

# Dynamics That Exist in the Understanding and Reasons for the Performance of Parallel Marriage Ceremonies

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## Abstract

This research sought to explore the understanding and reasons for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies in Winneba in the Efutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. A qualitative approach was used to provide a successful conduct of the research given the complexity of the phenomenon under study. The research design used for the study was case study. The targeted population for the study were married people who performed parallel marriage ceremonies, adults who have reached their marital age but are not married, parents, opinion leaders (pastors) and marriage counsellors. In all fifteen individuals were chosen as the target population for the study. This consist of five (5) married individuals who performed parallel marriage ceremonies, four (4) unmarried individuals who have reached their marital but are not married, two (2) opinion leaders, two (2) parents and two (2) marriage counsellors. The convenience sampling technique was used to select the elements such as married individuals who performed parallel marriages ceremonies, adult who have reached their marital age but are not married, parents and opinion leaders (pastors). Also, critical case sampling technique was used to sample the marriage counselors involved in the research work. A semi-structured interview guide was used for data collection. The items in the interview guide were structured from the various themes under the literature review which have a direct link with the research questions. Participants had some level of understanding of the concept parallel marriage ceremonies, just that most of them referred to the customary marriage as “the engagement.” In addition, most of the participants were not in the known of the Marriages Act 1884-1985 CAP. 127. Although most of the married participants claimed to have married or registered their marriage under that Act, they could not tell the detailed demands of the Act. Furthermore, the participants did not know the dynamics that exist in the performance of church marriage (church blessing and solemnisation of holy matrimony) and the issuance of marriage registration certificates. The performance of parallel marriage ceremonies is perceived by many as a way of ensuring faithfulness in marriage. Also, many have taken the performance of the parallel marriage ceremonies as a means of acquiring security and legitimacy for themselves and the children born in the union. Based on the conclusions it is therefore recommended that the concept of marriage contraction and the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 should be added to the senior high school curriculum to help educate the youth about the dynamics in the marriage contraction and registration process. Also, marriage counsellors should help would-be couple clear their doubt on the customary marriage ceremony as being engagement. In addition, the church and the media houses should educate the citizenry on the existing laws that protect the interest of the couple and their children even when one of them or the both are no more, example is the PNDCL 111.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The survival of society depends on the process of biological reproduction (Cabej, 2019). In fact, population is the foundation of all social structures. This is largely facilitated by the institution called marriage. To Nukunya (2003), marriage is the recognized institution for the establishment and maintenance of family life all over the world. Marriage is a fundamental element of a society and a source of life for the family, as well as a means for society to spread and maintain itself (Ankrah, 2017; Naz et al., 2011). Also, marriage is one of the universal social institutions established to control and regulate the life of mankind (Sheikh, Rehman & Naz, 2013). The authors further emphasized that aside the other reasons that influences people into marriage, the institution is biological based for family formation. This has been the greatest wish of most young adults (men and women) who have reached puberty.

Also, marriage is regarded as any union in which the couple has gone through all the procedures recognized in the society for the purpose of sexual intercourse, raising of a family or companionship (Nukunya, 2003). In the cultural setting of our society marriage union is only recognized when the two individuals (a man and a woman) have successfully gone through all the rules or customs sanctioned by the society (Nukunya, 2003). According to the Report of the 78th General Convention of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage (p. 45), the

societal and cultural understandings of marriage have penetrated and shaped the understandings of marriage and its contraction in a lot of situations (Episcopal Church, 2015). The uniqueness of this institution has demanded for many legalities in the process of contracting it.

Marriages in African nations were severely touched and molded by the west's colonialism of Africa, and hence exist as an institution distorted by western beliefs and concepts. (Omotoso, 1998). Furthermore, globalisation, modernisation, Europeanism, and notably foreign religion have added some dynamics to how Africans celebrate or contract marriages, particularly among Ghanaian Christians (Ritzer, 2011). Consequently, influencing the change in the laws guiding marriage and the different cultural believes funneling marriages over time. One inherent difference in the traditional ways of marriage in Africa (Ajiboye et al., 2012).

At marriage, every African Christian couple, especially in mission-founded churches, is confronted with three 'worlds' - the world of the traditional culture to which most parents of marrying-age children belong; the world of the civil or legal system under which the couple, like other citizens, live; and the world of the predominantly westernized culture that prevails in the church (Ibeka, 2009; Ngundu, 2011). The non-recognition of customary marriages has sometimes led to the regarding of wives and children of customary marriage as illegitimate and not accorded the same status as wives and children from civil marriage in terms of succession (Herbst & Plessis, 2008). According to Hastongs (1975),

*"This perplexing situation has confronted many African Christian couple in the wake of church marriage rules and discipline. Lack of recognition of customary marriage by the mission churches for church and government purposes has resulted in numerous Christian dilemmas over marriage. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that at marriage, African Christian couples end up with a particular sense of being torn at the three corners of a triangle: the claims of African tradition, the claims of a new-found faith, Christianity, and the claims of the State" (p.45).*

The would-be couple at marriage has the family (which is considered to very instrumental is the marital process), the church (which has been as the new family of the Christian) and the State which according to Crawford (2013) has become the third party in the marriage contraction process to satisfy. All of these, as well as others factors have prompted the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies by would-be couples in our societies these days.

The issue is there are compelling moral and legal reasons to affirm and recognize the cultures and knowledge systems of peoples who were previously colonized, particularly African customary law, which is widely regarded as the bedrock of African culture and values (Coleman, 2020). With the advent of modernisation, globalisation and Europeanism, many Africans and for that matter Ghanaians still cherish these customary laws. It is these customary laws that has been used in manning most of the institutions in our societies. For instance, the marriage institution and the chieftaincy institution (1992 Constitution of Ghana). It is out of the customary laws most society sets out rules or procedures for contracting marriage which is the bedrock of every society. Bogy (2014) asserted that customary marriage rite until recently, was a complete marriage ceremony after which a man and woman were recognized as husband and wife.

The debate on which one of these practices (customary or church/civil marriage) is acceptable and recognize by law is on-going. There has been report on some of these confusions and the question pose has been - Are traditional and or customary marriage, and white wedding the same? The question is "Which of the two sanctioned marriages (that's customary and church/ordinance marriage) is acceptable?" These are contemporary issues that need to be addressed for normalcy to prevail in our society. Are these as a result of the acquisition of western education and or from the Christendom? Obudho (1985), argues that the church does not recognize the customary marriage as a complete ceremony. This has led to the church indirectly forcing new convents to follow Christian system of marriage and discard the customary marriage ceremonies which they see as unclean (Obudho, 1985).

Upon reading about this topic, it has been agreed with Smith (1997), who asserted that the modern-day family sociologists concentrate more on marriages than the marriage ceremony. Although, it has been realized that many have written on marriage ceremonies (Obudho, 1985; Onyima, 2003; Mensah, 2013). However, to the best of our knowledge there is not enough literature on the parallel marriage ceremonies. This research seeks to fill the gap in literature concerning the parallel marriage ceremonies. This has influence in doing exploratory study on parallel marriage ceremonies in Winneba in the Efutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

The following are the objectives which guided the study: (1) explore the understanding of people on parallel marriage ceremonies; and (2) examine the reasons for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies. This research was delimited in content to the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies. Also, it was delimited in setting to Winneba in the Efutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. In addition, it was delimited to the Akan and the Christian community only. This work focused on the views of Christian marriage as religious institution.

## **2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of the issue can be understood best if it is looked at from a theoretical point of view. Although there are many theories that can be used in looking at the issue under consideration, but the discussion would be best understood when a sociological theory is used. The structural functionalism theory was considered.

### **2.1 Structural Functionalism Theory**

The structural functionalism theory which is also known as functionalism sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism is a brain child of Hebert Spencer (1820-1903), who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, in the same vein various parts of society work together to keep the society functioning (Spencer, 1898).

The parts of society that Spencer referred to as the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy. According to Spencer (1891) the State's responsibility is to protect the citizens and also punish evil doers. The society in its corporate capacity must exercise a rigorous control over its individual members, to the extent needful for preventing trespasses one upon another (Offer, 2019). This makes the institutions develop means to address the changing trends in the society. Although Comte and Spencer shared some differences in the way the term "social organism" was used, according to Park (1921) society exists for the benefit of its members, not its members for the benefit of society. The institutions in the society function for the benefit of the members of the society.

Institutions are orderly sets of relationships whose function is to maintain the society as a system (Goldschmidt, 1996). Durkheim's concern with the question of how certain societies maintain internal stability and survive over time made him to applied Spencer's theory to explain how societies change and survive over time. According to Durkheim, the society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim 1893, cited in Merton, 1994). According to Durkheim (1893) cited in Merton (1994) and Mauss (1924) cited in Mallard (2011), the society is held together through the sharing of values, language and common symbols of which marriage is one.

The argument above makes it clear that the society is managed through the set institutions within it. The institutions are there to govern the activities of the individuals in the society. These institutions are there to bring about equilibrium or balance in the system. The availability of the social, religious and civic structures is to help bring balance in the society. In recent times, marriage would contemporarily be considered a social, cultural, religious and even a legal institution. This means that for marriage to be valid it has to meet the modalities set by the social, religious and or the civil laws in the society. That is why the functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer and Comte, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole (Urry, 2000).

