marriage. This finding aligns with Mensch, Singh and Casterine (2005) when they showed that

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increased educational attainment is a possible factor in delaying women's age at first marriage.

4.6.2 Lack of Money on the Side of Suitors: An Impediment to Female's Marriages

The interview results also proved that, some respondents expressed the view that, men are afraid to marry women because of the fear of high bride wealth demands and weddings.

Mr. Moses espoused that:

> Lack of money on the side of men, makes it difficult for them to marry to pay for high bride price. Some men do not have money to pay for expensive weddings and bride wealth. This situation makes some women not to get married because a man must pay a woman's bride wealth if he wants to marry any woman. These days many ladies are also insisting of weddings, this scares some men away from them if they think, they cannot get money for weddings.

Madam Janet also showed:

> Lack of money on the side of men affects women's time of marrying. Some men think they do not have money for wedding so they remain single by not marrying the women.

Miss Adwoa shared a similar view when she said that:

> Lack of money on the side of men delays a woman's marriage. A woman who insists that her suitor weds her will end up not marrying early if her suitor cannot get the money to wed her.

The above findings from the interview excerpts corroborate with Sajeda and Bajracharya (2011:4) that "In many parts of the world, the costs of marriage are drivers of social change. Even while practices are widely varied, the consequences for women are overwhelmingly negative." They further argue that traditional courtships that involve a large bride price were viewed as burden for young men.

From above, many participants indicated the issue of money as though marriage is seen as a purchase of a woman with expenses involved. This problem comes up with "bride price" too. The problem with these ideas of participants is that, it objectifies

women i.e. they are commodities that something must be defective with. Thus, inability of a man to pay for a woman's bride wealth may delay her marriage. This idea limits a woman's power to be the one to make the purchase, but instead she is the one being judged as worthy or not.

4.6.3 Unmarried Women's Selectiveness: A Cause of their Delayed Marriages

Some of the respondents said that, some women are unmarried because they are selective.

According to Mr Moses:

> Some women are too selective. This is because they tend to sack men away from them because they think such men are not their type of men. So as they continue to do that, because in our society, it is a man that should approach a woman for marriage, they end up not getting men when such women advance in their ages.

Furthermore, Mr Bright also indicated this same:

> Some women too are so selective. They are either looking for men with a lot of wealth, high qualifications or very handsome men. So as they do not get what they really want, they do not accept any other calibre of men.

Mr Kofi also shared a similar perception by saying that:

> These days, many girls like men who have lot of money, cars and properties. Some unmarried women do no not want to suffer with a man before he becomes rich. This has made some women not to marry perhaps they were looking for men with wealth so if such men do not come their way, they will not accept any other man.

The perceptions above are also blaming unmarried women for their delayed marriages. This is because all the excerpts seem to show that, either unmarried women are looking for rich men, men with high qualifications or the unmarried women are looking for handsome men to marry. This findings also corroborate with Byrne and Carr (2005) that, single people are likely to be denigrated if they are deemed *responsible* for their

single status. Again, the excerpts above are also indicating that, because single women are not getting such calibre of men, they tend to experience delayed marriages. These set of results seemed not to go along with the evidence from the literature reviewed.

4.7 Summary

Many of the respondents believe that a woman needs a man because marriage is a cherished value in Ghana. Thus, if a woman is of age but not married, people around her may form so many perceptions about her. The data presented have shown that, many respondents believe that, if a woman is of age to have married but remain single, people think perhaps, she is too selective, a high time woman; she might have character problem, chasing too much education, does not want to marry and perhaps her suitor does not have money to marry her.

The data presentation and findings also revealed that many respondents appeared to have more negative than positive perceptions about unmarried women. The results from the questionnaires revealed that more than 60% of the respondents showed negative perceptions about unmarried women as against 35% positive attitude. This was confirmed by findings from the interviews where many of the participants showed negative perceptions. This result corroborates with DePaulo and Morris (2005) that unmarried women face negative perceptions as a result of their status. Though the statistical analysis showed that many participants had negative perceptions, their idea about unmarried women appeared to have been limited to the narrow definition of singlehood.

Again, the data also indicated that, the negative perceptions that people have about unmarried women tend to blame single women for their situations, and that the single woman has something wrong with her but not that something is wrong with the men, the society/cultural norms.

In addition, the findings also showed that many married people especially, the married females appeared to have shown more negative perceptions about unmarried women than the single males and the females. This might be the reason why these different groups of people have the perceptions they have.

To add to that, the findings have also shown that, single women's unhappiness is not about their marriage per se; rather how others see them, what others say, think, and do to them. The data presented again showed that participants perceptions that lack of money on the side of a potential suitor to pay a woman's bride price can delay her marriage. The problem with these ideas of participants is that, it objectifies women i.e. they are commodities that something must be defective with it. This idea is limiting for women because they do not have the power to be the ones to make the purchase, but instead they are the ones being judged as worthy or not. Lastly, the study indicated nuance in regard to the participant's perceptions indicating that smaller proportion of people have begun to see single status as a normal way of life thus suggesting a middle line of perceptions, that is, neither too negative nor too positive perceptions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter offers a summary of findings, conclusion drawn and recommendations made for implementation. The chapter discusses the contribution of this study to knowledge creation in general and people's perceptions in particular. The researcher came out with conclusions based on the study findings as well as recommendations. The chapter also involves suggestions for further research.

