PREDICTORS OF MARITAL STATUS IN THE SUNYANI MUNICIPALITY IN THE BRONG AHAFO REGION OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The multivariate study investigated whether Social Support, premarital Counselling, Level of Average Income and Education mediate the relationship between Family Pressure, Attraction and Peer Pressure. Data collected from 300 respondents (married and divorced men and women) from the Sunyani Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana were analysed using logistic regression (and chi-square) analytical techniques. Among the study findings was that Social Support was significantly related to Marital Status and that as Social Support increases, sustenance of marriages also increases even when the effects of family pressure, attraction and peer pressure are held constant. Thus Social Support is sustenance of marriage far more than Family Pressure, Attraction and Peer Pressure. The study also investigated the relationship between Premarital Counselling, Level of Education and Level of Income on one side and marital status on the other, using chi-square test. The study found that Premarital Counselling tested for significance while Level of Education and Level of Income did not. The findings of the study have serious implications for guidance and counselling personnel and were recommended that the services of the clergy, Immams, experienced men and women in society and government-trained professional guidance and counselling coordinators are very much needed in the area of Premarital Counselling. Also, marriage is not for everyone. Family members and friends should recognise this fact and desist from pressurising anyone who has chosen the simple life into getting married.

Keywords: Attraction, Family Pressure, Marital status, Peer Pressure, Premarital Counselling, Social Support.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time, society expects men and women to marry, not only for the purpose of satisfying the sexual urge, but also for procreation and companionship. Sociologists agree that definitions of marriage differ. Malinowski (2006), for instance, defines marriage as a sex relationship between a man and a woman which is expected to last forever. He views marriage as a contract for the production and maintenance of children. Also, according to Baur and Crooks (1990) marriage can provide a feeling of permanence in one's life and a sense of belonging. Also, the closeness and trust generated by marriage can lead to rich relationships and deep caring. In the same way, with the greater familiarity provided by marriage, people can develop better understanding of each other's needs and thereby build a more harmonious relationship.

Social support

According to Olson and DeFrain (2000) social support refers to the function and quality of social relationships, such as perceived availability of help or support actually received from friends and relatives, it may also be regarded as resources provided by others as coping assistance. It may be instrumental, for example, assist with a problem; it may be tangible, for example, donate goods or it may be informational such as give advice; and it may also be

emotional, for example, give assurance. Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) research that social support such as arranged marriages are usually very stable because it is the duty of the network of family members and friends and association members to help the new couple to get established in life. They also found that couples need social support indirectly in a form of emotional support from family members, friends, members of associations, and even from the society at large during bereavement or when couples are hit by disasters such as a rainstorm or fire outbreak.

Githinji (2005) also found that as relationship grows, money has power to break or strengthen the marriage relationship bond. Glick's (1976) research also shows that money can be a source of security or anxiety. This therefore means that financial support from the network of family members including parents; friends and association members as well as well-wishers to married couples indirectly serve as social supports which go a long way to bring about couple's financial security and thus make their marriages stable and peaceful.

Family Pressure and Marital Status

A plethora of authors including Lamina and Reidman (2003), Murdock (1949), Mikulincer and Shaver (2003), Mair (1969), Olson and DeFrain (2000), Fox (1980), and Stover and Hope (1993) argue that family pressure is the position that members of a family including biological parents take to the extent that they believe that they must select marriage partners for their children at all cost. Their reason is that they think that it is not only their responsibility to do so, but also they believe that as the more experienced people in society, they have the wisdom to select the appropriate spouses for their children.

Lee and Stone (1980) in their study explained that parents-arranged marriages based their decision on the principle that elders in the community have the wisdom and foresight to select the appropriate spouse on economic, political and social status considerations to enhance the family's status and positions. Chin and Chong (2006) also report that because parents are older and more experienced in life, they research the background of potential partners to ensure a successful marriage for their children. They make sure that partners they select match their children's characteristics, not blinded by infatuation, lust and romance that characterise youth marriages these days. Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) claim that arranged marriages are usually stable.

Boakye (2006) reports that, the child should solely look for a spouse with parents consenting only. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) on their part found that although in times past it was the responsibility of parents to look for partners for their children, yet today many children prefer taking their destiny into their own hands

Attraction and Marital Status

Levinger (1965) defines attractions as those elements of the marriage that draw people towards one another. For example, the major attractions of traditional marriage are practical attractions such as economic survival and the production of legitimate offspring. In his findings he established that economic survival and the production of legitimate children or offspring are major attractions of traditional marriage. Since all days are not equal and fortunes change, attraction that brought couples together may decrease if the fortunes of the senior partner in the marriage are no more. In the same way, if the desire for children was the main attraction that brought couples together, that attraction is likely to decrease when

expectations for issues turn out to be a mirage. When these happen the marriage can break.

Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) and Smith's and Apicelli's (1982) research that some people purposely marry for wealth and or procreation and therefore when they are not realised divorce could follow. Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) found that when people are physically attractive, others assume that they also have positive personal qualities such as sincerity, honesty, warmth, affection, empathy and fidelity. Later on, when these qualities are seen to be non-existent in a partner, attraction definitely will decrease and this can lead to divorce.

