

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES OF COUPLES IN LIVING-
APART-TOGETHER MARRIAGE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
EDUCATION, WINNEBA**



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Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Guidance and Counselling)
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DECEMBER, 2021

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature:

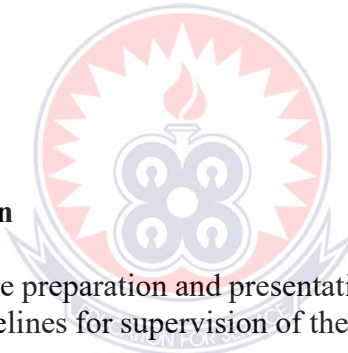
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Supervisor's Declaration

We 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.

Supervisor: Christiana Ammah (Mrs.)

Date:



DEDICATION

To Mrs. Mary Afua Ackumey, a retired lecturer, UEW, for encouraging me to pursue this programme during the time I was going through storms of life.



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I cannot forget Brother Felix and Uncle Ben for their contribution to this work. Many hours were dedicated to answering questions and requests for analyses.

Thanks to all my friends, for their pieces of advice and moral support. May the Lord bless you.

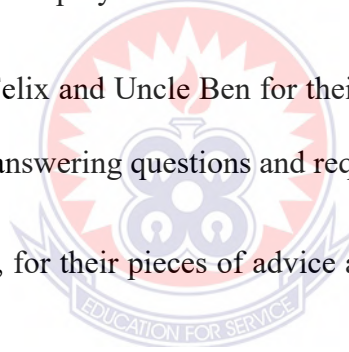
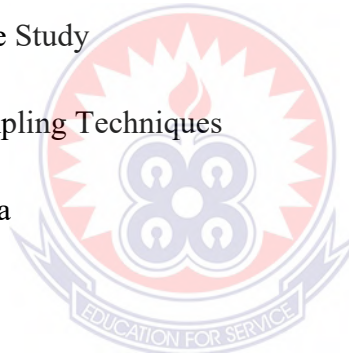


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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the adjustment experiences of couples in living-apart-together marriages and came out with counselling or coping strategies for couples in LAT marriages. The study was guided by four research questions. The study was qualitative in nature adopting phenomenological case study design. Sixteen (16) married couples were sampled for the study. Of the 16 participants, five were males, and 11 were females. The sampling techniques used for the study were the purposive sampling and snowballing techniques. Data were gathered using interview guide and were analysed thematically. The outcome of the study were that couples in LAT marriages enjoy adequate time for career goals. Despite the merits of LAT marriages, it was also revealed among other things that couples in LAT marriages experience lack of companionship and intimacy, and there is a high incidence of infidelity among couples. Effective communications, forgiveness among others were the coping strategies couples in LAT marriages used. In order to harness the inherent potential and advantages and minimize the drawbacks of LAT relationships, it was recommended that couples must cultivate the habit of effective communication, maximizing the power of virtues such as love, forgiveness and trust and practice the value of acceptance of responsibility, use work and social activities as a distraction, apply the principles of cognitive restructuring.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Although marriage is defined differently, and by different entities, based on cultural, religious, and personal factors, Stritof (2019) assert that a commonly accepted and encompassing definition of marriage is a formal union and social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. Similarly, Smith (2020) also defined marriage as any of the diverse forms of interpersonal union established in various parts of the world to form a familial bond that is recognized legally, religiously, or socially, granting the participating partners mutual conjugal rights and responsibilities including, for example, opposite-sex marriage, same-sex marriage, plural marriage, and arranged marriage. Customarily, marriage was the known and accepted social institution between couples that live together (Hope, 2012). However, some decades ago, a new social institution appeared in the Western world and is currently extending to all other parts of the world. In contrast to couples in conventional marriages which have one household in common, couples are increasingly living in separate destinations and separate households.

As explained by Mirza, Senthilkumaran and Ja'Far (2007), this is commonly referred to as Living Apart Together (LAT). LAT is also succinctly defined by Duncan and Phillips (2011) as an intimate relationship in which partners live in different geographical domains. As stated by De Jong Gierveld (2004), nowadays in Europe, unmarried cohabitation and living-apart-together relationships are frequently opted for by couples. Also, in the United States, Strohm, Seltzer, Cochran and Mays (2009) conducted a study and found out that people are becoming more inclined to living apart

relationships. Duncan and Phillips (2011), also asserts that, across the globe, the phenomenon of LAT is increasingly being recognized and accepted as a specific way of being a couple. Significantly, the phenomenon of couples living-apart-together-across-borders (LATAB) is on the increase due to the inability of couples to migrate together or to reunify in destination countries. This is as a result of the fact that family reunification laws, in most countries, are becoming more stringent, especially for those moving from the Global South to the North (Caarls & Mazzucato, 2016).

Particularly in Africa, although the concept of LAT marriages have been a common practiced in some tribes, Kyalo (2012) asserts that in the African context, marriage, predominantly, constitute a culturally recognized union between people, called spouses, that establishes rights and obligations between them, as well as between them and their children, and between them and their families. In Ghana, for instance, although LAT has been practised among tribes such as the Gas, the Effutus and the Gomoas, Kyalo (2012) indicated that the rationale for marriage generally in the Ghanaian sociocultural context is predominantly to unite two families together. The notion of contemporary LAT marriage is, usually perceived in Ghana as very far from the 'traditional' version of couple relationships, where co-residence in marriage was the norm (Duncan & Phillips, 2011).

Hope (2012), however, reveals that LAT had always existed on the African continent and its existence was due to the demands of certain jobs. The author (2012) further states that, prolonged absence of husbands or wives, who are in the security services who travel for peacekeeping operations away from their homes demands that they live apart from their spouses for as long as the peacekeeping operations last. Apart from people in the armed forces, the demands of most jobs and the need for workers to be transferred from their original community of abode to a different community of work

is spurring the acceptance of LAT as an adaptation strategy among couples in most African countries (Rennie & Mupenda, 2008). Furthermore, in Ghana, Caarls (2015) conducted a study on the phenomenon of LAT to investigate when and where families live geographically separate from each other. The findings of the study indicate that LAT is more common among Ghanaians whose spouses migrate outside the country. To Caarls (2015) therefore, the phenomenon of living-apart-together-across-borders (LATAB) is more common in Ghana as compared to LAT within Ghana. Recent observations about the demands of certain jobs and the quest to attain higher education or in-service-training have however given rise to LAT phenomenon within Ghana.

With the prevalence of this phenomenon, there is the need for couples in LAT to adopt strategies to adjust to the type of marriage they find themselves in. It is therefore significant to explore the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriage in view of the challenges they encounter so as to help other LAT couples to enjoy their marriage. As defined by Bisson and Sakhuja (2006), adjustment refers to the behavioral process of balancing conflicting needs, or needs challenged by obstacles in the environment. Adjustment experiences therefore refer to the measures being taken by couples in LAT marriages to ensure the sustenance of their marriage irrespective of the challenges that they encounter. The aim of this study is therefore to study the situation of LAT in Ghana in order to explore the experiences of couples in LAT so as to provide them with counseling on relevant coping strategies.

In every human environment regulated by precepts and laws, marriage is rite of passage instituted as a legal act and not just a romantic affair or religious rite (Dabone, 2012). Aduah-Kabah (2014) defines marriage as the handing over of a woman's reproductive rights from the father to the husband after the fulfillment of the necessary marriage rites. Marriage has been described as one of the most significant and essential human

relationships because it provides the primary structure for establishing a family relationship and rearing the next generation (Rosen, Myers & Hattie, 2004). Bell (2008) broadly defines marriage as any of the diverse forms of interpersonal union established in various parts of the world to form a familial bond that is recognised legally, religiously, or socially, granting the participating partners mutual conjugal rights and responsibilities. It includes opposite-sex marriage, same-sex marriage, plural marriage, and arranged marriage (Bell, 2008). Also, marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman whereby the couple leave their respective families to establish a new one.

According to Debone (2012) marriage is the matrimony that takes place between two people mainly male and female who are biologically unrelated for the purposes of sexual pleasure, companionship, love and procreation. Similarly, Aduah-Kabah (2014) asserts that the main purpose of marriage in sub-Saharan Africa is reproduction and polygyny and monogamy are the most practiced and socially accepted forms of marriage accepted by people living in Sub-Saharan Africa. Added to that, marriage is also describes as a union or cohabitation between a man or woman with the motive of perpetual commitment to each other and the children they reproduce in the relationship (Dabone, 2012).

Even though there might be some important variations within the marital systems across the globe, the underlying principle of marriage is the sexual bonding that is established between two opposite sexes which comes with kinship responsibilities (Dabone, 2012). According to Jack Jackson (2015), for a family to be declared legitimate, it must be marked by a socially and socially accepted union called marriage. Marriage is one of the most common and prevalent concepts practiced by everyone regardless of color, ethnicity and religion. However, it is sometimes difficult to define the marriage concept mainly because of the varieties of marriage arrangements popping up in different

societies of the world. Similarly, Muntari-Sumara (2015) asserted that the different definitions of marriage are mainly premised on the elements that constitute the marriage relationship. This quandary of the lack of a singular definition for marriage has sparked several arguments among anthropologist. Hence it became an undisputable fact that ritual recognition, cohabitation and definition of sexual rights is too narrow in defining marriage. Also, the difficulty in finding a good definition for the concept of marriage can be attributed to the varied forms and types of marriage that has emerged as a result of modern civilization (Dabone, 2012)

Marriage is a critical event in the life of any maturing individual and it comes with several benefits. According to Mensah (2018), marriage relationships serve as a platform to provide immense benefits to the people involved. Mensah (2018) indicated that marriage can act as a source of emotional, marital and social support for a significant number of people. Added to that, marriage can also serve as a platform for strengthening family ties and also the affirmation of both cultural and religious beliefs. In a marital relationship, Kariuki (2014) asserts that, the couples assist each other in terms of sharing emotional and physical intimacy, execution of tasks as a cohesive unit and they also create and utilize wealth as a unit.

Jack Jackson (2015) highlighted that marriage can be classified into two forms:

Monogamy: This is a form of marriage between one man and one woman. This therefore coveys the idea that, a man can only be married to one woman at a time. However, if the man takes another step to marry another woman while his wife is alive, the first marriage is mostly abrogated through divorce.

Polygamy: This is form of marriage mostly practiced by people in Sub-Saharan Africa. This form of marriage can be defined as relationship in which both the man and the

woman is allowed to have more than one spouse. Polygamy can be further divided into two sub-categories that is polygyny and polyandry. According to Aduah-Kabah (2014), polygyny is the form of marriage structure in which a man simultaneously married to more than one wife while polyandry can be defined as a marriage relationship where a woman can simultaneously have more than one husband. Jack Jackson (2015) indicated that polygyny is practiced mostly in traditional settings of Nigeria while polyandry is a dominant practice in India, Tibet and Lele of central Africa. Added to that, Mensah (2018) also indicated that modernization has introduced massive evolutions into the marriage institutions such as opposite sex marriage (a man and a woman) to same sex marriage.

Several scholarly works done on African societies indicated that men and women within the sub-region are expected to get married during their youthful years. Hence, a significant number of researchers indicated that, in Africa, marriage is seen as a universal ideal (Dabone, 2012). There are different types of marriage unions practiced in various parts of the world namely; Civil marriage, Religious marriage, customary marriage and “Come we stay marriages”. In the latter two marital arrangements, the male and female live as husband and wife without any form of a legal document to validate the union. Bogy (2014) asserts that religious marriage, customary marriage and statutory marriage are the dominant form of marriages practiced in the Ghanaian setting. However, majority of elite and educated Ghanaians located in towns and cities gravitate towards the concept of statutory marriages.

Afful and Nantwi (2018) define marriage as one of the paramount goals of life within the context of the traditional society and as a strong bond between a woman and a man for the singular purpose of procreation. Marriage, the authors indicated as the only appropriate and admirable way of continuing the bloodline of a man. Hence an

individual is deemed not whole when they do not marry. Afful and Nantwi (2018) further indicate that marriage in the Ghanaian traditional setting is labelled as a requisite stage in life and it is considered the most important social institution.

According to Bogya (2014), it is a common practice among many young people within the customary marriage context to marry from different kinship group. Through this act, kinship ties are strengthened; extended and new social contacts are being established. Bogya also indicated that marriage is a potent medium to forge new alliances between families and communities. Added to that, the author also asserted one of the motives of marriage in the Ghanaian traditional setting is for the couples to command respect and social standing in the society where one finds himself. Another reason is to predicate on the myth of uniting the link in the rhythm of life; that is the past, present and future generations are believed to be bound together when marriage activities are carried out.

Finally, Dabone (2012) asserts that in Ghana the customary marriage rite is done to fit the culture of the woman's ethnic group. The author further indicated that marriage is not just an affair between two people in love rather it is a group affair involves both immediate relatives and distant kin folk. Prior to the marriage agreement, inquiries are carried out by both families to uncover the true character of the potential son-in-law or daughter-in-law. Generally, traits such as immorality, contagious diseases and witchcraft are not accepted while traits such as hard work, respect and responsibility are endorsed by both families. During the marriage ceremony the acceptance of the dowry in the form of drinks or money signifies the consent of the family members to the marriage.

It is believed that marriage is a social institution which fosters the coming together of two totally different individuals with different personality traits, psychological make-up and often different socio-economic backgrounds to form a family. However, after marriage comes a period of adjustment to each other (Adegoke & Esere, 2009; Bali, Dhingra & Baru, 2010). This involves some compromise by both parties for the survival of the relationship. Marital adjustment, therefore, is defined as a situation where partners are said to be happy with each other in the relationship. It is a complex concept which is dependent on many variables. Often times, partners, in the course of the relationship, do not experience the marital bliss that they expect once they enter into the relationship. This is the probable reason why some couples prefer LAT marriages so as to have time on their own to get over whatever emotional disturbances they may have experienced while living together with their spouses in the same household (Kumswa, 2018). Essuman (2010) believes that the rate at which marital relationship is laced with pains, conflict and emotional confusion in recent times has increased dramatically, with an increased spate of divorce within short periods of marriage. The author makes reference to LAT marriages as a form of escaping from, or alleviating the emotional confusion and conflict spouses encounter in their “normal” customary marriage.

In simple language the word LAT in Dutch means to stick together (Levin, 2004). According to Upton-Davies (2012) up until now, researchers have not been able to provide standard definition for LAT relationships due to the basic fact that scholars define and measure LAT based on different parameters. Benson (2013) indicated that much uncertainty looms around how individuals who engage in LAT should be labelled or defined.

Consequently, researchers have difficulty in collecting data accurately quantifying the universality of individuals participating in romantic LAT relationships and accurately comprehending the role of LAT relationship across the general course of life due to the absence of an established terminology to describe LAT relationships (Benson, 2013). According to Manning and Smock (2010), 115 young adult men and women were interviewed about their experiences about non-marital cohabitation and it was discovered that there was no universally accepted terminology used to reference their partners or define the relationship. It was noted that majority of the participants displayed a very strong opposing view about the term unmarried partner and some were even confused by what the term really means (Benson, 2013).

Tai, Baxter and Hewitt (2014) define LAT relationship as the intimate relationship that exist between two people but with the agreement to live in separate households. This universal set accommodates a wide scope of couples with different motives and beliefs that fuel their ideology of living apart and at different levels in the course of life. These categories of couples include individuals who are currently dating with the potential of getting married, couples with no inkling of living together, couples who used to be together in the past but are now living apart. The latter two groups' rationale for living apart is premised on the desire of autonomy and freedom and other reasons like difference in geographical locations, available shelter, and the challenge of employment and the responsibility of taking care of the elderly.

Sobal, (2005) sees LAT as the couples who live in their own separate place of residence. However, Milan and Peters (2003) redefined the concept of LAT with the exception to people who are married or living in cohabiting relationships. They define LAT relationship as the concept where couples living in separate homes have intimate relationships. At one time, this type of living agreement was considered to be temporary

and a prelude to a bigger picture and labeled as to be a “go slow process”. However, Milan and Peters (2003) point out that in recent times LAT is regarded as permanent agreement for individuals who do not want to be in the same household but have intimate relationships. Finally, previous perspectives on the definition by different scholars do not correctly ascertain the prevalence of LAT because individuals answered the LAT survey questions subjectively (Haskey, 2005).

George and Ukpong (2013) assert that over the past fifty years, urban families in Nigeria has undergone serious transformation. The contemporary subsistence family has gradually morphed into a dual earning family where both parents work outside the constraints of the home to provide the basic necessities for their children and their loved ones (Akanle, Adebayo & Busari, 2014). According to Tade and Aderinto (2011), majority of these work conditions demands that one of these spouses be transferred to work in a different location away from home. Since majority of couples tend to value their jobs and also see it as source of income, a significant number of these couples tend to live apart in a marriage relationship called LAT marriages.

The characteristic feature of many LAT marriages is that couples come to the agreement that the wife stays with the children in their primary home whiles the husband usually swings through his new station and the primary home. The husband mostly visits his family mainly during weekends or on monthly basis (Kumswa, 2018). The idea of husbands living apart from their families for a period of time is not a new concept. In the past LAT relationships exist in different forms, for instance men usually find themselves in migrant labour as tin miners, rail construction workers and farmers. Nnaemaka (2018) highlighted that one of the reasons family stay apart together is for the purposes of work demands and the desire to pursue academic goals outside the country. Similarly, Akanle, Adebayo, & Busari, (2014) assert that families stay apart

both for long and short period of time mainly to meet work demands, pilgrimage journey and also for business purposes.

Despite the advantages and the need for LAT relationships in some marriages, Furstenberg and Cherlin (2010) indicated that the African cultural norm frowns on couples practicing LAT because LAT is a type of relationship that goes against the cultural norm which states that husband and wife must live in the same household to raise children. The scholarly works of the West also suggests that dual earner and LAT marriages are considered non-conventional forms of marriage relationship due to the simple fact that LAT relationship are not operating according to the expected standards of the African tradition (Kumswa, 2018).

The motivation for the indulgence in LAT relationships in the western world is very contrary to the African context. However, studies in Africa and the West have focused primarily on relationships taking place within the borders of the country but much attention has not been given to the context of living together apart across borders (Kim &Valentina, 2016). According to Coe (2011) and Oppong (2013) geographic separation of spouses in Ghana is a common practice. Marriages are organized as formal agreement between two families to foster and maintain alliances. From these perspectives geographical distance in marriage becomes the decree instead of the exception and any form of heightened intimacy is deemed unhealthy for both spouses because it compromises the loyalty to the respective families (Oppong, 2013). Women are progressively migrating internationally, without their husbands. Countless number of studies have demonstrated that the operation of transnational families is vastly different from independent female and male migration. For instance, there exist greater possibilities of Ghanaian transnational couples divorcing when the wife migrates

independently as compared to couples who have no migration experience (Caarls & Mazzucato, 2015).

Finally, Kalu (2012) establishes the premise that, LAT relationship is commonly practiced by the ancient Ga tribe. According to Kalu (2012), marriage among the Gas is considered a partnership not as a vital union. The union is structured so that the married couple can have greater level of autonomy and freedom. The traditional Ga family is of a patrilineal origin and they practice patrilocal resident arrangement. Men and women do not share the same resident. Hence this form of resident arrangement plays a very key role in the marital and family life of the individual. The author highlighted that, since majority of the males in the Ga tribe work as fishermen, they tend to leave their families for days and months on long fishing expedition to shoals on the Liberia and Central African coasts.

The direct consequence of the absence of the man from the same compound with their wives mostly creates family discords and sexual life is considered extremely private. Added to that, adult males are restricted to move freely in female compounds and the vice versa. The only exception to this rule is child birth, illness and ceremonial activities. However, men could spend the night with their wives in the female compound provided they adhere to the norm and rules of visitation (Kalu, 2013).

