Perception of Marital Satisfaction among Couples in the Asante Akim North Area

[1]Thomas Agyemang[*], [2]Samuel Agyemang, [3]John Richmond Sekyi

[1]MPhil. University of Education, Winneba, Ghana W/A
[2]EdD. Bia Lamplighter College of Education. Ghana W/A
[3]MPhil. Kibi College of Education. Ghana W/A

Abstract
The purpose of the study was to investigate the perception couple holds that may knit marriages together in order to avert many crises that are common in marriages in the Asante Akim North Area. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The survey design which involves the qualitative and quantitative approach was employed for the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 200 respondents (thus 100 males and 100 female couples) for the study. The study sought the views of respondents using questionnaires and focus group interview was the main instrument used for the study. Data were analyzed using various analytical techniques and t-tests. Among the present study's findings was that there was no statistically significant sex difference in what constitute marital satisfaction. The findings also suggested that there was no statistically significant age difference in what constitute marital satisfaction. The study concluded that; intimacy in a relationship is very important particularly with reference to how we spend our time. A lot of the frictions that do come into marriages are as a result of lack of spending time together during leisure time. Couples that had fun together during leisure time were found to be more satisfied in their marriages. It was recommended that, there is the need for effective Guidance and Counseling service concerning home management and financial management on the part of couples and also newly married, aspirants and the youth should seek counseling about marriage, concerning joys and problems.

Keywords: Perception, Marital, Satisfaction.

Background to the Study

The propagation of life and generation can hardly be possible without a sound marital relationship between a man and a woman. This relationship guarantees not only a happy union of the couple but also guarantees the propagation of the human race through procreation and economic support. In short, the stability and continuity of the social order and the need satisfactions and achievements of individuals are dependent upon marital institution. It is therefore not surprising that most societies in the world consider marriage as very desirable and an important aspect of life when one attains a certain age as prescribed by the norms of that society. We are living in a dynamic world. Through technological advancement the world has become a global village. As a result, we are always adapting our lives to meet some of the challenges of the day in the society. These changes have either been brought about by the education one has acquired, experiences one has gained or certain ideas that have been borrowed from certain cultures and societies. Standards, values and goals of people are now determined by the society in which one lives (World Book Encyclopedia, 1993).

Kumuyi, (1985) posits that marriage, the hub of life, is foundational in the Church, Community, Country and the World at large. According to Christian doctrine, God who instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve commanded it to be a full-time or life time union. (Genesis 2:7-19). The Bible instructs that ''whatever God has joined together let no man put asunder'' (Mt.19:6). Therefore, it is very absurd when during the period of marital relationship, separation or divorce occurs, which disrupts the whole programme of the family. As the oldest institution, it becomes the most important and the society's most basic unit. It is therefore pertinent to find out what will hold them together.

Abrah (2001) states that whichever way one goes in either early or late in life after marriage, one needs to work hard to make it successful. She argues that, commitment leads to success. Therefore, for a marriage to be successful both parties must be committed to its success. The obvious question that one may ask is 'what do people desire so much in their marriages?' Are those desires which determine whether or not people will be satisfied in their marriages the same for everybody? Abrah further suggests that, different people may have different perception about what they think will make them feel satisfied in their marriages and argues that some people think love can make marriage successful and as such the fact that they and their partners are deeply in love with each other, guarantees marital satisfaction, while others are also of the opinion that money is the most essential factor for a successful marriage. It would seem that the list of factors which might indicate how happy a couple can be in marriage is endless.Such opinions have been formulated in theories which are applicable to marriage. These are Social Science Theories such as the System Theory on love, the Marital Adjustment Theory on marital roles and intimacy and the Communication Theory on communication and decision making. These theories attempt to give explanation to what constitutes marital fulfillment.

Statement of the Problem
Marriage as a social arrangement has its moments of joy and crises. In Asante Akim North area, there seems to be marital problems. The empirical evidence for this assumption is found in the work of Oteng. According to Oteng (2007), a past student of the University of Cape Coast, who researched into the problems of marital fulfillment among couples in this University, there are marital problems such as lack of proper communication, lack of trust, misuse of money in marriage and a lot more. Marital problems that lead to divorce is not only restricted to Western countries but also African countries such as Ghana. Therefore, Asante Akim area is no exception to this worldwide problem. The research intends to unravel the problems that are associated with married couples that cause lack of satisfaction. Arthur- Baidoo (2001) one of the practices among all strong families is the ability to manage crises and that only a few families in Ghana and the world at large are able to manage crises. Given Arthur-Baidoo's observation then, it would appear that families with crises are denied the pleasure of marriage. According to Cox (1999), divorce rates are high in the world today and it is argued here that Ghana is no exception.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the dissolution of marriage seems to be relatively common in Ghana today than 20 years ago and desertion apparently ends most marriages rather than death. Amoateng and Heaton (1989) noted that there is alarming rate of unsuccessful marriages in Ghana. Aboagye (2001) says the concept of child welfare and development has emerged as a result of a recognition that the quality of life of children is of much importance to the general wellbeing of a nation. However, the disruption of marriages has led to the neglect of this important issue of child maintenance. Children from broken homes fall prey to social problems if not addressed.Asagba (2000) has expressed concern about the increasing number of divorcees and single parenthood in Ghana, due to differences married people find about their partners after marriage. Most of the problems stem from the fact that, couples do not discuss issues pertaining to their marriage life. Oteng (2007), social commentators, journalists, educationists, and religious leaders give talks, seminars on marriage as well as organizing workshops and that a week or two will not pass without an article or two in the national dailies especially the Mirror and Popular Entertainment paper on marital issues.

Purpose of the study
The study tried to investigate the perception couple holds that may knit marriages together in order to avert many crises that are common in marriages in the Asante Akim North Area. Specifically, it examines:The extent to which factors such as communication, happiness, intimacy, roles, and compatibility constitute marital satisfaction.Whether there is age, gender and marital status differences in couples' perception of the factors that constitute marital satisfaction.

Research Question
   1. What are the types and kinds of marriages?
   2. What are couples' perceptions on what constitute marital satisfaction?

Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were also generated to support the study.

Women will have a more positive perception of the factors that constitute marital satisfaction than men.

Older couple's respondents will have a more positive perception of what constitutes marital satisfaction than their younger counterparts.

Significance of the Study

The creation of awareness about this psycho-social problem and its attendant negative consequences has the potential of changing attitudes of the present day degeneration of marriage ideals. It is hoped that this study will bring to the fore, the true factors for marital satisfaction in the Asante Akim North Area under review. It is believed that the findings will be used as a guide in the formulation of policies on family life education and counselling at every stage of human development.The outcome of the study will also serve as a useful guide to both government and non-governmental organizations such as the National Council for Women and Development, Ghana Association of Women Lawyers, The Department of Social Welfare, Marriage Counsellors and Religious Organizations in handling issues, interpreting problems, passing judgment, advising parents and appreciating the situation and taking measures to improve marriages. It will also help educationists in planning Family Life Education Programmes for Primary, Secondary, Training Colleges and Universities. Furthermore, the study will also benefit all couples who would like to promote and keep their marriages through the recommendations that may be given periodically. Moreover, it will aid children whose parents are at the verge of separation or divorce to encouraging the two parties to stay and take good care of each other.

The Concept of Marriage

Just as the perceptions of marriage differ from person to person so is the conceptualization. It is so because of the author's background, knowledge, interest, experience and understanding.

The Compton's Encyclopedia on Line V3.0 (1998) stipulates that marriage is as old as civilization. It is a universal institution where partners are joined together in a special kind of dependence for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a family. The union is regulated by society: laws, rules, customs, beliefs and attitudes prescribed by the rights and duties of the man and women. Mark (1997), the person we are relating to is made in God's image; he or she is like God. So each spouse should treat the other with courtesy and dignity even when they do not feel like doing so. Brew and Ekuban (1991) state that marriage is a union between a man and a woman who agree to live together as husband and wife. Knox (1988) notes that, marriage can also be seen as a conventional relationship between man and woman in an educational, physical, moral and spiritual union exclusively and for life.

Weiten (1986) says marriage involves the socially sanctioned union of sexually cohabiting adults. Sarpong, (1974) identifies marriage as an affair between individuals who have fallen in love, one in which the lineages of the contracting parties are greatly interested. Marriage then provides a man with a mate to whom he can totally expose himself, body and soul. If the spouse feels assured that, his partner is his and his alone for life, then, he can trust her with his private intimate feelings. One cannot trust a person to whom the relationship has a possibility of impermanence.Dicks (1967:7) cited in Ofosu (2001) posits that: marriage is a social relationship. It is a voluntary agreement between two persons to enter into contract to play certain roles in such a way as not only to satisfy many emotional and biological needs of each other but also to fulfill or conform to a tolerable degree with the requirements and norms of the cultural background in which each partner developed and of the changing society of which they now form a constituent unit. According to Knox (1988) marriage in the US is an arrangement in which two adults of the opposite sex have an emotional relationship and a legal commitment to each other according to the laws of the state in which they reside. Most marriages involve a public announcement and a public ceremony. All require a marriage license which provides for the transfer of property and legitimacy to offspring.

Bernard (1972) states that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman. The man should be mature physically, mentally, socially and financially. Furthermore, he should be visionary, loving, caring, responsible and comforting. The woman on her part should be supportive, dependable, dutiful, industrious and submissive not assuming a domineering or governing role over the husband. She should not be knaggy, argumentative, stubborn and abusive. Even though marriage is between two separate individuals, their families are involved making it a union between the two entire families.In Ghana, according to Brew and

Ekuban (1991) marriage can be seen as a union between a man and a woman which is recognized by the families of both the man and the woman. It is contracted according to the customs of the ethnic group of which the couple are members or the society in which they live. Sometimes, this is followed by a religious ceremony commonly known as wedding. Baker and Dryden (1993) note that in many parts of the world, marriages are arranged in order to predict inheritance, increase family resources and enhance family reputations because parents feel that they are qualified to choose partners for their children. Some marriages continue to be arranged in Middle Eastern Countries, in parts of Japan, in Moslem African Countries and in parts of Indonesia. The family of the bride or groom may make the initial arrangements. Marriage brokers or intermediaries are occasionally used to assist the family to find a suitable mate for their offspring. The intermediary may be a family friend or relative or, a friend of a friend with an extensive network of contacts.