To Rice (1999) the most important element in attraction, at least in the initial encounters of a relationship, is physical attractiveness. He found that people are attracted positively to those who are pleasing to look at such as people with good builds and well proportioned bodies as well as a display of other physical characteristics. The most important element in attraction, in Rice's study, was physical attraction. This then presupposes that if overweight and or some menopausal challenges make some people (especially women spouses) lose personal charm, attraction is likely to decrease and this can lead to termination of marriage.

South's (1999) research findings point out that men especially place a higher value than women on physical attractiveness and youthfulness. This study then may suggest that some older men tend to chase younger women (i.e. teenage girls) at the annoyance of their legitimate older wives and this can lead to divorce. The teenage girls are more pleasing to look at because of their growing beauty. Conversely, South's findings also point out that women too look for men with wealth, fame, power, and high positions (i.e. for security). Perhaps this too may explain why some women abandon their husbands later in life who were once wealthy, famous in high positions.

Peer Pressure and Marital Status

Sasse (1997) sees peer pressure as an attempt to influence someone in a similar group. That is, someone experiences peer pressure when someone's friends want him or her to join in their activities, actions or belief. In our context it means friends who are married who want their friends who are not yet married and are not yet ready to also marry soonest at all cost. Sasse's findings noted that peer pressure can be challenging, extremely strong and compelling to the adolescent. His findings further revealed that because adolescents have not yet formed a strong personal identity, they are often not sure exactly what they are worth. This uncertainty often results in a lack of inner strength to resist if friends pressurise them to follow certain negative behaviours. Adjabeng (2002) found that when friends and neighbours of equal status or age group get married, the person who has not got married yet is persuaded by his friends' decisions and actions and then gets ready to marry too. But this risk to marry can be dangerous because marrying when one is not yet ready does not guarantee happy marriage.

Rice's (1999) study seems to suggest that some people rush into marriage because they feel left out when their friends are constantly announcing their engagements and getting married. To succumb to such peer pressure is certainly a negative attitude. But considering the fact that life is too short to delay marriage, and the fact that getting married early enables one to educate one's children well before retiring from employment, then peer pressure here should be taken as a wake-up call for eligible singles to be up and doing.

Marital Status and Level of Income

Raschke (1987) believed that socioeconomic status is probably the most important correlate of divorce, because over all, the higher the socioeconomic the less likelihood divorce. Similarly research by Githinji (2005) also found that as relationship grows, the issue of money has the ability to make or break the relationship bond. Money is best known as means to survival; however, its influence in relationships can reach into other areas, some of which may have nothing to do with survival. He also reports that Money is intrinsically neutral, but it can mean so much. It can be a source of security or anxiety. It can be an opportunity for power or a reminder of impotence. It can be used to improve lives or destroy them. It can lead to greater freedom or serve as a yoke around our necks.

Marital Status and Level of Premarital Counselling

Rice (1999) found that adequate preparation for marriage ensures marital success. His argument was that the three formal ways of preparing for marriage is crucial for successful marriages is food for thought. These formal ways include premarital education, premarital assessment and premarital counselling. Commenting on Rice's (1999) recommendations above, Mace (1987) explains that premarital education should include an academic course in marriage and family living at the college level. This, in the researcher's view, is a step in the right direction because as explained elsewhere in this paper getting the right orientation for any human endeavour provides the right insight into anything that one wants to do which ensures success at the end. For example, just as a medical officer or a nurse or a teacher (just to mention a few) all need training to ensure efficiency, good performance, commitment, and satisfaction which eventually lead to success, in the same way, adequate marriage education in the form of short courses involving lectures, audiovisuals, discussions, role playing etc will certainly expose couples to proper marital stability.

Duncan, Box and Silliman (1996) agreed that marriage preparation programmes are effective but they are under attended (i.e. not enough). To Olson and Defrain (2000) marital preparation is therefore to be seen as essential to making the new marriage work. Too often couples are so concentrated on the wedding day that, little if any, thought is given to what they want for their marriage. The more couples attend premarital counselling the less divorce becomes contemplative.

Hohman, Larson and Harmer's (1994) argue that premarital assessment or an evaluation of the extent to which the couple is fit and ready for marriage is a necessary prerequisite for successful marriages. Additionally, according to them it is appropriate that couples take a critical look at some of the problem areas in marriage such as relationships with friends, family, in-laws, religion, values, recreation, finances, children and their upbringing, sex and affection. This is important because it is important to resolve differences in these areas before marriage to forestall a stalemate after their coming together when it will be too late for them to agree to disagree.

Also, a third goal according them is to help the couple feel comfortable in seeking professional help in the future for marital or family problems. To the researcher, this is very important because from the researcher's observations, in the Ghanaian context, seeing professional assistance by couples is not common. It is an entirely new phenomenon. Usually in trouble or otherwise, couples either keep their problems to themselves until they mess up

after being swallowed up by the problems or they seek help from in-laws and friends who most often take sides and consequently succeed in ruining couples' marriages.