#### **2.1.1 Relevance of the theory**

The society though seen as a unite comprises of different parts. According to Park (1921) the society is composed of parts that have the power of independent locomotion. The society has been seen to be with parts for over centuries now. According to Simon (1960), the idea of society as an organism is centuries old. The institutions in the society operates separately but are interrelated to make society function effectively. This theory is still relevant because society is continuously becoming complex and for that matter needs the effective functioning of its institutions. The institutions are to work for the benefits of the members of the society and because society has not ceased to exist so is the organs or institutions in it. Just that some are changing as years go by.

#### **2.1.2 Application of the theory**

Marriage is seen as a social institution which needs societal structure for its effective administration (Gallagher, 2002). Also, marriage to Gallagher (2002) is a social institution based on public legal act and not just on private romantic vibe or one's religious rites. This means that the society is very key in marriage matters. This makes the structural functionalist theory to be applicable to the study of marriage in general. This is because marriage cut cross many institutions in the society and also affects many other institutions. For this reason, marriage ceremonies cannot be studied without a reasonable theory. In relation to the parallel marriage ceremonies, there are a lot of agents or actors who play important role in the marriage contraction process. This has informed the use of the structural functionalist theory to underpin this study. To help understand how the society, the church, family and others influence the marriage contraction processes, the conceptual review was done under the following themes; concept of marriage and parallel marriage ceremonies, and the reasons for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies.

## 2.2 The Concept of Marriage

How people understand marriage have great influence on how they decide to celebrate it. The universality of marriage should have influence how one generally accepted definition can be used for it. This assumption has never been the case, thereby making a universally accepted institution like marriage difficult to be defined (Nukunya, 2003). The definition of marriage can be looked at from different angles. Thus, the socio-cultural view point, the religious (Christianity) and the civil or the State's point of view. Looking at the definition of marriage from these view-points make it clear that although marriage is considered universal, not all definitions can meet the socio-cultural, religious and the national constitutions of all societies or culture (Sheikh et al., 2013). The concept of marriage is looked at from three perspectives. Namely; Customary (socio-cultural) concept of marriage, the Christian and the Civil concepts of marriage.

### 2.2.1 Customary concept of marriage

In considering the socio-cultural concept of marriage, its dynamics is also looked at in this section. For example, monogamy and polygamy. The definition and understanding of customary marriage are dependent on the customary laws of a given society. In Ghana, every community or tribe has its own customary laws that are used in governing their activities of which marriage is key (Nukunya, 2003).

Marriage is seen as a social institution which needs societal structure for its effective administration (Gallagher, 2002). Also, marriage to Gallagher (2002) is a social institution grounded on public legal act and not just based on private romantic vibe or one's religious ceremonies. This indicates that the society is very important in marriage matters. Nukunya (2003), asserted that marriage is any union in which the couple has gone through all the procedures recognized in the society for the purposes of sexual intercourse, raising of a family, or companionship. According to Johnson (1960) marriage is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted without loss of standing in the community and to have children. The definition of marriage by Nukunya and Johnson suggest that marriage is socially constructed in line with the customary laws of the society. Johnson and Nukunya's definitions of marriage fit well in the customs of many Ghanaian society.

Onyima (2003) looked at marriage as a socially approved sexual and economic union between a man and a woman which is presumed, both by the couple and by others, to be more or less permanent, and which subsumes reciprocal rights and obligations between spouses, and between spouses and their future children. In addition, marriage according to Encyclopedia Britannica (2020) is seen as a legally and socially sanctioned union, usually between a man and a woman, that is regulated by laws and rules, customs, beliefs and attitudes. The above definitions of marriage make it clear how the society and various cultures see and cherish the marriage institution. To all these authorities, marriage is socially constructed.

In addition, Westermarck (1981) asserted that, marriage is a durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring. Although, Westermarck did not say emphatically clear in his definition the involvement of the society in the marriage process, the key words he used (durable connection, male and female, beyond the mere act of propagation) in the definition makes the definition socio-culturally fit in the Ghanaian context of marriage. In addition to the above discussion, Kuenyehia and Ofei-Aboagye as cited in the work of Fenrich and Higgins (2001), marriage under customary law confers certain asymmetrical rights and obligations to the husband and wife. First, the husband gains complete and exclusive sexual rights to his wife.

In the Western societies like Rome, Greece and others marriage is seen as a means of providing legitimacy for children (Harrington, 2016; Jarnkvist, 2019). A definition by Zeligman and a committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland cited in the work of Tambiah (1966) says that marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognized legitimate offspring of both parents. This particular definition has made authorities asked questions about marriage being used to determine the legitimacy of the children born in the marriage by the wife (Nukunya, 2003; Leach, 1971). Are all children born in marriage legitimate children of the couple? Also, Max Weber defined marriage as a "stable sexual relationship" allowed and legitimized by the larger kin group and used to determine rules about property rights for children (Collins, 1986). To these authors, marriage is the means by which the society can be preserved through procreation. The above authorities have also asserted that marriage is socially constructed. Hence it needs to be contracted to meet the requirements of the society that oversees it (Ngundu, 2011). That is why Gallagher (2002) asserted that every society has some form of marriage.

## 2.3 Parallel Marriage Ceremonies

Celebration of marriage is a ritual in every given society (Panda, 2018). This has led to the society having means of ensuring that marriage is celebrated in line with the societal procedures (Nukunya, 2003). In Ghana, the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 has made provision for the celebration and registration of three kinds of marriages. Although to Crawford (2013), the three kinds of marriage are mutually exclusive, almost all would-be couples especially those in Christian religion celebrate more than one marriage ceremonies most at times. This is what has been termed as "*parallel marriage ceremonies*."



According to the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD, 2007) Syllabus for Junior High School Social Studies, parallel culture is when two culturally different ways of doing the same things is adopted while only one way could suffice. From this analogy, the term "*Parallel Marriage Ceremony*" can be referred to as a situation in which more than one marriage ceremony is performed, usually by Christian would-be couples, whereas any of the ceremonies suffice to pronounce the couple married. This practice is seen often in our societies because of the shape the marriage institution has now taken. The marriage institution according to Nukunya (2003) use to have only the family as a third party when it comes to its contraction, but now the emergence of the church and the State as the third party in addition to the family has contributed to the would-be couple having many group interests to satisfy in the marriage contraction processes. Under this topic, subtopics that have been considered are; brief history of marriage contraction and the components of parallel marriages ceremonies.

### **2.3.1 Brief history of marriage contraction**

The debate on the history of marriage contraction seems to be distorted because most tribes did not record the instances that led to the organisation of their marriages. Who owns marriage? Is it the *Family*, the *Church* or the *State*? According to Everitt (2012), both the Church and the State have played important roles at different times in the carving of the history of marriage as an institution. This session of the work looked at the brief history of marriage contraction from two themes;

- Alliances
- Consent

#### **2.3.1.1 Alliance**

Marriage to some connoisseurs is a means of social alignment. Where people strategically align themselves to particular class or category in the society. According to Everitt (2012) marriage is a well calculated tool use to establish diplomatic and trade ties in the years past. Grimes (2000) also alluded to this same fact. According to Twene (2019), marriage in Ghanaian custom is considered to be contracted between two families and not only the two individuals. In almost all the ethnic groups of Ghana, marriage is seen as not only a union between the man and the woman but it also creates a permanent relationship between the families of the couple (Obudho, 1985; Agyekum, 2012). Also, Omobola (2013, p. 139) asserted that "in Yoruba culture, marriage is not the sole responsibility of the couple but that of the communities because it is the joining of two or more families." This shows a clear indication of resemblance of marriage contraction as an identity in the African setting.

In the words of Twene (2019), the couple in African marriage are not obliged only themselves but to the extent the contractual parties being the families. This culture practices according to Woods (2021) has encouraged many parents in the times past and even now to give their wards in marriage to people and family they think are worthy, wealthy and are well connected in the society (Everitt, 2012; Grover, 2009). The reason being that it is not only the child that will benefit from the alliance (marriage) but the family at large.

According to Dankwa and Eshun (2019), love becomes the initial requirement one has to meet when it comes to selection of partners in contemporary Africa. They asserted that the entities making the choice do not take the interest of the family into consideration. In as much as marriage is used to build networks between families, which implies the family becomes key in mate selection, the love of the would-be couples is seen as very paramount. Wimalasena (2016) also asserted that by marriage especially in Ghanaian societies, the relationship of the couple to their families change.

Wimalasena (2016) asserts that, new social relations are created, not only between the husband and the wife, and between the husband and the wife's relatives on the one side and between the wife and the husband's relatives on the other, but also in a many great societies, between the relatives of the husband and that of the wife, who are on the two sides. To support this, Apalowo (2014) argued that marriage is a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, their children, and their in-laws. This assertion also sees marriage to be beyond the man and the woman in the marriage, rather it is a relationship between families.