Addo as cited in Arthur-Baidoo (2001) notes that Christian marriage is an honourable estate, which was instituted by God. Christians all over the world believe that God instituted it in the very beginning of the creation of man (Gen.2: 20-25) and must therefore be adhered to and adopted when a couple attain maturity and are qualified for it. Asiedu as cited in Ogunlaye (1999) asserts that marriage is one of the most important social institutions in Ghana and the world at large. As a social institution, it is set up to provide for family life and it gives responsibility as well as permanence to relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife. People everywhere including Ghana feel that the regulations of marriage maintain the stability of the community and is seen as the accepted way of expressing adult love. According to Dolphyne (1997) contemporary society is organized in such a way that people are expected to marry for the perpetuation of the family lineage. Marriage had been more stable in our societies some decades ago because many precautions were taken to ensure lasting results. Much time was taken by both families to study the history of each other's family in relation to stability of marriages in that family as well as moral background of members. Thus families of couples were scrutinized before marriages were sanctioned.

Addo (1999) observed that people marry for various reasons among them are:

For partnership to raise up offspring to succeed and inherit them.A desire to have a helpmate to assist in social, economic, educational, moral, physical, spiritual and religious life in order to maintain or sustain peace and harmony for better living.Some people also desire to marry for prestige.

a) As one who is married to a wealthy wife or husband or

b) A high ranking official such as a contractor, manager, minister of state, doctor, army and police officer or university lecturer etc.

In times past when occupation was mainly agriculture, men married more than one wife who could assist them on their farms.However, the main aim of marriage is to get a partner who loves and is sympathetic and caring under all circumstances.In whatever circumstances it is contracted, it must be remembered that God meant it to be everlasting, never to be put asunder (Mt 19:6; Mk.10:8,9)Arthur- Baidoo (2001), states that although marriage is a life-long partnership that should be binding on partners yet in recent times it could be easily broken by either partner. The spate in our society today presents gloomy picture of the stability of the marriage institution. It is obvious that divorce is one of the greatest dangers to the welfare of families and if this situation is not checked, a time will come when the problem will be uncontrollable and marriage with its accompanying benefits will become meaningless to future generations.Arthur- Baidoo (2001) further said that the marriage institution requires that the players involved must have a lot of affection, dedication and a high sense of responsibility, spiced with undying team spirit. The fact still remains that for every relationship; there are a thousand and one spiritual and physical referees as well as spectators who arrogate to themselves the duty to observe every move made by the couple and either cheer or cry foul. While some people will be working and praying for the relationship to flourish, others will be chanting against its very existence. The tendency on the part of the couple to please persons outside their relationship could be disastrous. It is important, however, not to neglect those around the marital unions, in-laws, friends, church members, just to mention a few. Many are those who rush to churches fasting and praying and sometimes wailing unto God for a partner but as soon as their request is granted, they forget entirely about Him and rather choose to consult friends and family members for directions. This may be disastrous if these sympathizers are not God fearing and are led by Him (Arthur Baidoo, 2001).

Islam, unlike other religions, is a strong advocate of marriage. There is no place for celibacy like, for example the Roman Catholic priests and nuns. The prophet (pbuh) has said "there is no celibacy in Islam". Marriage is a religious duty and is consequently a moral safeguard as well as a social necessity. Islam does not equate celibacy with high "taqwa" / "Iman". The prophet has also said, "Marriage is my tradition; whosoever keeps away there from is not from amongst me". Marriage acts as an outlet for sexual needs and regulates it so one does not become a slave to his/her desires. It is a social necessity because through marriage, families are established and the family is the fundamental unit of our society. Furthermore, marriage is the only legitimate or way to indulge in intimacy between a man and a woman. Islam takes a middle of the road position to sexual relations, it neither condemns it like certain religions, nor does it allow it freely. Islam urges us to control and regulate our desires, whatever they may be so that we remain dignified and not become like animals. (Courtesy: Jannah.org)

Types of Marriages:
Two major types of marriage exist in Ghana: Monogamy, a marriage of one man to one woman, and polygyny, a marriage of one man to two or more wives. In most cultural groups in Ghana, traditional marriage is usually an arrangement between two families as opposed to an arrangement between two individuals. Accordingly, there is pressure on the bride and bridegroom to make the marriage work as any problem will usually affect both families and strain the otherwise cordial relationship between them. In most Ghanaian cultures, the man usually pays the dowry or bride-price and is thus considered the head of the family. Adultery is acceptable for men but forbidden for women. Marriage ceremonies vary among Ghanaian cultures (Omokhodion, 1998).

Sarpong, cited in Offei, (2001), says that there are five kinds of marriages worldwide and there are traces of all the five in Ghana. They are: True levirate, Sororate, Ghost marriage, Cross-cousin and Infant marriage. True levirate is the custom of a man taking his dead brothers wife and begetting children with her for the dead person. It is practiced among the Zulus and Israelites in Deuteronomy 25:5. This type of marriage is similar to widow-inheritance which is practiced in Ghana. In this type of marriage, a man marries his late brother's wife to keep the inheritance of the late brother in the family. Sororate marriage on the hand is the direct opposite of the levirate. This is marriage where a woman marries her sister's widower and begets children for the deceased sister. The Effutu's of Winneba in Ghana practise this kind of marriage. Ghost marriage happens when a man betrothed to a girl dies and his relative marries the fiancé in the dead person's name and produce children for him.

Cross-cousin marriage occurs when a man takes as his wife, his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. This marriage ensures that inheritance of property circulates among close kinsmen. Notable among this are the Akans of Ghana.Infant marriage on the other hand is a marriage whereby a parent promises to give her unmarriageable daughter to a young man when she becomes nubile. This may be because the parent is impressed by the young man's handsomeness, resourcefulness, gentleness, courage, eloquence, wealth, position or tribe. This kind of marriage is also practiced among the Akans notably the Ashanti's (Ofosu 2001)

Kinds of Marriages
Nukunya (2007) has identified three major kinds of marriages in Ghana. These are:

a) The traditional or customary marriage

b) Religious marriages comprising Christians and Moslems.

c) The civil marriage.

The Traditional or Customary Marriage
Nukunya (2007) notes that "traditional marriage is the oldest and legal union of a man and a woman or women. It is a durable union in which the man and the woman agree to live together as husband and wife after they have gone through all the procedures recognized by the families of both the man and the woman in the society for such purpose." He, Nukunya (2007) continues to say that, traditional marriage is a social contract that gives protection to women and children and respect to the men. It ensures stability, security and

the human race. Damankah as cited in Abrah (2001) identifies traditional marriage as a union that is regarded as being very important for which the elders give it a special treatment. Parental control was so important to the extent that partners had practically no say in the negotiations.Schandorf (1992) states that traditional or customary marriage is a culmination of a series of relationships including pre-marital sex play in some societies. Akinade (1997) says that it appears to be the oldest type among Africans and found to be the predominant type among the majority of people especially those residents in villages and small towns. In this type of marriage, the husband is the head of the household. This means that, he directs the pace and progress of the marriage. Traditional marriages can only be dissolved in traditional courts. According to Amoateng and Heaton (1989) traditional marriage among others help to create meaningful alliances with other families in the community, a fact which largely explains the practice of arranged marriages in the society. Such extended family forms as resulting from traditional marriage occupied a central position in the organization of society.Traditional marriage according to Lavee and Olson as quoted by Sperry and Carlson, (1991) tended to be married longer and have more children. The wives were less frequently employed full-time.

Thus traditional marriage can be seen through the mirror of systems theory in which the organizational structure of the family system will be understood in terms of wholeness, hierarchies and boundaries.

Religious Marriage in Ghana is the Christian and Islamic Marriages

Christian Marriage
Abrah (2001) states that the Christian marriage is based on the Biblical concept of marriage in which marriage is believed to be God ordained. For Brown and Brown (1999) marriage in the Christian sense is to be seen as a commitment and not as contentment. The implication is that, couples in marriage should not seek to derive benefits from their marriage but rather that they should be concerned with what each can provide for the other or have a selfless attitude towards one another. Kissembe, Megesa and Shorter (1977) also see Christian marriage as a covenant between two people based on the Biblical command "and they shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:24).The Christian marriage by this command implies that partners or couples become "one" signifying intimacy and companionship. The Christian marriage as the book of Eph.5:22-31 describes the type of relationship that should exist between a husband and a wife is supposed to function like a system that has various parts functioning together to make a whole.

Islamic Marriage
Islam sees marriage as a social necessity because through it, families are established as a unit in the society. For marriage to be valid in Islam certain conditions must be met.The consent of both parents must be sought.Payment of the dowry called "Mahr" a gift from the groom to the bride.Witnesses from both parties, 2 male or female should be present at the time of the dowry.

The marriage should be publicized; it should never be kept secret as it leads to suspicion and troubles within the community.According to the Prophet when a man marries he has fulfilled half of his religion, and the remaining half comes when there is the fear of Allah. A husband is commanded by the law of Allah to treat his wife with equity, respect her feelings and show kindness and consideration, especially if he has another wife. He is again responsible for her maintenance. This right is established by authority of the Quran and the Sunnah. It is inconsequential whether the wife is a Muslim, non-Muslim, rich, poor, healthy or sick. The wife on her part must be faithful, trustworthy and honest she must not deceive her husband by deliberately avoiding contraception. She must not allow any person to have access to that which is exclusively the husband's right i.e. sexual intimacy. She should make herself sexually attractive to her husband and be responsive to his advances. Failure can lead to marital problems and worse still – tempt the man to adultery. Since obedience in a relationship is to keeps the family unit running as smoothly as possible the man has the right to be obeyed because he is the leader and not because he is superior. Obedience does not mean blind obedience; it is subject to conditions:

It is required only if what is asked from the wife is within the permissible categories of action.