Statement of the Problem

Generally, society expects that when people get married either under the Traditional or Religious or Ordinance Law, they should stay together till death. But this is not the case in Sunyani. More often than not, disagreements set in and the result is either separation or divorce. Marriage has now become one of the serious social problems. The rate at which marriages break down in the Sunyani Municipality creates room for concern.

Previous studies in this area have not worked mainly because most previous studies tended to be bivariate in nature (Rice, 1999; Olson & DeFrain, 2000; Duncan, Box & Silliman, 1996). They examined two variables which did not mimic the real world. Multivariate studies like the present study are more realistic since they are based on the assumption that the factors that sustain or break marriages are many and one factor alone, as is the assumption underlining bivariate studies, cannot be responsible for the survival or breakdown of a marriage. For example, the present study recognises that attraction and family pressure alone cannot influence the sustenance of marriage but rather other factors such as social support and family income for example may interact with attraction to determine the survival or otherwise of a marriage. These claims led the researchers to undertake the study.

The present study

The study aimed at investigating into the factors that promote and sustain marriages or break marriages and also make recommendations to the married, divorcees, Clergy, religious and other organisations on measures needed to be taken to sustain marriages in the Sunyani Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. A Compound hypothesis and supplementary hypotheses were raised.

Compound hypothesis

The compound hypothesis sought to test the hypothetical model of marital status in which factors constituting the facilitators of marital status such as family pressure, attraction and peer pressure were assumed to indirectly influence marital status via mediating factors such as social support, level of average income and premarital counselling.

Supplementary hypotheses

The supplementary hypotheses were used because variables such as premarital counselling could not be included in the logistic regression model because they were measured on categorical data; the following hypotheses were generated to test their relationship with marital status:

1. There will be a significant difference between premarital counselling and marital status.
2. There will be a significant difference between level of education and marital status.
3. There will be a significant difference between level of average income and marital status.

Method

Participants

The sample size was 300 married and divorced men and women (241married and 59 divorced). The sample for this study was selected using opportunistic and convenience sampling techniques. The researchers opted for this technique, based on the accessibility of a sample available within limited time and resources.

Procedure

The design of the study was a cross-sectional survey design involving logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression, according to Ofori and Dampson (2011) can be used to predict one's membership of a group based on certain factors or information. When applied to marriage, logistic regression can use certain factors to predict why some marriages are stable while others are not.

In the design of this study, there were six independent or predictor variables (family pressure, peer pressure, attraction, level of average income, social support and premarital counselling). Family pressure, peer pressure, attraction, level of average income and social support are interval variables while premarital counselling is a categorical variable. The dependent or outcome variable is marital status (i.e. Married or Divorced) which is a categorical variable. So the design meets the requirements for logistic regression. Part of the set of questionnaires used for the present study was adapted from Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley (1988) and the remaining items (statements) were integrated by the researchers who believed that these would be necessary in the Ghanaian context. The questionnaires were adapted and developed to suit the area of interest of the researchers which were to tap the constructs of Social support, Peer pressure, Family pressure and Attraction. Because Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley (1988) social support sub-scale questionnaire were based on American and European subjects and reported good validity and reliability and the researchers-developed questionnaire had never been tested, it was of great importance to subject them to a factor analytical test to ascertain their validity and reliability in the Ghanaian setting for reasons of cultural differences.

According to Ofori and Dampson (2011), the value of reliability is good at 0.6. After using it on the sample in the Sunyani Municipality the Social support yielded a cronbach alpha (reliability) coefficient of .81 indicating that the social support subscale was highly reliable. The family pressure subscale also yielded an alpha (reliability) co-efficient of .71 indicating that the family pressure subscale was very good and reliable. The reliability co-efficient under attraction yielded an overall alpha (reliability) co-efficient of .64 indicating that attraction subscale was good and reliable. Finally, the peer pressure subscale yielded an alpha (reliability) co-efficient of .60 indicating that the social support subscale was good and therefore reliable. Taken together all the 19 items (statements) covering the 4 factor loadings namely social support, family pressure, peer pressure, and attraction the overall alpha (reliability) co-efficient obtained was .71. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 16th Version software was used to analyse the data.

Analysis

A simple percentage was used in analysing the demography of marital status of the respondents. Logistic regression was used to test the theoretical model. Chi-Square Tests

were also used to analyse the supplementary hypotheses to investigate into the bivariate relationships among the variables.

Results

Demography of respondents

The result of the distribution of the respondents' marital status is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Marital Status of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Divorced	59	19.7
Married	241	80.3
Total	300	100

The Table revealed that two hundred and forty-one (241) of the respondents were married, representing 80.3 %, while fifty nine (59) were divorced, representing 19.7 % of the total number.