Notable cultural differences in the extent to which LAT is an identified and accepted intimate relationship are reflected in linguistic variations that inhibit a common focus and research agenda. In the United States, expressions used to describe long-term intimate relationships between older singles are often borrowed from teenage culture. When older U.S. respondents in Talbott's (2002) study of romantic relationships used expressions such as "dating" or "going steady," they often qualified them with

reservations about their inappropriateness. “It sounds nuts,” said one of Talbott’s respondents (2002, p. 446) “for an old lady to have a boyfriend.” Similarly, LAT partners in a qualitative Canadian study (Kobayashi, Funk, & Khan, 2016) struggled to find a good term for their partner, disliking the terms boyfriend or girlfriend because of their failure to reflect the strength of their relationship. In contrast, LAT relationships have an ontological status in Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium. In Norway and Sweden, the expression *sarbo* or *särbo*, meaning “to live apart” have been in common use for some time and describe long-term intimate relationships that do not include a shared home. The term LAT was first used in the late 1970s by a Dutch journalist referring to a movie in which two people shared a common relationship but not a common home. Besides being an acronym, the word *lat* in Dutch also means stick (Levin, 2004). In Belgium and the Netherlands, LAT has become generally accepted in everyday use. When the language provides us with a typified meaning of this relationship, LAT becomes part of accepted, commonsense knowledge and can be discussed, considered, and assessed as a realistic alternative to other forms of intimate ties (Borell & Karlsson, 2003).

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that such a large proportion of the research on older LAT couples is from Belgium (e.g., Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans, 2015), the Netherlands (e.g., de Jong Gierveld, 2004), about ideal marriages. Variations in which criteria are deemed necessary to qualify as LAT result in different sample populations (Duncan & Phillips, 2011). Statistics about families and intimate relationships are often based on households, so the distribution of LAT relationships has not generally been included in national population surveys (Borell & Karlsson, 2003; Strohm, Seltzer, Cochran, & Mays, 2009). Even in the few cases in which LAT relationships have been included in such surveys or have been studied in other

statistically representative samples, different definitions and measures hinder international comparisons. Estimates of the incidence of LAT relationships in Australia, North America, and West European countries lie in the range of 7% to 10% of the population (e.g., Rei-mondos, Evans, & Gray, 2011 [Australia]; Duncan & Phillips, 2011 [Britain]; Milan & Peters, 2003 [Canada]; Levin, 2004 [Norway]; Strohm et al., 2009 [United States]). Young adults, typically defined as between 20 and 24 years of age, often constitute the largest group categorized as LAT partners in these surveys. In Australia (Reimondos et al., 2011), France (Régnier-Loilier, 2015; Régnier-Loilier, Beaujouan, & Villeneuve-Gohalp, 2009), and Southern Europe (Billari, Rosina, Ranaldi & Romano, 2008), half or more of the LAT population is estimated to be younger adults.

Although more common now (see Asendorpf, 2008), LAT relationships among older persons still involve relatively few individuals in mid and later life. In Canada, 2.3% of those older than 60 years of age were LAT partners (Turcotte, 2013), and 4.3% of those aged 50 to 64 years in the Netherlands (de Jong Gierveld, 2015) and 5% of those older than 60 years of age in Sweden were LAT partners (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2015). In a statistically representative sample of unmarried, non-cohabiting U.S. adults aged 57 to 85, 18% of those aged 57 to 64, 14% of those aged 65 to 85, and 11% of those aged 75 to 85 years agreed that they “currently have a romantic, intimate, or sexual partner” (Brown & Shinohara, 2013, p. 4). Similar to most surveys, this study does not determine how many of those who have an intimate relationship see it as a long-term arrangement or their subjective definition and view of the relationship.

LAT relationships among older people are far more significant than nominal data may imply. Studies from Germany (Asendorpf, 2008), the Netherlands (de Jong Gierveld, 2015), and Sweden (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2015) indicated that LAT was especially

relevant to those who started a new relationship in their old age. In Sweden (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2015), of those who had started a new intimate relationship after their 60th birthday, 7 of 10 were LAT partners and fewer than 3 of 10 were cohabitants, leaving a very small number who had chosen marriage (for similar results in the Netherlands, see de Jong, 2004).

In some of the literature, LAT relationships are seen as one of the defining aspects of contemporary differentiation of intimacy and family life. This is particularly evident in the work of the pioneer researchers of LAT. As a research concept, LAT was originally launched with a claim to describe “a historically new family form” (Levin, 2004, p. 223; see also Levin & Trost, 2004). Does a critical review of subsequent empirical research support such a universal claim? Following a life course perspective, we expect LAT relationships to be characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity in terms of subjective meaning, function, and durability that relate in part to life stage (see Benson & Coleman, 2016b; Coulter & Hu, 2015).

Qualitative and quantitative studies combine various versions of LAT and multiple age cohorts, making it difficult to focus on LAT as a committed alternative relationship related to life stage. Studies that are ostensibly about LAT are often about LAT as a stepping stone to marriage or cohabiting. For example, in a British study of LAT relationships, defined as “currently in a relationship with someone you are not living with here” (Carter, Duncan, Stoilova, & Phillips, 2015, p. 579), only 6 of the 50 respondents would fit our definition of LAT because they were the only ones who considered LAT a preferred and committed relationship.

Young adults who LAT usually intend to establish a common home, but cannot do so at present because of practical barriers such as a housing shortage, unemployment, or different locations for work or school (Reimondos, 2011 [Australia]; Liebroer,

Poortman, & Seltzer, 2015 [France and Germany]; Dommermuth, Noack, & Wiik, 2009 [Norway]). Recurring recessions have meant that young adults who cannot establish themselves in the labor or housing markets are often obliged to return to their parents' home instead of setting up a household with their partner (Connidis, 2014). Those who intend to live with their partner once current impediments are resolved or because they are uncertain about their relationship are more accurately viewed as being in a testing period or passing phase than in a long-term committed relationship. As Duncan and Phillips (2011) concluded, steady girlfriend and boyfriend relationships among younger adults who did not live together and commuter relationships when jobs in different locations forced couples apart, are not new. Many LAT relationships among those with co-resident, dependent children are also temporary and involuntary. In this case, consideration of a third party is the impetus for LAT. Single parents, in practice often mothers, choose not to share their home with their partner to preserve the boundary of the family home and to provide continuity for and avoid conflict with their co-resident children (de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013). Single parents may also be concerned about the reaction of others such as parents or former partners who may consider it inappropriate to have a live-in partner or view it as grounds to withdraw financial support. Another third party - a parent who requires care - leads some adult children, in practice often adult daughters, to delay living with a new partner while looking after their elderly parent.

With longer lives, these children may be old themselves. Waiting to cohabit while in a LAT relationship creates its own contradictions, and couples must negotiate the ambivalence of their goal to live together with their current realities. Older persons too may be reluctant to engage openly in non-normative romantic relationships such as LAT, but they are more likely to keep them secret or provide justifications for them

(Koren & Eisikovits, 2011; Kobayashi, 2016) than to be deterred from LAT altogether. Here, the ambivalence created by engaging in a relationship that is not socially accepted is managed through accounts and secrecy. Regarding durability, although LAT relationships between young to middle-aged partners are often transitional, the LAT relationships of older couples are typically long term.

In Canada, young adults (20–29 years) averaged 2.3 years together, whereas older adults (older than 60 years) averaged 7.5 years. In a Swedish study, all 116 LAT partners aged 60 to 90 years described their relationship as long term, with a median length of 7 years and a range from 1 to 28 years (Karlsson & Borell, 2002). Differences in relationship duration are even more marked in longitudinal studies. In a study in France (Régnier-Loilier, 2015), only one in 10 of the young couples was still LAT 3 years after the first interview, and virtually none 3 years later. The majority had either moved to a common household (36% with the same person) or separated. In contrast, only 7% of seniors had moved in with their partner, more than half of them were still in their original LAT relationship after 3 years, and about a third after 6 years; the balance experienced the death of, or separation from their LAT partner. Although some researchers, such as Caarls and Mazzucato (2016) and Caarls and de Valk (2017), conducted some studies on the phenomenon of LAT marriages, most of these studies seem to focus on the living-apart-together-across-borders (LATAB) experiences of Ghanaians whose spouses migrated to Western countries.

The greater durability of older couples' LAT relationships reflects their preference for this type of intimate tie. At this life stage, LAT is neither primarily a practical necessity nor a step toward establishing a common home. A British study of LAT that identified one category of participants who both preferred and were committed to LAT (Carter et al., 2015) suggests that commitment has two elements: commitment to LAT as a form

of intimate relationship and commitment to one's LAT partner. In an Australian study (Reimondos et al., 2011), more than 70% of older LAT partners had chosen to LAT over any other type of relationship. A British study that distinguished between partner LAT couples and dating LAT couples found that those aged 65 to 97 years fell entirely in the partner LAT category, and those aged 55 to 64 years were twice as likely to be partners rather than daters (Duncan & Phillips, 2011).

Committed or intrinsic LAT partners in Belgium have features those parallel normative views of marriage as involving a strong sense of being in a couple with a deep emotional investment in commitment, loyalty, being together, and mutual respect (Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans, 2015). For most of the 116 older LAT partners in a Swedish study, the overwhelming motive for LAT was the intimacy of the relationship; LAT partners regarded their relationships as deeply intimate, marked by mutual trust, understanding, and the sharing of confidences (Borell & Karlsson, 2003). Almost all of the LAT partners had daily contact with one another via telephone, more than one third (36%) met almost daily, and another half met a couple of times a week (Karlsson & Borell, 2002). Most of the older LAT couples in a British study (Coulter & Hu, 2015) lived within an hour of each other, with two thirds less than 30 minutes apart, and saw each other at least once a week, with two thirds seeing their partner daily or several times a week. Variations in the terminology that British LAT partners who view themselves as couples use to describe their relationship suggest greater commitment among older couples; they more often used the terms partner or husband or wife, and younger persons more often used girlfriend or boyfriend (Duncan, Carter, Phillips, Roseneil, & Stoilova, 2014). In Swedish (Karlsson & Borell, 2002) and Belgian (Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans, 2015) studies of LAT, fidelity was generally seen as a prerequisite for the relationship, a view also supported by a survey of LAT partners

in Britain in which 87% thought it would be wrong if a LAT partner had sex with someone else (Duncan et al., 2014; see also Carter et al., 2015). In a U.S. study (Brothers, 2015) even sexually active older LAT couples viewed sex as a less significant component of their relationship than they did when in marriages earlier in their lives. The assumption of greater freedom coupled with monogamy between couples who do not live together requires an added degree of trust - another paradoxical element of LAT (Kobayashi, 2016).

Cohort differences in LAT echo earlier U.S. research on dating that found almost half of respondents aged 55 to 75 years and older described their dating relationship as “steady” and only a small number considered it a step toward marriage, leading the authors to conclude that “dating is taken seriously by older adults but not as a means to marriage,” especially by women (Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1991, p. 258; see also Bulcroft & O’Connor, 1986). Watson and Stelle (2011) found that “young old” women did not see dating as a step toward remarrying, even in cases when dating developed into a steady, long-term relationship; a steady, long-term relationship, not marriage, was their goal. Older adults in the United States seriously pursue romantic partners (Stephure, Boon, MacKinnon, & Deveau, 2009), and, when compared with the personal ads and dating profiles of younger adults, they are less future oriented and more focused on present concerns (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013).

Counter to normative assumptions about marriage, older Belgian LAT couples also valued autonomy, time on their own, economic independence, and maintaining territorial boundaries (Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans, 2015). Older Swedish couples also emphasized autonomy as a prime motivator for LAT (Borell & Karlsson, 2003). Similar to LAT couples, later life dating women “prided themselves on their independence and did not want to give it up” (Dickson et al., 2005, p. 73). Analyses of

personal online ads generally confirm that older women are seldom prepared to compromise their independent lifestyle with a new marriage (e.g., Levesque & Caron, 2004; McWilliams & Barrett, 2014).

The low level of organization of LAT relationships and the absence of many of the commitments and ties that characterize marriage (Yodanis & Lauer, 2014) put the focus on the emotional side of the relationship (Borell & Karlsson, 2003). In theory at least, LAT simultaneously gives both partners autonomous access to their resources and home along with access to strong mutual commitment and intimacy. Partners defined as being in intrinsic LAT relationships in a Belgian study (Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans, 2015, p. 19) “operate as two autonomous individuals with their own objectives (maintaining autonomy and freedom) and cooperated to achieve a common goal (the mutual provision of intimacy, companionship and support).” LLAT relationships exemplify one of the features of Giddens’ (1992) ideal type of “pure” relationship; to a relatively high degree they depend on “satisfactions or rewards generic to that relationship itself” (p. 224).

Among older persons, priorities shift as the responsibilities of raising children and paid work diminish. A limited future increases a preference for affectively rich relationships (Carstensen, 1995). LAT is well suited to this psychological process. Emotional content is brought to the fore, and, in contrast to marriage, the automatic development of increasing commitments and responsibilities is not assumed (de Jong Gierveld, 2004; Karlsson & Borell, 2002). At the same time, among Swedish LLAT partners, reciprocal emotional support was accompanied with almost daily practical support (Karlsson & Borell, 2002), and they received more support from their LLAT partner than from any

other person in their network, including children and grandchildren (Karlsson, Johansson, Gerder, & Borell, 2007).

Most older persons who LAT are previously married parents (Karlsson & Borell, 2002; Karlsson, Johansson, Gerder, & Borell, 2007) see also de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013). Unlike younger adults, LAT is chosen for its good fit with their current life stage and their links to adult children. Participants in a qualitative U.S. study of 59- to 89-year-olds in LAT relationships (Brothers, 2015) viewed marriage as a relationship associated with the life stage of having children.

Brothers (2015) concluded that older persons in LLAT relationships were engaged in a new family form that contrasted with the focus on gendered family formation and child rearing in their earlier marriages. LAT relationships among older couples reflect class-based differences that make the capacity to run two homes more likely among those with more resources. Among younger couples, LAT often occurs because a couple cannot afford their own home and, therefore, lives with others (often parents) until they can (Coulter & Hu, 2015). In cases where co-residence in old age means forfeiting public funding, then those with fewer resources may be more likely to choose to LLAT. Gender also shapes the appeal of LAT later in life. The pull of linked lives and responsibilities to others is gendered, with women more likely to experience consequent limits on agency in the types of intimate relationships that are compatible with these commitments (de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013; Upton-Davis, 2015). Women who can afford to maintain a separate home appear to be more motivated than men to be in LAT relationships as a way of avoiding the gendered arrangements that they experienced in earlier marriages (Brothers, 2015; Upton-Davis, 2012). Swedish research (Karlsson & Borell, 2002) showed that women were significantly more motivated to choose LAT to secure independence and avoid a traditional gendered division of labor. Whether

women regarded their previous marriage as “happy” or “unhappy,” they often saw their shared home as representing responsibility rather than freedom and work rather than relaxation. Among repartnered adults aged 50 and older in the Netherlands (de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013), women, older participants, and parents were more likely to LAT than to remarry or cohabit. Women were also motivated to LAT as a way of protecting their financial assets (de Jong Gierveld, 2002). A Canadian qualitative study of LAT couples involving mostly divorced partners (Funk & Kobayahi, 2017) also found that women saw LAT as a way to avoid gendered household tasks and partner nurturing and to protect autonomous decision making about finances and the home. Men did not make parallel observations. Australian work by Upton-Davis (2015) involving women 45 years of age and older showed the appeal of LAT as a transformative option that allowed for a more egalitarian intimate relationship marked by independence and a positive view of oneself. The role of women in establishing LAT relationships can be seen as a result of the influence that earlier experiences have on choices made in later life (Elder, 1994). If their previous marital households were a constitutive force in the reproduction of traditional gendered relations, their own household today is a resource base from which they may avoid an asymmetrical distribution of household labor and unequal demands of caring for a partner (Borell & Karlsson, 2003; Brothers, 2015). The ambivalence of enjoying a committed intimate relationship that threatens egalitarianism in household labor is resolved by LAT. LAT relationships can also be a method of resolving ambivalent views about cohabiting (Roseneil, 2006) and competing desires to both stay in a preferred neighborhood and engage in an intimate relationship (Coulter & Hu, 2015).

Social policies that rest on the assumption that couples have their own safety net - each other - are motivators to LAT, especially among women. In this case, institutionalized

policy tends to reinforce gender and class relations. For example, in Sweden, decreased access to public social services has made it increasingly difficult for couples who live together to get assistance. Accordingly, Swedish women who LAT tend to see a home of their own as a protection against potential societal demands that partners provide the care that would otherwise be the responsibility of local welfare services. For those who cannot afford to forfeit public funding, there is also a push toward LAT.

Critical review establishes that LAT in older age is characteristically different from LAT at earlier life stages, making LAT more in keeping with a new family form than a transitory coping mechanism in later life. Research on dating in the United States shows parallel life stage differences. Although younger adults generally view and experience LAT as a temporary situation, older ones typically seek it out as an end in itself and aim to negotiate long-term, stable LAT relationships. Does the fact that LAT is usually a durable relationship for older couples but a flexible arrangement for younger ones (Coulter & Hu, 2015) mean that older couples in LAT relationships never marry? Not necessarily, but just as marriage is considered marriage even though it might end in divorce or widowhood later on, so a committed LAT relationship is a LAT relationship even if it might result in marriage later on. In the meantime, for both LAT and marriage, the accepted definition of the situation at the time has consequences for the partners in the relationship and for those in their social networks. The possibility of change does not deny the power of currently living apart together or being married if the couples involved consider their relationship a long-term arrangement. Our focus has been on LAT relationships in which both partners have chosen to be in a committed relationship that protects autonomy and limits obligations. Choice or agency refers to acting on one's own behalf in the context of available alternatives, that is, agency-within-structure (Connidis, 2012, 2015; Settersten, 2003). LAT partners who defend their

choice to LAT rather than marry because of their emotional commitment or financial, parental, or legal situations were described in a Canadian study as displaying interpretive agency (Kobayashi et al., 2016).

Unveiling the fact that some women enter into LAT relationships because they feel constrained or vulnerable rather than doing so as a consequence of reflexive and strategic choices (Duncan, 2015) does not negate the fact that they have chosen to LAT as their best available alternative. Seeing such vulnerability or constraint as motivators unique to LAT also ignores the reality that many women (and men) enter marriage for similar reasons. The unique contradictions of choosing to LAT when another form of relationship is preferred and their negotiation are topics for further research. LAT can be viewed as a way of resolving the ambivalence that older persons may have about both cohabiting and marrying, but LAT has its own contradictions that require negotiation. The term itself suggests the contradiction inherent in negotiating a committed, intimate relationship (togetherness) without co-residing (apartness) in cultures where co-residence has been a defining feature of intimate ties (Stoilova, Roseneil, Crowhurst, & Santos, 2014). As is true of all families of choice, LAT relationships involve ambivalence in the tensions between critique and transformation and between belonging and exclusion (Pidduck, 2009). Among couples that include one partner who prefers to LAT and another who would rather live together (see, e.g., Duncan, Phillips, Carter, J, Roseneil, & Stoilova, 2014), the incongruity of negotiating a committed relationship in separate households is compounded by contradictory goals between partners. For LAT couples in which both partners want to LAT because they value a committed intimate relationship combined with autonomy and limited obligation, the ongoing challenge is to negotiate this paradox.

As is often true of applications of vacillation to family ties, reference to ambivalence in LAT relationships is usually at the micro level of mixed feelings. Some LAT partners and couples experience ambivalence about the appropriateness of LAT (Benson & Coleman, 2016b) and about care exchanges (de Jong Gierveld, 2015). Such ambivalence is focused on the micro level of psychological feelings but can be related to institutionalized expectations regarding what constitutes a committed relationship and to broader structural issues such as gender and class.