It must be maintained only with regard to matters that fall under the husband's rights. (Jannah.org)

Characteristics and Law of Marriage

Knox (1988) emphasized that, there are five characteristics of marriage namely: Emotional relationship, Sexual monogamy, Legal commitment, Legitimacy of clan and public ceremony.

Emotional Relationship is a relationship sought by two persons or people who care a great deal for each other, who enjoy being together, and who want to share their lives permanently. They want a lover, friend, a person they can trust and talk to, in an otherwise competitive and often impersonal world. Emotional commitment to each other is often thought to imply that each partner will be sexually faithful to each other.Marriage is a legal commitment that, only those of the opposite sex (one female, one male) aged usually 18 years or older and of marital status (neither partner may be married to someone else) may contract. The marriage license certifies that; the individuals are married by a legally empowered representative of the state with two witnesses present. The marriage license deems it that any child born of the marrying couple is legitimate and makes the parents legally responsible for the care of the offspring. The legal bonding of a couple is often preceded by an announcement of newspaper and a public ceremony in a church. Telling parents, siblings and friends about wedding plans, help to verify the commitment of the partners and also help to marshal the social and economic support to launch the couple into marital orbit (Knox 1988).

"Marriage law", according to the Compton's encyclopedia (1998) is the body of legal specification regulating the initiation, continuation, and validity of marriages. A newly married couple undergo a radical change in their legal status by the act of marriage. They assume certain characteristics and obligations to each other. In many societies, the couple may be expected to live together in the same or nearby dwellings. The wife may be expected to provide domestic services such as child bearing, cooking and housekeeping; and the husband may be expected to provide food, shelter, clothing and other means of support. The rights of marriage may include the shared ownership and inheritance of property and in monogamous marriage, the exclusive right to sexual intercourse with each other.

Compton's encyclopedia further said that, marriage customs and rituals vary as marriage laws. It varies from one culture to another. Every past or present society has had its own concept of marriage and many have created marriage laws that reflect their particular conceptions. Unlike the reformation, the canon law of the Catholic Church was the only law governing marriage between Christians in Western Europe, and canon law still has considerable authority in some Roman Catholic Constitutions.The church has historically regarded marriage as a lifelong and sacred union that could be dissolved only by the death of one of the spouses. This conception of marriage viewed that husbands and wives are made of "one flesh" by the act of God, and marriage was thus transformed from a civil contract that could be terminated under Roman law to a sacrament and invisible mystic reunion of souls and bodies. Under canon law, the force and mutual consent of both parties was regarded as completed by consent and then consummation. Canon law held a marriage to be null and void in cases in which the parties were close different relations. Most marital laws of Western Nations are products of Roman Catholic Canon law that has been greatly modified by the changed cultural and social conditions of modern life. Modern marriage laws regard marriage as a civil transaction and allow only monogamous unions. In general, the legal capacity of a person to marry is the same all over the world and is subject to impediments such as blood relationship and mental incapacity.In Muslim countries of the Middle-East, Asia and North Africa, the prevailing Islamic law regarded marriage as a contract for the "legalization of intercourse and the procreation of children." Islamic law has historically permitted the practice of polygamy, but polygamy seems to be waning in virtually all Muslim countries in recent years.

Polygamous marriages are still permitted in many African nations, but there is a growing tendency toward monogamy. Many developing nations in Africa are markedly different from Western nations in that, there is no uniform Marriage law. The regulation of marriage relations is based either on religion or on the customary laws of the territory. Marriage in Ghana is both socially and legally bound. It is socially bound because it involves other people besides the couple, such as the families of the man and the woman. It is legally bound because it is regarded as a contract of legal implications. There are therefore rules, regulating how it may be contracted and by whom.Brew and Ekuban (1991) also explain that under the customary law, the duties and rights arising from the union are determined by the customs and practices of the particular

ethnic groups. Customary law permits polygyny just as Islamic law also promotes polygyny. However, a manmay not marry more than four wives at the same time. Marriage under ordinance law is monogamous.

Couple positive perception of marriage

Olson and DeFrain (2002) note that there are many positive and negative reasons for marrying, and people in love are often not objective when it comes to analyzing their motives and actions. Being rational and realistic about one's reasons for marrying is not easy; nevertheless, people who marry mainly for positive reasons are likely to have sounder marital relationship. Among the positive reasons are: companionship, love and intimacy, supportive partnership, sexual partnership and sharing parenthood.Companionship: is to share one's life with another person and is one common reason for marriage. It enables partners to share the joy of life. However, although people assume that marriage will end loneliness, it seldom does unless both partners feel good about themselves. Love and intimacy: The need for love and intimacy is related to the need for companionship. Couples become fortunate that the person they trust most trust them also and those they love most love them too.

Supporting Partnership: Marriage provides the opportunity for growth as a human being and for nurturing the growth of one's partner. A marriage cannot survive if the partners think only of their own development; career needs, or needs for recognition and accomplishment. But sharing each other's successes and genuinely supporting each other in the quest for betterment and achievement enhance and stabilize a relationship. Poll (1982) states that when people marry they agree to share their lives and commit themselves to each other. This agreement offers unlimited opportunities to the couples to enhance their personal growth and understanding and to develop self-respect and self-knowledge, to enjoy mutual feelings of worth and being loved. Sexual Partnership: Marriage has long been considered a stable source of sexual satisfaction for both partners. It is often seen as a way to legitimize one's sexual feelings and behaviour. Nonetheless, if sex is the major reason for marrying, the marriage is to have a very good chance of surviving.

Procreation: Another traditional reason for marrying is to have children, but parenthood can be a mixed blessing. Though parenthood is not for everyone, it can unite or divide a couple.

Couple negative perception of marriage

Among the negative perception why people marry are: premarital pregnancy, rebellion against parents, seeking independence, family or social pressure and economic security.Premarital Pregnancy: "Having to get married" because of a premarital pregnancy is not a good way to go into marriage. Although the partners have shared sex, they may not have yet developed other aspects of true intimacy and may lack a real understanding of who they are marrying.Rebellion against Parents: Very many people use conflict with parents as a reason for marrying. Marriage as rebellion against repressive parents may seem a rational option for a young person. It is better to develop one's independence and to come to terms with one's family of origin before thinking about marriage.Seeking Independence: Closely related to the need to escape or rebel is the need to be independent. Young adults have a drive to succeed on their own. But becoming independent from one's family is something that only an individual can do. People cannot rely on their partner to do it for their Family or Social Pressure: Most families put subtle and not-so-subtle pressure on people to marry when they are relatively young. Both males and females may be pressured, but women often feel more pressure as they reach their late 20s. Marrying against one's own desires is unlikely to produce a happy relationship.

Economic Security: Although economic security has been a traditional reason for marrying, it has dubious merits today. Half of today's marriages contracted this way end in divorce. Financial problems are the most common marital problem in recent times. Religious beliefs hold that a healthy family produces healthy children, church, communities and countries. Kumuyi (1997) argues further that unhealthy marriages produce wayward, stubborn and rebellious children who involve themselves in streetism, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, school dropouts and all the social vices. Kumuyi, (2006) further said that many marriages are breaking down in recent times because they are not rooted in appropriate foundations. Just as a building on inappropriate foundation collapses, so also marriages that are not given proper foundations collapse. Today many more people seem to care less for such foundations and the consequence is reflected in the frightening rate of marriage failures all over the world (Kumuyi, 2006). The strong desire and love for

good living, lack of role congruence, reciprocation or equivalence within the marriage has brought about conflicts between couples which mostly end up in separation, desertion and in some extreme cases divorce. Of late marriages are found to be unstable and less interesting because some of the cultural procedures have been obliterated. Ofosu (2001) posits that due to one factor or another, many young fellows have rushed into marriages and are reaping the fruits of frustration, depression, discouragement and despair. Others have delayed in marriage owing to immaturity, inability to make the wise decision, lack of preparation and joblessness. Unfaithfulness to marriage vows also leads to broken hearts which results into untimely death and insanity (Ofosu, 2001).

Predictors of Marital Satisfaction

Baker and Dryden (1993), in contributing to the above said, satisfaction with a relationship depends on whether your spouse meets your expectations, in terms of sharing your values, ideas about your lifestyle, providing you with companionship, respect and a satisfying sexual relationship, earning an adequate income and eventually becoming a good parent. It could also be influenced by one's job, friendship, in-laws and children. Lupri and Frideres (1981), note that satisfaction is at its peak at the honeymoon days because everything seems new, exciting and considerable. Following closely to the honeymoon is when the first visitor (a child) arrives in the family. It helps to share the home, develop sexual relationship and spending time togetherEmpirical research by Peplau, Hill and Rubbin (1981), reveals that men become more disillusioned when they observe their partner to be more romantic and idealistic. Weiten (1986) identifies marital adjustment of parents to correlate with marital satisfaction of their children. He further said the age of the couple is also related to the likelihood of success of the marriage. Balmin (1993), however, states that marriage is now seen as an equal relationship between the two partners based on love and compatibility. He idolized mutual support in times of stress, loyalty, sexual satisfaction roles and responsibility sharing, personal freedom within the marriage vows, stable home, good communication and sharing of decisions.

Stinnet, Carter, and Montgomery, (1972) share the view that at every age, the quality of marriage varies from couple to couple and situation to situation. In general, it has been deduced that older husbands and wives tend to be happier than they have been since they were newly married. To buttress the above research, Maas and Kuypers (1974), note that at age 70 and above there are fewer conflicts as compared to ages 30-60. Latopa (1979) confirms the above assertion with empirical facts by saying that many elderly husbands and wives consider their spouses to be their best friend and closest confidant. For most men their partner is sometimes the only confidant.

Atchley and Miller as cited by Knox (1988), stated that other stresses such as raising children, holding a job, sex and in-laws have been settled through compromise with time. Knox (1988), further said that, there are some characteristics which keep most marriages satisfied. He identified them to be: meeting sexual needs enjoy support from partner, caring for each other, sharing of common interest and activities, working towards the success of the marriage through loyalty and good communication.