Testing the study hypotheses

To test for the study hypothesis a direct logistic regression analysis was performed through SPSS BINARY LOGISTIC to assess predictors of the respondents being married or divorced on the basis of their social support, family pressure, attraction and peer pressure. The logistic regression run after three iterations in an attempt to classify the respondents by marital status the results presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Classification Table (a)

			Predicted Marital status		
	Observed		Divorced	Married	Percentage Correct
Step 0	Marital status	Divorced	0	26	.0
		Married	0	240	100.0
	Overall Percentage				90.2

As can be seen in Table 2, the third iteration reduced the divorced respondents from 59 to 26 and the married respondents by only one. Table 2 also provides the baseline prediction table, and because more of the subjects were married than divorced (i.e. 26 divorced and 240 married) the prediction assumed that every participant belonged to the married category and therefore this prediction would be correct 240 times out of the total sample of 266 which is 90.2 %. So the constant only model (i.e. the model without the predictors) gives a 90.2 % prediction rate as the baseline from where the logistic regression model will be run. The zero (0) % correct column in Table 2 means that no one was divorced. Therefore this baseline model classified that 90.2 % of the subjects have been predicted to be married. This is the initial prediction without the predictors in the model. The final classification table and over-all success rate of the predictors in the model is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Final Classification/Prediction Table

			Predicted		
			Marital status		
	Observed		Divorced	Married	Percentage Correct
Step 1	Marital status	Divorced	3	23	11.3
		Married	5	235	97.9
	Overall Percentage				89.5

As shown in Table 3, out of the 26 respondents who were divorced in Table 2, the model predicted three correctly and 23 incorrectly to be married. Therefore for the divorced respondents, the model had a poor prediction rate of 11.3 %. However, out of 240 married respondents, the model predicted only 5 incorrectly to be divorced and 235 correctly to be married. Therefore for the married respondents, the model had a very good prediction rate of 97.9 %. In total the model had an overall percentage correct prediction of 89.5 % which was not far from the constant only model in Table 2 with correct overall percentage of 90.2 %.

The results of the logistic regression model

A direct logistic regression analysis was performed through SPSS BINARY LOGISTIC to assess prediction of participants' marital status (divorced or married) on the basis of their social support, family pressure, attraction and peer pressure. Table 4 shows the results of the analysis when the predictors were in the equation.

Table 4: Variables in the Equation

	Variables	B	S.E	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Step 1[a]	Social Support	1.459	.381	14.679	1	.000	4.300
	Family Pressure	-1.385	.344	16.214	1	.000	.250
	Attraction	-.948	.302	9.837	1	.002	.387
	Peer Pressure	-.444	.174	6.559	1	.010	.641
	Constant	7.165	1.620	19.574	1	.000	1.294E3

The model summary with all the predictors in the equation produced a Nagelkerke R-square of .313, which means that the model explained 31 % of the variance in marital status. Table 4 also shows the individual contribution of the variables to identify the married respondents from the divorced respondents. The following are the interpretation of the predictors in the equation.

Social Support: It can be seen from the table that social support has a b-value of 1.459 and Wald statistics of 14.679, which is highly significant at the less than 0.001 level (Sig=0.000). The Exp(B) for social support is 4.3 and the coefficient (b-value) of 1.459 for social support means that on average as social support increases by one unit, the odds (this is obtained by the probability of staying married divided by the probability of being divorced) of sustaining a marriage increases by four times or four-fold. In other words, the probability of a couple without social support divorcing is slightly over four times greater than a couple with social support. This is true if family pressure, attraction and peer pressure are held constant. The B-value of 1.459 will also suggest that social support accounted for a considerable amount of

the 31 % (Nagelkerke R-square of .313 of the variance in marital status explained by the four predictors.

Family Pressure: The b-value of -1.385 and Wald statistics of 16.216, which is also highly significant at the less than 0.001 level (Sig=0.000) would suggest that family pressure also made a significant contribution to the prediction of marital status. The odds ratio (Exp B) value of .250 means that as family pressure decreases by one unit the odds of a couple staying married also decreases by .250 or 25 %. In other words, the probability of a couple staying married increases by 25 % when they are under more family pressure than when they are not. The B-value of -1.385 will also suggest that similar to social support, family pressure also accounted for a considerable amount of the 31% (Nagelkerke R-square of .313) of the variance in marital status explained by the four predictors. Of course, these conclusions are true if the effect of social support, attraction and peer pressure are controlled for.

Attraction: This predictor has a b-value of -.948 and with the significant value (Sig=0.002) and Wald statistic of 9.837 would suggest that attraction also made a significant contribution to the prediction of marital status. The odds ratio (Exp B) value of .387 means that as attraction decreases by one unit the odds of a couple staying in marriage also decreases by .387 which is almost 39 %. In other words, being no more attracted by the things that attracted a couple to marry could lead to divorce. This is true if the effect of social support, family pressure and peer pressure are held constant. The B-value of -.948 would also suggest that attraction did not contribute as much as social support and family pressure to explain the 31% variance in marital status. However, the significance level of 0.002 suggests that it also made a significant contribution.

Peer Pressure: The b-value -.444 and the significance value of 0.010 Wald test statistic of 6.559, would suggest that Peer pressure also made a significant contribution to the prediction of marital status. The odds ratio (Exp B) of .641 suggests that as peer pressure decreases by one unit, the odds of a couple who married under peer pressure still being married decreases by .641 (ie 64 %). In other words, friends are important in sustaining marriages. The B-value of -.444 indicates that Peer Pressure accounted for the least of the 31% variance explained in marital status.