Uncertainty about LAT is likely to vary based on the degree to which a culture and society view marriage as the proper or ideal intimate relationship. In Great Britain, marriage remains the overwhelming favourite (Duncan, Duncan, Phillips, M, Carter, Roseneil, & Stoilova,, 2014).

Negotiating LAT in the context of established understandings of what comprises a real and socially accepted committed relationship creates ambivalence for some individuals who LAT, particularly in countries where LAT is a relatively new alternative. In a U.S. qualitative study of 25 LAT partners (Benson & Coleman, 2016b), those who are still coming to terms with merging LAT with normative views of what constitutes a romantic relationship are characterized as ambivalent. The absence of an accepted term for LAT in the United States noted by partners trying to find appropriate titles for one another (Benson & Coleman, 2016b; Brothers, 2015) reflects cultural variations in the extent to which LAT is a recognized and accepted intimate tie and in the likelihood of institutionalizing LAT, comparative topics that warrant further study. These variations in turn help to account for different levels of ambivalence associated with LAT.

Explorations of alternative intimate relationships that lapse into traditional ideas of “good partnerships” as those in which partners feel obliged to care for one another (see,

e.g., de Jong Gierveld, 2015) highlight the socially constructed ambivalence that couples who LAT must negotiate. The assumption that being a good partner includes the obligation to provide extensive care challenges the legitimacy of intimate ties where this is not a premise. Yet if partners choose LAT in part because they prefer not to assume care obligations, then they are being the kind of good partners they had agreed to become by not expecting to either give or accept care. What is the experience of LAT partners when the need for care arises?

At the heart of LAT is the contradictory aim of having a long-term, committed, intimate relationship while preserving autonomy and minimizing obligations to give and receive care. Circumstances that threaten the balance of intimacy and independence, such as the declining health of a partner, are likely to heighten ambivalence in LAT relationships (Connidis, 2015). Indeed, LAT partners themselves express ambivalence about the impact that future care needs may have on their relationship (Kobayashi, 2016). What happens if a partner's situation changes and more extensive support is needed? How do couples negotiate this contradiction and how are other family members implicated in this negotiation?

There are no longitudinal studies that can show the actual extent of care commitments between LAT partners over time. Studies in Sweden (Karlsson, Johansson, Gerder, & Borell., 2007) and the Netherlands (de Jong Gierveld, 2015) were more or less hypothetical, as the respondents had generally not been faced with the challenge of a seriously ill partner. When asked to envisage a future scenario in which their partner is seriously ill, respondents had higher expectations of receiving care from their LAT partner than from their relatives, and none of them would consider ending their LAT relationship because their partner became ill (Karlsson & Borell, 2002; Karlsson, 2007).

Most, however, envisaged caring for an ill LAT partner a few days a week or a few hours a day, not full-time.

Belgian data (Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans, 2015) showed that LAT partners considered their partners as providers of emotional support and care, but there were signs of ambivalence about the ability to meet future care needs.

A British study (Duncan et al., 2014) that relied on hypothetical views of future care provision found that slightly more than one quarter of those in chosen LAT relationships believed that their partner would care for them were they “ill in bed.” Men were more likely than women to believe this and, unlike the Swedish study; both men and women were more likely to say that a family member would provide such care. In practice, some LAT partners had received extensive support when ill. Research in the Netherlands suggests that the attitudes held by LAT couples about care exchanges are not matched by their behavior in the face of actual illness (de Jong Gierveld, 2015). LAT partners who had not yet faced the situation of a seriously ill partner often expressed reservations about providing unlimited care, but those who actually had a very ill partner usually provided the same degree of care as would married spouses. This suggests that for some LAT couples, the resolution of ambivalence is found in favoring the commitment of the relationship over the autonomy of not providing care.

Comparative research should explore variations in how the ambivalence of autonomy and intimacy are resolved when the need for care arises, a transition that is a revealing site for studying ambivalence (Connidis, 2015). The link between policy and LAT and its impact on negotiating caregiving is significant. As Upton-Davis (2012) observed, LAT also has policy implications for housing if more old people continue to live alone even when in an intimate relationship and for health care arrangements given that one cannot assume that having a partner means receiving care. To date, LAT among

heterosexuals tends to be more common among those with more resources (Upton-Davis, 2015). Given that LAT appears to be a positive experience for substantial numbers of older persons, particularly women, structural barriers to this option must be explored.

There is a great need for a broader network perspective on the implications of LAT relationships for the larger constellation of family ties - the issue of linked lives. The desire to protect the inheritance of one's children by not living with an intimate partner often motivates LAT. Adult children can be influential in decisions to LAT rather than live with a partner (de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013). One's own or a partner's children can sabotage plans to live together and may decrease contact with parents when children hold negative views of their parents engaging in LAT relationships. Comparisons with continuously married partners found that repartnered couples, especially those who cohabit or LAT have weaker ties with their children (de Jong Gierveld & Peeters, 2003). The risk of greater conflict that repartnering in a cohabiting relationship poses leads some parents to LAT as a way to resolve the ambivalent goals of engaging in an intimate tie and maintaining closeness with children (Schenk & Dykstra, 2012).

The ambivalence of LAT relationships reverberates across family ties, raising questions about the boundaries and expectations of others regarding the LAT partner of a family member. Key assumptions made by LAT partners in qualitative studies (e.g., Brothers, 2015; de Jong Gierveld, 2015) are that they have made the necessary arrangements for health care, that their children will take care of them if needed, and that their partner's children will care for their partner. From the standpoint of adult children, the fact that a parent is LAT cannot be assumed to mean future care for their parent if needed.

What are the implications of this assumption for negotiating a relationship with a parent's LAT partner? Is there an effort to develop an emotional bond in the absence of assuming an instrumental one? Does the expansion of networks that LAT potentially allows increase the number of potential care providers (Cherlin, 2010), or is there ambivalence among adult children about offering care to their parent's LAT partner? Is a LAT partner "part of the family" or "my parent's partner"? Variations in the response are likely to parallel those among step ties - much will depend on the duration of the relationship, the extent of shared activity, and the degree of emotional attachment that develops over time (Connidis, 2010). A qualitative British study (Stoilova, Roseneil, Carter, Duncan, & Phillips, 2017) suggested that strong emotional attachment and the view of a LAT relationship as ongoing enhanced viewing a LAT partner as part of the family, which often extended to the LAT partner's family members. In cases where LAT partners do eventually provide care despite a starting assumption that this would not occur, are the family members, especially children, expected or likely to support their parents' caregiving efforts? Given that some ex-wives care for their ex-husbands, primarily as an expression of their commitment to helping their children (Benson, 2020), perhaps children of parents who LAT become implicated in caregiving chains that contradict expectations of filial obligation. The paradoxical concern about public and legal status in relationships that are sought after for their autonomy and limited obligation is a source of structured ambivalence as LAT couples negotiate committed relationships that lack legal standing (Duncan, Carter, Phillips, & Stoilova, 2012).

Lyssens-Danneboom and Mortelmans (2015) found legal insecurity among LAT partners who were concerned about not having a public identity as a couple and about whether they would have access to their partner should there be a medical problem or accident. At the same time, LAT partners generally accepted that, upon their partner's

death, it would be their partner's family members and not themselves who would be responsible for making subsequent arrangements. The potential cost of legal exclusion is exemplified by a man who was sole care provider to his LAT partner up to her death, but was then denied partner status by her children (de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013). Legal status issues parallel long-held paradoxes in committed same-sex relationships in past and present jurisdictions where marriage is not a legal option for sanctioning the relationship. The ambivalence of their social standing as couples may reverberate across the family network when other family members make efforts to claim the legitimacy of a family member's gay or lesbian relationship (Connidis, 2003).

There appears to be paucity of literature when it comes to the phenomenon of LAT among couples who live apart from each other within the borders of Ghana. Due to transfers of teachers from one place to another, it becomes necessary to carry out a study to unravel the adjustment of couples in living-apart-together marriages in the University of Education, Winneba where most of these workers settle for LAT relationships where their spouses reside in different communities. Notably, it seems to suggest that adequate attention has not been given to LAT workers within the educational sectors in Ghana. For instance, many couples have had their marriages collapsed because LAT marriages engendered mistrust between them (Kalu, 2013). The foregoing inspired the need to bring to the fore the adjustment experience of the many other couples who are still in LAT marriages.

1. 2 Statement of the Research Problem

Marriage forms the basis of family existence, according to societal expectations in most African communities, couples in conventional marriage are expected to live together in a common household (Allen & Olson, 2001). Since the demands of certain jobs have necessitated a new social norm (LAT), which is directly opposite to the traditional norm

of couples in conventional marriages with one common household, it is prudent that coping strategies should be made readily available to couples in LAT, through counselling avenues, for such couples to mitigate their challenges and enjoy their marriages.

Some scholars, however, questioned the ability of couples in LAT marriages to solve the numerous problems that arise in marriage since they live separate from each other. Connidis, Borell and Karlsson (2017) for instance, question how couples in LAT marriages effectively resolve challenges such as the social pressure from traditional parents or relatives who do not support LAT relationships. The individualism in LAT marriages has the tendency of escalating the issue of disagreement among the couples which can easily dissolve the marriage.

Furthermore, the geographic separation in LAT marriages raises crucial questions about how couples can readily access emotional or physical support from their partners when needed, considering they are not always physically present with each other. Essuman (2010) notes a rising trend in marital relationships characterized by pains, conflicts, and emotional confusion, with an increased incidence of divorce within short periods of marriage. The author suggests that LAT marriages might be seen as a means of escaping or alleviating the emotional challenges encountered in traditional customary marriages.

With all the above concerns about LAT marriages, there is the need to conduct a study to explore the experiences of couples in LAT marriages to understand their challenges. Although some researchers such as Caarls and Mazzucato (2016) and Caarls and de Valk (2017), conducted some studies on the phenomenon of LAT marriages, most of these studies seem to focus on the living-apart-together-across-borders (LATAB) experiences of Ghanaians whose spouses migrated to Western countries.

There appears to be paucity of literature when it comes to the phenomenon of LAT among couples who live apart from each other within the borders of Ghana. Most significantly, the sector of the Ghanaian institution where the phenomenon of LAT should be studied is educational sector. Due to transfers of teachers from one place to another, it becomes necessary to carry out a study to unravel the adjustment experiences of couples in living –apart-together marriages in the University of Education, Winneba where most of the workers settle for LAT relationships where their spouses reside in different communities.

Numerous studies have explored the phenomenon of Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages, providing valuable insights into the motivations, challenges, and outcomes associated with this non-traditional living arrangement. Researchers such as Levin and Trost (2018) and Johnson and Dush (2019) have investigated the factors influencing couples' decisions to choose LAT, emphasizing individual autonomy, career pursuits, and the desire for flexibility in relationships. Additionally, studies by Duncan and Phillips (2017) and Carter and Reynolds (2020) have delved into the communication patterns and satisfaction levels of couples in LAT marriages, shedding light on the dynamics of intimacy and connection. A study by Lewin (2017) that compared happiness in the relationship, support, and strain in LAT relationships with first marriages, remarriages, and cohabitation. Also, Ayuso (2019) explored the future of couples in LAT relationships and found that those who live farther from each other and have less contact are the most likely to marry in the future. Benson, Kerr & Ermer (2017) also examined the motivations for LAT relationships among older adults and found that seniors wanted to have "intimate companionship" while maintaining their own homes, social circles, customary activities, and finances.

Despite the valuable contributions of existing literature, several gaps and deficiencies persist, particularly in the context of couples in LAT marriages within academic settings such as the University of Education, Winneba. Existing empirical studies on LAT marriages predominantly focus on general populations, neglecting the unique dynamics present in academic settings. The intersection of academic and relational pressures is insufficiently explored, leaving a gap in understanding how individuals within the university context navigate the complexities of LAT unions. Many studies lack a nuanced exploration of the cultural and societal influences shaping LAT marriages. The University of Education, Winneba, operates within a distinct cultural framework, and understanding how these contextual factors impact couples in LAT relationships is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of their adjustment experiences. While existing literature offers theoretical frameworks, there is a scarcity of practical insights to guide educators, counselors, and policymakers in supporting couples in LAT marriages, especially within academic environments. Practical recommendations for addressing the unique challenges faced by couples in the University of Education, Winneba, are notably absent.

This study aims to address the identified gaps in the literature by conducting a comprehensive examination of the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages within the University of Education, Winneba. By building upon the foundations laid by previous researchers, this study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the motivations, challenges, and outcomes specific to the academic context.

Focusing on the University of Education, Winneba, brings a unique perspective to the study. The educational sector presents specific challenges related to job transfers, a factor that often leads to couples adopting a living-apart-together (LAT) arrangement.

Investigating how couples in this academic environment navigate the complexities of LAT marriages contributes valuable insights to the understanding of this phenomenon. The research problem addresses a societal shift from traditional marital norms to the emerging trend of LAT marriages. The demands of certain professions, such as teaching, often require geographical separation for couples, making it crucial to explore how individuals in the educational sector adapt and cope with such unconventional marital arrangements. As mentioned in earlier research problem statement, the societal shift towards LAT marriages necessitates the availability of coping strategies, particularly through counseling avenues. Investigating the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages provides valuable insights for counseling professionals and educators, enabling them to tailor support services to the unique needs of couples facing geographical separation.

Notably, it seems to suggest that adequate attention has not been given to LAT. For instance, many couples have had their marriages collapsed because LAT marriages engendered mistrust between couples (Kalu, 2013). The foregoing inspired the need to bring to the fore the adjustment experience of the many other couples who are still in LAT marriages. LAT marriages usually lead to challenges such as mistrust, emotional disconnect, and difficulties in seeking support. These issues have significant implications for relationship satisfaction and stability. Exploring adjustment experiences sheds light on the factors that contribute to successful LAT marriages and identifies areas where interventions may be needed to strengthen these relationships. The rationale also highlights a paucity of literature on LAT marriages within the borders of Ghana, particularly in an educational setting. By narrowing the focus to the University of Education, Winneba, the study aims to fill a gap in existing research,

providing a more comprehensive understanding of LAT experiences among couples in this specific context.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Majority of work conditions demands that spouses be transferred to work in a different locations away from home. Since majority of couples tend to value their jobs and also see it as source of income, a significant number of these couples tend to live apart in a marriage relationship called LAT marriages. The characteristic feature of many LAT marriages is that couples come to the agreement that the wife stays with the children in their primary home while the husband usually swings through his new station and the primary home. University of Education, Winneba is no exception, since majority of the workers are in to LAT marriages.

The purpose of this study is to explore the adjustment experiences of couples in living-apart together marriages in the University of Education, Winneba.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the benefits of couples in LAT marriages
2. find out the challenges of couples in LAT marriages
3. explore the counseling implications arising from living-apart-together (LAT) marriages for couples

1.5 Research Questions

1. What benefits accrue to couples in LAT marriage?
2. What challenges accrue to couples in LAT marriages?
3. What are the specific counselling needs and challenges faced by couples engaged in living-apart-together (LAT) marriages?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Recent observations about the demands of certain jobs and the quest to attain higher education or in-service-training have however given rise to LAT phenomenon within Ghana. The contemporary subsistence family has gradually morphed into a dual earning family where both parents work outside the constraints of the home to provide the basic necessities for their children and their loved ones. Majority of these work conditions demands that one of these spouses be transferred to work in a different location away from home.

The findings of this study will outline the benefits and challenges that couples in LAT marriages encounter in their day-to-day lives and what they do by themselves to harness these benefits and overcome the challenges. Besides, the findings of the study will guide policy makers in the relevant sectors such as the Ministry of Education, University Teachers, Ministry of Health, Ghana Security Services, in formulating appropriate policies to ensure that spouses in LAT marriages are considered in matters of transfer so that they could be posted to places where they can unite with their partners. For practice, the findings of the study will significantly contribute to discourse on the normalcy of LAT marriages. Finally, the findings of the study would add to the existing body of educational research literature, which might be harnessed for further research in other related fields.

1.7 Delimitations

The study is delimited to adjustment experiences of couples in living-apart-together marriages. Also, the study is restricted to only marriage couples of UEW living-apart-together.

1.8 Definition of Terms

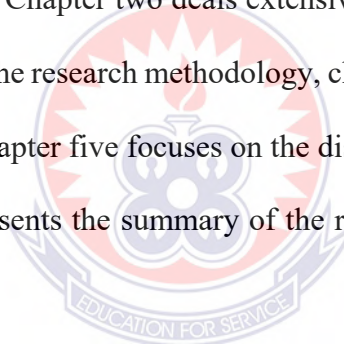
Living-apart-together (LAT) marriage: an intimate relationship that exists between two people but with the agreement to live in separate household.

Adjustment: behavioural process of balancing conflicting need or needs challenged by obstacles in the environment.

Adjustment experiences: measures taken by couples in LAT marriages to ensure the sustenance of their marriage, irrespective of the challenges that they encounter.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study contains six chapters. Chapter one consists of introduction, statement of the problem, objectives and purpose of the study, research question, delimitation and significance of the study. Chapter two deals extensively with related literature review, chapter three focuses on the research methodology, chapter four deals with presentation of results of the study, chapter five focuses on the discussion of the results and chapter six, the final chapter, presents the summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter principally focuses on the review of relevant literature pertinent to the subject under study and the theoretical framework that guides the study. Literature, therefore, was reviewed under the following subheadings:

1. Why couples choose LAT marriages
2. Benefits of couples in LAT marriages
3. Challenges of couples in LAT marriages
4. Coping Strategies to Maintain LAT Relationships

2.1 Rationale Behind LAT Relationships

Tai, Baxter, & Hewitt, (2014) defines LAT relationship as the intimate relationship that exist between two people but with the agreement to live in separate households. This universal set accommodates a wide scope of couples with different motives and beliefs that fuel their ideology of living apart and at different levels in the course of life. These categories of couples include individuals who are currently dating with the intention of getting married, couples with no inkling of living together, couples who used to be together in the past but are now living apart. The latter two groups' rationale for living apart is premised on the desire of autonomy and freedom. Other reasons like difference in geographical locations, available shelter, and the challenge of employment and the responsibility of taking care of the elderly are also considered. For Levin and Trost (2004) both married and non-married couples as well as same sex and opposite sex couples were integral parts of their definition. The authors defined LAT as the couples who do not share the same place of residence but live in their own separate residence

in which the other persons might also reside; they mostly perceive themselves as couples and believe their friends and family also recognizes their union. However, four years down the line Milan and Peters (2003) redefined the concept of LAT with the exception to people who are married or living in cohabiting relationships. They define LAT relationship as the concept where couples living in separate homes have intimate relationships. At one time, this type of living agreement was considered to be temporary and a prelude to a bigger picture and labelled as a “go slow process”. However, Milan and Peters (2003) point out that in recent times LAT is regarded as permanent agreement for individuals who do not want to be in the same household but have intimate relationships. Finally, previous perspectives on the definition by different scholars do not correctly ascertain the prevalence of LAT because individuals answered the LAT survey questions subjectively (Haskey, 2005).

It is recorded that individuals who practice LAT relationships may express a glimpse of uncertainty from time to time about what their relationship means (Castro-Martín, Dominquez-Folgueras, and Martín-García, 2008). Currently, life course variation may be the hidden notion for engaging in LAT relationships, differences in sexual orientation may also be one of the major contributing factors. According to Peplau and Cochran (1990) and Weston (1997) it is a common practice among lesbians and gay men to reside in separate households so that they can maintain privacy with regards to their relationship, to enhance an egalitarian partnership, or to breed intimacy while remaining autonomous. Since child-bearing is not synonymous with same-sex relationships, sharing the same place of residence might be a less defining component of same sex relationships (Black Black, Sanders, & Taylor, 2007).