To Dankwa and Eshun (2019), each family owes each other some kind of responsibilities. In some Ghanaian cultures in case any of the parents or close relation of the couple dies, the success of the funeral organisation becomes the responsibility of the whole family. That is why you usually hear them say in Fanti "Ye rek) ye nsew eyi" literally meaning we are going for our-in-law's funeral. This means that marriage is not only between spouses but a family affair (Clifford, 1922). This belief makes many parents and or families in the times past to get much interest in the kind of family or home their children marry from.

Also, when a family does not wish to lose its property, a marriage arrangement is made for the family's young people, which is commonly referred to as cousin marriage (Clifford, 1922). Although cousin marriage in some Ghanaian societies is accepted the rules of exogamy is keenly taken into consideration (Nukunya, 2003). This is normally seen in matrilineal system of inheritance but also practiced in the Islamic communities in the Northern Regions of Ghana (Nukunya, 2003). It is normally done to aid in the preservation of the family's assets. Although there is alliance in marriage, modernity has prompted a progressive change in the way we go about

things in our societies these days, particularly in respect to mate selection and the marital process in general (Ritzer, 2011). But the church and the family still show interest in who their members go into marriage relations with (Dankwa & Eshun, 2019).

### **2.3.1.2 Consent**

Consenting to a marriage used to be primarily the responsibility of the will-be couple's parents or family. Hareven (1991) claimed that the family is extremely important and is intertwined with all other social institutions in our society, including marriage. Hareven (1991) asserted that the family is very key and for that matter is connected to all the other social institutions in our society of which marriage is one. The marriage process starts from a point of deciding on the mate to select. In most cases the would-be couples were excluded from the mate selection procedures (Adinkrah, 2011).

Arranged marriages are considered as centred on the parents (Grover, 2009). According to Ahmadi (2017) most parents betroth their girl-child to marriage before they even grow up to marriageable age to legally get married. This practice does not give the girl that right to decide for herself the kind of man, family or class she would like to marry from. According to Bowan (2013), human right advocacy groups are still fighting against some of these rights violations in our societies. Through modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation, aspects of marriage decisions have penetrated into Ghanaian culture, especially when it comes to mate selection (Manuh, 1997; cited in Addia et al, 2015). This is as a result of the *gemeinschaft gesellschaft* shift phenomenon. These are German words that signify community and society respectively. Introduced in classical social theory, they are used as interplay to discuss the different kinds of social ties that exist in small, rural, traditional societies versus large-scale, modern, industrial ones. This societal interplay influenced and continue to influence the institution marriage in our Ghanaian society.

Guttmann (2012) is of the view that, these days parents who even tried to choose partners for their children seek the consent of the children. In all this, children who sent their own chosen partners home in most cases have to wait for the approval of the partner by their parents and or families before the marriage process can commence (Nukunya, 2003; Addia et al., 2015). In the situation where one family disapproves the marriage, it processes are held until all doubts are cleared (Nukunya, 2003).

This is evident in how the ceremony is carried out. One of the means through which a family may be considered to have consented to a marriage is through the acceptance of the gifts that the man (husband to be) will present to the woman's parents and or family (Rattray, 1929; Sarbah, 1968). This gift has many names in our Ghanaian culture. For instance, "tsir nsa" in Fanti literally means (Head Drink), the Ashanti called it "Aseda" meaning (Thanksgiving), etc. According to Addia et al. (2015), the family has always been key in refereeing the marital process. A sentence in the section C of the Methodist liturgy and book of worship for the Methodist Church, Ghana under the sub-theme "order for the Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony" asserts that the parents and the family are key in the marriage process. "Who gives this Woman to be married to this man? The father of the woman or his representative shall answer" (Methodist Church, Ghana, 2014, p. 181).

This particular demand of the ceremony accepts that the parents and or the family cannot be sidelined in the marriage process (Tembo & Keeler, 2013). The children who do not go through the customary rites to get married are mostly considered to be disobedient to parents and or family. These are some of the reasons why (Nukunya, 2003) considers marriage as a family affair.

### **2.3.2 Components of parallel marriage ceremony**

Parallel marriage ceremony has now been the order of the day. This practice though considered by many as a unit ceremony in the marriage process, parallel marriage ceremony can be looked or considered to have many components. Parallel marriage ceremony basically consists of the three components. Namely; customary marriage, ordinance marriage and church marriage.

#### **2.3.2.1 Customary marriage ceremony**

Customary marriage is usually celebrated based on the customary laws of a given tribe or society. This makes customary marriage ceremony exceptional from each other tribe or society. This is because in Article 11(3) of the 1992 Constitution, the customary laws of Ghana are considered to be the rules which by custom are applicable to particular communities. The customary laws are traditionally observed among the indigens of the society. In South African law, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 (RCMA) cited in Moore (2015) documented that customary marriage is a marriage in accordance with customary law. Nukunya (2003) asserted that the Akans demands in customary marriage ceremony is quite different from that of the Ewes, the Ga Adengbes and vice versa.

The Akans like any other tribe has a special way of handling their marital processes. According to Griffiths (1997), cited in Moore (2015) stated that the process can take a number of month or to some extent years depending on the relationship that exist between the families involved. Through the socialisation process, members of the clan or the society are even made to know of the clans they can marry from (Rattray, 1929; Wimalasena, 2016). This and others in times past influenced mate selection process which was mainly done by parents. Dankwa and Eshun (2019) assert that mate selection exercise has been influenced by western education

and Christianity. This has reduced the key role parents play in the mate selection process for their children. In the olden days, the customary marriage rite starts from infant betrothal which is gradually phasing out in our Ghanaian setting. Under this heading, topics like marriage list and validity of customary marriage have been discussed.

**Marriage List:** The marriage list in Akan customary marriage rite has no specific date of its inception but most of the items included in the list like the *'Tsir nsa'* meaning *'head drink'* has been there since. The preparation of the marriage list is influenced by a lot of factors that is: the tribe and the class of the parents and or family, the status of the woman, the trade of the woman, etc. (Nukunya, 2003). Also, according to Siwan (2007) there are a lot of factors that influences the wealth of the bride price, the grooms and his family are made to pay.

The items on the list are grouped in many cases under three themes; parents and siblings, family and witnesses and the woman (Manoukia, 1950). These are the items given to the parents and siblings, the family and the witnesses who come to grace the occasion as well as bride herself. Some of the key items that are generally listed in the Akan's marriage list include father's cloth, money and sandals, mother's cloth, money and scarf "duku", brother(s)-in-laws money "akontan sekan", family money, witness money, and "tsir nsa".

The marriage list has now become integral part of the marriage ceremony. The bride-price is a very important element on the marriage list in the customary marriage ceremony. According to Mubaiwa (2019), the purpose for the payment of pride price is to ensure the stability of a marriage. According to them the bride price is the seal of a marriage. This argument by Mubaiwa (2019) confirms that the young would-be couple who knows and respect for traditional customs is made to satisfy the family in addition to the other institutions of the marriage process.

**Validity of customary marriage:** Article 11(3) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana accepts the customary laws in our traditional set ups. This means that marriage contracted under the supervision of the customary laws of the societies in Ghana cannot be under mind. According to Kamanabi (1983) and Mawere and Mawere (2010) until one completes the traditional ceremony the marriage is not considered to be valid. In other jurisdiction, the validity of a customary marriage comes only after the bride price has been paid although the payment may differ from society to society (Slos, 1983; Nukunya, 2003).

These payments according to Rattray (1929) and Nukunya (2003) are dependent on the status of the woman, whether she is a princess, commoner or a slave. To some tribes, the payment of the bride-price is a form of compensation paid to the parents of the bride for all they have done for their daughter before marriage. In addition, the purpose for the payment of pride price is to ensure the stability of a marriage. This clearer shows that, the payment of the bride price is the seal of a marriage.

Finally, the State also through the Marriages Act, 1884-1985 CAP. 127 accepts customary marriage and has stated the measures under which it can be registered. This simply means that any customary marriage that has gone through all the socially recognized procedures for marriage is considered valid (Nukunya, 2003). Before the customary marriage laws were amended in 1991, PNDCL 263 of 1991, the Marriages Act has a session that made even the registration of customary marriage mandatory and that the failure of couple to register their customary marriage within a said period after marriage was an offence.

### 2.3.3 Christian marriage ceremony

The church has means of celebrating marriage to fit their doctrines and teachings. Christian marriage is a complicated topic that has been debated throughout African mission's history (Falen, 2008). The church wedding ceremonies has been seen as one of the complex transitions into marriage that the would-be couples have to go through (Erlank, 2014). Although the Christian concept of marriage has been influenced by the advent of modernity, education and industrialisation, the Christendom still hold on the basic element of Christian marriage which is monogamy.

According to Chireshe and Chireshe (2011), the monogamous nature of Christian marriage has made many young would-be couple especially the women to prefer bringing their marriages under the Christian marriage laws (Lewis et al., 2011). For instance, the practice of fidelity (Methodist Church, Ghana, 2004). The Christian community has ways of contracting their marriage in accordance with their beliefs and doctrinal practices. This has influenced the difference in the way some churches celebrate or go about their marriage ceremonies as means of accepting the marriage of their members. This session of the work looked into the dynamics in the Christian marriage ceremonies.