Testing the Goodness-of-fit of the model

Homer and Lemeshow's goodness-of-fit test which compared observed with predicted number of cases for the two categories of marital status, using all the predictors in the model showed a good fit with x^2=9.809, df=8, p=.301. The goodness of fit of the model shows that the ability of the model to correctly classify the respondents in terms of their marital status was found to be reasonable (89.5 %). The model's sensitivity was quite high (i.e. 97.9 % of the respondents who were married were correctly classified), but the model's specificity was low (i.e. only 11.5 % of respondents who were divorced were also correctly classified). The model predicted that as social support increases by one unit, the odds of a marriage being sustained also increases by 4.3 times. The prediction for family pressure also suggested that as family pressure decreases by one unit, the odds of a couple staying married also decreases by .250 or 25 %. In other words the probability of a couple staying married increased by 25% when they are under more family pressure than when they are not.

The model also predicted that as attraction decreases by one unit the odds of a couple staying in marriage also decreases by almost 39 %. However, Peer pressure was found by the model to be a poor predictor of marital status.

Casewise Listings of Participants

In addition to the above observations, an inspection of cases for which the model predicted most poorly, that is, cases with standardised residuals (z) = +/- 2 or above, revealed that there were seven respondents, who were actually divorced but the model predicted them to be married and this is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Casewise list

Participants	Observed Marital Status	Predicted Marital Status
144	Divorced	Married
148	Divorced	Married
155	Divorced	Married
156	Divorced	Married
157	Divorced	Married
162	Divorced	Married
165	Divorced	Married

Table 5 shows the casewise listings of participants who were all divorced but the model predicted them to be married. These were participants' numbers 144, 148, 155, 156, 157, 162 and 165. This would suggest that there is one factor which appears to be more predictive of marital status than the others. To find that factor, let us take participants 156 and 165 as examples. Both rated family pressure, attraction and peer pressure almost the same. However, inspection of their ratings for social support differed significantly from each other. This would suggest that the factor that is more influential in predicting marital status is social support. This is supported by the results of the logistic regression in which social support was 4.3 times more to predict marital status.

Supplementary analysis

Normally in a logistic regression, categorical data are used as the Dependent variable whereas Interval data are normally used as the Independent variable. Because the study had marital status which was a categorical data as the Dependent variable it meant that data on premarital counselling, level of education and level of income which were categorical data could not be used in the logistic regression model and therefore were analysed as supplementary.

Pre marital Counselling and Marital Status

The study also investigated the relationship between premarital counselling and marital status by generating the hypothesis that premarital counselling will significantly relate to marital status. Table 6a is a 2X2 contingency table showing marital status and premarital counselling.

Table 6a: Marital status * Have you had premarital counselling before? Cross tabulation

		Have you had premarital counselling before?		
		Yes	No	Total
Marital status Married	Count	151	90	241
	Expected Count	142.2	98.8	241.0
	% within Marital status	62.7%	37.3%	100.0%
Divorced	Count	26	33	59
	Expected Count	34.8	24.2	59.0
	% within Marital status	44.1%	55.9%	100.0%

Table 6a shows that 62.7 % (151) of the married respondents had experienced premarital counselling while 37.3 % (90) had not. In the divorced respondents 44.1 % (26) had experienced premarital counselling whilst 55.9 (123) had not. The differences in the respondents' experiences of premarital counselling were tested for significance using the chi-square and the result is presented in Table 6b.

Table 6b: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	6.770[a]	1	.009	.012	.007	
Continuity Correction[b]	6.023	1	.014			
Likelihood Ratio	6.668	1	.010	.012	.007	
Fisher's Exact Test				.012	.007	
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.747[c]	1	.009	.012	.007	.004
N of Valid Cases	300					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 24.19.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

As Table 6b shows, the chi square test reveals there was a significant difference within the cells (chi-square=6.770, 4=1 Exact sq. =0.012). To find the cell responsible for the significant difference in chi-square the expected count in the cells of Table 6a were inspected. An inspection of Table 6a shows that the significant difference might be coming from the divorced cells. As can be seen in Table 6a, 26 of the divorced respondents have had pre

marital counselling but this should have been more (34.8). But 33 divorced participants did not have pre-marital counselling but should have been less (24.2). In other words, the significant difference in chi-square seems to suggest that there was a relationship between divorced and premarital counselling which suggests that the divorced respondents sought significantly less premarital counselling than their married counterparts.

Level of Education and Marital Status

The study also investigated the relationship between respondents' marital status and level of education and the results presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Chi-Square Tests, Marital Status by level of Education

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.785[a]	5	.733
Likelihood Ratio	3.012	5	.698
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.173	1	.279
N of Valid Cases	300		

Table 7 shows the results of the chi-square test of level of education. The Pearson Chi-square gave a P-value greater than 0.05 meaning there is no possible relationship between marital status and level of education.