As the size of a family becomes buoyant, married couples are obliged to seek for avenues to meet the needs of the family while at the same time fulfilling their ambitions and aspirations as humans. In making the attempt of improving the family's standard of living, married couples embark on the adventure of finding better job offers with higher remuneration, pursuing higher levels of education, career development and undertaking new business ventures. The desire to follow this path of freedom leads to several family problems such as separation of spouses from each other, as well as from their children (Kariuki, 2018).

Similarly, Kumswa (2018) asserts that the desire to move up the corporate ladder and land the dream career that would meet the couples need propels the couples to pursue the relevant educational skills and qualification away from home. Becker (2018) even argues that, the only time couples do not practice LAT is when the husband is already having a high-income job or the wife has a low level of education and hence going out to get a job will not make a significant variation in the income level. Shuang (2017) conducted in-depth research in 2016 to explore the reasons why some couples practice LAT relationships in China. The author interviewed respondents from varied backgrounds such as students, migrant workers, housewives and professionals. It was discovered from the study that the reasons why couples practice LAT in China can be categorized into external reasons (jobs and educational purposes) and personal reasons (self-development). According to some couples, the idea of not making the choice to cohabit with their partner is mainly based on the constraint of job and education. Some of the respondent indicated that LAT has offered them freedom and space which reduces so much daily contact. This freedom normally translates into higher levels of passion and intimacy within the relationship. However, some of the participants also

indicated that living together is not their priority citing eccentric attitudes of their spouses as a reason.

The presence of infants in a household has a significant influence on the decision-making for people in LAT (Liefbroer, 2015; Haskey & Lewis, 2006). It often happens that one or both partners in a LAT relationship had their own children staying with them. In order to provide a safe and loving living environment for the children, parents often decide not to live together with their LAT partners (Levin & Trost, 2004). In most cases, women are more likely to be single parents or the one with custody of the children after union dissolution.

Added to that, duties towards elders were another contributing factor that makes LATs a more ideal living arrangement than marriage or and cohabitation (Wiser, 2015; Tai, 2014). According to the 2001 General Social Survey in Canada, 36% of Canadian adult population lived with their parents (Chai, 2015). More particularly, young adults might live with their parents to save expenses whereas middle age individuals might also live with elderly parents and are thus more likely to provide care to their parents. In 1996, about 2.1 million members of family between the ages of 30 and 59 were catered for by their family members at Canada. Levin and Trost (2004) couples who live away from their partners have the chance to care for their elderly parents within the same household as most of the respondents mentioned that it is the “right” or moral thing to do and to not do so would create guilt.

Sexual orientation is also one of the motives why some couples also practice LAT. A 2003 survey conducted in the United States, showed that about 50% of the populace held attitudes of “mostly unfavourable” or “very unfavourable” towards lesbians and gay men. Within this type of social context, LATs is dominant among the same-sex

couples. The first reason is privacy concerning sexuality for same-sex relationships can be provided by LATs (Strohm, C. Q 2009). Also, raising children in this kind of living environment is easier since childbearing and child raising are controversial among same-sex couples (Black et al., 2007). Based on the 2003 California LGBT Tobacco Survey, about 18% of lesbian women and gay men are in LAT relationships (Chai, 2013).

Kariuki (2018) conducted descriptive research on a population of married individuals living in the Kiambu County of Kenya whose spouses are abroad to assess the impact of long-distance relationships on the couples. The author noted that, the residents of this county are very ambitious people who venture aggressively into new areas of life which they believe will help them improve their standard of living. Data was collected using questionnaires. The author discovered from their study that, three main reasons are the motives which drive married couples to practice LAT namely: employment, education and career advancement. This corroborates the studies of Schvaneveldt, Young and Schvaneveldt (2001) which states that couples in Taiwan commute for reasons such as career development and employment opportunities, particularly in a society where jobs are hard to come by and with the added merit of extra of income for the family.

Constraint versus choice

For most young adults, reasons for being in LAT relationship are due to circumstances outside of their control (e.g., financial constraints, job market, housing market, educational pursuits, caregiving responsibilities), rather than viewing the LAT arrangement as a lifestyle choice (Levin, 2004). Conversely, middle-aged and older adult LAT couples explain their reasons for being in a LAT relationship as a way to balance intimacy and autonomy while continuing to maintain relationships with and

responsibilities toward others (Karlsson & Borell, 2002). LAT relationships may be viewed as a legitimate family form for older adults, rather than a common transitional stage of steady dating that precedes future cohabitation or marriage for younger adults (de Jong Gierveld, 2004; Haskey & Lewis, 2006; Levin, 2004). Indeed, the majority of older adults in LAT relationships do not wish to cohabit or marry their partner in the future (Regnier-Loilier et al., 2009). Duncan and Phillip's (2010) study utilizing data from the 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey supports this age distinction. In their study they distinguished between 119 dating LAT couples versus 196 partner LAT couples. Partner LAT couples were defined as "those who see themselves as belonging to a couple" (p. 113). Dating LAT couples were defined as those "who do not regard themselves as an established couple, and more resemble traditional steady/special girl or boyfriends" (p. 113). Only 3% of dating LATs in Duncan and Phillip's study were aged 55-64, and none of the dating LAT partners were in the 65 and over age group. To summarize, compared to younger adults LAT relationships appear to differ in both form and function for older adults.

The concept of living apart together (LAT) is not solely an African trend. As stated earlier. Majority of demographical work on non-residential relationships have existed predominantly among people in Western countries. Formerly, an individual was viewed as either single, cohabiting or married (Roseneil, 2006). However, an emerging body of literature have confirmed the agreement to society towards LAT relationships (Duncan and Phillips, 2011; Levin 2004). The motivation for the indulgence in LAT relationships in the western world is very contrary the African context. However, studies in Africa and the West have focused primarily on relationships taking place within the borders of the country but much attention has not been given to the context of living together apart across borders (Kim and Valentina, 2016). Migration across

borders is a positive sign for a household mainly because of the possible economic benefits the family tends to enjoy (Stark and Bloom, 1985). The goal of the individual is to return to their homeland once their economic objective is accomplished. Ferrer (2011) discovered that African immigrants are most likely to stay separate in comparison with immigrants from other EU countries. Besides, it was recorded that it takes a very long time for African migrants to reunify. This length of time can be attributed to the outcome of exacting rules that apply to these special company of migrants. This could be in to cultural exercises such as the regular happenings of non-residential relationships among West Africans which gravitates African migrants towards living apart together abroad relationships (Bledsoe and Sow 2011; Coe 2011). According to Coe (2011) and Oppong (2013)) geographic separation of spouses in Ghana is a common practice. Marriages are organized as formal agreement between two families to foster and maintain alliances. From this perspective geographical distance in marriage becomes the decree instead of the exception and any form of heightened intimacy is deemed unhealthy for both spouses because it compromises the loyalty to the respective families (Oppong, 2013). Women are progressively migrating internationally, without their husbands. Countless number of studies have demonstrated that the operation of transnational families is vastly different from independent female and male migration. For instance, there exist a greater possibility of Ghanaian transnational couples divorcing when the wife migrates independently as compared to couples who have no migration experience (Caarls and Mazzucato 2015).

Brooks asserts that LAT relationships are very prominent in the western countries especially among elite scholars and the public. Castro-Martin also indicated from their work that LAT can also be called non-residential partnerships. The concept LAT confronts the age long assumptions of a significant number of Western demographic

research which defines couples as two people living in the same household and having an intimate relation (Strohm, C. Q (2009) asserts that the rationale of sharing a house communicates the idea of commitment, sharing household responsibilities and fostering intimacy.

According to the authors, western definition for couple relationship had a remarkable impact on demography due to the advent of LAT in Second Demographic Transition. This new order of change is vastly designated by a decline in lifelong marriage and an ever growing number and non-marital relationships such as non-residential partnerships and cohabitations (Duncan and Phillips 2010; Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Kiernan 2004; Sobotka and Toulemon, 2008). Studies have shown that couple relationships in the western world are made up of a significant minority of LAT couples.

From the research data collected by Duncan and Phillips (2010), 10% of the adult population in the UK are involved in LAT relationships and similar digits were recorded in countries such the US, Australia and other European countries. These findings are however contrary to the scholarly works of Chai (2015) which states that the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 2006 concluded that the commuter marriages are becoming rare in America and only about 3% couples operate this kind of agreement. Similarly, in the case of Canada, about less than 1% of people aged 20 and above practice commuter marriage, this accounts for about 240,000 Canadians (Chai, 2015). When it comes to longevity, the LAT relationships among older couples are mostly hinged on a long-term vision, whereas to young and middle-aged partners who are involved in LAT relationship mostly perceive their relationship to be transitional. In a study conducted in Sweden, all the 116 participants of the survey aged 60 to 90 years labelled their relationships as long term with a median period 7 years and a specified range of 1 to 28 years (Karlsson & Borell, 2002).

It has been discovered that individuals with a high level of education gravitate towards and practice the principles of LAT (Castro-Martin et al., 2008; Duncan & Phillips, 2010; Haskey & Levin, 2006; Reimondos, Evans & Gray, 2011). It was recorded that individuals in Britain between the ages of 25 and 44 who practice LAT relationships spend a full year longer in secondary school than their colleagues who practice cohabitation (Haskey and Levin, 2006). Liefbroer et al., (2015) discovered from their study that, individuals with advanced education most likely are found to practice LAT relationship as compared with to any other co-residential relationship. In the United States. Strohm, Seltzer, & Cochran. (2009) discovered from their study that men and women who indulge in LAT relationships mostly possess college degrees compared to their counterparts in cohabiting relationships (33% vs. 18% for women; 29% vs. 16% for men).

2.3 Benefits of LAT Relationships

There are quite a few practical reasons why this style of relationship may seem like an appealing choice.

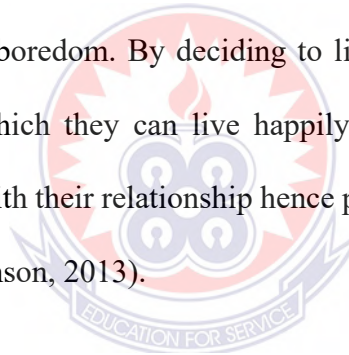
2.3.1 Autonomy

LATs enable people exercise autonomy. When exercising autonomy an individual can possess and maintain their own household and still have an intimate relationship (Liefbroer et al., 2015). Living in separate places guarantees separate finances. This enables the individual to be in control of his own account but in the case of conventional married couple financial accounts and resources are normally considered as joint. In addition to that, majority of LAT couples prefer to be in separate places because it is sometimes difficult to adjust to the behaviour of your partner. For example, if your

partner has the habit of smoking and you are allergic to smoking. This however does not happen in LAT relationships because of the display of autonomy (Chai, 2013).

2.3.2 Enhancing Novelty

Staying apart may be one way that enriches the originality or freshness in a relationship. In the beginning, married partners are found of engaging in fresh and exciting activities together - what learners call self-expanding activities. They go out on dates, they travel and discover new parts of the city, they attempt each other's hobbies, and not only do they have engaging discussions, they also endeavour to have exciting conversations. As the couples live on, and on, though, it can be easy for couples that live together for a long time to fall into such a state of tediousness that they stop having fun and exciting things hence leading to boredom. By deciding to live apart, LAT couples may have discovered a way by which they can live happily, thus, not compromising on the excitement that comes with their relationship hence preventing their relationships from becoming repetitive (Benson, 2013).



2.3.3 Avoidance of Relationship Pressures

Writing on the merits of LAT marriages, McKimmie (2010) postulated that LAT marriages enable people to avoid relationship pressures and expectations while still experiencing intimacy. It allows couples to have their own space and downtime. Without it, some couples would be unable to develop their own individuality and independence. Being independent is important for both individual happiness and relationship health and longevity. McKimmie (2010) further stated that without any independence, we can become codependent and resentful of the relationship. Having our own downtime allows us to maintain our own sense of self. It also nourishes us and allows us to give more to the relationship.

2.3.4 Living Habits Are Less Annoying

Rodney (2012) indicated that, living habits, and particularly unequal division of household chores, can negatively impact relationships. There is a link between equal housework division and higher sexual satisfaction. Again, if you are not living with your partner, their annoying habits can be more bearable and cause less tension between you as a couple. You only have to deal with the other's habits part time, instead of all the time and they do not impact on you as much.

2.3.5 Better Sex

Being in a structured routine with too much familiarity can have a negative impact on sexual desire, especially for women. Therefore, reducing this familiarity by living separately can have the reverse effect. Living apart can boost sexual desire which means that, even though you're not living together, you experience greater sexual frequency and satisfaction as a couple (Roe, 2012).

2.3.6 The Relationship Is Less Boring

It is easy to take each other for granted and forget to do the 'special things' for each other that we do at the start of a relationship. LAT can help avoid this as you tend to make more effort for your relationship and the time you dedicate to being a couple, because time spent together is not necessarily a given (Roe, 2012).

2.3.7 Less Argument

When we spend less time with our partners, we generally argue less because there's less to argue about. LAT means that there is less need for consensus on issues, such as living conditions, chores, and finances, which are a major source of tension for many couples. Each partner can, to a large degree, do what works for them (Goodmann,

2010). Arguing creates tension and stress for couples and, over time, can result in resentments which erode a relationship. Less argument means greater relationship satisfaction and individual happiness (Goodmann, 2010).

2.3.8 Lack of Desire to Move

Older adults may feel extremely settled in the homes they have lived in and maintained for years. Their adult children and grandchildren may also be attached to the homes, wanting to be able to return to them for holidays and so on (Roe, 2012).

2.3.9 Concern about the Commitment

Some LATers express concerns about committing to potentially provide care for another person “for life,” as one would in marriage. These concerns are often more pronounced for women than men. While LATers may say that they would take care of their partner if he or she needed it, they want to do so by their *choice*, not out of the sense of obligation that accompanies marriage.

2.3.10 Desire to Maintain Independence

At this age, many people have a complex and full life with hobbies, networks, professional concerns, and routines in place. Many LATers express an interest in maintaining their “own lives” and having some space while also still enjoying companionship (Stafford, 2003).

2.3.11 Concerns about Family Reaction to a Marriage

Older adults may worry about adult children’s response to a late-in-life marriage or cohabitation, which may not always be positive. Issues regarding inheritances, family homes, and roles can become emotional - even, for instance, the decision as to what to

call the new spouse of a parent. Living apart together may be less likely to create family disruptions (Rodney, 2012).

2.3.12 Relationship Satisfaction

Individuals having varied characteristics may be more or less likely to develop some particular types of unions, and these individual characteristics may translate, into variations in levels of relationship satisfaction. For instance, individuals who share strong beliefs about marriage are less likely to cohabit and they mostly report higher levels of satisfaction because indulgence in marriage rites creates evidence to confirm their beliefs. Alternatively, individuals who exhibit varying levels of commitment or attachment to their partner can possibly enter certain kinds of relationships than others, and they mostly give feedback of an oscillating level of relationship satisfaction due to differences in the level of commitment. Finally, Individuals may experience certain situations which drag them into certain forms of relationships and may consequently experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Tai, Baxter, & Hewitt, 2014).

2.3.13 Union Duration

In general, the length of a LAT relationship is short (Reimondos, Evans, & Gray, E.2011). At the time of the survey about 40% of people in LAT relationships had only been in a relationship for one year compared to 28% of those who had been in a relationship for 3 or more years. In addition, they propose that people usually make some changes after being in a LAT relationship for one or two years, either terminating their LAT relationships or moving in a co-residential relationship. Moreover, the period of a LAT relationship frequently differs with varied age groups (Ermisch & Siedler, 2009). Ermisch and Siedler (2009) stated that people above age 35 usually have lasting LAT relationships than their younger group. More specifically, about 50% of LAT

couple over 35 often have relationships that last about 5 years and 25% of those last up to 10 years. Likewise, the period of a LAT relationship normally is shorter for young people. Specifically, the duration of a LAT relationship on average is 2.3 years among those between 20 and 29 years of age, compared with 3.8 years among those between 40 and 49 years old and 7.5 years among those aged 60 and over.

The period of a LAT relationship does not only depend on the age of LAT individuals, it also varies depending upon the attitudes toward co-residential relationships (Régnier-Loilier, Beaujouan, & Villeneuve-Gohalp 2009). Among LAT couples between the ages of 25 and 54, the average period is 43 months if at least one of the partners lists being independent as a reason for living in separate households, followed by 30 months if the separation is due to external constraints and 25 months if at least one of the partners mention not being ready as the reason for separation.

2.4 Challenges Experienced by LAT Couples

There is myriad of challenges encountered by individuals who practice LAT. Roslan, Yan Li, and Ahmad (2013) assert that loneliness, the intense stress of trying to balance time and energy between family and work, the lack of good judgment of other people about the challenges you face and financial expenses are some of the major drawbacks of couples who practice LAT marriages. Similarly, Stuzer and Frey (2008) indicate that LAT marriages do not only expose them to the dangers of travelling, dangers such as emotional stress, anxiety, low level of motivation can lead to health problems. Added to that LAT relationships can lead social cost which has impacted on both family and friends. From the perspective of Roslan et al (2013) and Kumswa (2018), LAT marriages are accompanied by heavy financial burdens. To maintain this kind of relationship, the LAT family will bear transportation cost, telephone cost and other supported services. Socially, LAT families normally have inadequate time to do many

things that conventional families who live in the same residence take for granted, hence they have to create special times to carry out some of these activities. Sometimes special events such as reunion can be very stressful for LAT families since they want to accomplish much in a brief period of time, they are together. This tends to lead to unrealistic expectations of each other and hence a negative impact on the relationship with spouses, friends and children (Ralph, 2015)

Also, single parents, most often mothers, take the decision to not share their home with their partner for the purposes of preservation of the boundary of the family home and facilitate continuity while avoiding conflict with their co-resident children (de Jong Gierveld & Merz, 2013). Single parents may also express their genuine concern about how others will react particularly former partners or parents who might label it inappropriate to be in a relationship with a live-in partner or might exploit it as great avenue to withdraw financial support (Freeman, 2015). The intention for many young adults who practice LAT usually is the establishment of a common home after sometime. However, practical impediments such as a shortage of accommodation, unemployment, or different locations for work or school might stop them from accomplishing their goals in the present (Reimondos, Evans & Gray, 2011; Liefbroer, Poortman, & Seltzer, 2015).

Recurring financial recessions can cause many young adults to return home to be with their parents instead of building up a household with their partner (Connidis, 2014). Roslan, Strohm, Seltzer & Cochran (2013) conducted a qualitative and quantitative study on 14 Malaysia couples to assess the impact of LAT marriages on the psychosocial state of the couples and the children's education. The data was collected via interviews and questionnaires. The authors discovered from their survey that about 86.6% of the respondent express negative feelings such as guilt and worry for family

members, becoming easily upset and over sensitive due to stress and becoming suspicious about the faithfulness and loyalty of their spouses. Also, LAT couples with positive psychosocial traits such as the ability and willingness to readily accept one's mistakes exhibited less emotional problems when taking care of children education as well as relationship with friends and family. The opposite holds true for those with negative psychosocial characteristics.