### 2.3.4 Civil marriage ceremony

To bring uniformity into marriage and it related issues, the State has taken the centre stage to help avert all the issues that are in relation to marriage contraction. According to Crawford (2013) traditionally, in the times past the extended family was seen or recognized as the third party to Ghanaian (Akan) marriages. According to him, now the State is considered to be the third party to all marriages contracted in Ghana. This means that the State has assumed an important position on the issues concerning marriage and its contraction. The State now being the third party has to be involved in the marriage contraction process directly or indirectly. This is because the State through the law courts has the power to adjudicate marital cases based on existing laws. Also, when the

family is not able to stand in for the couple in case of demise or mishandling of any of the couple and the children in the union, the State assumes the position of the family to help such individuals. According to Graphic Online (2020), individuals can register their marriages in court without the consent of their parents especially when the parents are not in agreement of the union. With this example, the State has become a key agent in the marital process of her citizens.

The Register General's Department (RGD) is the institution mandated by law to register marriages in Ghana. The law that established the Registrar General's Department is CAP. 127 and has been in force since the colonial period. According to Graphic Online (2019), this was due to the introduction of Christianity into Africa, specifically, Ghana. It was created to get around the customary demands of that time. This is because people who had converted to Christianity found it difficult to marry from traditional religions and cultural families. So, the marriage ordinance was passed to get around the demands of the customs (Graphic Online, 2020). According to GSS, Ghana's Marriages Act which was enacted in the 1884 has gone through series of amendments. The Marriages Act, 1884-1985 CAP. 127 is the law the State has accepted to use to govern the registration of marriage.

### **2.3.5 Marriage registration**

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) document with the title "Standard Operating Procedures for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics" (CRVS), the Registrar General's Department (RGD) is mentioned to be the institution mandated by law to register marriages in Ghana. The current law on marriages is the Marriages Act, 1884-1985. (CAP. 127). According to GSS this law has been amended extensively.

#### **2.3.5.1 The Marriages Act, 1884-1985, CAP. 127**

The Marriages Act, 1884-1985 CAP. 127 has three parts. Namely;

- Part 1: The Customary Marriage,
- Part 2: Marriage of Mohammedans and
- Part 3: Christian and Other Marriages.

The law is to regulate the registration of marriages in the State. Based on the Marriages Act, 1884-1985, all marriages in Ghana can only be registered under these three forms of marriages stated above. According to Ghana Statistical Service (2015), Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Ghana's Comprehensive Assessment Report, the Marriages Act 1884-1985 (CAP 127, 129), has its primary focus on providing guidance for the management of the marriage process with some requirements for marriage registration.

In all the three types of marriages, according to GSS, the law currently indicates that only men and women aged eighteen years and above, who are not closely related by blood or through marriage are eligible to lawfully enter into a marriage. Marriages performed under the Act must also be performed on premises with the doors open between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on working days, excluding Sundays and public holidays, and in the presence of two or more witnesses in addition to the officiating ministers and anyone else who may wish to attend the ceremony (Graphic Online, 2020). This work is focused on the part one and part three of the Marriages Act. That is, the customary marriage and the Christian and other marriages.

**Customary marriage:** Customary marriage is the commonest type of marriage contracted in Ghana. According Awusabo-Asare (1990), cited in Afrim-Narh (2008), about 80% of marriage in Ghana are contracted under the customary laws. He asserted that even marriages intended to be celebrated under the ordinance are first celebrated under the customary law. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) document with the title "Standard Operating Procedures for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics" (CRVS), before the customary marriage law was amended in 1991, PNDCL 263 of 1991, the law enacted in 1985 made the registration of customary marriages and divorce mandatory and this was to be done within three months of contracting such marriage.

Also, there is no legal limit to the number of customary wives a man may have, nor is there any limit to the number of such marriages that can be legally registered under the Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law, 1985 (PNDCL 112). The Section 14 of the of PNDCL 263 of 1991 requires that customary marriage must be legally contracted indicating that all customs and traditions to obtain parental consent must be exhausted.

In addition, according to Afrim-Narh (2008) the Section 15(1) states that the provisions of the Intestate Succession Law PNDCL 111(1985) shall apply to any spouse of a customary marriage registered under this Law. Although, according to Graphic Online (2019) the customary marriage under the Marriages Act 1884-1985 is still polygamous, a sort of protection is given to the spouses and their children that are born in the union (PNDL 111). So, would-be couples who marry under the customary laws and wish to register their marriage would have to convert their marriage from the customary marriage to the ordinance marriage.

**Christian and other marriages/ordinance marriage:** Marriage under the Ordinance (CAP. 127), according to Crawford (2013) takes within its ambit Christian and civil marriages. It was first enacted in 1884 and was based basically on English Marriages Act preceding (Crawford, 2013). Ordinance marriage enables a man to marry only one woman and is based on Christian principles of monogamy, meaning that unless the man or woman dies or the marriage is legally dissolved, neither party cannot marry another person (Crawford, 2013).



There are three different certificates that are provided under the Ordinance Marriages Act. According to Crawford (2013) the couple may choose to marry under any of the three kinds of ordinance marriage based on the three certificates. According to the Section 41 of the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 a marriage can be celebrated under the following three certificates. This work will briefly discuss these types of marriage certificates issued during marriage registration. These certificates are:

- A Registrar's Certificate issued by the MMDAs, District Courts and the RGD themselves.
- A Marriage Officer's Certificate issued by licensed churches and licensed ministers of religion.
- A Special license provided by the Principal Registrar of Marriages.

**Marriage under Registrar's Certificate:** When couple intend to marry under the Authority of a Registrar's Certificate, any of the parties shall sign and give the Registrar of the District a Notice of Marriage (Marriages Act, 1884-1985, CAP. 127). The Registrar upon receipt of the notice shall enter the particulars in the marriage book and publish the notice on the Notice Board outside the office for twenty-one (21) days or for three months to elapse.

The Registrar after this period issues a Registrar's Certificate or License of marriage within three months with the twenty-one (21) days inclusive. The marriage is then celebrated if the couple has met all the conditions including payment of the set fee after the twenty-one (21) days. Being satisfied with the banns of marriage, if any caveat has not been entered, the marriage officer shall at any time within the three (3) months, issue a marriage certificate after the celebration of the marriage.

**Marriage under a Marriage Officer's certificate:** Marrying under a Marriage Officer's certificate is when a properly licensed minister of a religion (Christian) who is gazetted to perform marriage, officiate the marriage ceremony in a licensed place of worship. This type of certificate is applied for basically when the parties intend to get married in a church. In such case the pastor is the one the law authorizes to perform the marriage ceremony. With this type of marriage ceremony, there is the need for the announcement of the banns. The crying of banns according to Finnell (2018) has been in existence since Elizabethan Era (1558-1603). This announcement is made thrice in the churches the would-be couple attend. According to Knight (2008) the situation where marriage is celebrated without announcement of banns the marriage would be considered illegal. This was done to help anyone who has any objections or evidence of anything that might affect the union of the two to come to light and be dealt with before the ceremony (Finnell, 2018)

**Marriage under a Special License:** In the Session 55 of the Marriages Act 1884-1985 a provision has been made for persons who will wish to marry under a Special License. With this, the Registrar issues a special license which will be on the premise that the Registrar is satisfied by an affidavit that there is no lawful impediment to the proposed marriage. For instance, if any of the party is married to any person at the time of applying for the special license, then we can say there is a lawful impediment to the proposed marriage (Graphic Online, 2020).

With this form the license given, shall be in a form of authorizing the celebration of the marriage between the parties named in the marriage may be celebrated in a place other than a licensed place of worship or a Registrar office if the Registrar so authorize (Graphic Online, 2020). The Registrar may authorize the celebration of the marriage at a particular location the parties may choose. This means that the Registrar waives certain conditions for an Ordinance Marriage such as the length of time for notices or permits of a venue (other than the Registrar General's Office, MMDA or Church). According to Graphic Online (2020) it is advisable to apply for the Special license from the Principal Registrar of Marriages.

## 2.4 Reasons for the Performance of Parallel Marriage Ceremonies

The reasons that lead many would-be couples into performing parallel marriage ceremonies are enormous. These reasons range from personal interest through to religious factors to social and legal demands of the society or State.

A misleading information about the word "wedding" is one of the major reasons why many would-be couples celebrate parallel marriage ceremonies. In general terms, the church has made it that "wedding" is only done in church and any marriage organized outside the church is not wedding. According to Edwards (1987), wedding is a rite of passage. In addition, it represents a rite of passage for two individuals who want to make their relationship legally established in the eyes of the law and of everyone around them (Appadurai, 1997, cited in Adebola, 2016). The ceremony in which marriage is enacted and announced to the community is called a wedding (Kalmijn, 2004)

Wedding is a class of rituals all over the world which marks the transition of person(s) from one social status to another (Edwards, 1987). Leeds-Hurwitz (2002) asserted that weddings mark the beginning of marriage. Wedding occurs in almost all societies and can be simple or elaborate depending on the individuals involve (Adebola, 2016). This is influence by the socio-cultural context of the couple (Kalmijn, 2004). This simply means that any socially recognized means of celebrating marriage can be termed as wedding and not only that which is held at church. Christian and civil marriage ceremonies are considered to be foreign practices.