Level of Income and Marital Status

The relationship between level of income and marital status was also investigated using chi-square test and the result is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests, Marital Status by Level of Income

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.350[a]	5	.096
Likelihood Ratio	9.739	5	.083
Linear-by-Linear Association	.014	1	.904
N of Valid Cases	300		

Table 8 shows there was no significant relationship between marital status and level of income because the Pearson Chi-square gave a P-value greater than 0.05.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Social support

The present findings have revealed that, social support that couples get, to a large extent, enhances the quality of their marriages. The logistic regression analysis revealed that social support was significantly related to marital status and that as social support increases, sustenance of marriages also increases even when you control for the effects of family pressure, attraction and peer pressure. This means that the findings suggest that social support has positive influence on marriages that were based on it despite the effects of family pressure, attraction and peer pressure. Therefore, social support is sustenance of marriage more than family pressure, attraction and peer pressure. These findings are consistent with Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) research that social support such as arranged marriages are

usually very stable because it is the duty of the network of family members and friends and association members to help the new couple to get established in life. They also found that couples need social support indirectly in a form of emotional support from family members, friends, members of associations, and even from the society at large during bereavement or when couples are hit by disasters such as a rainstorm or fire outbreak.

Again, the present findings are consistent with Githinji (2005) who also found that as relationship grows, money has power to break or strengthen the marriage relationship bond. Glick's (1976) research also shows that money can be a source of security or anxiety. This therefore means that financial support from the network of family members including parents; friends and association members as well as well-wishers to married couples indirectly serve as social support which goes a long way to bring about couple's financial security and thus make their marriages stable and peaceful.

In the light of the foregoing, it can be concluded that social support encompassing different types: emotional, esteem, informational, and tangible is a predictor for marital status of couples in the Sunyani Municipality.

Family Pressure and Marital Status

Secondly, Logistic regression analysis reveals that as family pressure increases, the odds of a marriage that was based on family pressure surviving decreases (not very good). This means that family pressure has negative influence on marriages that were based on it. In fact, the findings of the present study suggest that social support, attraction and peer pressure will have no effect on marriages breaking up. Interestingly, studies by Olson and DeFrain (2000), Fox (1980) and Stover and Hope (1983) contradict these findings. They reported that in the past, in most cultures, the parents of the bride and groom corroborated to select the future spouse and made most of the arrangements for the marriage. A promising economic future and good health among others generally informed their choices. The present findings also contradict that of Lee and Stone (1980). The result of their study explained that parents-arranged marriages based their decision on the principle that elders in the community have the wisdom and foresight to select the appropriate spouse on economic, political and social status considerations to enhance the family's status and positions.

Again, the present findings contradict an argument put forward by Chin and Chong (2006) that because parents are older and more experienced in life, they research the background of potential partners to ensure a successful marriage for their children. They make sure that partners they select match their children's characteristics, not blinded by infatuation, lust and romance that characterise youth marriages these days. Findings of the present study also did not support Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) claim that arranged marriages are usually stable. The present study has disproved all that.

In view of the above findings, Boakye's (2006) and Mikulincer and Shaver's (2003) studies have been credited. Boakye's argument is that in the present day, it is the child who should solely look for a spouse with parents consenting only. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) on their part found that although in times past it was the responsibility of parents to look for partners for their children, yet today many children prefer taking their destiny into their own hands. Could parents still influence their children's choices of partners? Children of today do not listen to advice anymore; they always like to do what seems good in their own eyes and this

could be one of the possible reasons why couples in the Sunyani Municipality did not allow themselves to be influenced in their choices of partners.

Attraction and Marital Status

Findings from the present study revealed that as attraction increases the odds of a marriage based on it surviving decreases. This means that attraction alone cannot keep a marriage going, other factors like social support, peer pressure, and family pressure are all important in the sustenance of marriage. In support of the present findings, Levinger's (1965) findings have established that economic survival and the production of legitimate children or offspring are major attractions of traditional marriage. Since all days are not equal and fortunes change, attraction that brought couples together may decrease if the fortunes of the senior partner in the marriage are no more. In the same way, if the desire for children was the main attraction that brought couples together, that attraction is likely to decrease when expectations for issues turn out to be a mirage. When these happen the marriage can break. This study also supports Olson's and DeFrain's (2000) and Smith's and Apicelli's (1982) research that some people purposely marry for wealth and or procreation and therefore whey they are not realised divorce could follow.

The present study supports Rice's (1999) findings that people are attracted positively to those who are pleasing to look at such as people with good builds and well proportioned bodies as well as a display of other physical characteristics. The most important element in attraction, in Rice's study, was physical attraction. This then presupposes that if overweight and or some menopausal challenges make some people (especially women spouses) lose personal charm, attraction is likely to decrease and this can lead to termination of marriage.

South's (1999) research findings point out that men especially place a higher value than women on physical attractiveness and youthfulness. This study then may suggest that some older men tend to chase younger women (i.e. teenage girls) at the annoyance of their legitimate older wives and this can lead to divorce. The teenage girls are more pleasing to look at because of their growing beauty. Conversely, South's findings also point out that women too look for men with wealth, fame, power, and high positions (i.e. for security). Perhaps this too may explain why some women abandon their husbands later in life who were once wealthy and famous in high positions.