Finally, the intention for many young adults who practice LAT usually in the establishment of a common home in the future. However, practical impediments such as a shortage of accommodation, unemployment, or different locations for work or school might stop them from accomplishing their goals in the present (Reimondos, Evans & Gray., 2011; Liefbroer, Poortman, & Seltzer, 2015). Recurring recessions dictate the bearing of young adults who lack the impetus to be grounded in the labor or housing markets are most likely obliged to return home to be with their parents instead of building up a household with their partner (Connidis, 2014). Even those with the intention of spending the rest of their lives with their partner, immediately current challenges are resolved or due to the basic fact that, they express a form of uncertainty about their relationship are critically perceived and labelled as being in a testing phase or transitional level than in a long-term committed relationship. As Duncan and Phillips (2011) eventually concluded, the gradual girlfriend and boyfriend relationships practiced by younger adults who did not live together are mostly forced apart by jobs in different locations. Majority of LAT relationships particularly those with co-resident, dependent children are also short term and spontaneous. For this situation, the impetus of the relationship hinges on the consideration of the third-party consideration

2.5 Coping Strategies to Maintain LAT Marriages

Maintenance refers to the strategic, cognitive or relational actions that sustain or enhance the partnership (Canary & Dainton, 2006). Our present-day perception of relationship maintenance among married and dating partners is that, there is some formal engagement of specific strategies by which romantic partners maintain their relationships. Most of these strategies are both cognitive and relational. Much emphasis has been given to the latter by most scholars in their scholarly works. Benson & Ermer, (2017) have discovered five basic strategies employed by couples to maintain their relationships. They include positivity, openness, affirmation, shared responsibility, and social networks. According to Canary and Stafford (2012), since the discovery of these five basic strategies others have been highlighted namely: joint activities, affection, avoidance, small talk, and focus on self. However, majority of scholarly work are silent on the strategies employed to achieve stability in or among individuals in non-normative relationships, such as individuals in LAT relationships (Stafford, 2016). One relevant exception is the work of Borell and Karlsson (2005) who studied the core strategies employed to maintain LAT relationships. The authors conducted a study on about how women create constraints to maintain their LAT relationships. The ideology that time and space are boundaries is the characterizing backbone for maintaining LAT relationships and the distinguishing factor for LAT committed and intimate partners. Borell and Karlsson (2005) conducted a study on how the home can be used as a boundary among Swedish women. Focus was given to how women maintained their LAT relationships via the avenue of institutionalizing time-sectioned relationships with their respective LAT partners. For example, one of the women has a partner who expressed the feelings of jealousy towards her female friends. The consequential boundary the woman decided to set up for this problem is to eliminate talking about her

friends to her partner or talking to her friends over the phone when her partner was around. Another woman complained about sharing her apartment key with her partner. However, she took the key back after sometime because of the unceremonious visits made by the partner.

Duncan, Phillips, Carter, Roseneil, & Stoilova, (2014) conducted a study to explore how individuals in LAT maintain their relationships and also highlight challenges that go with them. When asked about how they cope with the distance in the relationship, some of the participants responded with happiness because of the proximity of their partners whereas others express some form of sadness due to the barrier of long distance. Communication is very critical for any relationship to have a thriving future. Even though majority of the couples cope through phone calls and text messages, the silence on the non-verbal communication between the couples sometimes results in the relationship going stale. Non-verbal cues such as making eye contact in conveying the ideology that the person talking makes is very important and can breed love and affection in relationships but mediums such as text messages and phone calls veil this aspect of communication (Holtzman, 2017). These non-verbal cues are mostly missing in LAT relationships because of the degree of frequency in meeting.

The study of relational maintenance is relatively new and personal relationships scholars continue to debate over definitional issues and explaining maintenance processes (Canary & Dainton, 2006). In this study, maintenance is viewed as strategic, cognitive or relational actions that sustain or enhance the partnership (Canary & Dainton, 2006). Our current theoretical understanding of relationship maintenance among married and dating partners is that romantic partners maintain their relationships by engaging in specific strategies that are both cognitive (for example, thinking one's relationship is better than most) and relational (e.g., participating in shared activities)

in nature. It is this latter relational context that has received the most frequent focus in maintenance research.

Stafford and Canary (2006) identified five strategic behaviors or interactions utilized by couples (married and dating) to maintain their relationships. They involved positivity, openness, assurances, shared tasks, and social networks. Since this initial work, other strategies have been added, involving: joint activities, affection, avoidance, antisocial, small talk, and focus on self (Soulsby, & Bennett, (2015).). Other scholars have identified alternative actions. Utilizing a dialectical approach, Baxter (2006) suggested that partners manage several contradictory tensions in their efforts to maintain/sustain their relationships. Less research has focused on examining maintenance in the contexts of social networks and cultural beliefs and values. Although scholars have recognized that social networks play a role in the stability of romantic relationships, few studies have examined how people utilize their social networks to sustain their close relationships (Canary & Stafford, 2001). We know even less about the ways maintenance is achieved in cultures outside the mainstream White, middle-class population in the United States (Stafford, 2003), or among individuals in non-normative relationships, such as individuals in LAT relationships. One relevant exception to the dearth of maintenance research on LAT relationships is Karlsson and Borell's (2005) study on the ways women create boundaries to manage their LAT relationships. The notion that times and space boundaries are established by LAT partners as a strategy for maintaining their relationships is sensible because such boundaries are what distinguish LAT couples, in an operational sense, from other committed intimate partners that share a household. Karlsson and Borell (2005) examined how the home was used as a resource for women's boundary making among four elderly women in Sweden. Their research focused on how women maintained their

LAT relationships by establishing time-zoned or time-sectioned relationships with their respective LAT partners. For example, one woman whose LAT partner used to be somewhat jealous of her relationship with her female friends, maintained her LAT relationship by establishing boundaries around the content of her conversations with her partner - to eliminate her partner's jealousy, she avoided talking to her partner about her contact with friends. Having keys to one another's home proved to be a sensitive issue for another woman and her LAT partner. At first, both partners had keys to one another's home, but eventually the keys were returned after the female partner became frustrated by her partner's unannounced visits. This same woman chose to keep her LAT relationship separate from her other social relationships, and she viewed this separation as a way to maintain continuity in her previously existing relationships with friends and family. She and her partner did not together discuss their extended families or friends, nor did they visit them together.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the existential theory, family systems theory, and Adlerian theory

Existential Theory

Existential therapy is a philosophical and psychological approach that emerged in the mid-20th century, primarily influenced by existential philosophy. It focuses on the exploration of individuals' unique subjective experiences, emphasizing personal responsibility, freedom, and the search for meaning in life. Existential therapists believe that individuals have the capacity for self-awareness, choice, and personal growth, even in the face of life's inherent uncertainties and existential challenges (Baert, Morgan & Ushiyama, 2022). Existentialism emphasizes the idea that individuals have the freedom

to make choices and are responsible for the consequences of those choices. It encourages individuals to recognize their agency in shaping their lives (Yusuf & Susilo, 2020). Existentialism places a significant emphasis on the search for meaning and purpose in life. It acknowledges that individuals grapple with existential concerns, such as the meaning of life, death, isolation, and freedom (Allen, 2020). Existential therapy encourages individuals to live authentically by aligning their actions with their true values and beliefs. Authentic living involves self-awareness and a willingness to confront one's own reality. Existential anxiety arises from the awareness of one's mortality and the uncertainties of life. It is considered a normal part of the human experience and can drive individuals to seek meaning and purpose. Existential therapy emphasizes the importance of living in the present moment. It encourages individuals to be fully present in their experiences and to engage in life authentically.

In the context of the current study existential theory's emphasis on freedom and responsibility aligns with the autonomy and individual choices inherent in LAT marriages. Couples in LAT arrangements often make intentional choices to balance personal and relational needs. Existential theory's focus on the search for meaning is relevant to understanding why couples in the University of Education, Winneba, choose LAT marriages. The study can explore how these couples derive meaning from their unique living arrangement. Existential theory encourages authenticity, and in the context of LAT marriages, it relates to couples aligning their choices with their values and beliefs. The study can explore how couples in LAT arrangements navigate authenticity. Existential anxiety, inherent in the human experience, can be explored in the context of couples facing the challenges of geographical separation in LAT marriages. The study can examine how couples cope with existential anxiety. Existential theory's emphasis on living in the present moment is relevant to

understanding how couples in LAT marriages within the university setting navigate their day-to-day experiences and maintain a connection despite physical separation. Incorporating existential theory into the study's framework provides a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences, choices, and coping mechanisms of couples in LAT marriages within the academic context, contributing to a richer exploration of their adjustment experiences.

Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen in the 1950s, is a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics within families. It views the family as an emotional unit, and individual behaviors and interactions are seen in the context of the larger family system (Haefner, 2014). Several key concepts characterize Family Systems Theory. Bowen introduced the concept of differentiation of self, which refers to the degree to which individuals can separate their emotions and thoughts from those of the family. Higher differentiation allows individuals to maintain autonomy within the family system (Mohammadi, Alibakhshi & Sedighi, 2019; Skowron, 2000). Another key concept characterizing family systems theory is triangles. Triangles represent the smallest stable relationship unit in a family. When tension arises between two family members, a third person may be drawn into the conflict, forming a triangle. Understanding the dynamics of triangles is crucial in family systems. Bowen identified patterns of emotional functioning within nuclear families, including the tendency to pass anxiety between family members. Understanding these patterns can provide insights into how emotional processes impact the family unit (Alzoubi, 2018).

Another key concept characterizing family systems theory is family projection process. This process involves parents projecting their unresolved emotional issues onto their

children. Children then internalize these issues, perpetuating multigenerational patterns of emotional dysfunction. Family Systems Theory emphasizes the transmission of emotional patterns across generations. Unresolved issues from one generation may be passed down to the next, contributing to ongoing family dynamics. Bowen proposed that an individual's position in the sibling hierarchy could influence personality development. Sibling positions may contribute to variations in roles and relationships within the family system.

Family Systems Theory's concept of differentiation of self is relevant to understanding how individuals within LAT marriages navigate autonomy and connection. The study would explore how couples balance their individual identities while being part of a larger family system. Triangles in Family Systems Theory represent the shifting dynamics within family relationships. The study would investigate how external factors or individuals become involved in the couple's dynamics, influencing the stability of the LAT arrangement. Understanding the emotional processes within the nuclear family emotional system would shed light on how couples in LAT marriages manage anxiety and emotional tension. The study can explore how emotional patterns impact the stability of LAT unions. The study would also examine whether couples in LAT marriages experience the family projection process, where unresolved emotional issues from the family of origin impact their relationship. Understanding this process is crucial for comprehending the emotional dynamics within LAT marriages. Family Systems Theory's emphasis on multigenerational transmission is pertinent to understanding how patterns from previous generations influence couples in LAT marriages. The study would explore the intergenerational aspects shaping their relationship dynamics. Examining how sibling positions influence personality development within LAT marriages aligns with Family Systems Theory. The study can explore whether

individuals' positions in their family of origin impact their roles and interactions within their LAT union.

Integrating Family Systems Theory into the study provides a framework for understanding the intricate dynamics of couples in Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages within the University of Education, Winneba. By considering concepts such as differentiation of self, triangles, and multigenerational transmission, the study would gain deeper insights into how family system dynamics impact the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages.

Adlerian Theory

Adlerian theory, developed by Alfred Adler, is a holistic psychological approach that emphasizes the individual's social context and the pursuit of significance in life. One key concept of the Adlerian theory is striving for significance. Adlerian Theory posits that individuals are motivated by a fundamental drive to overcome feelings of inferiority and pursue a sense of significance or superiority. This striving for significance influences behavior and choices (Watkins & Guarnaccia, 2013). Also, another key concept of the Adlerian theory is social interest. Social interest refers to an individual's innate desire to connect with and contribute to the well-being of others. Adler considered social interest a crucial factor in mental health and emphasized its role in fostering positive relationships (Cooley, 2019). Adlerian Theory takes a holistic approach, considering the individual as an integrated whole within their social context. It explores the interconnectedness of thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and relationships. Adler also placed importance on birth order and family dynamics in shaping personality. Birth order, family roles, and early experiences within the family contribute to the development of an individual's lifestyle and worldview. Another key concept of

the Adlerian theory is lifestyle. Lifestyle refers to an individual's unique way of approaching life and the strategies they use to pursue their goals. It encompasses patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are developed early in life (Evans & John, 2013). Adlerian focus on understanding an individual's goals and the underlying beliefs and behaviors aimed at achieving those goals. Examining one's goals provides insights into their lifestyle and choices.

The study would explore how the Adlerian concept of striving for significance influences the decisions and behaviors of couples in Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages within the University of Education, Winneba. What significance do they seek in maintaining a LAT arrangement? Adlerian Theory's emphasis on social interest is relevant to understanding how couples in LAT marriages navigate their social connections and contribute to each other's well-being despite physical separation. The study would explore the role of social interest in maintaining a positive relationship. Taking a holistic approach, the study would explore how the academic and personal aspects of individuals within the University of Education, Winneba, interact and influence their experiences in LAT marriages. How does the university context shape their holistic well-being? The study would investigate how birth order and family dynamics contribute to the development of lifestyles and worldviews within LAT marriages. How do early family experiences influence the choices and behaviors of couples in LAT arrangements? Adopting an Adlerian lens, the study would delve into the unique lifestyles of individuals in LAT marriages. What patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving characterize their approach to life and relationships? The study would examine the goal orientation of couples in LAT marriages, understanding the underlying beliefs and behaviors guiding their decisions. How do their goals align with their pursuit of significance in the relationship?

Integrating Adlerian Theory into the study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations, behaviors, and dynamics of couples in Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages within the unique context of the University of Education, Winneba. By exploring concepts such as striving for significance, social interest, and lifestyle, the study can gain deeper insights into the psychological and relational aspects influencing the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages.

Empirical Review

Brown, Manning, & Wu (2022) investigates the relationship quality of midlife adults in the United States across various partnership types, including dating, living apart together (LAT) relationships, cohabitation, and marriage. The study aims to compare these relationship types and shed light on the dynamics of unmarried partnerships in midlife. The study use data from the 2013 Families and Relationships Survey, a nationally representative survey of US adults, focusing on an analytic sample of adults aged 50–65 in a partnership (N = 2166). Multivariable models are employed to examine the associations between different relationship types (dating, LAT, cohabiting, and married) and dimensions of relationship quality, including happiness, support, commitment, disagreement, and instability. Brown, Manning, & Wu (2022) finds support for the incomplete institutionalization perspective, particularly for LAT relationships, which tend to report lower relationship quality than married individuals. Cohabitors also show mixed support for this perspective, reporting less happiness and commitment than married individuals. However, cohabitators and married individuals did not significantly differ on dimensions such as relationship support, disagreement, or instability, supporting the idea that cohabitation may function as an alternative to marriage. Notably, dating, LAT, and cohabiting relationships exhibit substantial similarities in terms of relationship quality.

A study by Régnier-Loilier & Vignoli (2018) delves into the nature of Living Apart Together (LAT) relationships, offering a comparative analysis between two distinct family settings, France and Italy. The study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding LAT relationships by challenging simplistic assumptions and exploring the multifaceted nature of such unions. The study challenges the idea that living apart means being without a partner, highlighting that more than a quarter of individuals in both France and Italy do not fit this simplistic characterization. This finding emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of relationship statuses. The study again found that, LAT relationships are prevalent in the early phases of the life course in Italy. Economic challenges and societal pressures to marry contribute to the popularity of LAT arrangements among young adults facing these circumstances. In contrast, LAT relationships in France are portrayed as a conscious choice, particularly in later life stages. This suggests a more deliberate decision-making process in favor of LAT arrangements, possibly influenced by cultural and social factors unique to France. The article contributes significantly to the understanding of LAT relationships by unveiling the diverse nature of these unions in France and Italy. By challenging stereotypes and providing insights into the varied motivations for choosing LAT arrangements, the study adds valuable knowledge to the ongoing debate on evolving family structures and relationship dynamics. Régnier-Loilier and Vignoli conclude their study by emphasizing the need to move beyond simplistic characterizations of LAT relationships. By highlighting the diverse nature of LAT unions in France and Italy, the research invites scholars and policymakers to consider the unique socio-cultural contexts shaping individuals' choices regarding living arrangements and partnerships.

Johari, Singh, & Mehra (2020) explores the nuances of marital adjustment in two distinct family structures: living apart together couples (LATC) and proximal couples

(PC). The research aims to assess and compare the similarities and differences in marital adjustment between these two forms of families, recognizing that the ability to anticipate and navigate adjustments is crucial for a fulfilling marital relationship. The study administered the Dyadic Adjustment tool to 75 living apart together couples and 75 proximal couples in Distt. U.S. Nagar of Uttarakhand, drawn through snowball sampling. Data collection involved mixed methods, including mailed questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephonic interviews. Both husband and wife's responses on marital adjustment were recorded. Johari, Singh, & Mehra (2020) found out that living apart together couples were found to exhibit significantly higher affectional expression compared to proximal couples.

This suggests that couples in long-distance relationships may place a higher emphasis on expressing affection as a means of connection. Despite the differences in affectional expression, both living apart together couples and proximal couples were statistically similar in terms of dyadic consensus, cohesion, and satisfaction. This implies that while certain aspects of marital adjustment may differ, other dimensions remain comparable between the two types of couples. The study suggests that proximal and long-distance marital relationships each have their own advantages and disadvantages. However, the authors emphasize that the outcome depends on how couples navigate challenges and transform disadvantages into opportunities. The findings of this study contribute to understanding the dynamics of marital adjustment in diverse family structures. By comparing living apart together couples and proximal couples, the research offers insights into the unique aspects of adjustment within these relationships, providing implications for couples seeking fulfilling and resilient marital relationships. Johari, Singh, and Mehra conclude that marital adjustment is a nuanced process influenced by various factors. The study highlights the importance of recognizing the unique

dynamics of living apart together couples and proximal couples, offering valuable insights for couples and practitioners to navigate the challenges and capitalize on the strengths of different marital arrangements.

Benson & Coleman (2016) addresses the limited understanding of late-life partner relationships, focusing on long-term marriages and offering scant attention to the complexities of forming new partnerships in older adulthood. Given the increasing prevalence of cohabitation and the emerging awareness of Living Apart Together (LAT) arrangements among older adults, the study investigates the decision-making process behind choosing LAT relationships. The study employed a grounded theory approach, utilizing life history calendars and semi structured interviews with 25 participants. The interviews examined how the participants' current relationships evolved into living apart together (LAT). The data analysis identified seven contributing factors: relational and personal goals, age, caregiver burden, partner factors, relationship histories, and shifts in social mores. The study identified seven contributing factors that influence decisions about living apart together (LAT) among older adults. These factors include individual goals, age considerations, caregiver burden, partner-related factors, relationship histories, and shifts in social norms. Participants, during the process of deciding to live apart together, were observed to be actively working to resolve long-held and ingrained beliefs about romantic relationships. This suggests a dynamic cognitive and emotional process as individuals reconsider their views on partnership in later life. The study revealed three preferences for living apart together (LAT) among the participants: opposing, ambivalent, and advocating. These preferences reflect the varied attitudes and stances individuals take toward LAT relationships, highlighting the diversity of perspectives within this older adult demographic. The findings of the study contribute to a deeper understanding of

the decision-making process behind living apart together (LAT) relationships among older adults. The identified factors and preferences provide valuable insights for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers working with older individuals navigating new partnerships in later life. Benson and Coleman conclude by emphasizing the importance of recognizing and exploring the nuanced process of forming new partnerships in older adulthood, particularly in the context of living apart together (LAT). The study's contributions extend to both theoretical understandings of late-life relationships and practical considerations for supporting individuals in this demographic as they navigate complex decisions about partnership preferences.