According to Adebola (2016) these foreign marriage ceremonies have been incorporated into contemporary marriage ceremonies and has become an integral part of our marriage process these days. This inflow of foreign marriage practice has made many would-be couples to think that the wedding is the replacement or redefinition of the traditional customs and rituals in the marriage process (Adebola, 2016). This notion has to some extent led to the tagging of the customary marriage as “the engagement” in our days. To many young Christian would-be couples, most of the traditional practices and marriage rituals are outmoded hence they have lost their values. Even those that still exist are seen to have lost their importance in our societies (Adebola, 2016). This notion has also made many would-be couples who want to be seen as civilized, current and educated to opt for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies. That is after “the engagement” they have to have their wedding (being it Christian and or civil marriage).

Also, the individuals involved in the marriage process use the occasion to show off their wealth. According to Finnell (2018), wedding celebration has these days become a way to show off the couple’s status both socially and economically. Would-be couples who are educated most especially, graduates feel that the wedding day is their special day and that they have to get a wedding planner to give them the best of service in order to secure a kind of status in the society (Finnell, 2018). Erlank (2006) emphasize that the practices many people associate with marriage ceremony had little to do with faith rather, many take it as a time to tell the world what they have and who they are. To many Christian would-be couples, the performance of these parallel marriage ceremonies offers them the opportunity to show how famous they are by inviting many people to their marriage ceremonies (Finnell, 2018). To most would-be couples the number of people that makes it to your marriage ceremony shows how famous you are in the society.

Additionally, many would-be couples perform parallel marriage ceremonies not because they willed it but they do that to satisfy the demands of the church and all the other parties involved in the marriage process. This according to Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Report (2010) cited in Twene (2019) is as a result of the claim that many Africans who are Christians live a life incorporated with the elements of the African values. According to Heider (2007), cited in Adebola (2016) sees marriage and its ceremony as an important event which is not only meant for the two individuals involved but for the society and the group the couple may be affiliated to. At marriage the young Christian would-be couple are torn between their customary laws, the civil laws and the demands of the denomination (church) they belong (Ibeka, 2009).

According to Obudho (1985), in the church, it is expected that a leader or potential leader have to be properly married in the church. The constitution of the Methodist Church, Ghana alluded to this same assertion (Methodist Church Ghana, 2001). The church has made it that valid marriage is that which has been solemnized before the priest (Obudho, 1985). The would-be couple who is a leader or wish to serve in the leader position of the church is made to meet these demands (Methodist Church Ghana, 2001). Although to Hastings (1967), cited in Falen (2008), the Catholic Church has always been strict about marriage, the Protestant churches tended to be more tolerant.

Hastings (1967) explained that being married as a Catholic meant having only one true Church marriage, whereas Protestant churches would frequently legalize customary marriages and the children born of them (Falen, 2008). Despite this, some churches refuse to give communion to would-be couples who have not had a wedding or blessing but just a customary marriage ceremony (Obudho, 1985; Graphic Online, 2019). Due to this, many young Christian would-be couples who desire to have a good standing with God and the church are made to satisfy the demands of the church after the customary marriage ceremonies. This has left many Christian would-be couples to go through the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies not that they willed it but to satisfy the demands of their respective churches.

Another serious difficulty many would-be couple face is the perception that, would-be couples who perform only customary marriage have gotten themselves involved in sexual promiscuity. Although there is no found literature to back this assertion, many members of the church have this in mind that when would-be couple opt for only customary marriage ceremony it means they have indulged in sexual immorality. This to them is the only reason that will make would-be couple hide their marriage from God and the members of the church in general. This has influenced the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies by many Christian would-be couples.

The society cannot be left out in the issue of parallel marriage ceremonies. According to Finnell (2018) in some societies the successfulness of one’s wedding is dependent on the number of guests that were present at the wedding and the money that went into its organisation. People who want to protect the image of their families because of the societal expectations raises huge sums of money to perform these parallel marriage ceremonies to prevent the society from looking down on them or ridicule them and their families (Finnell, 2018). Also, according to Twene (2019) performing church wedding in addition to the customary marriage serve as honour on the couple in the society. Gradually, the society is making it look like the successfulness of one’s marriage is dependent on the elaborative type of marriage ceremonies organized.

The State through its laws has been seen especially by most women to be protecting their interest hence

their (women) preference for marriage under the civil laws (which is purely monogamous marriage) in addition to their customary laws (customary marriage) (Goody, 1990, p. 129, cited in Falen (2008). Barlow et al. (2005), cited in Afrim-Narh (2008) asserted that the State practices, however indicate that marriage is often taken to be the key determinant of family protection. This is evident in the provisions made in the CAP. 127 of the Marriages Act. Marriage celebrated under the Marriage Ordinance, 1951 (CAP. 127) is considered to be strictly monogamous such that the Section 44 of this law places strict limitation on married person who would wish to contract another marriage even under native law or customs. This was one of the reasons why the Act was rejected by many especially the chiefs and other opinion leaders.

Afrim-Narh (2008) added that, the right a spouse has to share in the Intestate Succession Law is largely dependent on the system of marriage contracted when the deceased was alive. Where the deceased is survived by a spouse married under CAP. 127, order 2 rule 7 of the Probate and Administration Rules (1991; LI1515), cited in Afrim-Narh (2008) puts the surviving spouse in the first priority for the administration of the estate. The situation where the deceased married under the customary law all the surviving spouses share in the spouse portion of the estate (Afrim-Narh, 2008).

According to the Conference Report for the Centre of Excellence, a marriage certificate serves as legal proof of the couple's union. It can be used by women to protect their property and inheritance rights, as well as their social security, in the event of their spouse's death or divorce (Silva, Snow, Andreev, Mitra, & AbouZahr, 2019). Although there is no evidence to support this assertion, some women who are aware of the provisions of the statute prefer to, and in some cases demand for an ordinance marriage celebration in addition to the customary marriage celebration in order to secure their marriage and children.

One important reason that cannot be over looked is the religious nature of woman. Miller and Stark (2002) asserted that women are more religious than men. According to Twene (2019), this perception is one major reason for women always wanting to have church marriage. Twene (2019) added that many see marrying at church strengthens once faith and that they would be allowed to partake in the religious activities of the church. The foregoing scholarly discussion alluded to the reasons why couples engage in parallel marriage ceremonies.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the epistemological branch known as interpretivism. Interpretivist research paradigm states that reality is multi-layered and complex. The interpretivist believe that people are creative and actively construct their social reality. The interpretivist further notes that the social world should be studied in the natural perspective through the eyes of the participants, without the intervention of the researcher (Dammak, 2013). Interpretivists believe that understanding of the context in which any form of research is conducted is critical to the interpretation of data gathered (Willis, 2007). According to Willis (2007), interpretivism usually seeks to understand a particular context, and the core belief of the interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. This notion was laid as the foundation on which the research on the dynamics that exist in the understanding and reasons for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies was conducted.

Qualitatively, the research adopted a case study design. It is believed that reports of past studies allow the exploration and understanding of complex issues by helping to explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis, 1997).

The setting for this research is Winneba, the capital of the Efutu Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. Winneba is a town with a population of 55,331 and known traditionally as Simpa. It is a fishing community in southern Ghana, lying on the south coast, 140 kilometers (90mi) east of Cape Coast, and 56km (35mi) of Accra. It coordinates 5° 21'00" N 0° 37'30" W/5.35000°N 0.62500°W.

The target population for this study were married people who have performed parallel marriage ceremonies, adults who have reached their marital age but are not married, parents, opinion leaders (pastors, leaders of family and or clan) and marriage counsellors in Winneba in the Efutu Municipality. Out of the huge population of Winneba, the accessed population for the study was fifteen (15) people. This number consisted of five (5) married individuals who have performed parallel marriage ceremonies, four (4) unmarried adults who have reached their marital age, two (2) marriage counsellors, two (2) parents, two (2) opinion leaders (Reverend Ministers/Pastors of any well recognized church).

Basically, purposive sampling technique was used in carrying out this research. Purposive sampling was used to identify characteristics of the population of interest and selects the elements or subject with those qualities. These necessitated the use of the purposive sampling technique in this research. The convenience sampling technique was also used to select the elements such as married individuals who performed parallel marriages ceremonies, adult who have reached their marital age but are not married, the parents with children who are either married or not and opinion leaders (pastors).

Convenience sampling technique simply means where a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for the study are selected (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Also, critical case sampling technique was used to

sample the marriage counsellors involved in the research. Critical case sampling is where you collect samples that are most likely to give you the information you are looking for. This sampling technique was considered because the professional marriage counsellors can speak to the issue in a professional way. This type of sampling is particularly useful if a small number of cases can be sampled (Strewig & Stead, 2001). They are the ones most likely to provide the wealth of information needed for this work in a professional way.