The present study is also in consonance with Olson and DeFrain's (2000) findings that when people are physically attractive, others assume that they also have positive personal qualities such as sincerity, honesty, warmth, affection, empathy and fidelity. Later on, when these qualities are seen to be non-existent in a partner, attraction definitely will decrease and

Peer Pressure and Marital Status

The logistic regression analysis revealed that as peer pressure increases the odds of a marriage based on peer pressure surviving decreases (not very good). This suggests that attraction and social support can lead to divorce and family pressure will have no effect (on a marriage that is on the verge of collapse following peer pressure). Adjabeng (2002) found that when friends and neighbours of equal status or age group get married, the person who has not got married yet is persuaded by his friends' decisions and actions and then gets ready to marry too. But this risk to marry can be dangerous because marrying when one is not yet ready does not guarantee happy marriage.

Rice's (1999) study seems to suggest that some people rush into marriage because they feel left out when their friends are constantly announcing their engagements and getting married. To succumb to such peer pressure is certainly a negative attitude. But considering the fact that life is too short to delay marriage, and the fact that getting married early enables one to educate one's children well before retiring from employment, then peer pressure here should be taken as a wake-up call for eligible singles to be up and doing.

Sasse's (1997) findings noted that peer pressure can be challenging, extremely strong and compelling to the adolescent. His findings further revealed that because adolescents have not yet formed a strong personal identity, they are often not sure exactly what they are worth. This uncertainty often results in a lack of inner strength to resist if friends pressurise them to follow certain negative behaviours. But the present findings are contradictory to Sasse's. To conclude, it can be said that the model is a good predictor of marital status.

Relationships between Marital Status and Level of Education, Premarital Counselling and Level of Income

In the present study it has been demonstrated that family pressure, attraction and peer pressure significantly bring people (couples) together. And while social support and pre marital counselling significantly and abundantly help to sustain marriages, education, and levels of average income or finances or money (for short) do not in any way have impact on the sustenance of the marriages in the Sunyani area in the Brong Ahafo region. The data obtained showed that there was no relationship between marital status and level of income. This finding contradicts findings by Raschke (1987) which believed that socioeconomic status is probably the most important correlate of divorce, because over all, the higher the socioeconomic the less likelihood divorce. Similarly research by Githinji (2005) also found that as relationship grows, the issue of money has the ability to make or break the relationship bond. Money is best known as means to survival; however, its influence in relationships can reach into other areas, some of which may have nothing to do with survival. To him money is intrinsically neutral, but it can mean so much. It can be a source of security or anxiety. It can be an opportunity for power or a reminder of impotence. It can be used to improve lives or destroy them. It can lead to greater freedom or serve as a yoke around our necks. Even though money is a strong factor in life, it does not control the way couples in the Sunyani Municipality run their life.

On the other hand, the present study showed that marital status could be influenced by premarital counselling. This confirms other research by Rice (1999) which found that adequate preparation for marriage ensures marital success. Duncan, Box and Silliman (1996) agreed that marriage preparation programmes are effective but they are under attended (i.e. not enough). To Olson and Defrain (2000) marital preparation is therefore to be seen as essential to making the new marriage work. Too often couples are so concentrated on the wedding day that little, if any, thought is given to what they want for their marriage. During the counselling sessions couples learn important problem solving skills, discuss expectations, learn about their strengths and areas for growth, and they learn about how their families of origin will potentially influence their marriage. This helps them to be tolerant and be ready for all situations. The more couples attend premarital courses the less divorce becomes contemplative.

Rice's (1999) argument that the three formal ways of preparing for marriage is crucial for successful marriages is food for thought. These formal ways include premarital education,

premarital assessment and premarital counselling. Commenting on Rice's (1999) recommendations above, Mace (1987) explains that premarital education should include an academic course in marriage and family living at the college level. This, in the researcher's view, is a step in the right direction because getting the right orientation for any human endeavour provides the right insight into anything that one wants to do which ensures success at the end. For example, just as a medical officer or a nurse or a teacher (just to mention a few) all need training to ensure efficiency, good performance, commitment, and satisfaction which eventually lead to success, in the same way, adequate marriage education in the form of short courses involving lectures, audiovisuals, discussions, role playing etc will certainly expose couples to proper marital stability.

Hohman, Larson and Harmer's (1994) argument that premarital assessment or an evaluation of the extent to which the couple is fit and ready for marriage is a necessary prerequisite for successful marriages for the researcher, need not be overemphasized. They cite a common form of assessment as health assessment involving physical examination and blood tests for sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, HIV/AIDS and gonorrhoea; these tests are meant to ensure health safety and the avoidance or prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, according to them it is appropriate that couples take a critical look at some of the problem areas in marriage such as relationships with friends, family, in-laws, religion, values, recreation, finances, children and their upbringing, sex and affection. This is important because it is important to resolve differences in these areas before marriage to forestall a stalemate after their coming together when it will be too late for them to agree to disagree.

Also, a third goal according to Holman, Larson and Harmer (1994) is to help the couple feel comfortable in seeking professional help in the future for marital or family problems. To the researchers, this is very important because from the researcher's observations in the Ghanaian context, seeing professional assistance by couples is not common. It is an entirely new phenomenon. Usually in trouble or otherwise, couples either keep their problems to themselves until they mess up after being swallowed up by the problems or they seek help from in-laws and friends who most often take sides and consequently succeed in ruining couples' marriages.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The logistic regression analysis revealed that social support was significantly related to marital status and that as social support increases, sustenance of marriages also increases even when the effects of family pressure, attraction and peer pressure are controlled for. The findings therefore suggest that social support has positive influence on marriages that were based on it despite the effects of family pressure, attraction and peer pressure.