Benson, Kerr, & Ermer (2017) delves into the relatively unexplored domain of relational maintenance in long-distance romantic relationships, specifically focusing on non-marital intimate partners in later life who prefer the living-apart-together (LAT) arrangement. The study seeks to understand how older adults in the United States maintain their romantic relationships across separate residences. The primary objective is to explore the dynamics of relational maintenance among older adults engaged in living-apart-together (LAT) relationships. By conducting a grounded theory study, the study aims to uncover the strategies employed by older LAT partners to safeguard autonomy and maintain relationship satisfaction. The study utilized interviews collected from 22 older adults engaged in LAT relationships. Through qualitative analysis, the research seeks to construct an account of how older adults navigate and sustain their romantic partnerships across residences. The study identifies that older adults in LAT relationships prioritize safeguarding autonomy as a crucial aspect of relational maintenance. The participants engage in a process aimed at preserving individual independence while maintaining the connection with their partners. The study identifies two overarching strategies employed by older LAT partners in their

relational maintenance efforts: upholding separateness and reshaping expectations. These strategies reflect the nuanced approaches individuals take to balance autonomy and connection in their LAT relationships. While autonomy is paramount, participants underscore the importance of maintaining a flexible mindset regarding the physical copresence of their relationships. This suggests that older adults in LAT arrangements value adaptability in navigating the challenges posed by living apart. The findings have implications for practice, particularly in understanding that creating an interdependent couple-identity may have little bearing on the relationship stability of older LAT couples. The study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the autonomy of older adults in LAT relationships and suggests that relationship satisfaction can be achieved through strategies that balance separateness and adaptability. Benson, Kerr, and Ermer conclude by highlighting the significance of their findings for understanding relational maintenance in the context of living-apart-together (LAT) relationships among older adults. The study contributes valuable insights to the limited literature on this topic, shedding light on the strategies and considerations that contribute to the satisfaction and stability of romantic partnerships in later life. The authors also advocate for future research to explore potential variations in LAT experiences among diverse demographic samples.

Lyssens-Danneboom & Mortelmans (2015) contribute to the understanding of Living Apart Together (LAT) partnerships in Belgium (Flanders) by exploring the comparability of such unions with marriage across different relationship dimensions. Utilizing semi-structured interview data from a diverse sample of 54 LAT individuals aged 30–68 years, the study aims to uncover the extent to which LAT partnerships resemble marriage in terms of various relationship aspects. The primary objective is to investigate the comparability of Living Apart Together (LAT) partnerships with

marriage across five relationship dimensions: a couple dimension, an enterprise dimension, a value dimension, a role dimension, and a form dimension. The study seeks to understand the nuances of LAT partnerships in comparison to traditional marital relationships. The qualitative data obtained through these interviews are utilized to explore the dimensions of LAT partnerships and their resemblance to marriage, providing insights into the complexities of these unique relationship arrangements. The study identifies that key relationship values place LAT partnerships on an equal footing with marriage. This suggests that individuals in LAT relationships share fundamental values that are comparable to those in marital unions. Findings indicate that transitional LAT partnerships exhibit greater similarities to marital relationships compared to permanent LAT partnerships. In terms of perceptions of coupledness, joint enterprise, and partners' roles and responsibilities, transitional LAT partnerships align more closely with marriage. The study highlights that the similarities between LAT partnerships and marriage diminish when considering the form dimension. This dimension likely encompasses the structural aspects of the relationship, reflecting the unique characteristics that distinguish LAT partnerships from traditional marriages. The findings have implications for understanding the diverse nature of LAT partnerships, emphasizing the variations within this relationship arrangement. The study suggests that the comparability of LAT partnerships with marriage is contingent on factors such as the transitional or permanent nature of the LAT arrangement and the specific relationship dimensions under consideration. Lyssens-Danneboom and Mortelmans conclude that while LAT partnerships may share key relationship values with marriage, the extent of their similarity varies based on the nature of the LAT partnership. The study provides nuanced insights into the complexities of LAT

relationships in Belgium, shedding light on the dimensions where they align with or diverge from traditional marital unions.

A study by Upton-Davis & Carroll (2020) investigates the legal and financial implications of Living Apart Together (LAT) relationships, particularly focusing on how property division is perceived and managed at the conclusion of these relationships. The study draws on case studies from two Australian LAT studies, exploring the complexity surrounding the legal status of LAT relationships and its potential financial consequences. The primary objective is to examine the legal and financial implications of Living Apart Together (LAT) relationships, specifically focusing on property division at the end of such relationships. The study draws on case studies from two Australian LAT studies, leveraging real-life examples to explore the legal intricacies and financial considerations associated with LAT relationships. The use of case studies adds a practical dimension to the examination of LAT relationships, offering insights into the potential challenges and consequences faced by individuals in this relationship form. LAT relationships are highlighted as a significant modern-day relationship form, constituting 9–10% of the single adult population in Britain and Australia. The article acknowledges the growing prevalence of LAT relationships and the importance of understanding their legal implications. Individuals in LAT relationships often have concerns about how their property will be divided at the end of the relationship. The article emphasizes that while there is a general perception that LAT relationships are free from family law implications, the legal reality is more complex, involving a mix of factors that determine the legal status and financial consequences of a LAT relationship. The study points out the complexity involved in determining whether a LAT relationship has legal consequences, particularly if it is classified as a de facto relationship. The legal status of LAT relationships plays a crucial

role in defining the financial responsibilities and consequences for the individuals involved. The study has implications for individuals in LAT relationships who may assume a level of asset protection based on the perception that LAT unions are exempt from family law implications. The findings emphasize the need for a clearer understanding of the legal complexities surrounding LAT relationships and the potential financial consequences for individuals in these arrangements. Upton-Davis & Carroll (2020) concluded by providing a timely discussion of the potential financial implications for individuals in LAT relationships. The article underscores the importance of recognizing the legal intricacies associated with LAT unions, offering insights that can inform individuals and legal practitioners about the complexities involved in property division at the conclusion of LAT relationships.

Research Gap

The reviewed studies span diverse geographic locations, including the United States, Belgium (Flanders), and Australia. Each study provides insights into the unique dynamics of Living Apart Together (LAT) relationships within its specific cultural context. While individual studies provide in-depth insights, a comparative analysis across different cultural and legal contexts could reveal common patterns or unique features of LAT relationships. The identified research gap in the existing literature highlights the need for a more focused exploration of the adjustment experiences of couples in Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages within the specific context of the University of Education, Winneba. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into LAT marriages, particularly in general populations, the academic setting introduces unique dynamics that remain largely unexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by offering a nuanced examination of the motivations, challenges, and outcomes specific to LAT marriages within the University of Education, Winneba.

Current literature acknowledges challenges in LAT relationships, but there is insufficient research that delves deeply into the unique challenges faced by couples within the academic context, especially at the University of Education, Winneba. This study contributes by specifically identifying and exploring the challenges that couples in LAT marriages encounter within the academic setting. By doing so, it aims to provide a detailed understanding of the obstacles unique to this context, contributing to a more comprehensive knowledge base. Most studies on LAT marriages have a broad focus on general populations, overlooking the distinctive challenges faced by couples in academic settings. By honing in on the University of Education, Winneba, this research provides targeted insights into how academic and relational pressures intersect. This focus acknowledges the specific challenges related to job transfers, a prevalent factor in the educational sector leading to LAT arrangements.

Many existing studies lack a nuanced exploration of the cultural and societal influences shaping LAT marriages. The study acknowledges the unique cultural framework within the University of Education, Winneba. By understanding how these contextual factors impact couples in LAT relationships, the research aims to bridge the gap in our understanding of the adjustment experiences within this specific cultural and societal context. While existing literature offers theoretical frameworks, there is a scarcity of practical insights to guide educators, counselors, and policymakers in supporting couples in LAT marriages. The research seeks to provide practical recommendations for addressing the unique challenges faced by couples within academic environments. By doing so, it addresses the identified gap and offers actionable insights for counseling professionals and educators, enabling them to tailor support services to the specific needs of couples facing geographical separation.

While the need for counseling support in LAT relationships is recognized in the literature, there is a lack of research that systematically explores the counseling implications, especially within academic environments. The research seeks to address this gap by exploring the counseling implications arising from LAT marriages at the University of Education, Winneba. By doing so, it aims to offer practical insights and recommendations for counselors and educators supporting couples navigating the complexities of LAT relationships within an academic framework. The societal shift towards LAT marriages necessitates the availability of coping strategies, particularly through counseling avenues, but this aspect is often underexplored. Investigating the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages within the University of Education, Winneba, not only provides a deeper understanding of coping strategies but also contributes valuable insights for counseling professionals. The research aims to offer practical guidance on how to support couples facing geographical separation in the academic setting.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

As discussed in the literature above, even though quite an important number of scholarly works have been done to explore the Experiences of Couples Living Apart Together in different parts of the world attention has not been given to the Adjustment Experiences of Couples Living Apart Together in University of Education, Winneba. The goal of this dissertation therefore is to fill this gap of knowledge by investigating the Adjustment Experiences of Couples Living Apart in University of Education, Winneba.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines and justifies the methodology which is used to collect the required data for this study. The chapter starts with the research paradigm, research approach. It then continues with the research design; trustworthiness, sources of data; sample and selection criteria; the execution strategy; ethical issues and the conclusion of the chapter.

Philosophical Orientation

The philosophical orientation that guided the study is grounded in phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach that focuses on understanding and describing the lived experiences of individuals (Smith, 2013). It seeks to explore the essence of human experiences and the meanings individuals attribute to those experiences. Phenomenology encourages researchers to "bracket" or set aside preconceived assumptions and biases to approach the phenomenon with fresh eyes. The goal is an in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences of participants, aiming to uncover the essence of their experiences. Researchers strive to provide rich, detailed descriptions that capture the nuances and subtleties of participants' lived experiences. Phenomenology acknowledges the subjective nature of experiences and values the unique perspectives of individuals (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

The adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages are inherently subjective and complex. Phenomenology aligns well with the study's objectives as it allows for an exploration of the essence of these experiences from the perspective of the couples involved. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, would be employed to

collect data that capture the nuanced experiences of couples. Phenomenological data analysis involves identifying themes, patterns, and structures that reveal the underlying essence of the phenomenon. LAT marriages, involving unique arrangements and challenges, are rich contexts for phenomenological inquiry. This philosophical orientation enables the researcher to delve into the depth of the couples experiences and understand the significance they attribute to living apart together. Phenomenology, by uncovering the lived experiences of couples, provides valuable insights that informs counseling interventions and support services. Understanding the essence of their experiences allows for the development of targeted and meaningful guidance.

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study used the interpretivism paradigm. As defined by Rehman and Alharthi (2016), a research paradigm is a basic belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions about how a particular study should be carried out. Similarly, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) also assert that a research paradigm refers to a researcher's philosophical orientation which informs the researcher about how meaning will be constructed from the data gathered. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the key tenet of the Interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially constructed and as a result, the central focus of the Interpretivist paradigm is to enable researchers understand the subjective world of human experience. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explain further that Interpretivist paradigm makes an effort to 'get into the head of the subjects being studied' so to speak, and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning he or she is making of the context.

Through Interpretivist paradigm, every effort is made by the researcher to try to understand the viewpoint of the subject being observed, rather than the viewpoint of the observer. Emphasis is therefore placed on understanding the individual and their

interpretation of the world around them. Interpretive paradigm was chosen for this particular study for three reasons. Interpretive paradigm allows a researcher to access the experiences and viewpoints of the research participants, it recognizes the role of the researcher and the research participants in knowledge construction and is useful in an attempt to understand a phenomenon in all its complexity in a particular socio-cultural context (Kusi, 2012).

3.2 Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative approach. According to Babbie (2013), qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data, while focusing on meaning-making from the experiences of people or the phenomenon under study. Similarly, Lune and Berg (2016) explain that "qualitative research methods for the social sciences" that qualitative research is a research approach used by researchers to gather data to make meanings from peoples actions through case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts and cultural texts and productions; or observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts. Creswell (2013) also defines qualitative approach as a research approach which helps its users to make knowledge claims based primarily on the various meanings of people's experiences which are socially and historically constructed, with the aim of developing a theory/pattern or advocacy/participatory perspectives or the two.

Qualitative research is well-suited for the in-depth exploration of the adjustment experiences of couples in Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages within the University of Education, Winneba. Open-ended interviews can capture the complexity of their experiences. The qualitative approach allows for open-ended interviews with couples, providing an opportunity for them to share their perspectives on the challenges and benefits of LAT marriages within the academic context. Qualitative data analysis

methods, such as the thematic analysis, is used to inductively identify themes and patterns in the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of their unique challenges and coping mechanisms (Creswell & Creswell (2017). Qualitative research approach aims to get a better understanding through firsthand experience, truthful reporting, and quotations of actual conversations. It aims to understand how participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meaning influences their behaviour (Connelly, 2016). Since the aim of the study is to explore the adjustment experience of couples in LAT marriages, a qualitative research approach was deemed suitable, giving its benefits.

3.3 Research Design

Research design refers to the researcher's strategy for obtaining the required data in addressing the objectives of the study. In this study, the researcher employed a phenomenological case study design. As a result, the researcher specifically gathered primary data from individual couples in LAT marriages who are resident on University of Education, Winneba campus. The focus on LAT marriage couples who are resident on University of Education, Winneba campus will help the researcher to find answers to the 'what' and 'why' questions of the study. The choice of this design is supported by Yin (2009), in whose view a focus on specific respondents in an institution or an organisation is most appropriate when the focus of the study is to find answers to 'what' and 'why' questions and also in cases where an individual cannot influence the behaviour of respondents as well as where the individual finds it necessary to include contextual factors because they are believed to be of importance to the study.

The specific focus on individual couples in LAT marriages who are resident on University of Education, Winneba campus is therefore considered most appropriate for this study because rather than exploring the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT

marriages from different geographical areas, the focus on individual couples in LAT marriages who are resident on University of Education, Winneba campus, will help the researcher to investigate thoroughly about the phenomenon under study. This will facilitate in-depth understanding of the subject matter. This assertion was supported by Yin (2009), who argued that giving a focus to a study facilitates a deep investigation of a real-life contemporary phenomenon in its natural context. This is why the study will focus on individual couples in LAT marriages who are resident in Winneba.

3.4 Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of workers of the University of Education, Winneba who are in LAT marriages and are resident specifically in Winneba campus. The University workers were chosen for this study, because due to the nature of their occupation, the researcher anticipated that there were people who might have resided on Winneba campus for a long period of time and are not living on the campus with their spouses would therefore be a trustworthy source from which relevant data can be solicited.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sixteen (16) married couples who are workers at the University of Education, Winneba north campus was sampled for the study. Of the 16 participants, five were males, eleven females. The sampling techniques used for the study were the purposive sampling and snowballing techniques. The researcher used snowballing technique to locate the right respondents.

3.6 Inclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria concern properties of the study sample, defining reasons for which people from the target population are to be excluded from the current study sample. In this study, the inclusion criteria included the following:

- A respondent should be 30 years or above
- A respondent should be a worker at the University of Education, Winneba
- A respondent should not necessarily be a native of Winneba
- A respondent should be a married one

3.7 Instrumentation

Semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion were employed to gather data for the study and this ensured triangulation.

Interview guide

The study adopted a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. The guide was validated by its content validity. Thus, the interview guide reflected the research questions and it was guided by same. Kusi (2012) argues that, the instrument chosen for a study depends on the philosophical assumption, research approach and the purpose of the study. This particular instrument was chosen because the researcher was informed by the interpretive paradigm, which argues that knowledge is created through the interaction between the researcher and the participants. A semi-structured interview fits a phenomenological case study which is located within the interpretive-qualitative framework that seeks to explore a phenomenon because it offers the researcher opportunity to interact with the participants in their socio-cultural context (Kusi, 2012). Also, the semi-structured interview was employed for the study because it provides the participants the opportunity to construct their own world (Kusi, 2012). Semi-structured interview guide was developed to suit the objectives of the study. The interview allows

entrance into another person's world and is an excellent source of data. Complete concentration and rigorous participation in the interview process improve the accuracy, trustworthiness, and authenticity of the data (Streubert , Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

Focus group discussion

A focus group discussion is a form of group interviewing in which a small group, usually led by a moderator (interviewer) in a loosely structured discussion of various topics of interest. The course of the discussion is usually planned in advance and most moderators rely on an outline, or moderator's guide, to ensure that all topics of interest are covered. It is not uncommon for two discussion groups, groups that are identical in demographic and life stage characteristics to have different thoughts on the same subject. What is said in one group or qualitative interview might never be repeated in a second group. This reflects the exploratory nature of qualitative investigations and the diverse nature of populations.

During the focus group discussion, the researcher played the role of a careful listener and guided the discussion without participating directly in it. The researcher refrained from making comments or suggestions that will introduce bias into the conversation.

3.8 Trustworthiness

According to Trochim Connelly (2016), trustworthiness of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. From the foregoing, it can be said that, trustworthiness in research is attained when a researcher clearly shows and establish the protocols and procedures involved in carrying out a study so that the study can be considered worthy of consideration by readers. As indicated by Connelly (2016), there are four criteria that research must meet

in order to be considered as trustworthy. These criteria include credibility, dependability, Confirmability, and transferability.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility essentially refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of research findings. It establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data. As qualitative research explores people's perceptions, experiences, feelings and beliefs, and it is believed that the participants are the best judge of whether or not the research findings have been able to reflect their opinions and feelings accurately.

Bryman (2012) holds the view that the establishment of credibility of findings demands that the research is carried out according to good practice and by submitting it to the social world that were studied for confirmation that the researcher understood that social order correctly. Guba and Lincoln (2014) suggest that prolonged engagement is a technique to ensure credible and interpretation of findings. To achieve credibility in this study, the researcher engaged in prolonged engagement by spending two months in the field collecting data. The purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and to focus on them in detail (Guba & Lincoln, 2014).

Peer debriefing exposes a researcher to the searching questions of others who are experienced in the methods of enquiry, the phenomenon or both (Guba & Lincoln, 2014). In this study, the researcher exposed the research work to colleagues for constructive criticism. Member check is whereby data, analytical categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested by members of those stakes- holding groups from whom the data were originally collected (Guba & Lincoln, 2014).

Guba and Lincoln (2014) suggested that by implementing an audit trail, an auditor or second party who becomes familiar with the qualitative study, its methodology, findings and conclusions can audit the research decisions and the methodological and analytical processes of the researcher on completion of the study, and thus confirm its findings. The researcher used audit trail to through giving the work to a colleague to audit the findings in establishing the authenticity of the findings.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability entails the generalization of a study's results and it can be achieved thorough description of the research context and underlying assumptions which can make the research results transferable from the original research situation to a similar situation (Stumpfegger, 2017). The researcher achieved this in this study by extensively and thoroughly describing the process that was adopted for others to follow and replicate. Thus, the researcher kept all relevant information and documents regarding the study. Also, in this study, the research context, and methodological processes were provided. These could enable other researchers to apply the findings of this study to similar settings of their choice thereby regarding the findings in this study as answers in their chosen contexts. Finally, the researcher ensured the trustworthiness of the findings by exposing the study to colleagues for constructive criticism and by sharing the findings with the respondents

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability also requires that when replicating experiments, the same results should be achieved. To achieve dependability, the researcher must ensure that both the process and the product of the research are all consistent. In this study, dependability was established through the establishment of appropriate enquiry decision. This included

review of interviewer-bias to resist early closure and at the same time prevent the provision of unreliable data due to boredom on the part of the participants because of prolonged interview sessions. In addition, information from literature assisted the researcher to develop questions that elicit appropriate responses to answer the research questions formulated to guide the study. There was a systematic data collection procedure that reached the point of saturation, the extensive documentation of the data (transcriptions of interview narratives) and methods of analysis are steps in proving the dependability of the data. Thesis supervisors assessed the work to find out whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Trochim and Donnelly (2006) define Confirmability to mean the degree to which research results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. In order to establish confirmability, the researcher after transcribing the audiotapes and coding, and treating all other relevant information and documents regarding the study, gave the results back to the participants to confirm the responses. The researcher effected changes where necessary and gave the transcribed data back to the participants again for them to authenticate the inferences derived by the researcher. The researcher then took the final transcribed data from the participants as a true record of what the participants factually provided.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

In adherence to ethical and procedural guidelines, the data collection process for this study followed a systematic and transparent approach. An introductory letter was secured from the Head of the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of Education, Winneba. This letter served a dual purpose: first, to seek official permission from the University Administration to conduct the research, and second, to

assist in recruiting eligible respondents for the study. With official authorization obtained, potential participants were informed about the research's purpose and objectives through the same introductory letter. Consent for participation was explicitly sought from each respondent, emphasizing voluntary involvement and the assurance of confidentiality. Upon obtaining informed consent, individual interview sessions were conducted with each participant. The interviews were conducted in English, the medium of communication agreed upon with the participants. The use of a standardized language ensured a consistent and comparable dataset.