5.1.0 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to discover people's perceptions about unmarried women in Kwaebibirem district of the Eastern region of Ghana. A summary of the findings in relation to people's perceptions are presented along the following themes:

- The perceptions that people hold about unmarried women in Kwaebibirem District.

- Differences in perceptions between singles and married adults.

- People's perceptions about the causes of delayed marriages

5.1.1 The Perceptions that People hold about Unmarried Women

The major findings of the study in relation to this theme were**:**

i.   The interview and the questionnaire results revealed that many people have certain perceptions about unmarried women. These perceptions are more negative than positive. Though many participants showed negative perceptions, their idea about unmarried women appeared to have been limited to narrow a

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definition of singlehood. The idea of unmarried women appeared to have been replaced by a narrower definition which were largely influenced and limited to their perceptions. As long as a woman remains unmarried, excerpts from the questionnaire and the interviews revealed that, such a woman will be viewed negatively due to idealization of marriage.

ii. Participants' responses to the questionnaire and excerpts of the interviews revealed that the people's beliefs about marriage are so strong that, indirectly and directly an attempt is made by people through their perceptions to ensure that everybody especially, women get married.

iii. Excerpts from the interviews revealed that many unmarried women are blamed for being responsible for their single status. The blame is rooted in participants' idea that, there might be something wrong with the unmarried women but not men or the societies that they come from.

iv. Besides, the findings from the interviews also suggested a perception that women should lower themselves in terms of their styles of dressings and lifestyles in order to get attracted to men with lower incomes.

v. Evidence from the study showed that many participants believe that unmarried women do not feel happy. This perception is not about their marriage per se, rather how others see them, what others say about them, think about them, and do to them that make the unmarried woman unhappy. Again, it was evident that the excerpts from the interview suggested that a woman needs a man/family to be happy. This idea is limited thinking and problematic, because an individual's happiness may not necessarily depend on presence of family members or a man, but this seemed to be what many respondents thought.

vi. More so, excerpts from the interviews also revealed that unmarried women tend to think more than their married counterparts. This thinking affects their emotions than a woman who is married.

vii. On the other side of the coin, it is evident from the findings that, some participants showed a subtle or slight degree of difference in the way they viewed unmarried woman. That is, these participants indicated fairly positive perceptions. The nuance in regard to the participant's perceptions is indicative that a small proportion of people have begun to see single status as a normal way of life thus suggesting their acceptance of single status.

5.1.2 Differences in Perceptions between Singles and Married

i. The questionnaire findings showed that single males showed negative perceptions than the single females. Thus, both males and females irrespective of their marital status do have similar perceptions about unmarried women. However, married men and female especially, the married females showed the most negative perceptions about unmarried women. For instance, many of the married females disagreed with the statement, *women who wait to get married show wisdom and maturity* while many of them agreed to the statement *unmarried women above 30 years without husbands are husband snatcher).* This shows the trends in terms of all the items. This suggests that, the married females have a stronger case for maintaining the marital norm or idea which the single females seem to be defying, hence, the married females having more negative perceptions about single status because they seem to be defending their status.

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5.1.3 People's Perceptions of Causes of some Women Delaying Marriages

i.   It is evident from the findings that, many participants believe that too much education on the side of a woman delays her marriage.

ii. Also, the excerpts from the interview showed participants brought up the issue of money as though marriage is seen as a purchase of a woman with expenses involved (payment of bride price). The problem with these ideas of participants is that, it objectifies women (i.e. they are commodity that something must be defective with it). Thus, inability of a man to pay for a woman's bride wealth may delay her marriage. This idea is limiting for women because they do not have the power to be the ones to make the purchase, but instead they are the ones being judged as worthy or not.

iii. Lastly, the findings also revealed participants believe that women who are too selective are likely to have delayed marriages because as the unmarried women continue to reject men, as she advances in her age, she may find it very difficult to get men to approach her.

5.2 Conclusions

This study sought to discover perceptions of people in Kwaebibirem district of the Eastern of Ghana about unmarried women and also to find out whether these perceptions are rather positive than negative. However, the responses from the questionnaires and the excerpts from the interviews show a more negative perceptions than positive. This affirms what many literatures provide on unmarried women in other parts of the world.