Ngozi (2002) contends that marriage is expected to last "till death do us part", meaning that marriage is expected to flourish till one of the partners dies. Because marriage ought to last till one partner dies, it then becomes imperative that we consider many factors that can bring about marital satisfaction before marriage. Some of the factors include maturity, family background, religious background, ethnic origin, educational qualification, financial ability and prospects, physical attributes, compatibility, trust, character, love and genotype.Ngozi further said, after the wedding, couples have to start life as husband and wife. She said there is more to marriage and its stability than looking into each other's eyes every day to drink love for one another. Problems usually come up and the couples have to handle them. It is necessary to acquaint husbands and wives with some of the factors which will help to enhance the stability of their marriages. Some of these factors include: tolerance, mutual trust, children, communication, marital attitude and similarity between partners. (Ngozi, 2002).For tolerance, she said, the ability to tolerate the inadequacies of one another sustains marriages a great deal. Marriage requires a lot of compromises by each partner. These compromises come in the form of tolerance of the shortcomings of each other. In the case of mutual trust, husbands and wives should trust one another. When there is mutual trust the couples are able to ignore gossips from friends, neighbours and relations. When couples trust themselves there is little that would go wrong in the marriage and the trust will not threaten their relationship.

Talking about children, Ngozi said, many marriages in the world are basically contracted for procreation purposes. In Ghana for instance during marriage ceremonies the prayers for the newlyweds by everybody present is to have as many children as God can give them. Eye brows are raised when couples stay for a year without children.Effective communication is a necessity for a successful marriage. Feelings of partners should be expressed in their conversations. They should also endeavour to discuss openly and freely whenever they have problems because differences are inevitable in marriages. Studies by Lauer and Lauer, (1985) have confirmed that conflict resolution skills are necessary ingredients in marriage stability.Fincham, (1985), has confirmed that the attitudes of couples towards marriage are very central to stable marriages. People with wrong attitudes tend to see marriage as something they can do away with, if it becomes inconvenience. Marriage has its own peculiar stresses and strains which we can cope with if we have the right attitude.

Annor-Ofori (2003) on his part says that nobody marries his or her enemy but there seems to be so many marriage breakdowns. He further said that researches conducted into many broken marriages had revealed that the following are some of the major causes: insecurity, incompatibility, improper communication, unfaithfulness, disobedience, disrespect, financial problems and impatience. To him therefore, what can make marriages satisfying to each other are the opposites of the above mentioned factors which cause marriage breakdown. Talking about age as a factor for marital satisfaction he says it is better to marry age-mates or at most a difference of about five years. If the age difference is too much, there are lots of disadvantages and problems, which will eventually break the marriage.

A. Role Theory and Marital Satisfaction

Eshlemanas quoted by Manahem (2000) states that role theorist see reciprocity of roles in marriages. To Eshleman, marriages are united in a perfect bond if a partner plays his/her roles well. Roles are considered to be social acts as a result the actions of men and women are not separate, isolated or discreet but intertwined activities of the two. Manahem explains that spouses in marriage perform complex functions which include sexual gratification, companionship, child rearing and the like. Marriages become complete and fulfilled when spouses perform their functions creditably. However, if partners in marriage perform their roles effectively and efficiently their behaviour becomes adaptive. The implication here is that there is compatibility when roles are carried out in an excellent manner (Eshleman 1969).Abrah (2001) quoting Manahem (2000) said when there are discrepancies in role expectation (where one does not do what is expected of him/her in the marital situation) it brings problems in interpersonal relationship. In a well-integrated marriage there is congruence in what the husband and wife expect each other to do and also what they themselves are expected to do. In this regard the marital system is seen as a unity of reciprocal statuses and roles which naturally lead to a build-up of intimacy between couples. The role theory has given two conditions which can result from it if marital roles are perceived and performed as is expected of couples. The resultant conditions are compatibility and intimacy.

Roles and Role Expectation of Spouses

Glen (1994) contributing to the changing perception in norms about marital roles noted that until recently these were culturally prescribed but they have now become a matter for negotiation in individual marriage. Akinade (1997) observed the flexibility in the expectation of the roles of the spouses in modern times. Lamanna and Reidman (1997) commenting on the effect of role performance on couples asserted that as the marital relationship grows the partners discover that they satisfy a majority of each other's emotional needs. This tends to promote the development of a greater rapport, deeper self-revelation, more mutually dependent habits and greater need satisfaction. The developments of mutually dependent habits make partners to need each other more dearly than ever and this creates avenues for the growth of a satisfactory marital union.

Communication Theory and Marital Satisfaction

Healthy communication in families according to Kumuyi (2006) brings about healthy families. The communication theory of Bateson et al cited by Nwoye (1991) states that inappropriate communication has led to many problems in marriages and have even broken down families. Communication can be done verbally and non-verbally. Verbally with words while gestures, tone of voice, writing on paper, sign language, different kinds of symbols, nodding, facial expressions and images constitutes non-verbal communication. Talabi (2007) says there are five major types of human communications which are visual,

gestural, verbal, written and sign language. Communication is sharing information or providing entertainment. One of the most important types of communication is interpersonal communication which couples use when they want their thoughts, feelings and wishes known to their partners. Marriages then cannot survive without interpersonal communication. Duncan & Rock (1994) notes that good communication establishes, maintains and changes relationships.As a result, couples should be careful in their utterances and behaviours. Gorden (1994) highlighting on the need for good communication between couples posits that many marriages are on rocks as a result of poor communication. He further said there are a lot of cold wars in some marriages and this has come about as a result of lack of communication, distorted information, and lack of understanding the information, miscalculation and misinterpretation.

Sopatre (1999) states that refusing to talk to one another is a way of showing hostility and anger instead of a desire to work through the problem. There are times when conflict arises as a result of the verbal and non-verbal cues. If a statement made is followed by a contradictory behaviour it will easily generate into conflict in the home. For instance, a wife who gives her consent on an issue, later starts to jam doors to indicate that she is not happy with the decision or information given by the husband. In the area of decision making, Asante cited by Kwarteng (1997) said occupational status and age of the spouses were important factors in decision making. He argued further that men are bossy and become autocratic many a time when they are elites and are the sole bread winners for the home. Kelly quoted by Pensi (2001) notes that decision making enables couples to plan ahead without anxiety and unreasonable optimisms. Decision making is an essential component in marriage since it complements good communication and builds a harmonious home. To avoid reaction a partner therefore should be cooperate in decision making.

Intimacy, a factor in Marital Satisfaction
Rubin (as quoted by Kimmel and Messner 1995) gave a psychoanalytic interpretation of male-female relational problems as being rooted in the social organization of the nuclear family which have set a fundamental, emotional and sexual differences between men and women. Such emotional and sexual differences teach men to abhor if not reject form of cleaver age or attachment to their female counterpart. Indeed, certain traditional or cultural practices seem to perpetuate such male/female intimacy or dichotomy. This assertion is proved by the conventional wisdom which says that women want intimacy, men resist it. Considered along this misconception the implication is that the display of intimacy by the husband is a cowardly and feminist act. Rubin further alleges that intimacy as a concept is complicated and slippery. She defines intimacy as the sharing of common place everyday events that determine the temper and texture of life (Kimmel et al, 1995).

Intimacy demands that partners who are intimate put off all pretenses or artificial behaviour in order for them to reveal their real selves to each other. Such self-revelation is done in the belief that people can be loved for what they really are. It also means that people can confidently show their weaknesses to their partners without fear that such shortcomings will be counted against them (Kimmel et al 1995).Akinade (1997) recognized the need for couples to share feelings which to him is self-disclosure. He cautioned couples against being secretive. The obstacle here is that if childhood practices as inherent in the cultures of societies have trained men to camouflage their feelings then that poses a potential danger for intimacy in marriage.Van Pelt (1999) says, during all stages of married life couples need a method whereby they can get in touch and stay in touch with the other partner's feelings.Moses and Schwebel (1994) quoted by Abrah, (2001) added that individuals in intimate relationships attain marital happiness. They quoted Frankael as saying that individuals in present day relationship do evaluate their romantic relationship in terms of the level of intimacy. However, Beanoni and Scanzoni (1988), have cautioned that in a primary relationship such as marriage, feelings of intimacy are strengthened but this has the potential to breed hate as well as love.

Conceptual Framework
The main conceptual framework underpinning the present study is an adaptation of the Role model theory (Eshleman, 1969), Communication theory of (Bateson et. al), System theory of (Neel, 1971), Intimacy theory of (Rubin) and the Marital Adjustment theory of (Scanzoni&Scanzoni, 1988). Previous research has employed such theories to investigate various factors as potential influences on marital satisfaction. Such factors include the ability to give/receive positive support and the use of blame, anger and rejection in

conflict resolution (Pasch & Bradbury, 1998); the use of the wife demand-husband withdraw conflict resolution pattern (Kurdek, 1995); self-disclosure on a day-to-day basis and perceived responsiveness of spouse (Laurenceau, Feldman Barret&Rovine, 2005) one's views of their partners' specific traits (Neff &Karney, 2005); and length of marriage (Russell Hatch Bulcroft, 2004). There has also been research done examining differences between men and women's views of marital satisfaction (Neff &Karney, 2005; Vanglelisti and & Huston, 1994).

According to research by Vangelisti and Huston, husbands and wives report declines in the level of satisfaction in areas such as the quality of communication, the amount of influence/control they have in the relationship, their sexual relationship, and the amount of time they were able to spend together as time passed (1994). When the couples had children, there was also a decrease in satisfaction regarding the division of household tasks. Some researchers take the stance that marital dissatisfaction is to be expected as a marriage progresses, as disillusionment causes the initial feelings of optimism and happiness to fade (Cherlin, 1992, as cited in Neff &Karney, 2005). It is this disillusionment, not the emergence of distress, which seems to predict divorce and marital dissatisfaction (Huston, Saughlin, Houts, Smith & George, 2001)?However, much of this research has been conducted with newlyweds- beginning within 6 months of their marriage and continuing through the first 2-5 years of their relationship. (Kurdek, 1995), suggests that because the first assessments made by some researchers occur shortly after spouses were married, subsequent changes in the levels of marital satisfaction could be attributed to normative declines in marital satisfaction in the early years of marriage.