All interview sessions were recorded electronically. This method allowed for the accurate capture of participants' responses and ensured that nuances in their expressions and emotions were accurately represented. The use of electronic recording also facilitated a detailed and verbatim transcription process. Post each interview, the audio recordings were played back to the participants. This member checking process served as a crucial step to ensure that participants recognized and confirmed the accuracy of the information they shared during the interview. Any discrepancies or clarifications were addressed at this stage. Simultaneously with the interviews, detailed field notes were taken by the researcher. These notes included observations, non-verbal cues, and any contextual information relevant to the participants' experiences. The field notes served as supplementary data for a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives.

To enhance transparency and confirm the authenticity of the field notes, they were later read back to the participants. This process allowed participants the opportunity to confirm or provide feedback on the researcher's interpretations, ensuring accuracy and mutual understanding. Each individual interview session lasted approximately 25 minutes, ensuring a balance between gathering in-depth information and respecting

participants' time commitments. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, capturing every spoken word. Subsequently, a thematic coding process was employed to categorize and organize the data according to the study's objectives. In summary, the data collection procedure was characterized by ethical considerations, transparent communication, participant confirmation at various stages, and rigorous documentation to uphold the integrity and reliability of the research process.

Validation of Data Sources

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the data sources, the study employed several validation techniques:

Member Check

After transcribing the audiotapes and coding, the researcher gave the results back to the participants for confirmation. Any necessary changes were made based on their feedback. This iterative process of member checking ensured that the data accurately represented the participants' perspectives.

Peer Debriefing

The researcher sought constructive criticism from colleagues through peer debriefing. Colleagues familiar with qualitative research methods and the phenomenon under study critically reviewed the research decisions, methodological processes, and findings. This external review contributed to the rigor and credibility of the study.

Expert Consultation

Seeking input from subject matter experts in the field can enhance the validity of the research. Hence, the researcher consults the researcher supervisor, the raw and

transcribed interview were submitted to the research supervisor for his inputs. His insights helped validate the research design and data interpretation.

Type of Triangulation Employed

Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple data sources and methods:

Data Triangulation

The study employed both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods. This variation in data sources allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the adjustment experiences of couples in LAT marriages. The combination of individual interviews and group discussions provided a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Methodological Triangulation

The study utilized both interviews and focus group discussions, contributing to methodological triangulation. The different methods allowed for a cross-verification of findings, enhancing the robustness of the study.

Minimizing Researcher Biases in Data Collection

Several measures were taken to minimize researcher biases during data collection:

Prolonged Engagement

The researcher spent two months in the field, engaging with participants and immersing in their socio-cultural context. Prolonged engagement facilitated a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and minimized the potential for superficial interpretations.

Interviewer-Bias Awareness

The researcher consciously addressed potential interviewer biases, resisting early closure during interviews to prevent premature conclusions. This approach ensured that participants had ample space to express their experiences without undue influence.

Supervision and Feedback

Thesis supervisors assessed the work, providing oversight and feedback. This external perspective helped identify and rectify any inadvertent biases that might have influenced the data collection process. In summary, the study employed member checks, peer debriefing, and an audit trail for data validation. Triangulation was achieved through data and methodological approaches, and measures such as prolonged engagement and interviewer-bias awareness were implemented to minimize researcher biases during data collection.

3.10 Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analysed in themes. Analyses were made in accordance with the procedures described by Bell (2010). These procedures involve a number of steps that are outlined below:

Listening many times to the recorded tape in order to develop familiarity with it. “Initial noting” of potential themes were noted in the margins; hence, each theme was coded (for example, using abbreviation). Themes were recorded as headings on a blank sheet of paper verbatim examples from the text were written under each of the headings. From time to time, information that was considered to be in support of the identified themes were noted and positioned under the appropriate title headings. New themes that emerged from later transcripts were tested against earlier transcripts and any

congruent information from earlier transcripts was recorded at the right-hand margin under the appropriate theme title.

After each transcript has been read and coded, the coded segments were recorded under the appropriate theme headings. Each theme was then examined using the coding to define the theme more clearly. Comparisons were made across the themes and this allowed for the identification of super-ordinate themes, which appears to link originally disparate material. When those themes were identified, they were checked against original transcripts to find out whether the themes made sense in terms of the integrity of the single participant. In summary, the researcher went through the following processes in analysing the data in themes:

1. Data familiarisation: At this stage, the researcher organised data from field notes and audio recordings of interviews from participants into transcripts and reread the transcripts several times.
2. Code formation: After the transcription of the data, the researcher organised the data by coming up with codes which imaged from the transcripts.
3. Identifying Theme: The researcher then transformed the codes into specific themes or categories. Fifteen themes emerged out of the interviews.
4. Refining the themes: At this stage, researcher sorted out the themes. Also, the researcher checked for repetitions, similarities and differences that emerged so as to refine the data.
5. Defining and naming themes: During this stage, the researcher finally refined and defined the themes for analysis.

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
Challenges Experienced by LAT Couples	Difficulty in Parenting
	Infidelity
	Lack of Companionship and Intimacy
	Financial Difficulties
	Stress
	Development of Negative Habits
Benefits of LAT Marriages	Freedom and Autonomy
	Adequate Time for Career Goals
	Revival of Marriage
Coping Strategies Employed by LAT Couples	Effective Communication
	Trust
	Cognitive Restructuring
	Prayer
	Using Work and Other Social Activities as Distraction

3.11 Ethical Issues

In accordance to the ethics of research, the researcher first and foremost briefed the respondents in advance about the purpose of the study and sought their consent, to indicate their willingness to participate in the interview. To commence the data collection, the researcher sought permission from the respondents to use their titles or occupations for the analysis. The researcher did not give money or gift to any of the

respondents. This was to prevent any influence on the data needed from the respondents.

3.12.1 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

Participants need to be furnished with accurate and complete information on the goal(s) and procedures of the investigation so that they fully understand and in turn decided whether to participate or not (Bryman, 2012). This makes informed consent a necessary prerequisite to any research in which human beings are involved as participants. In this study, the researcher clearly spelt out the purpose, the intended use of the data and its significance to the participants. Each of the participants willingly decided to take part in the study.

3.12.2 No Harm to Participants

Babbie (2013) asserts that the ethical norms of voluntary participation and no harm to participants have become formalized in the concept of informed consent. Accordingly, respondents base their voluntary participation in research studies on the full understanding of the possible risks involved. Babbie (2013) also added that the researcher should guard against subtle dangers. Throughout this study, the researcher made conscious effort to ensure that no respondent was harmed physically, psychologically or emotionally during the period of the research. Interview was confidential, participants were warmly accepted and questioning was politely done.

3.12.3 Anonymity

Research respondents' well-being and interests need to be protected. Thus, respondents' identities in the study should be masked or blinded as far as possible (Aso-Oliyah, as cited in Trochim & Donnelly 2006). The people who read the research should not be able to identify a given response with a given participant (Babbie, 2013). The

names of the respondents were not revealed anywhere in this study instead, number codes were used. Also, the recorded responses remained silent on the true identities of the participants.

3.12.4 Confidentiality

According to Bryman (2012; p.67), confidentiality “indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner.” This definition implies that the researcher must jealously guard all the information disclosed by the participants so that only the researcher has access to it. Before the commencement of the data collection, participants were assured that data would be kept confidentially. In doing so, codes were assigned to the various questionnaires and were kept from the reach of other individuals.

Data Management

After work is done and submitted, all data collected will be locked up in a safe to prevent anybody from getting access to the information. This will help avoid the issue breaking confidentiality.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and justified the methodology which was used to collect the data. The chapter started with the research approach and the rationale for the choice of the approach. It then continued with the research design, sample and sampling techniques, data handling and data analysis procedure; ethical issues and the conclusion of the chapter. The next chapter, chapter four, outlines the presentation, analyses and discussion of the data that researcher gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the adjustment experiences of couples living apart together in the University of Education Winneba based on the data that have been gathered from respondents. The analysis and interpretation of data were carried out to suit the research questions and objectives that were defined for the study. In view of the analysis, this chapter is organized under four key themes namely; rationale for LAT marriages, benefits of LAT marriages, challenges experienced by couples in LAT marriages and the counselling or coping strategies employed by LAT couples to overcome their challenges and harness the benefits of LAT relationships. Before the presentation of results under the various themes, the demographic information of all the respondents is discussed as follows.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics are set of information that provides detail profile of the various respondents' understudy. Six (6) major characteristics were obtained from the respondents. These characteristics include age, gender, number of years married, position of respondent, original community where couples reside, current community where one of the couples resides. The total number of respondents interviewed for the study is sixteen (16).

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Number of in Years Marriage	Position Of Respondent	Original community where couples reside	Current community where couples reside
R1	47	Female	21	Lecturer	Cape Coast	Kasoa
R2	33	Female	4	Administrator	Winneba	Accra
R3	39	Male	3	Lecturer	Adenta	United State of America
R4	37	Female	7	Police Sergeant	Nyakrom	Kumasi
R5	47	Female	9	Library Assistant	Cape Coast	Tamale
R6	48	Male	22	Administrator	Cape Coast	Koforidua
R7	40	Male	2	Editor	Odorkor	Takoradi
R8	40	Female	7	Editor	Nyakrom	Kumasi
R9	52	Male	28	Security Officer	Kumasi	Winneba
R10	55	Female	10	Counselor	Winneba	Cape Coast
R11	45	Female	15	Counselor	Winneba	Cape Coast
R12	38	Female	10	Lecturer	Winneba	Winneba
R13	40	Female	9	Lecturer	Winneba	Accra
R14	40	Female	10	Lecturer	Cape coast	Winneba
R15	44	Male	21	Security officer	Cape coast	Winneba
R16	30	Female	9	Editor	Kumasi	Winneba

4.2 Organization of Themes and Sub-Themes

In all, a total of 11 sub-themes were generated under the four specific objectives of the study. Whiles the main themes were developed based on the objectives of the study; the sub-themes were generated out of codes that were developed from the data gathered

from the participants. The four main objectives are (1) Why couples choose to live in LAT marriages (2) Benefits of LAT Marriages (3) Challenges faced by couples in LAT marriages (4) Counselling or Coping strategies employed by couples in LAT marriages to overcome their challenges and harness the benefits.

4.3 Rationale Behind LAT Marriages

The first objective this dissertation seeks to throw light upon is the reasons why couples engage in LAT marriage relationships. The researcher asked probing questions about the first research question to elicit the views of the participants about the reasons for the engagement in LAT marriages. From the data gathered from participants, in response to the above question, three (3) main themes emerged. These include, desire to seek better job opportunity to financially support the family, job demands such as transfers, educational preferences for children. The responses of participants under each of these sub-themes are analyzed as follows.

4.3.1 Desire to Seek Better Job Opportunity to Financially Support the Family

As indicated by the respondents, one of the main reasons why couples participate in LAT relationship is the desire to seek better opportunities to attend to the financial burdens of the family. Two of the respondents indicated that,

“... After the programme I had an appointment to lecture at the university Since I needed to support my husband financially, my husband agreed that I should take the appointment. Added to that, I have to move to campus since it became difficult to commute from home every day” R 1.

“...it was not a decision we took together because when the transfer came my husband was not happy about it. He expected me to reject the transfer. My work is such that you cannot stay at one place for long time, therefore refusal of the transfer decision can cost you your job” R 4.

Similarly, another respondent indicated that,

“.... I did not choose to be in this type of marriage relationship but work demands placed me in this situation. When the transfer came, it was a massive problem for me. In fact, when this transfer issue popped up my family wept bitterly” R 9.

4.3.2 Educational Preferences for Children

Finally, it was noted from the data that educational needs and preferences of the children is another reason why couples participate in LAT marriage. The data indicated that although some of the respondents had the opportunity to join their partners in their new stations of work; majority declined the opportunity mainly because of educational needs of the children.

“.... We have three girls, since we were staying at Cape Coast before the changes came and looking at where the children are schooling we have no option but to let the children continue at Cape Coast” R1.

The results from the data gathered on the first objective, as analyzed above, revealed that several factors contribute to the rationale behind why couples in the University of Education, Winneba Practice LAT. According to the data, the main reasons why couples at the University of Education, Winneba practice LAT marriage include, desire to seek better job opportunity to financially support the family, job demands such as transfers, educational preferences for children. The findings of this study, as presented in the above paragraph, completely addresses the first research question which seeks to find out the rationale behind LAT relationships.

4.4 Challenges Experienced by LAT Couples

The second objective that this thesis seeks to explore is the challenges experienced by LAT couples at the University of Education, Winneba. Participants of the study were therefore asked varied questions in line with this objective. From the data gathered from

participants, six sub-themes emerged. These include infidelity, difficulty in parenting, financial difficulties, lack of companionship and intimacy, development of negative habits and stress.

4.4.1 Difficulty in Parenting

According to the respondents, one of the major challenges they experience on a daily basis is the difficulty in exercising effective parental care towards their children. This is mainly due to the fact that parenting involves so many activities and requires full attention and dedication. However, majority of respondents do not have the time and energy to become effective parents. One of the respondents indicated that,

“.... the challenges are immense. In the first place when we are not around it is quite difficult for the children to be serious about their school work. Added to that, most of the time I tend to overwork myself but when my husband is around he would assist m with disciplining the kids and also help me with the household chores” R 3.

Similarly, another respondent indicated that,

“...upbringing of the children is a problem because there are times the children would misbehave and if the father is there and he speak they will listen because for us mother they will take us for granted. I would say living apart is not good at all” R5.

4.4.2 Infidelity

Infidelity is another major challenge experienced by respondents who practice LAT relationships. According to the respondent's sex is one of the main needs that must be met in a marriage relationship. However, when this need goes unmet due to circumstances such as distance, then married couples usually find themselves in the quagmire or predicament of infidelity. One of the respondents indicated that,

“.... there are several potential challenges that accompanies this form of life. One of them is drinking uncontrollably, flirting with women” R8.

4.4.3 Lack of Companionship and Intimacy

Another challenge experienced by the respondents is the lack of companionship and intimacy. The marriage relationship is designed to serve as a support system for couples to develop affection and friendship through deep conversation and intimate activities. However, as a result of the barriers of LAT relationships the goal of intimacy and companionship is not thoroughly achieved. The respondents normally complained about the constant feeling of loneliness because the intimacy goals are not met. According to one of the respondents,

“.... God made it such that when husband and wife live together, they bond well through sex. So, when it happens like this you tend to treat

each other as strangers or like an ordinary person. There are times that I am sick and I needed someone to understand and take care of me, as you can see I am not feeling fine but my husband is not here to give me emotional support” R 5.

Added to that, respondent two indicated that,

“...sometimes he feels lonely and bored because he has nobody to talk to when he come home from work unlike my case I have my mother and my son to interact with when I come back home” R2.

4.4.4 Financial Difficulties

Some of the respondents complained about the expensive nature of this form of marriage arrangement. As indicated by respondent nine,

“...my transportation to go home every month is a problem because it is expensive apart from that I have to send money to my family and also I have to rent a room for myself, pay extra utility bills with the same salary” R9.

4.4.5 Stress

Stress levels as a result of performance of household chores is one of the major challenges experienced by LAT couples. According to one of the respondents,

*“...most of the time I like to overwork myself but when my husband is around he would monitor my work, sometimes he would help me with some of my work”***R3.**

4.4.6 Development of Negative Habits

Some of the respondents indicated that one of the challenges often experienced with this form of marriage arrangement is the development of negative habits such as negative eating habits, smoking and frequent quarrels. This is indicated by respondent eight which indicated that,

“.... there are several potential challenges that accompany this form of life. One of them is drinking uncontrollably and smoking” **R8.**

Added to that another respondent indicated that,

“...my husband and I used to eat together so when I had to stay away from home due to my work I find it difficult to eat. It took a long time for me to adjust to it. This has made it difficult for me to even eat as I usually do when we eat together” **R1.**

In summary, the analysis of reports under this section revealed that the challenges experienced by couples in LAT relationships include; infidelity, difficulty in parenting, financial difficulties, lack of companionship and intimacy, development of negative habits and stress. The findings of this study as presented by this sub-section fully answers the objectives of the second research question which seeks to ascertain the challenges faced by couples who find themselves in LAT relationships.

4.5 Benefits of LAT Marriages

In this section, the researcher wanted to probe the benefits of LAT marriages to the individual and the family unit. Clearly, LAT marriages, just like most conventional forms of marriages, have their pros and cons. The responses provided by the respondents are similar to the benefits of LAT provided in the literature review. Some of the benefits include; increase freedom or autonomy, adequate time for career goals, revival of marriage, reduction in the consistency of quarrels.

4.5.1 Freedom and Autonomy

The data gathered revealed that, freedom and autonomy is one of the advantages of LAT relationship. This freedom is experienced in the form of freedom from basic household chores such as cooking, freedom to close from work late and the freedom to make decisions without the interferences of your spouse.

“.... there are times one wants things to be done in a particular way or properly done, but the other may not want it that way so when you are living apart you least experience these things” R7.

Added to that, another respondent indicated that,

“.... the only thing I can say is because he is not here I am free from cooking, washing and cleaning all the time” R4.

4.5.2 Adequate Time for Career Goals

Another added advantage of LAT relationship is that the individual has adequate time to pursue their career goals. According to one of the respondents,

“.... am able to have enough time for my work that is when I am alone I use the time judiciously” R1

4.5.3 Revival of Marriage

According to the respondents, boredom in relationship can be attributed to the constant presence of your spouse. However, in LAT marriages; since there is a constant absence of one spouse, the feeling of boredom is replaced with the desire to be with your spouse. When one of the spouse's finally visits home, the marriage relationship experiences a new form of spark and revival.

Again, it was intimated that, reduction in the consistency of petty quarrels is one advantage that comes from this form of relation. Since couples live apart, the tendency to be easily irritated by the constant negative habit of their spouses is very minimal. The foregoing were confirmed by the fifth and second respondents who indicated thus,

“ That when we stay apart, anytime we visit each other, the marriage become new again. This is because we miss each other.” R 5.

“Living apart together helps to avoid petty quarrels. By virtue of the fact that we live apart, one cannot easily create the atmosphere for quarrel” R2.

In summary, the analysis of the views of the respondents under this sub-section reveals the benefits of LAT marriages. Despite the challenges that comes with LAT relationships, the benefits that accompany LAT marriages is increase freedom or autonomy, adequate time for career goals, revival of marriage, reduction in the consistency of quarrels.

4.6 Coping Strategies Employed by LAT Couples

Having ascertained the potential benefits and challenges faced by couples who practice LAT marriage, it is significant to determine how LAT couples developed key strategies to mitigate the challenges that LAT relationship poses and leverage the positive impact associated with this form of marriage arrangement. The fourth objective of this study

therefore seeks to determine the coping strategies used by LAT couples to offset the negative impact of LAT marriages and leverage the advantages embedded in this form of relationship while making room for growth. From the data gathered from participants, in response to the fourth objective, three (3) main themes emerged. These include, effective communication, resorting to virtues such as forgiveness, love, trust etc, cognitive restructuring, prayer and using work and other social activities as distraction.