Semi-structured interview guide was employed for the data collection. Trustworthiness of research instrument was ensured. Speziale and Carpenter (2011) describe trustworthiness as establishing the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experiences of the study participants. Credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability are the four criteria used to measure the trustworthiness of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). These criteria are used to evaluate the study's overall truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Because it is theoretically well developed and widely used by qualitative researchers, this model for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research was chosen.

Qualitatively, thematic analysis of data was done hinging on occurring themes after the data collection. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research entails a continuous interplay between data collection and data analysis. As a result, after the first interview, the data was analyzed. This helped in discovering patterns and further data collection was carried out making it easier.

Atlas.ti software for qualitative research analysis was used and pseudonyms were created for the interviewees. The next was the uploading of the transcribed data files to the Atlas.ti. The primary document was assigned codes into the Atlas.ti. for analysis. It is believed that researchers must take into account the ethical considerations when doing human research (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Enough protection was given to the participants to ensure that they were not known by other individuals. This was done by giving them codes instead of names and address. Their consents were also sought before they were interviewed.

Seeking their consent was to help them decide whether to partake in the interview or not. According to Bhutta (2004), the informed consent provides full and transparent information since it offers the participant the opportunity to question the researcher. This greatly aided the researchers in removing all types of coercion and ensured that the participants had complete choice in their decision to participate or not. Confidentiality of information provided by participants was highly adhered to. The participants were told that their identities would be kept private and that they could opt out of the study at any moment they so wish. In achieving confidentiality, participants were assigned numbers on the interview protocol instead of their names which made it difficult for outsiders to identify the participants.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings of the study. The first part focuses on the biographic characteristics of the participants and the second section focuses on the data analysis and discussions. The data was gathered through a semi-structured interview guide. The interview data was collected through direct interview with fifteen interviewees. In attributing the various quotations to the interviewees, numbers were given in order of participation beginning from 1 to 15 and these numbers were used to represent them.

The biographic characteristics of the fifteen participants comprises of eight (8) males and seven (7) females. Concerning the age bracket of the participants, the youngest were between the ages of 20 and 30, whilst the oldest were between 40 and 60 years. In relation to their academic qualification, there was one (1) PhD holder, three (3) master degree holders, six (6) graduates and six (5) students. This biodata indicates that participants were knowledgeable and were of age to contribute independently to the research.

The second section focuses on the presentation of data for the research questions which was divided into four parts. The first part focuses on how people understand parallel marriage ceremonies. The second part also considers the reasons for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies. The data was presented, analyzed and discussed in accordance with the various research questions.

##### **4.1 How People Understand Parallel Marriage Ceremonies**

Data was gathered to explore how people understand parallel marriage ceremonies. It is important to note that the knowledge on marriage and its celebration and how it is understood influences the level of assessment made by the interviewers. For this reason, many themes emerged based on the responses to the interview questions. The following are the themes that were developed; Views on parallel marriage ceremony, Components of parallel marriage, Awareness of the Marriages Act, Dynamics in Christian marriage ceremony and Dynamics in marriage registration and certification.

###### **4.1.1 Views on parallel marriage ceremony**

In trying to find out the views of people on what parallel marriage ceremony is, almost all the participants exhibited some level of understanding of the concept just that most of them at the first time of hearing the word



made it sound like they have not heard of the word before. Most of the answers the participants gave were in a form of questions. These were some of the responses from the participants.

Participant 2 had this to say about parallel marriage ceremony:

*“Parallel marriage ceremony, please is it about the performance of both engagement and wedding? I think is the performance of engagement and later climaxing it with the wedding in church.”*

Participant 3 also adding, said this:

*“Parallel marriage is performing both traditional and State marriage and where your religion also demands you do that one in church. It is where a man goes to see the family of a suppose wife to identify himself to the family and do the engagement and then further adds the State marriage or religious marriage to the engagement.”*

Another participant answered with confidence by saying:

*“Parallel marriage ceremony is when one performs the customary marriage ceremony in addition to the ordinance marriage ceremony. So, to me if you are doing two types of marriage to confer a marriage then it is parallel marriage ceremony.”*

All the above participants had some level of understanding of the concept of parallel marriage ceremony. One statement that runs through all the responses except few was the perception people have that the customary marriage is “the engagement.” This perception has influenced many to see the customary marriage ceremony as not a complete marriage ceremony. This is as a result of the influence by Christians leaders through indoctrinations, which have made it to sound that until marriage ceremony is done in church or by the church, one will not receive God’s blessing on such union (DeSimone, 2003). The above notion has made especially, the youth not to perceive the performance of both customary and ordinance marriage ceremonies as parallel but anything customary in the marriage process as the commencement of the marriage process of which the ordinance ceremony is the climax.

#### **4.1.2 Components of parallel marriage ceremonies**

All the participants interviewed knew the components that make up parallel marriage ceremony. Also, they were all able to talk about what goes into each of the components especially the customary marriage rite. From the data gathered the participants addressed the issues of customary and ordinance marriage ceremonies which most of them referred to as wedding. Under the components, two main themes emerged. Thus, the Customary marriage ceremony and the Christian or Ordinance marriage ceremony.

#### **4.1.3 Customary marriage ceremony**

Almost all the participants displayed some level of understanding of the customary marriage. Some went further to say that it is the African way to marry and did not show any doubt of its authenticity or genuineness. Although, almost all the participants accept the authenticity of the customary marriage ceremony, few talked about it being a complete means of getting married. Also, people see it as a form of marriage that permit polygamy.

A participant had this to say:

*“Customary marriage is what we call engagement or traditional marriage. It is the marriage that is done in the homes where the two families come together to perform the marriage rite.”*

Another participant added that:

*“Customary marriage is a marriage ceremony conducted traditionally with all the laid down laws where the parents of the lady officially hand her over to her suppose husband to permit other ceremonies to be done. To me the customary marriage ceremony is the primary ceremony, without it you cannot continue with the rest of the processes. So, it is very important every would-be couple perform that before any other ceremony. Even during the wedding, the pastor will inquire whether they have finished with the customary rite. This simply means that it helps you to go through the other needed marriage processes with ease.”*

Participant 6 also said:

*“Customary marriage is that type of marriage that gives the legal license to marry as many as you can as a man. We are Africans and that is our way of marriage.”*

From the responses of all the participants interviewed, none of them disregarded the customary marriage ceremony but they showed a level of distrust in it because most of them were in doubt whether there are laws to protect the individuals that go into it. This shows that the Part 1 of the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 which comments of Customary marriages is not known to many married, unmarried individuals and even opinion leaders. The question is, “is it the church that is hiding it from their members because of their personal interests or the education on the Marriages Act has not gotten down to the citizens? This also revealed that although people are taken through the counselling sessions, most of them are not exposed to the Marriages Act for them to decide on what to do. Many are counselled for the purpose of the church wedding. One of the disturbing observations made was “No church marriage, No marriage counselling.”

#### **4.1.4 Christian or Ordinance marriage ceremony**

The responses from the interviewees revealed that people ascribe some religiosity and legality to the church marriage more than the customary marriage. Most of the female participants wished to celebrate their marriages

in church than any other place except few. The interesting thing was that, most of the male participants revealed that if they have had their way, they would not have done it or will not do it. But if the need be, they will.

The following are some of the responses the participants gave:

*“Christian marriage is a marriage ceremony organized after customary marriage with the consent of the couple at their proposed chapel especially the ladies church with the idea of the church blessing their marriage.”*

*“Ordinance marriage is when a man marry one wife as the laws of the State says.”*

*“Ordinance marriage ceremony is the marriage rite performed after the customary marriage rite which is either done in court of law or in church.”*

*“Ordinance marriage ceremony is organized to bring the marriage unto the presence of God and to bind them together forever.”*

*“Ordinance marriage ceremony is the ceremony performed to validate the marriage and also to officially made the church aware that the two individuals are legally married.”*

All the above responses show that the individuals attach some kind of believe to the performance of the church marriage. Also, most of the participants believe that the ordinance or church marriage is backed by laws of the State (CAP. 127), therefore making it authentic. Thus, the State endorses it and God also through the church leadership finally blesses the union.

One thing the society has loss sight on is that, not all marriages organized especially in church is recognized by the laws of the State if the requirements of the Marriages Act are not entirely satisfied. For instance, according to the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 if these three basic requirements such as a gazetted chapel and officiating minister of religion is not met, the marriage though organized in church is not recognized by the State.

The requirements are: the appointed reverend minister who will officiate the marriage should be gazetted; the place of worship where the marriage will be celebrated should be licensed; and the marriage should be solemnized under the authority of a registrar’s certificate, a marriage officers’ certificate or a special license from the Registrar. If these three basic requirements are not met, marriage organize in church is still under the customary marriage laws. This is because refusal to go with the requirements will not move the marriage pass the customary ceremony domain.

#### **4.1.5 Dynamics in Christian marriage ceremony**

Another interesting thing noticed during the interviews was the awareness of the participants on the dynamics that exist in Christian marriage ceremonies. The question was to find out whether the participants are abreast with the difference in the church blessing and the solemnisation of holy matrimony.

##### **4.1.5.1 Church blessing**

Some of the participants did not know the differences between the two. Some also revealed that the church blessing is a marriage ceremony organized for only the aged couples or people who have finished given birth. Others also believed that it is organize for people who could not afford the wedding expenses or are just not modern. The following are some of the responses.