Research design
There are many research designs but the researcher limited himself to the survey design which involves using the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The reason for using the two paradigms was to reduce the flaws in the designs. A focus group interview which provided a rich in-depth data because respondents felt free to talk about issues which close ended questionnaires cannot provide was used for the qualitative data. For the quantitative approach a questionnaire was used and it offered the researcher the opportunity to access information from a larger sample of individuals. Finally, questionnaires are simply not suited for some people. For example, a written survey to a group of poorly educated people might not work because of reading skill problems. More frequently, people are turned off by written questionnaires because of misuse.

Study Area/Location
This study was carried out in seven (7) towns in the Asante Akim North District of the Ashanti Region namely, Agogo, Hwidiem, Juansah, Domeabra, Kyekyebiase, Amantena and Akutuase respectively all in the Asante Akim North District. The district is mountainous area especially Agogo. The district is situated between the Eastern Region, Kumawu and Juaso. Agogo is the district capital which is about forty kilometers from Kumasi the Regional capital. The main language spoken in the area is Asante Twi and the Christianity is the dominant religion practiced by the inhabitants. However, there are a few who prefer the traditional religions and migrants from the Northern part of the country who also identified themselves to the Islamic religion. The district is predominantly occupied by peasant farmers, small scale business operators and small scale miners. The researcher's familiarity of the area also influences its choice for the study.

Population
The population for this study consisted of all married couples in the Asante Akim North District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Several factors have influenced the choice of the district. Firstly, it is a typical case. Secondly, its size is manageable within the duration of the study. Thirdly, the research was that of convenience because the respondents could be reached easily and the cooperation was high. Ordinarily, the term population refers to a group of people inhabiting a specified geographical location. The American Heritage dictionary (2007) defines population as a set of data consisting of all conceivable observations of a certain phenomenon. It could be finite and infinite. In educational research, the type of population used is the target population. Borg and Gall (1996) state that target population is all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which we wish to generalize the results of our research. It has the advantage of saving time and expense of studying the entire population.

Sample Size and Sampling Strategy
The sample size for the study sum up to 200, comprising 100 men and 100 women (couples). The rationale behind using this number for the study is that the larger the sample size, the greater the probability of the sample reflecting the general population. This means that when the sample size is large, there is the likelihood that it will cover a larger population and that will make the data gleaned from the questionnaires become more representative of the population.   However, six respondents among the group were selected for the focus group interview. The sample was selected from the towns in the target area. Sample represents the number of subjects in the study. Therefore, the group of subjects or respondents from which data were collected in the Asante Akim Area was marriage couples. It was the belief of the researcher that this category of respondents will help him to address his research objectives.

There are eleven different towns in the area. The selected towns were picked through randomization. The sub-chiefs picked for their town. Y or N was written on pieces of paper. Any town whose sub-chief picked Y= Yes, was used for the study.

Table 1: Distribution of Population

TOWN	POPULATION
Agogo	40
Hwidiem	30
Juansah	30
Domeabra	25
Kyekyebiase	25
Amantena	25
Akutuase	25
TOTAL	200

Source: Asante Akim North District Office (2020)

Amoani (2005) states that sampling is the procedure whereby elements or people are chosen from a population to represent the characteristics of the population. It is the most intelligent way of learning about what is happening within a population. The sampling procedure for the study was the random sampling methods.The individual respondents were selected from their population using randomization. After entering a town all couples within the town were made to group together. Randomization was carried out by writing Yes or No on pieces of paper for the administration of the questionnaire in all the towns. Any couple who picked Y= Yes, was included in the sample study. The simple random sampling was preferred because it ensured that each couple had an equal and independent chance of being chosen (Gall & Borg, 1996). This selection technique was necessary in order to meet the assumptions of the parametric test used to test the study hypotheses.

Data Collection Procedure
The study was conducted in Agogo, Hwidiem, Juansah, Domeabra, Kyekyebiase, Amantena and Akutuase respectively all in the Asante Akim North District. A sample size of 200 respondents was selected for the study. Before the study letters from the researcheŕs department were sent to the various chiefs in the towns to seek permission. Couples who participated in the study and completed the 24 item questionnaire gave their consult before taking part. The researcher's presence also helped to clarify issues, when the need arose.

Validity and Reliability
Validity refers to the soundness, legitimacy and appropriate use of a test result. It is also   seen as the ability of an instrument to measure what it seeks to measure. The validity of the instruments were distributed to convenient couples. For the sake of validity, the completed sets of statements were given to supervisor for his comments. The questionnaire was piloted to test its validity and reliability. For testing the reliability of the questionnaire the test-retest method was employed. The instrument was tested on a group of 100 neutral

sample from the same towns mentioned earlier on and the data was recorded. The exercise was repeated on the same sample a fort-night later and again coded. The first data were correlated with the second data which yielded an r of .80. Since the questionnaire yielded a Pearson's r of .80 for the test retest the questionnaire can be regarded as highly reliable (Kline 2002). For validity, the questionnaire was given to lecturers who commented and gave suggestions as to its content and face validity. These corrections were then used to amend the final copy for the study. This assured the face and content validity.

Data Collection

A brief explanation and introduction were given as guides to the respondents before administering the questionnaire to all those who were chosen for the study. This was to make sure that the respondents' understanding of the demands of the questions was not in doubt. This way they gave answers based on their understanding. In administering the interview, a rapport was established with the respondents to make them feel relaxed. Fern (2001) is of the view that the interview should keep the discussion focused without discouraging the sharing of ideas and get all members to contribute while ensuring that others do not dominate.On a practical note, focus groups can be difficult to assemble. It may not be easy to get a representative sample and focus groups may discourage certain people from participating, for example those who are not very articulate or confident, and those who have communication disorders or special needs. The method of focus group discussion may also discourage some people from trusting others with sensitive or personal information. In such cases personal interviews or the use of workbooks alongside focus groups may be a more suitable approach. Finally, focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with the others in the group (Thompson, 2005).

Gathering of Focus Group Respondents

In the light of the above, it was with much great effort before I could get my representative sample. I had to go round the respondents who completed the questionnaire because the focus group members should be part of the study population to look for my sample. Having contacted about twenty (20) couples I finally got the representative sample for the interview. Initially I had an informal brief meeting with the group. I told them about the purpose of such a meeting, the expectation, the time and duration of the meeting and the venue and role of each member of the group. Again, I made them aware of individual differences, that we are different and unique in so many ways. It therefore implies that each one should see the other as such and should expect to hear things beyond their imagination. Members were told to respect the views of one another and learn to listen to the one on floor in order to be able to ask questions for clarification and to also contribute to the discussion. Finally, I assured them of confidentiality even though we were in a group. At the end of the brief meeting they all happily promised coming for the programme and they did.

Procedures

A focus group was conducted on 29–05-2013 (Wednesday) at 4:00p.m., at the basement of Agogo Chief Palace with the following respondents. For the purpose of confidentiality, the participants will be known by the following 01-male aged 53 years and is married to 02 a female aged 46 years and they have been married for the past 22 years. Likewise, 03 is also a male aged 57 years and is married to 04 who is a female aged 52 years and have been married for 31 years. Finally, 05 is a male aged 43 years and was married to 06 a female aged 34 years and married for 6 years.The researcher too was present. The discussion started with the introduction by the researcher based on the already prepared interview guide. The discussion was started by 01 and was carried forward by other group members. Every respondent had opportunity to speak and was very helpful in the process. The discussion went on for around 50 minutes. The discussion touched upon the extent to which factors such as communication, happiness, intimacy, roles and compatibility constitute marital satisfaction. The facilitator (researcher) guided the discussion on certain topics which he felt would need some more inputs from the respondents and also on the topics that needed further clarification.

Data Analysis

For effective analysis of data, Bryman (2001) says a researcher must use a suitable research design notably called paradigms in the conduct of a research. They are the qualitative and the quantitative paradigms. The data collected for these paradigms were analyses both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data from the focused group interviews was analyzed using factor, content, quotation and thematic analyses. The hypotheses within the present study were tested using the independent samples t-tests for the differences

between the groups on the factors constituting marital satisfaction. A significance level of 0.05 was used as the cut-off point for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses. SPSS version 12 was used to analyze the quantitative data.

Interview

The interviewer personally introduced himself, explained the purpose of the interview, and set guidelines for how the interview would proceed. The roles of both the interviewee and the interviewer were spelt out. The respondents were exhorted to speak their minds as objectively as possible on any of the interview questions. The respondents were assured of confidentiality and were also informed that the interview was for academic purposes only. The standardized open-ended approach of interview was used. In this, each respondent was asked the same question in the same order. The rationale for this was to make comparability possible as well as to make the analysis of the emerging data simple.

Table 2: Sex Distribution of Subjects

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	**95**	47.5
Female	**105**	52.5
Total		100

Source: Asante Akim North District Office (2020)

Age Distribution of Respondents

Table2 depicts the age distribution of respondents. As the table shows, the age group of subjects who responded to the questionnaire ranges from 20 to 60 years and above with the mean age of 2.4 (SD=.956) which can be interpreted as the majority of the respondents being between the ages of 30 to 49 years. Similar to the sex distribution, the age distribution of the sample would appear to be representative of the population from which it was drawn.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

CODE	AGE GROUPS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES	MEAN CODE	S.D.
1	20-29 Years	32	16		
2	30-39 Years	86	43		
3	40-49 Years	57	28.5	2.4	.956
4	50-59 Years	20	10		
5	60 Years and above	5	2.5		
	TOTAL	**200**	**100**		

Source: Asante Akim North District Office (2020)

Transcription of the Focus Group Interview Data

Participants' responses to the Happiness Factor

When asked what they would consider to be happiness in their marriages, all were asked to list the main factors that have contributed to their happiness. The majority of the respondents about (83%) said they were happy while 17% said otherwise. When asked how happy they were 01 said ''I try not to displease my partner nor take a stand that will displease her.'' 02 who happened to be married to 01 also said, ''I respect my partner as head of the family and submit to him and he in turn respects and loves me.'' 03 said, ''there are openness, understanding and commitment from him to his partner.'' 04 who is married to 03 also said ''since the sin syndrome has been removed through salvation and have been born again, I no longer suspect him so there is mutual trust.'' 05 who was married to 06 said, ''initially there were mutual understanding, respect and love for one another but later it turns otherwise.'' These comments suggested that respect for one another; openness, submissiveness, commitment and understanding are some of the contributory factors to happiness. Other factors to happiness are unsuspecting and mutual trust. Disrespect, suspicion, rebellion and lack of commitment to marriage are some factors that cause unhappiness.