Nevertheless, it is evident from the findings that, some participants showed a subtle or slight degree of difference in the way respondents viewed unmarried woman. These sets of participants indicated a fairly positive perceptions. The nuance in regard to the

participants' perceptions is indicating that smaller proportion of people have begun to seeing single status as a normal way of life thus suggesting their acceptance of single status.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions of the study, the literature review and theoretical framework on the phenomenon investigated, the researcher suggests the following recommendations:

i. It is recommended that laws on all manner of negative comments, marginalization, and stigmatization of people especially, the unmarried women should be enforced by law enforcement agencies and institutions. This will help prevent all forms of marginalization, stigmatizations about unmarried women hence, enable people to make life time choices they want to make.

ii. There is the need for women involvement in decision-making, policy building, and legislative bodies in order to place women's agenda at priority levels.

iii. Besides, there is the need for education and awareness creation to sensitize people about the need for change in societal norms to pave way for respect for people irrespective of their marital status. This sensitization can be done by Ministry of Gender, Children and Social protection. This is because negative perceptions about unmarried especially, women can make them have low self-esteem.

iv. Again, tertiary institutions should increase specialty areas concerning gender issues. The issue of unmarried women should be incorporated in these specialties.

v.   Lastly, Civil Society Organizations and NGOs interested in women issues should encourage women especially, unmarried ones to get involved and fully participate in development of their societies to help project them positively.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study was conducted at a micro level by using only one district in Ghana. To be able to generalise the findings of this study to cover the many districts and people in Ghana, future studies should consider replicating this studies to cover the many more districts in Ghana to ascertain whether similar findings will come out.

Besides, there is the need to conduct a research on mature unmarried women to find out whether they feel that people perceive them negatively. Again, comparative study about married women and unmarried women should also be conducted in Ghana to ascertain which of the groups feels happier than the other since this study was just about people's perceptions about the unmarried.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

Questionnaire of people's perceptions of unmarried women

These questionnaires seek to find out people's views and opinions regarding their perceptions of unmarried women in Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. This is a research being conducted by a Master of Philosophy student from the Department of Social Studies. University of Education, and Winneba. This research is purely for academic (Graduate research) purposes. Your confidentiality and anonymity will be highly observed in terms of your responses to the questionnaires.

Thank you very much for taking time to answer the questions in these survey.

PART A: Background Information, please –tick in ✔ the appropriate box- [ ]

1. Gender: [   ] Male   [   ] Female

2. Age: [   ] under 20   [   ] 21-29   [   ] 30 over

3. Marital status: [   ] single   [   ] married   [   ] divorce   [   ] widow

4. Indicate your highest educational level: [   ] J.S.S [   ] S.S.S [   ] Diploma/cert.
[   ] Degree

5. Religion: [   ] a Christian [   ] a Moslem [   ] a traditional person   {   } others

6. How religious are you?   [   ] Extremely religious   [   ] fundamentalist   [   ] casually religious   [   ] not religious

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Perceptions Rating Scale about People's Perceptions about Unmarried. Please Tick In Appropriate Space. Please be sure to put only one tick for each item. Key: A= Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, Ambivalent, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

No	Statement	SA	A	Ambivalent	D	SD
1	Marriage should be the first priority in every woman's life.					
2	Women should marry early.					
3	Women from age 29 and above and still single should be pressured to marry.					
4	Unmarried women who do not consent to pre-marital sex are more morally responsible.					
5	Unmarried women older than 30years have bad character					
6	Bad character is behaviour that is shown by both married or single					
7	Women should wait to be physically, emotionally and economically secured before marrying					
8	Anti-sociability is synonymous with women who are unmarried.					
9	Being married can be assumed that one is lucky.					
10	Unmarried women suffer lesser stress than their married counterpart.					
11	Unmarried women over 30 years look pitiful, frustrated, hopeless and desperate.					
12	Single older women have more life choices than married women.					

13	Unmarried woman over 30 years are responsible for their marital status.					
14	Unmarried women are free to achieve their aspirations without any restriction.					
15	A woman without a man is not complete individual.					
16	There is enjoyment of more privacy when one is unmarried.					
17	Unmarried women over 30 years are selfish, choosy/selective and immature.					
18	Women who wait to get married show wisdom and maturity.					
19	Unmarried women above 30 years without husbands are husband snatchers.					
20	A state of being single does not mean one is promiscuous.					
21	Women over 30 years are still not adult in the family until they marry.					
22	A woman can be unmarried, independent and happy.					
23	Unmarried women over 30 years and single are unattractive to men.					
24	A woman looks more attractive if she is single.					

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am a second year Master of Philosophy student in Social Studies education from University of Education, Winneba. I am conducting a research on the topic**: People's Perceptions on Unmarried Women in Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern region of Ghana**

This is purely an academic activity. You are therefore guaranteed of your anonymity and confidentiality. Thanks for accepting to be interviewed. Please tell me your age, marital status, educational level and religious denominations. Kindly share your opinion and views on the topic**.**

1. In your opinion what are your general perceptions about unmarried women from 29 years and above?
2. Do you know any unmarried woman personally and you think she fits the characteristics you have described? If yes, in what ways? If no in what ways?
3. How important is a woman's physical attraction in finding a partner?
4. Can unmarried woman be trusted in terms of having a friendship with a married woman or man?
5. How do you think older unmarried women feel or look?
6. Do you think older women who are unmarried and independent can be happy?
7. In your opinion do you think unmarried women can stay in this society and decide not to marry?
8. Who suffers more emotional stress than the other, married or single women**?**
9. What do you think are some causes of women delaying marriage marriages or singleness?
10. How much of it is their own faults?

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