Interviewee 3 said:

*“The blessing of marriage is after the customary marriage; the couple are blessed by the pastor. This can be done anywhere. So, if your pastor follows you to the customary marriage ceremony and blesses your marriage there, it is the church blessings you have had.”*

A participant added:

*“With the blessing the church has its own certification which to me is not recognized by the laws of the State. To me I think that certificate ceases to work when any other couples leave the church.”*

Another has this to add:

*“Church blessing is for people or families who have some financial challenge organizing the wedding. So, after the customary marriage they go to church for the reverend minister to bless their marriage for them. This can even be done in the midst of the Sunday service or even during normal church service with few family members of both families being present without them having to organize a different programme for that.”*

Also, this participant said a similar statement:

*“I know church blessing to be a ceremony that is done by the church after the customary marriage has been organized. With the blessing, the officiating ministers do not join in the customary marriage. It is usually organized on Sunday service or during morning devotions with the involvement of the families of the would-be couples and some few church leaders. Just that it usually organized for the aged couples and guys who do not have money for the wedding. I would not wish for such a ceremony and I do not think any young lady will wish her marriage be organized like that in these modern times.”*

The responses from the interviewees tell a story of how people have been misinformed about the church blessing of marriage. Does the church take the pain to explain to their members what the church blessing of marriage means? It is true that the church blessing is an internal arrangement made by the church to officially give recognition to the marriages of their members especially leaders (who had customary marriage ceremony

before becoming leaders). Also, to present the marriage to God for His blessings on the union but a picture has been painted that all young couple who opt for it are poor and cannot afford the wedding. One shocking response from one of the participants was that “*church blessing is for those who have had sex before the marriage and the Holy matrimony is for virgins.*” It is time the church takes keen interest in the matters regarding marriage ceremonies and address them.

#### **4.1.5.2 The solemnisation of holy matrimony**

The question was to know how the participants understand solemnisation of holy matrimony and what they think makes it different from other marriage ceremonies celebrated in church. Almost all the participants sounded positive about their knowledge on the solemnisation of holy matrimony which most of them referred to as wedding.

participant 1 commented that:

*“To me the ordinance marriage ceremony is the ceremony that takes place at the church premises and there are laws to back it. You see, with that one the couples have to sign marriage certificates and also go through a lot of activities before the marriage finally comes off.”*

Also, a participant said:

*“Blessing of marriage can be done by any pastor but solemnisation of holy matrimony is done by a registered pastor by law and the place the marriage is done must also be gazetted. With this the church has keen interest in it and organizes it very well. I will add that it is a marriage ceremony that the church gets much involved. This is because they will let you go through everything you need to do before the ceremony is done. For instance, organizing counselling for the couple and making sure they run blood test.”*

Participant 5 said this:

*“With the holy matrimony you have to set a day aside to go through all the rituals set aside by the church for people who want to marry through such means to have your marriage done for you.”*

The responses from the participants show that almost all of them had some kind of knowledge about the holy matrimony usually called wedding. So, because of the churches interest in it and the attention the society give to it, many people think it is the only approved marriage rite. Many young ladies want that kind of marriage ceremony because they think it is the only marriage the State has laws to protect (Knight, 2008). Some of the responses of the participants also pointed out that most of the young people do not attach much importance to the religious aspects of it. Rather they attach to the fashion and the entertaining part that is involved in the marriage process as asserted by (Finnell, 2018).

#### **4.1.6 Dynamics in marriage registration and certification**

Marriage registration is one of the technical areas the questions sought to ascertain the views of the participants. Though, it is the integral part of marriage contraction these days, the responses from the interviewees did not show they know much about the registration and certification of marriages. All that they were certain of is, we went to court of law and a certificate was issued to us. The question of which one of the three certificates were the couples given? Many talks about only the ordinance certificate. Below are the varied responses from the participants.

One of the participants has this to say:

*“No. We went to court and informed them of our intentions and they told us to pay a fee but they did not explain anything to us. Our marriage was registered under the ordinance, I do not know there are difference in the certificates. I cannot tell whether what they gave me was the right one but our reverend minister observed it and gave it back to us.”*

This one also stated that:

*“Yes. I know you go to law court to register but I do not know what goes on with the issuance of the license. When I am ready to marry, I will go and inquire before but for now I do not know anything about the differences in the marriage certificates.”*

The fifth participant emphasised that:

*“Yes. We have those who go to court of law to do the registration and those who go to the District Assembly where the marriage is to take place and registration done. That’s all I can say in relation to the marriage registration and the certificates. I do not know much about it please.”*

One of the participants expressed this:

*“I made it known to them but most of them did not give attention to it when I was explaining it. A couple once said “Maa, let’s go on, all that we want is that the marriage should come on, the rest will take care of it itself, he added, it’s not the certificate that makes the marriage work or Maa?”. So, I had to continue. Some of them also want only the church wedding so after explaining the certificate (marriage under a Marriage Officer’s certificate) to them they just tell you to move on to other things. Others do not say it but their actions will let you move on.”*

The responses above show that there are couples who do not even know the certificate under which their marriage is registered. Also, most of them do not care to make inquiry about the certificates they claim they

registered their marriage under until there is an issue before they will inquire to know the authenticity of the marriage certificates they have. But the would-be couples should be in agreement with what Crawford (2013) asserted to. To him, marriage under the Ordinance (CAP. 127) takes within its ambit Christian and Civil marriages. This, the church and the State has a great responsibility when people go to church or the court of law to register their marriages. The outcome shows clearly that, there are a lot of issues on marriage ceremony that has to be looked at by the government, the church, opinion leaders and especially parents.

#### **4.1.7 Awareness of the Marriages Act**

The researchers wanted to know from the interviewees whether they were aware of the Marriages Act and its content recognizing the customary marriage. Few of the responses sounded that they have heard of it but they could not speak to it. Most of the participants also said they have no idea of the Marriages Act, 1884-1985.

Few of the participants had this to say:

*"Yes, I have heard of it. In fact, I haven't bothered to know what it is about. I heard of it somewhere that's all".*

Another interviewee also said:

*"No, I know it talks about ordinance marriage. that's all I can say".*

Participant 7 had this to say:

*"Yes. I know the customary marriage is recognize by the Marriages Act 127 but now it has become the order of the day or a ritual that we are all to go through by having two or more ceremonies. After going through the two, it will prevent me from going into any other marriage with anyone because it becomes biding on you that, once you are in it you cannot go about with any other woman as your wife".*

Participant 15 added that:

*"Yes. I have heard of it. Although I'm married, I wasn't taken through it so I cannot speak to it that much. All I know is that, it is the State laws that governs marriage and its ceremonies."*

Most of the people who said they do not know much about the Act were the unmarried interviewees. Although most of them were having plans of getting marriage soon. The question is, when will they be aware of the Marriages Act to help inform them decide on which of the marriage ceremonies to perform? Or have they decided already? The responses from the participants made it clear that although the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 is nicely carved, it is still far from the people it was made for. Meanwhile, hundreds of marriages are contracted every month in our churches and societies. Whose responsibility has been shelved?

## **4.2 The Reasons for the Performance of Parallel Marriage Ceremonies**

In exploring the reasons for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies, the following themes emerged through the gathered data. These are: the readiness for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies, and factors that necessitate the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies.

### **4.2.1 Readiness for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies**

The noise about the parallel nature of marriage ceremonies has recurrently gain public attention. The question is why are these marriage ceremonies still going on in our societies? So, which group of people are complaining about the parallel nature of our marriage ceremonies? These are questions that need answers to guise us shape the institution of marriage. On the readiness of people for the performance of the parallel marriage ceremonies, most of the participants' responses reveal that they have made up their mind to do it because they have no option. Who will take the initiative to do something different? This can only be done when the youth get right information about marriage and its contraction. About their readiness for parallel marriage ceremonies these are what some of the participants said. Participant 2 stated this:

*"Yes. Because I'm a Christian who live in a society and have a family. So, I've to satisfy all these institutions being it the church, the family and the society for me to be free from their ridicule. It will be better to be in debt than for the society to scoff at you. Even if I am to work for years to get the resources to do it why not?"*

Another participant said this:

*"I would like to do only customary marriage but my girlfriend is demanding for the performance of wedding in addition to the customary rite. The reason for me wanting to perform only customary marriage is that I am a Ghanaian and wish to respect my customs which recognizes the customary laws. The wedding is a foreign practice. She says all the friends are expecting her to perform the ordinance ceremony (wedding) so she cannot fail them, after all she other people's weeding. Also, to her it an honour to the couple and their families. I will only do the two if the family and the woman are able to consider me a bit and when I also see the need for it why not."*

Another, also talked about her readiness for the parallel marriage ceremonies in this way:

*"No, I have always wished or wanted to do both in other to be secured in marriage. Also, to protect my children when any of us is no more (dead) or are not together any more (divorce). I have always wished for that so I prepared towards it before I even met my husband. I did not want any stories. I started saving towards my wedding when I started working. My husband was also interested so we did not struggle at all. Just that I will not encourage any individual to perform the parallel ceremony if she has not planned and saved enough towards*