Participants' responses to the Communication Factor

When asked what they would consider to be their communication style,33% of the respondents of the focus group interview said it was verbal, 50% said it was open and 17% said there was problem with communication. 01 who normally opens the interview has this to say, ''the communication style is verbal and that we always sit down and talk freely.'' 02 who is married to 01 shared the same view with her partner and added that ''we discuss a lot to make sure we are on course.'' 03 was the first to say that ''there is openness in our marriage and that I don't hide anything from my wife.'' 04 is 03's partner and she said, ''it is open and we discuss everything freely without any inhibition from my partner''. 05 the former husband of 06 said, ''initially there was openness; we had time to discuss until coldness from my partner set in. Finally, 06 said, ''I have problem with communication so I don't talk too much and I am easily irritated. These comments presuppose that verbal communication, whereby couples feel free to discuss a lot about their marriage is one of the communication styles. Openness without hiding anything from one another or without inhibition is also another communication style which has been very beneficial to the families. However, coldness and anger were detected to be the non-communicable factors which cause negative effects in marriages

Participants' responses to the Intimacy Factor

When asked how they spend their leisure time with their spouses, 67% said they do not have leisure time and 33% said they have time for leisure. 01said, ''I have no definite time for leisure because even on Saturdays and Sundays which are holidays I am busy because I go to work on Saturdays and am occupied with religious activities on Sundays''. 02 who is 01's partner said, ''I don't have any and have been praying my husband gets time to take me out for someone to cook for me to eat.'' 03 is a male partner who is among those who have leisure time, he said ''we listen to news and stroll together.'' 04 a partner to 03 said, ''we read articles, newspapers or church magazines, some interesting issues are discussed together and also stroll together. 05 a male partner said, ''do I even have it?'' ''The only time I get is when I am in bed and even there because of the load of work for the day and stress I fall asleep.'' Finally, 06 said, ''I have no time to share because I am a student and have three children who cannot take care of themselves so I am always busy.'' These comments suggest that couples who have time for leisure use it profitably in strolling together, reading magazines and newspapers and discussing the issues that come out. It was found that some couples had no time for leisure due to much work and this was causing some inconveniences among some of the participants.

Participants' responses to the Marital Roles Factor

When asked what I (the researcher) would have seen them doing together with their spouses, 67% said they do things together and do not have specific roles for men or women. Some (33%) have drawn the line for roles for the man as well as the woman. 01 who is among those without specified roles says, ''I cook, wash clothes, sweep, do ironing and virtually all the household chores together.'' Adding her voice to what 01 said 02 a spouse to 01 said, ''we do things together; there is no work for man or woman. Any time I am occupied with something my partner turns over to do other work to support me.'' 03 and his partner 04 have drawn the line for roles for the man and the woman. 03 said, ''our children are grown so they help their mother in the household chores. What is more we have a house boy to assist in the domestic duties. In the

light of the above what you will see us doing together is eating, bathing and doing our devotion.'' 04 a spouse of 03 said, ''apart from what my partner has said, 'we listen to news together and discuss the issues that come out together.These comments suggest that there are no specified sex-type roles for many couples because they do things together particularly household duties like washing, cooking, pounding, ironing, taking care of the children, sweeping and a lot more. One of the participants whose children are grown said a line has been drawn in their home for roles and the children assist their mother in the domestic duties. Despite these differences all the couples have been moving on well in their marriages.

Participants' responses to the Compatibility Factor

When asked how they respond in times of serious disagreement, 50% said they discuss it calmly without shouting at each other. Some (33%) said at times it becomes heated and have to retire and come back again and 17% said when there are delays in solving the disagreement there is anger. 01, one of the proponents of solving disagreement calmly said, ''I tell my partner to sit down and solve it. Anyone who is at fault accepts the challenge and apologies to the other and ends everything.'' 02 took her turn and said, ''disagreement comes because of individual differences, but in such times I don't keep my opinions to myself, we discuss it calmly without shouting at him. When I am offended and I complain and he accepts his fault I forgive and don't harbour grudge against him so we move on and vice versa.'' 03 one of those who retires because of the heated argument in times of responding to a disagreement said, ''when we don't seem to understand each other we retire but come back again, pray together and try to solve it.'' 04 a spouse to 03 says, ''in times of disagreement when I see that tempers are rising I wait for the tempers to cool down before I talk again.'' 05 a male respondent to 06 says, ' I keep quiet to let my partner to reflect on it after pointing the wrongs out.' 06 who was married to 05 said, ''my partner was not sitting down with me to discuss and look for solution so I become angry when I see there is delay in solving it.''These comments presuppose that in times of serious disagreement partners sit down and talk things over and forgive the offender. Others said they accept their faults and apologize to appease the offender. On the other hand, partners who did not find things easy do not gross over the problem but retire to cool tempers before coming back for amicable solution. These steps have in no doubt kept their marriages. However, it was also observed that couples that get angry keep quiet without finding solutions to the crises or delay in finding solutions to the disagreement.

Test of Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses generated for the study an overall marital satisfaction mean score was computed for each respondent using the SPSS. The higher the marital satisfaction mean score the better a respondent's perception of marital satisfaction. For testing the hypothesis, a $p < 0.05$ was used as the limit. In other words, the study hypothesis will be rejected and the null hypothesis accepted if $p > 0.05$ and vice versa.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis generated for the study was that women will have a better perception of the factors that constitute marital satisfaction than men. As the group statistics seen in Table 4 shows there appears to be a difference in the two groups' mean (male = 3.99, female=3.91), marital satisfaction score. To test whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups on the mean satisfaction scores; an independent sample of t-test was conducted. As seen in Table 4, the result of the t-test revealed that there was no statistically significant sex difference in what constitute marital satisfaction (t =1.639, df = 198, p = .103). Therefore, the study hypothesis that women will have a more positive perception of the factors that constitute marital satisfaction than men is rejected and the null hypothesis accepted. In other words, women did not have a more positive perception of what constitutes marital satisfaction than men respondents.

Table **4: Group Statistics and independent samples t-tests of sex on marital satisfaction**

Sex	N	Mean	T	df	P value (sig)
Male	95	3.99724			
			1.639	198	.103
Female	105	3.9139			

Source: Asante Akim North District Office (28June, 2020)

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis generated for the study tested the assumption that older couples' respondents will have a more positive perception of what constitute marital satisfaction than their younger counterparts. As can be seen in the group statistics in Table 5 there appears to be a difference in the two groups' mean marital satisfaction scores (Young = 3.9319, Old =3.9845). To test whether there is a statistically significant difference between the mean marital satisfaction scores, an independent sample of t-test was conducted. As seen in Table 5, the result of the t-test revealed that there was no statistically significant age difference in what constitute marital satisfaction (t = -1.017, df = 198, p = .311). Therefore, the study hypothesis that older couples' respondents will have a more positive perception of what constitute marital satisfaction than their young counterparts is rejected and the null hypothesis accepted. In other words, older couples did not have a more positive perception of what constitutes marital satisfaction than younger respondents.

Table 5: Group statistics and independent samples t-test of Age and Marital Satisfaction

Age	N	Mean	T	Df	P value (sig)
Young	118	3.9319	-1.017	198	.311
Old	82	3.9845			

Source: Asante Akim North District Office (28June, 2020)

Happiness as a Factor in Marital Satisfaction

On the happiness factor in marital satisfaction participants said that respect for one another, openness, without hiding anything from each other, submissiveness, particularly for the female couples to their husbands, commitment to make the marriage successful by both parties and understanding each other are some of the contributory factors to happiness. Furthermore, they said other contributory factors are lack of suspicion and mutual trust. However, disrespect for each other in the marriage, being suspicious of one another, rebellious attitudes particularly on the part of the wives and lack of commitment to marriage ethics are some of the factors that cause unhappiness in marriages. According to Stinnett et. al. (1984) happiness is a major pursuit in all aspects of life: jobs, education, recreation and community relations. It is not surprising that happiness is expected in marriage. When people marry there is a tendency to think that the husband or wife will make the other happier than he or she was before. There is great potential for joy in marriage if the two people are compatible, emotionally mature, and considerate and dedicated to each other's welfare. Happiness does not lie in the institution of marriage. It lies within people and depends upon the way they relate to each other. The major issue then, becomes how husbands and wives relate to one another so as to enhance each other's happiness.

One of the major factors that bring about happiness in our marriages is satisfying your partner sexually but unfortunately none of the participants mentioned sexual matters as contributory to happiness in their marriages. However, it was argued that it could be one of the factors that might bind or cause the demise of many marriages. The reasons for this might lie in the fact that, the Ghanaian culture sees sex education or revealing such a secret as sacred to their marriage and hence a taboo. It is unlike the Western culture where sex education is freely discussed. From the above, it was observed that sex (that is being male or female) has no bearing on how people perceive marital satisfaction. This is because both sexes said the same thing. The present result was not expected and rather the study hypothesis suggested that women will have better perception of what constitute marital satisfaction than men. It is reasonable to expect that women would have a better perception than men would, because women are seen in our society as being romantic, loving, compassionate, caring and tender than men. The biased finding may be because of the population. Christians were chosen as the target population and perhaps their doctrines have influenced them greatly.