The findings further showed from the logistic regression analysis that family pressure has negative influence in marriages that were based on it. The findings suggest that even social support, attraction and peer pressure will have no effect on such marriages breaking up. The findings from the present study again revealed that as attraction increases the odds of a marriage based on it surviving decreases. This means that attraction alone cannot keep a marriage intact; other factors like social support, family pressure and peer pressure are all important for the sustenance of marriages. The findings also revealed that as peer increases the odds of a marriage based on peer pressure surviving decreases, suggesting that attraction,

social support and family pressure will have no effect o n a marriage that is on the verge of collapse following peer pressure. It has a powerful, negative effect on marriages.

Using chi-square analysis, it was revealed that level of income and level of education did not have any impact on respondents' marital status. This is clearly shown in Table 7 and 8, however, it was clearly established that premarital counselling has a great deal of positive influence on marriages in that the more respondents attended premarital counselling the less divorce became possible.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

More importantly, the findings of the study have serious implications for guidance and counselling personnel. The services of the clergy, Immams, experienced men and women in society and government-trained professional guidance and counselling coordinators are very much needed in the area of Premarital Counselling (clinics & workshops).

In senior high schools, all institutions of higher learning such as colleges, training institutes and tertiary institutions, it will be beneficial if students are encouraged to take a course in marriage relationship skill-based education. As youth, they would be exposed to good models of behaviour and may also have the opportunity to learn skills and attitudes that will facilitate successful functioning within their married role in the future. This innovation calls for Marriage Enrichment Programme (M. E. P).

Marriage Enrichment Programmes are activities that expose couples to skill-building techniques that focus on problem solving (conflict resolution), couple education, assessment and counselling, and divorce prevention. It is important to emphasise that as the couples in marriage pass through various stages in life, growth approach becomes particularly necessary. For this reason, topics like entry to parenthood, the responsibilities of caring for young children, freedom from work (if couples are gainfully employed in government work) are significant issues that affect marriage that should be discussed. Also, enriching the quality of the marriage is important. As a matter of fact, education for marriage should not be a one-time situation. It must continue throughout the lifetime of the couple. Also, marriage is not for everyone. Family members and friends should recognise this fact and desist from pressurising anyone who has chosen the simple life into getting married.

In churches and mosques, the clergy and Immams should encourage engaged couples to spend between six months and one year in premarital counselling before they marry. They should not marry until they have established a meaningful relationship and have resolved major difficulties. They should be encouraged to relate openly and honestly rather than play traditional dating or mating games. In the community, seasoned men and women counsellors (traditional counsellors) should be encouraged to revisit "bragoro" popularly known as Traditional Puberty Rites Ceremony. In the olden days (in Ghana) when females came of age, puberty rites were performed for them before they were permitted to marry. Sometimes a month or two were set aside for this ceremony. Experienced married women were engaged in preparing the young girls. During this period, they taught the young adults what to expect and what to do during marriage. These include companionship, commitment, communication, house-keeping, financial management, among others. These in fact, contributed in no small way to make marriages stable. The researcher is of the view that "bragoro" should be revisited because even though the present study has shown that premarital counselling is

good, this puberty rites ceremony can further strengthen marriages and make them more stable.

The government too could help by making sure that couples apply for marriage ordinance licence or certificate and should be given a hand book prepared by the courts specifying their legal rights and responsibilities as married partners to each other and to their children, both during marriage and in the event of marriage dissolution. Finally, since building a strong network of extended family, friends, and professional assistance is a good thing that strengthens married relationships, the citizenry should be encouraged to go to the clergy, Immams, experienced married men and women in society as well as professional counsellors for help when needed.

LIMITATION

Convenience sampling is sample bias because the sample is not truly representative of the population. Convenience sampling therefore becomes a big disadvantage because it creates problems and also lends itself to criticisms. One of such criticisms is its limitation in generalising its findings to cover the entire population. However, in spite of these limitations, the validity of the research findings and conclusions has not been compromised.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the study that for married and divorced men and women in the Sunyani Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region, social support, family pressure, attraction and peer pressure are contributory factors to their marriages. The results of logistic regression analysis suggest that although one factor alone cannot sustain a marriage, social support stands out as the most influential factor that sustains marriages in the Sunyani area. In the logistic regression analysis, social support stood out as the best predictor (i.e. the factor that is more influential in predicting marital status). This is supported by the results of the logistic regression in which social support was 4.3 times more to predict marital status. The supplementary chi-square test that was conducted also revealed that premarital counselling was another factor that helps to sustain marriages as against level of education and level of income that are not.

The findings from the present study amply demonstrate the usefulness of using multivariate designs in the study of an area as complex as sustenance of marriages. Although one study alone cannot capture all the factors that bring about marital harmony, the findings from the present study give us one of the models upon which interventions designed to help sustain marriages can be based.

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