4.6.1 Effective Communication

Any good marriage blossoms in an environment of open exchange of emotion, desires and acceptance. Communication is therefore one of the key indices of a satisfying relationship. The data gathered from the respondents revealed that some of the LAT couples resort to video calls and normal phone calls as effective ways of communicating with their spouses. According to respondent three,

“....my husband is the busy time as well as me because of that we communicate a lot sometimes through zoom, WhatsApp and other available means this always keep us in touch”R3.

4.6.2 Trust

To cope with their challenges, some of the respondents resorted to virtues such as forgiveness, trust and love. The respondents who share this assertion are of the belief that relationships are full of challenges and therefore one must demonstrate a strong character to thrive these challenges. According to one of the respondents,

“.... trust is very important in marriage for those living together and those living apart need it the more” R11.

4.6.3 Cognitive Restructuring

Some of the respondents indicated using cognitive structuring as one of the strategies to mitigate the challenges of LAT marriages. To achieve psychological awareness, couples are mentally primed by counselors and therapist to have the mindset that LAT partnerships are strenuous and couples must therefore be willing to make the necessary adjustment per the demands of the challenges. On this note, respondent 1 stated:

“It’s challenging being in LAT marriage, but I consider the reason why I got married and that keeps me going despite the challenges LAT marriage poses” **R1**

4.6.4 Prayer

Some of the participants indicated that they cope with their marriage challenges primarily by praying and trusting God that he will help them through all their challenges. According to respondent five,

*“....Upbringing of the children is a problem because there are times the children would misbehave and if the father is there and he speak they will listen because for us mother they will take us for granted. I would say living apart is not good at all but I know God and he helps me a lot. I pray, read my bible and listen to music and take consolation from God”***R5**

4.6.5 Using Work and Other Social Activities as Distraction

Finally, on the coping strategies employed by the participants, some respondents indicated using work and other social activities as a means of emotional detachment from family and friends. This normally protects them from the feeling of depression due to the absence of spouse and children. The eighth respondent succinctly indicated that,

“.... because of the corona virus, schools are on break so I do my work and when I close from there I occupy myself with church activities and it has helped me a lot. It takes my mind off evil and unnecessary troubles” R8

The findings of this study, as presented under this sub-section, have therefore answered the fourth research question and also addresses the fourth objective of this research which seeks to determine the counselling and coping strategies used by LAT couples to mitigate the challenges of this form of marriage arrangement and maximize the positive impact LAT relationships had on their marriage.

Discussion of Results

This chapter seeks to discuss the findings on the adjustment experiences of couples living apart together in the University of Education Winneba based on the data that have been gathered from respondents. The discussions and interpretation of data were carried out to suit the research questions and objectives that were defined for the study. In view of the analysis, this chapter is organized under four key themes namely; rationale for LAT marriages, benefits of LAT marriages, challenges experienced by couples in LAT marriages, and the counselling or coping strategies employed by LAT couples to overcome their challenges and harness the benefits of LAT relationships.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Five of the participants were males, whereas 11 were females. This means that more females are taking the initiative to participate in LAT marriages due to reasons such as work demands and the desire to meet financial obligations of the family. This is in line with Abele and Volmer (2011) who assert that the past 40 years has been a great shift of women entering the labour force in increasing numbers. As a result of this abrupt

change many families are adopting LAT marriages where couples maintain separate residences in different cities and reunite regularly.

With respect to the occupation, the demographic information revealed that LAT marriage is a common practice among majority of Ghanaians who work in white collar jobs. Added to that, the minimum educational requirement for the occupation of the respondents is either a diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctorate degree. This therefore also means that the highly educated people in Ghana tend to have affinity for this type of marriage as compared to the less educated who are less informed and are not willing to adopt foreign concept of marriage.

Why Couples Choose to Live in LAT Marriages

The first objective of this research is to find out the reasons couples at the University of Education, Winneba practice LAT marriage. The study revealed that, desire to seek better job opportunity to financially support the family, job demands such as transfers, educational preferences for children are the main reasons why the respondents practice LAT. As indicated by the respondents, LAT marriage is increasingly practiced and endorsed by the modern society due to its merits to the current marriage structures. However, Kumswa (2018) indicates that majority of the older generation within the context of African culture see LAT as a threat to the marriage institution.

Concerning the need to seek better opportunities to support the family financially, Vasumathi (2018) asserts that there are several reasons why modern couples practice living apart marriages; this can be attributed to the desire to obtain a better and higher quality standard of life and the need to create an outstanding career path. This means that most majority of LAT couples intentionally sacrifice the joy staying together as a family in order to alleviate the financial burdens of the family and also to improve the

standard of living of the family unit. This therefore explains why some participants of this study mentioned the desire to seek better opportunities to support the family financially as a reason for the involvement in LAT marriage. However, Wismanto (2017) strongly indicates that principles of LAT mostly have negative impact on the husband and wife and there is a higher probability of the relationship resulting in divorce as compared to the relationship of conventional couples. As indicated by the responses of the respondents, the demands of work are identified as a key reason for the respondents to practice LAT. Normally, the demands of work come in the form of transfer from one location to another. This means that the policies formulated by companies are not congenial to the modern family structure. Similarly, Chikopela, Chitundu, and Mpolomoka (2020) highlighted that uncompromising and inconsiderable transfer decision by organizations tends to put employees under obligation to accept work responsibility far away from their matrimonial home. The direct consequence of this organizational demand includes emotionally disturbed children, and retardation in work performance.

Challenges Faced by Couples in Ghana Who Practice LAT Marriages

The study's exploration of the challenges faced by couples in Living-Apart-Together (LAT) marriages at the University of Education, Winneba, revealed a spectrum of difficulties that influence the daily lives and relationships of the respondents. It's essential to delve deeper into these challenges, drawing insights from relevant theories and empirical studies.

One prominent challenge highlighted by the respondents is the dearth of companionship and intimacy in LAT marriages. Stafford and Merolla's (2007) findings, as cited in Lee (2018), resonate with this aspect, emphasizing that geographic distance significantly diminishes face-to-face interactions. Mediated interactions, such as phone calls or video

chats, often fall short in compensating for the absence of physical presence. Existentialism posits that individuals create meaning in their lives. The lack of companionship challenges Ghanian LAT couples to find meaning in their relationship despite geographic separation. Couples must navigate existential questions about the purpose of their union and individual growth. Family System Theory views the family as an emotional unit. The lack of companionship impacts the emotional interconnectedness of the family. Strategies to maintain emotional bonds are essential for the overall well-being of the family system. Adlerian Theory emphasizes social interest. The absence of companionship challenges Ghanian LAT couples to find alternative ways to contribute to social interest and mutual support despite physical separation.

Additionally, Sandow's (2019) insights point to a common pattern in long-distance marriages – reduced spousal involvement in daily family responsibilities. The lack of shared responsibilities like cooking, washing, and emotional support can lead to a decline in the quality of relationships. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with inadequate quality time and minimal appreciation from their partners, contributing to daily arguments.

Infidelity emerges as a significant challenge, with respondents expressing concerns about the fidelity of their partners in LAT marriages. R8 and R5, in particular, emphasized the difficulty in trusting their partners due to the physical separation. This distrust is rooted in the inability to monitor their partners' activities closely, leading to suspicions of extramarital affairs. Existentially, the challenge of trust and infidelity in LAT marriages relates to authenticity. Partners grapple with the authenticity of their connection when physically distant. Trust becomes a cornerstone, and couples must actively choose to trust their partner's faithfulness. Trust issues are not isolated; they

affect the entire family system. The emotional climate within the family is influenced by the perceived trustworthiness of individual members. Family therapy may be beneficial in addressing trust issues comprehensively. Trust issues, through an Adlerian lens, deviate from social interest. Couples must focus on rebuilding social interest through collaborative efforts. Techniques such as encouragement and fostering a sense of belonging can be applied.

Empirical studies, such as those by Hall and Fincham (2009), support the notion that distance can create an environment conducive to infidelity. Factors like less communication, petty quarrels, unforgiveness, loneliness, and unmet sexual desires were identified in the data, aligning with characteristics observed in relationships of R8 and R5.

While adults may adapt mentally and psychologically to parenting from a distance, challenges arise when it comes to parenting children. Respondents R3, R4, R5, and R9 expressed serious concerns about the impact of LAT marriages on parenting. This aligns with the literature on long-distance parenting, emphasizing the unique difficulties children face in coping with separation from their parents (Bergstrom, 2019). From an existential perspective, parenting challenges require couples to find meaning in their roles as parents despite the physical distance. It prompts introspection into the purpose and significance of their parenting, contributing to the existential development of the individuals involved. Parenting challenges extend beyond the couple to impact the entire family system. The emotional dynamics between parents and children are interconnected with the overall family emotional climate. Involving the entire family in discussions and strategies related to parenting challenges is crucial. Adlerian Theory reframes parenting challenges as opportunities for individuals to

contribute to social interest by fulfilling their parental roles, even from a distance. Promoting a sense of purpose and significance in parenting roles is crucial.

Also, drawing from Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), the challenges identified in lack of companionship, trust issues, and parenting can be viewed through the lens of attachment dynamics. Attachment theory posits that individuals seek proximity to attachment figures during times of distress, and physical separation can trigger attachment-related anxiety. Empirical studies, such as those by Knobloch et al. (2014), underscore the importance of communication in maintaining trust in long-distance relationships. Understanding these challenges through theoretical frameworks provides a more nuanced perspective, aiding in the development of targeted interventions for couples in LAT marriages.

In summary, the challenges faced by couples in LAT marriages at the University of Education, Winneba, encompass emotional, relational, and familial aspects. The integration of theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence enriches the understanding of these challenges, paving the way for informed recommendations and support strategies.

Benefits of LAT Marriages

The third objective of this research is to explore the advantages enjoyed by couples that practice LAT at the University of Education, Winneba. The results of the study revealed that, increase freedom or autonomy, adequate time for career goals, revival of marriage, reduction in the consistency of quarrels are some the benefits that comes with this form of marriage arrangement. The marriage arrangement where couples live together comes with challenges such as putting up with negative habits from spouse, obligation to close from work early and limited time to hang out with friends. As illustrated by the

respondents, LAT marriages have enabled them to achieve freedom and autonomy which couples who live together may not have. This is in line with Chikopela, Chitundu, & Mpolomoka (2020), and Nwobi and Iloeje (2020) who assert that couples who participate in LAT marriages experience increased spousal independence.

In the context of the advantages that LAT offers to couples, all the eleven respondents with the exception of R9 and R8 unanimously highlighted the benefits of LAT to their marriage and personal lives. The disagreement of R9 and R8 is totally based on both the biblical and traditional idea that married couples are supposed to live together and anything that poses threat to this belief is labelled a disadvantage. When interviewed about the potential of recommending LAT marriage to other couples, R8, R6, R5 and R9 indicated that they wouldn't recommend it to anyone while R7 on the contrary indicated that LAT is the best form of marriage and would be happy to recommend it to anyone but the couples must be mentally prepared to handle the pressure.

Counselling Strategies

The final objective of this study is to highlight the counselling strategies employed by LAT couples at the University of Education Winneba to overcome the challenges they face and maximize the benefits of LAT. According to the respondents, some of the strategies employed to cope with the challenges of LAT relationship included, effective communication, resorting to virtues such as forgiveness, love, trust etc., cognitive restructuring, prayer and using work and other social activities as distraction.

According to statistics, about 70% of the Ghanaian population is Christian. This is a significant indicator that a huge number of people look up to God to solve their marital problem. This therefore explains why majority of respondents resort to prayer as a way of coping with the challenges of LAT marriage. Added to that, Hatch, Marks, Bitah, Lawrence, Lambert, Dollahite, and Hardy (2016) believe that prayer often leads love

and forgiveness which are essential binding cords that keep the marriages of LAT couples from falling apart when challenges emerge. Finally, the respondents indicated that cognitive restructuring is one of the effective tools employed to overcome the challenges of LAT marriages.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the synopsis of the research findings, conclusion of the study, limitation and outlines the recommendations of the study and suggested an area for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The analysis of data collated from respondents highlighted that the major rationale behind LAT relationships include; desire to seek better job opportunity to financially support the family, job demands such as transfers, educational preferences for children. Although many of the respondents approached LAT relationships with great expectations, this form of marriage relationship posed greater challenges than the conventional forms of marriages. Some of the challenges encountered by LAT couples include infidelity, difficulty in parenting, financial difficulties, lack of companionship and intimacy, development of negative habits and stress.

In spite of the challenges highlighted by LAT couples, one cannot deny the fact that this form of marriage arrangement results in some advantages. The research revealed that some of the benefits aggregating to the LAT relationships of the couples include freedom or autonomy, adequate time for career goals, revival of marriage, and reduction in the consistency of quarrels. The challenges that come with this marriage arrangement include infidelity, difficulty in parenting, financial difficulties, lack of companionship and intimacy, development of negative habits and stress. LAT married couples tend to develop strategies to leverage the advantages and mitigate to the barest minimum the

challenges that comes with LAT relationship. Some of these coping techniques include; effective communication, resorting to virtues such as forgiveness, love, trust, etc, cognitive restructuring, prayer, using work and other social activities as distraction.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore the counselling strategies used by married couples after going through the challenges posed by LAT marriage. To achieve this objective, data was gathered from 16 respondents and analyzed using qualitative approach.

The comprehensive exploration of LAT marriages in this study unequivocally concludes that this unique form of matrimony is not immune to a spectrum of challenges. Delving into the intricacies of the lived experiences of couples practicing Living Apart Together (LAT), a myriad of daily hurdles has surfaced. The identified challenges, which reverberate throughout the fabric of LAT unions, are as follows: infidelity, difficulty in parenting, financial difficulties, lack of companionship and intimacy, development of negative habits and stress. In conclusion, this study affirms that LAT marriages are not exempt from the intricate web of challenges inherent in any committed relationship. Infidelity, parenting complexities, financial strains, emotional disconnection, and the emergence of negative coping mechanisms collectively weave a tapestry of obstacles for couples living apart together. Understanding and addressing these challenges are imperative for the sustenance and enhancement of LAT marriages. It is only through a nuanced comprehension of these intricacies that effective counselling and coping strategies can be formulated, paving the way for resilient and flourishing LAT unions.

On the other hand, avenues such as effective communication, resorting to virtues such as forgiveness, love, trust, etc., cognitive restructuring, prayer and using work and other

social activities as distraction are some of the strategies employed by LAT couples to overcome their challenges. The findings of the study, as illustrated above, therefore indicate that all the four objectives set for this dissertation have been addressed.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Some respondents appeared to be economical with their responses to the interview questions. Others too were reluctant to cooperate with the researcher, fearing information they share may be made public, although they were assured of the confidentiality of their information. There was also paucity of literature on the topic in question to fully support the study. Despite all these limitations, the study was successfully carried out.

5.4 Counselling Implications

One major challenge faced by LAT marriages as revealed in the study is infidelity. The specter of infidelity looms large in LAT marriages due to physical separation, fostering doubts and suspicions. The implication for counselling is that addressing trust issues and fostering open communication are paramount. Counselling should provide a safe space for partners to express concerns, rebuild trust, and explore strategies to stay connected emotionally.

Parenting from a distance poses unique challenges, affecting both parents and children. The implication for counselling is that parenting strategies need to be re-evaluated. Counselling should focus on equipping parents with effective long-distance parenting skills, emphasizing consistent communication, and creating routines that support the child's well-being.

Managing finances separately adds strain, potentially impacting the financial stability of LAT couples. Financial counselling is crucial, guiding couples on creating a financial

plan that suits their unique arrangement. Emphasis should be on budgeting, shared responsibilities, and mutual financial goals.

Another challenge faced by LAT marriages is lack of companionship and intimacy. Emotional and physical distance leads to a lack of companionship and intimacy, causing dissatisfaction. Counselling interventions should focus on nurturing emotional connections. Techniques such as virtual date nights, shared activities, and fostering emotional intimacy can be explored to bridge the physical gap.

The strain of LAT marriages may lead to the development of negative habits and heightened stress levels. Stress management strategies and behaviour modification techniques should be integrated into counselling. Encouraging healthier coping mechanisms, mindfulness practices, and mutual support can mitigate the negative impact of stress. The challenges identified in LAT marriages are nuanced and interconnected. A holistic counselling approach, addressing each challenge within the broader context of the relationship, is essential. By acknowledging these challenges and tailoring interventions accordingly, couples can navigate the complexities of LAT marriages and foster enduring, fulfilling relationships.

5.5 Recommendations of the Study

On the premise of the findings, the recommendations are as follows;

In order to harness the inherent potential and advantages and minimize the drawbacks of LAT relationships, couples must deliberately cultivate the habit of effective communication, maximizing the power of virtues such as love, forgiveness and trust etc, practice the value of acceptance of responsibility, use work and social activities as a distraction, apply the principles of cognitive restructuring and engage in passionate and effective prayer.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher suggests that, further study be carried out on the topic indicating whether or not LAT marriage has any impact on the social upbringing of children and whether or not it affects them emotionally.



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APPENDIX A

ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES OF COUPLES IN LIVING APART IN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

My name is Augustina Mensah. I am conducting a research on the above topic for academic kindly assist me by providing your response to each question. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for academic research purposes only. No particular individual(s) or address will be identified in the results. Kindly respond as sincerely as possible.

Thank you for your assistance. I am very grateful.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COUPLES:

Position of respondent:

Age of respondents:

Number of years in marriage:

Original community where spouse resides:

How far away does your spouse live from you?

Objective 1: Why do couples choose to live in LAT marriages?

1. How did you decide to stay in a Living Apart Together (LAT) marriage?
2. What factor(s) led to you staying in Living Apart Together (LAT) marriage?
3. How mutual was the decision between you and your spouse to be in an LAT marriage?
4. Did your families have any problems with or do they have any influence in your decision?

Objective 2: What challenges do couples in LAT marriages experiences?

5. Which difficulties do you encounter as a result of the fact that your spouse is not always physically present with you?
6. Which difficulties does your spouse go through as a result of the fact that you are not always physically present with him or her?
7. How does family pressures (pressures from both families), if any impact your LAT marriage?
8. Specifically, how do you deal with the issue of trust you are not physically with your spouse?

Objective 3: What are the benefits of LAT marriages?

9. From your perspective, what are some of the advantage being in a LAT marriage?
10. Is it advantageous to your spouse as well?

Objective 4: What counselling or coping strategies can help couples in LAT marriages to overcome their challenges and harness the benefits?

11. Which strategies do you and your spouse use to overcome the challenges identified above?
12. How do you cope with family pressures (pressure from both families), if any, that comes with LAT marriages?
13. Generally, which coping strategies will you recommend to couples in LAT marriages?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LAT COUPLES AND COUNSELLORS

Name of institution:

Position or statue of respondent in the institution:

Number of years in the institution:

Question 1. To ascertain the reason why couples choose to live in Living Apart Together (LAT) marriages

1. From your perspective, why would couples choose to stay in Living Apart Together (LAT) marriage in Ghana?
2. What factors (s) enhance staying in Living Apart Together (LAT) marriage in Ghana?

Question 2: To identify challenges couples face in (LAT) marriages

3. Which difficulties do couples in LAT encounter as a result of the fact that their spouse is not physically present with (Probe for challenges of husbands separately from wife)?
4. From your perspective, what are some of the advantage being in a LAT marriage? (Probe further for husband from wife.

Question 3: To come out with counselling or coping strategies that can help couples in (LAT) marriages to overcome their challenges to harness the benefits.

5. From your counselling experiences, which counselling strategies do couples in LAT marriages need to overcome their challenges.
6. Which steps should couples in LAT marriages take to enjoy the advantages associated with LAT marriages?

7. Which counselling techniques will you recommend to couples in LAT marriages?