The result suggests that the Ghanaian culture on marriage might have a positive influence on marriage, in that both sexes see themselves as having the same rights to marital happiness. In support of the findings, Abrah, (2001) in her study on Factors Relating to Marital Satisfaction also states that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents with regards to what indicate their marital satisfaction. Blazer, (1963) indicates in his study on Complementary Needs Fulfillment and Marital Satisfaction also affirm that there is no difference in the ratings of husbands and that of wives. However, the above findings seem to differ from the findings of Rollins and Feldman (1970) which indicated that husbands have different understanding in certain issues concerning marital satisfaction.

The study result again suggests that, age is not a contributory factor on how people perceive marital satisfaction. The present study's finding is inconsistent with that of Stinnet, Nick, Mittelstel and Montogeeny's (1972) finding that older husbands and wives tend to be happier than newly married couples. It also contradicts Latopa's (1979) assertion that many elderly husbands and wives consider their spouses to be their best friends and most close confidant and makes them more satisfied in their marriages than younger couples. The present result was not expected because the study hypothesis assumed that the older respondent will have a better perception of what constitute marital satisfaction because at age 60 years and above there are fewer conflicts as compared to 20 – 50 years (Maas and Kuypers, 1974). Moreover, stressors such as raising children, looking for or the urge for sex, holding a job, and intrusion of in-laws have been settled through compromise with time (Alchley and Miller, 1980). The question of marital status and happiness was observed that married couple does not really matter when dealing with marital satisfaction.

Communication as a Factor in Marital Satisfaction
Respondent for the focus group interview had this to say about communication. Participants said, verbal communication whereby couples feel free, to sit down and discuss a lot about their marriage by being frank and transparent are the communication styles that have been beneficial to their families. However, it was observed that coldness; snap shot answers and keeping quiet were detected to be the non-communicable factors which cause breeches in marriages. Ogbunnaya (2000) states that marriages in which the couples have time to discuss together are always healthy and congenial. However, there are some homes where there are problems due to lack of listening skills which is also part of communication. When a partner is communicating to a spouse and the spouse is pre-occupied with more vital issues it means he or she is not paying attention or uninterested. Listening involves hearing, understanding and sharing the way things are said, the tone used, the expression and gestures employed. If a spouse gets to know that the partner is not listening, it can be irritating and may provoke the speaker. Couples who want to enjoy their discussions should be relaxed, clear their minds and concentrate on what is being said. If necessary keep an eye contact to see how he or she is feeling, the gestures used and the way and manner the message is being presented to enjoy the conversation. When a partner sees that she or he is not listening the one may keep quiet and silence has its negative side effect too (Ogbunnaya, 2000).

Wahlroos (1998) identifies that it is often said that "speech is silver and silence is golden'' yet there are times when one needs to keep silent over volatile issues which can stir controversy. For instance, when the wife or husband sees that the other partner's voice is getting higher. In such instances silence will cool tempers down. However, silence should not be used as a weapon to bring men into subjection. When the husband's action is wrong the wife must learn how and when to talk to him about it. Never assume that your partner will not listen to you. It is only through effective communication that you can win your partner. When communication breaks down, it is hard to know partner's opinion and where he/she differs from you. There are a lot of families where silence has brought about cold wars which have caused them severely.

In adding his voice to what Wahlroos (1998) said, VanPelt (1999) illustrated his point with a story in a family with a cold war. He said, the husband has been fighting for a better paid job and has since been writing to many institutions and establishments. One institution replied him and gave him time to report for the interview on a particular day. He was to get there early so when he got home because they were not in talking terms, he took a piece of paper and wrote on it: ''Yaa, I am to go for an interview tomorrow at such and such a place so wake me up at 5.00 am''. When the woman woke up the following morning at dawn she also wrote on a paper, ''Kwaku, it is five o'clock (5.00am) so wake-up and prepare for the interview'', and kept it under his pillow. The man woke-up some minutes to seven o'clock (7.00 am) and shouted: ''Hei

Yaa!'' ''Is that how you are, you did not wake me up and I have missed this great opportunity?'' The wife replied, ''you wrote a note and kept it on the table, I replied and kept it under your pillow so lift it up and you will see it.'' The man raised the pillow and found the note. They talked to each other that day and stopped being silent.

The focus group discussion also suggested that sex, age and marital status do not really matter when talking about communication as a factor of marital satisfaction. For sex it was observed that though men are seen to be bossy and would like their word to be obeyed the content analysis from the focus group interview revealed that there was free flow of exchange of ideas and there was no master-servant relationship in the marriages. With regard to age, the older couples as well as the younger ones had no problem with communication. They both talk freely in their marriages. On marital status it was observed that the married couple had no problem with communication. The styles were verbal, open and frank. As already reported in the content analysis of the focus group interview the married couples said almost the same thing that their communication styles were verbal, open and frank. It was only one respondent who said he had problems with communication.

Intimacy as a factor in Marital Satisfaction
It was observed from the focus group interview that leisure time which makes the couple to spend time in doing things together in a pleasurable manner was a problem to some of them. Economic stress has made the female partners to be working to generate income to supplement that of their male counterparts. In the light of the above, about 67% of the respondents said they hardly have leisure time with their spouses. Due to pressure of work even on weekends which are supposed not to be working days they still get to the office on Saturdays and use Sundays for religious activities. A respondent retorted: ''Leisure time, do I even have it? The only time I have is when I get to bed and due to stress I sleep off." Another said, "I am a student and have three children who cannot take care of themselves and have no help mate to assist me. So I am busy all the time and have no leisure time".From the above it could be inferred that some of the participants had no time for leisure. About 33% said they have leisure time, and spend it by strolling together, reading magazines and newspapers and discussing issues that arise from the reading.

Van Pelt (1990) says in spite of hectic schedules, couples should try and create a time within the week which will enrich their marital life; dinners out, an evening of games, a hand-in-hand walk, a swim or a drive. Hendricks (1998) contends that without exception it has been found that the most successful marriages have added the warmth of fun, laughter and enjoyable experiences to life. Though there is a saying that "the family that prays together stays together", so also is it true that "the family that plays together also stays together". The activities the family engages in can be changed with time. There can be a morning jog together. This early morning ritual not only provides the exercise the couple need for better health but it improves their attitudes, gives time to commitment and stimulates a mutual interest (Van Pelt,1990). Van Pelt further said that couples should try to bring in something that is interesting, challenging, creative or delightful because they help to keep the family going. Each of us remembers special moments of closeness with another person in whom we have felt good about ourselves and the other person. It is commendable when family members can experience such moments of closeness and feel a sense of connectedness. This kind of intimacy is a dream for most families. Fortunately, or unfortunately some accomplish it more successfully than others. One reason lies in the way that couples communicate with each other. Intimacy has, in fact, been defined as the depth of verbal and non-verbal exchange between two individuals. It entails a true acceptance of each other and a commitment to the relationship. Intimacy develops in relationships through communication patterns that are affectionate, affirming and open,

Wahlroos (1999) husbands and wives don't know each other because of the lack of intimate communication. Couples are very cautious about sharing their innermost thoughts and feelings with one another. He said, studies show that there is intimate communication during the courtship time as well as the first year of marriage. Couples explore their inner feelings and set goals for the future but it soon becomes a white elephant when children enter the scene; attention is diverted from husband and wife to home and children. Romance wears off and the relationship takes on the appearance of a business partnership, conversation centres on financial problems for example, "Musah's fight at school" and ''Kwadwo's poor grades". But in all styles of married life, couples need a method whereby they can get in touch and stay in touch with the

other partner's feelings and refrain from talking about exchanges of ideas, concepts and hopes for the future to finding out how mates feel inside. Hooper (1997) also said, to make love more intimate in a relationship, there is the need to satisfy your mate sexually. Intimacy is a quality that grows through a sharing of feelings, it heightens all aspects of the relationship and is the main ingredient responsible for turning sex into ecstatic experience as opposed to a pleasurable but uninspiring one. She further said in order to achieve intimacy we need to be brave enough to reveal our innermost selves to our partners. To buttress this fact, Van Pelt (1990) contends that a survey by Redbook Magazine (1975) revealed a connection between good sexual communication and a good sex life. Of every 100 women (raw scores) in the study who stated that they always discussed intimate feelings with their husbands, 88 rated their sex life as very good or good. Of those who never discussed sexual feelings with their husbands 70 in every 100 reported fair or poor sex lives. It appears that most of those who need to discuss their problems fail to do so, resulting in frustration and dissatisfaction in their marriages.

Van Pelt further argues that since women feel more sexually inhibited than men and find it difficult to speak about sexual topics because of its embarrassment, whenever possible it is helpful for a husband to take the initiative in helping his wife verbalize her feelings. Both partners need to feel free to express honestly and frankly what feels good and what does not, what is desired and what is not, what stimulates and what does not. If couples have never before verbalized their sexual thoughts and feelings, they should approach the topic slowly and carefully, and neither should become discouraged if the other reacts negatively. From the discourse above, it was observed that sex has no correlation with how people perceive marital satisfaction. This is because both sexes had similar problems as far as leisure time is concerned. Again, it became known that age too is not a contributory factor in how people perceive marital satisfaction. This is because both the older and the younger couples had problem with leisure time. On the question of whether marital status is a contributory factor towards how people perceive marital satisfaction, the result of the interview on intimacy revealed that married couple did not really differ when dealing with marital satisfaction and therefore 'intimacy'. This is so because some of the respondents had no time for leisure. The above findings and discussions appear to be supported by the present study's empirical findings that Sex, Age and Marital status have no correlation with the factors which constitute marital satisfaction.

Marital Roles as a Factor in Marital Satisfaction

From the focus group interview results, it was found that there were no specified roles for many couples because they did things together particularly household chores, like washing, cooking and pounding, ironing and taking care of children. Some female spouses said when they are busy with other things their partners do the cooking and any other things they can do to keep the family going without complaining or murmuring. Olson &Defrain (2005) quoting Parson's Theory of (1965) assumed that highly contrasting gender roles were essential for families and society. However, due to urbanization and industrial societies the family had lost its functions and was on decline. According to Parson the traditional family and society required that men be "instrumental" and women be "expressive". The man's instrumental role was to be the breadwinner, the manager, and the leader of the family. The woman's expressive role was to take care of the emotional wellbeing of the family through nurturing and comforting. However, in contemporary times, it is more commonly assumed that both sexes are capable and can be successful in a variety of roles at home and at work. Women can be independent, strong, logical and task oriented. Men can be nurturing, sensitive, cooperative and detail oriented. However, they can benefit by learning from each other; men can learn the value of being more sensitive and caring from women; women can learn the values of independence from men; and both can learn to work together and become independent.

A couple who are older said their children are grown up and what is more they are having a house help to assist in the household chores. As a result, they have drawn a line for roles but these children offer them assistance particularly to the female spouse. The discussion above suggests that sex, age and marital status do not really matter when talking about marital roles as a factor of marital satisfaction. In many homes among the Northerners as well as the Akans there are specified roles for men and women. Men are supposed to do the strenuous work and give the less strenuous work to women. Men after giving the house keeping money, do nothing about cooking, washing, and pounding, i.e. all the household duties are done by the women. A good example is when they both return from the farm, the man will bath, change his clothes and get to town to go and play ludo, oware or draught. The woman will remain in the house alone to do the

cooking, pounding and setting the table before going to call the husband to come home for meals. But the content analysis from the focus group revealed that there were no such roles in their homes. The couples do things together, cooking, pounding, washing and taking care of children in the home. On the question of age, both the older and the younger couples were doing similar things. They did the household chores together irrespective of age. As far as marital status is concerned it was revealed that the couples had no specified roles. These findings and discussions appear to be supported by the present study's empirical findings that sex, age and marital status have no bearing on what constitute marital satisfaction.

Compatibility as a Factor in Marital Satisfaction
The study result from the focus group interview revealed that in times of serious disagreement, partners sit down and talk things over without shouting at each other but respect each other and apologize to one another where necessary. Others said they accept their faults and because there is forgiveness, they forget about the problem. Moreover, some said they do not allow the sun to go down on their anger without sitting down to find solution to the disagreement (Eph.4:26). On the other hand, partners who don't find things easy don't gross over things but retire to cool down tempers before coming back for settlement. Called "Time-out" & "foul" by Olsen and DeFrain (2005) when verbal interchanges get too intense, a time out can be useful. The length of the time-out depends on how emotionally over-wrought the participants are sometimes an hour is sufficient, at other times a day is needed. Time-outs shouldn't last too long, however, because one or both partners may refuse to deal with the issue again. To call a 'foul' is when a partner brings up the past. The other should stop him/her. This gives both partners a chance to calm down and think things through before trying again to resolve the disagreement.

Despite these setbacks this particular family lives happily and moves together that, it was a pleasant sight to visit their home. However, the female couple said she used to keep quiet and wait to see if her partner will find amicable solution to the crises. When there is delay, she becomes angry and begins to show her displeasure through talking and changing her countenance until things become normal. Ogunlaye (1998) notes that a lot of women are like this, instead of humbly submitting themselves and sitting down with their husbands to find amicable solutions to whatever crises that have come they begin to slam doors and windows to show their displeasure to their husbands. Some women make selection of proverbial songs which will irritate their partners. Others however wear gloomy face to convey a danger sign to the husband and any other person who comes across. Ogunlaye further said, some women on the other hand think that crises in their homes could be taken care of through nagging. Theirs is to constantly remind their spouses how bad they are. The men are scolded for not attending church, smoking, drinking and indulging in other vices. At times some women call their partners as good for nothing persons who have abandoned their children and neglected their homes (Ogunlaye, 1998). Finland, (2000) discusses that nagging normally doesn't solve problems in the home because it often puts the men into more confusion, constant discomfort and pain. Some women are notorious to an extent that they disgrace their husbands' publicly leading to the men taking steps which may break the marriage because they can no longer bear the reproach. Others in times of crises go to the extent of reporting everything to their parents and there is always intrusion by the in-laws and other unwanted visitors into the family for settlement

Ogunlaye (2000) says men are shy and reserved so to avoid the women as the saying of the wise man in the Bible says: "it is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house" (Prob. 21:9). They keep late at work and at times too decide to go to the drinking bars and other spots and come home fully drunk and these practices have been breaking many marriages. Again when men become fed-up they either drive their spouses away or get transferred and move to a new place without the spouse's knowledge. In the light of the above, as we saw in the study findings that the couples resolve all their crises amicably without shouting at each other, partners should learn to tolerate one another and also try to adjust to situations to preserve their marriages. From the focus group discussion, it was observed that sex, age, and marital status do not really matter when talking about compatibility as a factor of marital satisfaction. In the case of sex, both men and women were seen to be knit together and respected one another's view and so sit down to resolve any conflict amicably. With regard to age, the older couples, as well as the younger ones, had no problem with compatibility. The study findings revealed that the older, as well as the younger couples, were all solving their crises amicably without shouting at each other or keeping their views to themselves, as both talk freely in their marriages. These findings and discussions appear to be supported by

the present study's empirical findings that sex, age, and marital status have no bearing on what constitutes marital satisfaction.

Summary
The study investigated the perceptions of marital satisfaction among couples in the Asante Akim Traditional Area. It critically examined the factors that affect marital satisfaction and also if there are factors such as ages, gender and marital status that influence the perceptions of couples. The study employed Likert type and close-ended questionnaires and focus group interview to collect data. It was located within both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The study population consisted of couples in the Asante Akim Traditional Area. The sample size was 200 and was drawn from the following towns: Agogo, Hwidiem, Juana, Domeabra, Kyekyebiase, Amantena, and Akutuase. It was found that factors like communication, intimacy, marital roles, adjustment, and compatibility have a positive influence on couples with regards to their perception of marital satisfaction. The result suggested that age, gender, and marital status did not influence the respondents' perception of marital satisfaction.

Contribution to Knowledge
One of the values of conducting research is that close examination of a singular setting can yield insights into the subtleties of social reality often missed in more generalized quantitative research. This research studied the perceptions of marital satisfaction among couples in the Asante Akim Traditional Area and knowledge acquired could be used by Pastors, counselors, churches, mass media and sociologists. The outcome of the study will also serve as a useful guide to both government and non-governmental organizations such as the National Council for Women and Development, Ghana Association of Women Lawyers, the Department of Social Welfare, marriage counselors and religious organizations. They can use it in handling issues, interpreting problems, passing judgment, advising parents and appreciate the situation and take measures to improve marriages. Furthermore, the study will also benefit all couples who would like to promote and keep their marriages.

Conclusions
With reference to whether sex differs in what constitutes marital satisfaction in marriage, it was observed that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean of the two groups. This contradicts Rollins and Feldman (1970) who in their studies found that marriage has different meanings for husbands. It, therefore, implies that the adage ''what is good for the goose is also good for the gander,'' should be considered by couples.

Finding out from respondents whether older couples will have a better perception of what constitutes marital satisfaction than their younger counterparts, the general response was that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean of the two groups. This contradicts Maas and Kuyper's assertion that older marriages are more satisfying than younger marriages.

The study revealed that communication is very important in marriage because some of the respondents who had communication problems suffered dearly by destroying their marriages.

It was discovered from the study that intimacy in a relationship is very important particularly with reference to how we spend our time. A lot of the frictions that do come into marriages are a result of a lack of spending time together during leisure time. Couples that had fun together during leisure time were found to be more satisfied in their marriages.

From the study, it was observed that things are changing with regard to marital roles. Male spouses are now helping to do domestic chores like cooking, pounding, washing of bowls and plates which used to be reserved for the women.

Finally, from the respondents, it was found out that there was marital stability and satisfaction because the couples were faithful to one other. However, it was again discovered that couples were committed to their marriages because each partner tries to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

Recommendations
Based on the findings made in this study the following recommendations are made for the above-mentioned groups.

The study revealed that some of the respondents lacked good interpersonal relationships as husbands and wives. For example, couples did not communicate well to each other and this development has affected the marital relationship. It is therefore recommended that newly married, aspirants and the youth should seek counseling about marriage, concerning joys and problems.

Again from the study, it was found out that some married couples found it difficult to adjust in their marriages. And this should be a concern to stakeholders in marriage. For example, they cannot make changes or adjustments in their lives. It is therefore recommended that marriage counselors should intensify their work in the area of how to give couples satisfaction in their marriages during pre/marital counseling. The study further revealed that intimacy which makes couples spend time doing things together in a pleasurable manner was a problem in many marriages. For example, many respondents said they had no definite time for leisure since even on Saturdays and Sundays which seem to be holidays they get busy with academic and religious activities. It is therefore recommended that Pastors, parents, marriage counselors and friends should encourage couples to try and create time within the week for their partners to enrich their marital lives. From the findings of the research, it was deduced that lack of communication was causing a lot of havoc in marriages. For example, coldness and anger were detected to be the factors that cause negative effects on marriages. It is therefore recommended that Ministers, marriage counselors, religious organizations should organize programs and seminars on how to keep their homes by being open and talking to each other without hiding anything from them.

It was again discovered from the study that couples shout at each other when it comes to settling the serious disagreement. For example, couples become angry and retire because of heated argument and others just boil up and refuse to talk. It is therefore recommended that counselors should educate couples on how to handle issues, interpret problems and appreciate one another.

Moreover, it was also found out that there was a lack of concern and care among couples. For example, some respondents said they do not have time for themselves, as a result, they show little interest in the needs of others even when sick. It is therefore highly recommended that counselors and pastors should indoctrinate their congregation to show love and concern for one another.

Implications for Counselling
Helping families to maintain marital satisfaction involves all categories of counselors since marriage carries with it psychological problems that affect children, adolescents, the newly married, young couples through old age. Marriage counselors and Pastors are needed more than ever before as couples experience a complex array of personal and social problems. Counselors and Pastors should be abreast with the times so as to give counsel based on the trends of the changing society and family life. They should be able to touch on the intricacies of marriage based on research conducted by themselves or others rather than basing counseling on assumptions.

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