*it. It is demanding though, but I did it and I am proud of it.”*

Participant 15, also put it in this way:

*“Yes. I will do parallel ceremony. The reason being that my church advises and admonishes that after the customary we are to have the ordinance marriage (wedding) in church and even if not in the church ‘kora’ we should go to court to register so that the marriage will be binding and very legal. We have been told the benefits that comes with it so I have started preparing towards that long ago. Please, do you not see that it will be some way ‘bi’ if a whole graduate like me decides to do some “kolo” marriage ceremony?”*

The data presented above fits in the structuralist theory. How people see the structures to be dependent to the extent that one cannot deal with only one of the institutions and leave the rest when it comes to marriage and its ceremonies. These rituals involved in marriage ceremonies have influenced the readiness of people about the performance of the parallel marriage ceremonies. The data is in agreement with Awusabo-Asare (1990), cited in Afrim-Narh (2008) that even marriages intended to be celebrated under the Ordinance are first celebrated under the customary law. This is also in agreement with Goldschmidt (1996) functionalist view that the relationships that exist within the institutions are for the maintenance of the society. From the data it confirms that every individual, except few wanted to do or have done the parallel marriage ceremonies. Also, the intentions of companionship in marriage are now not hampered. Many young people are thinking of what they will get from their partner other than what they can offer their partner. The question is, how can the young people be helped to understand some of these ceremonies so that they can moderate it in their celebrations or seek proper counsel in their quest to do it.

#### **4.2.2 Factors that necessitate the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies**

There are many reasons that motivate people to go into parallel marriage ceremonies. The data gathered have revealed the pertinent issues that influences people to perform the parallel marriage ceremonies. The following themes emerged during the interviews: It an honour to both couple and families, it provides both partners and the children security, and other religious factors.

##### **4.2.2.1 It is an honour to both couple and families**

The performance of parallel marriage ceremonies according to the data gathered is seen as a means of honouring the parents and families of the couple especially the bride. One of the participants had this to say:

*“It’s good to have the parallel ceremonies. Because not all family members and friends can make it to the family house for the customary ceremony. So, at the church many others can be around and witness it. Also, it is an honour to be able to wed someone. It is good you go through the parallel ceremony for your wife and her entire family to know that you cherish and respect her and the family. It is true the customary marriage ceremony also honours the parents and the family but brother, you know that some families will not appreciate it when you do only the customary rite but immediately you add the wedding to it then you the man “naa” you also feel big. You can also talk when you meet friends. Brother, I think I have to honour the woman I will marry.”*

Another participant added:

*“To get a good name and reputation. At least you are highly honoured within both the church and the society if you are able to perform the parallel ceremonies as couple. This reputation also affects the parents or family members of the couple in question.”*

The interviewees according to the data gathered had a notion that in performing the parallel marriage ceremonies you are honouring the woman’s family and the couples themselves. This confirms what Twene (2019) wrote that marrying in church in addition to the customary marriage serve as honour on the couple in the society. This belief that one has to do everything possible to please the people around them is really leading many young people to do what at times is not even within their means. The burden is on the society especially the church to educate her members on some of these activities which do not build up the individual in marriage. The excesses should be dealt with by the church leadership to clear such beliefs and practices by her members.

Also, parents should think of the future of their wards in marriage than thinking of how their in-laws would honour them through the extravagant weddings they organize for their daughters. The youth in the churches, the society and the parents or the families should be educated to understand what Adebola (2016) wrote which says that wedding can be simple or elaborate. It depends on the individuals involved in it not every young person should be made to honour the in-laws and the wife through weddings if the person is not having the means to do so.

##### **4.2.2.2 It provides both partners and the children security**

Another hard truth almost all the interviewees commented on that will influence them to organize or request for the performance of parallel marriage ceremonies was the issue of security for both partners and their children. Why will one do everything possible to protect the children? Is it that people are losing interest in the social institutions? The participants had this to said:

*“Performing parallel marriage ceremonies will make me stick to one woman, and also to have my peace of mind from pressure from multiple partners. It will even protect you from contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Also, if you try not to do it, your wife will always suspect you. Master, it will be better you do it and have your*

*peace of mind from the pressures of your wife. In addition, it will help me secure the legitimacy of my children so that when I'm no more, no one will take their possessions from them as it happens in some marriages contracted under the customary laws. And also, to be faithful to my wife to be."*

Participant 8 also said this:

*"I have been advising them to perform the parallel ceremony. It serves as a form of security for the partners and the children in case any of them or both are no more. These days some people are always ready to fight over properties of others. It will be better to secure the future of your partner and children through the registration of the marriage. It will also, help check polygamous marriage. The times we are in are not favourable at all, so I have and will still encourage my daughter or any young woman to do the ordinance in addition. At least, the man will be careful when he wants to be unfaithful in the marriage."*

Two important declarations were settled base on the data gathered from the responses of the interviewees. The first one was on faithfulness in marriage and the second one was on the security and legitimacy of the children in the marriage, if any. The issue is who has misinformed the society on the marital laws and intestate succession laws of the State. The individuals in the church should be made to understand that the ordinance marriage does not deal with the issue of unfaithfulness in marriage rather it prevents polygamous marriages. Also, the PNDC law 111 (Interstate Succession Law) has been in place to protect couples and their children when any or one of the partners is no more. The question is, how many of the citizens are aware of some of these social and legal interventions made by the State? The church should get resource persons to educate their members on the demands of the laws of the land.

#### **4.2.2.3 Religious factors**

The data gathered made a serious revelation about the issue of religion and beliefs during the interviews. Religious beliefs have influenced a lot of people to do things which to some extents were against their will. Most of the participants alluded to this as a reason for them willing to perform or had performed the parallel marriage ceremonies.

*"I am a Christian, so I have to bring my marriage before the Lord and with that I have to follow the detects of the church which also recommend that I must register or legalize my marriage before they can bless it for me. Also, it will enable me as a leader to continue to serve my maker in my own small way. In our church if you are a leader and you fail to perform the ordinance (which they usually encourage us to do) then you cease to be a leader. In our traditional belief too, if you do not honour your parents or that of your wife-to-be for them to bless you, the marriage would not work. So, on these grounds I did the two. I want God's blessings from the church and the parental blessings too."*

Another participant added this:

*"My Christian beliefs also demand I do the parallel ceremony. So, I am preparing towards that. My parents are church leaders and I do not think they will understand I go to court to register instead of doing it in church. My mother would not even agree so I have made my mind to do the two. I am not dating now, but I am praying to God that my would-be wife will also be someone who likes the wedding, else I will be torn between her and my parents."*

This was added by a participant:

*"I was demanding that my husband-to-be should only let's go to the court after the customary marriage and register for the ordinance. This was because I wasn't working and I did not want him to incur much but we were made to understand that we belong to the church community. We were made to understand that we need God's blessings to succeed in our marriage. I was a leader in the children's ministry so I was told to be a good role model for the kids because if I only do the customary marriage and go to court the children will even think I am pregnant that's why I do not want the church to come in. Brother, the leaders of our church made this a big issue oh, but although I wasn't working by then, we have to squeeze water from stone to get things done. So, we did the two. But truth be told, it was difficult times for us during such periods."*

The findings from the reasons for the performance of the parallel ceremony revealed that the church has indirectly contributed to the performance of the parallel marriage ceremonies. Is it that the church is no more sensitive about the plight of their members? The outcome shows that it is only the people who have gotten married and few who are close to the leadership of the church that are aware of this influence. Although it is something going on, it seems to be under tone. This is because most of the unmarried participants did not talk about the influence from the church in the performance of the parallel marriage ceremonies. Many of the married participants claim they accepted to do it because they wanted the hand of God in their marriages. The question is "Does God bless people in only the church premises?" The assertion of Mbiti (1999) that the religiosity nature of Africans, has caused many not to ask questions on issues boarding on faith and beliefs or religion is impinging on the progress of many people in our contemporary society.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Participants had some level of understanding of the concept of parallel marriage ceremonies, just that most of

them referred to the customary marriage as “the engagement.” In addition, most of the participants were not in the known of the Marriages Act 1884-1985 CAP. 127. Although most of the married participants claimed to have married or registered their marriage under that Act, most of them could not tell the detailed demands of the Act. Also, almost all the unmarried participants were not in the known of the Marriages Act 1884-1985 and its demands. Furthermore, the participants did not know the dynamics that exist in the performance of church marriage (church blessing and solemnisation of holy matrimony) and the issuance of marriage registration certificates.

The performance of parallel marriage ceremonies is perceived by many as a way of ensuring faithfulness in marriage. Also, many have taken the performance of the parallel marriage ceremonies as a means of acquiring security and legitimacy for themselves and the children born in the union. Moreover, parallel marriage ceremonies are performed by many to fulfill or satisfy the demands of the church, the family and the society at large.

Based on the conclusions, it is therefore, recommended that the concept of marriage contraction and the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127 should be added to the senior high school curriculum to help educate the youth about the dynamics in the marriage contraction and registration process. Also, in the meantime the churches and other government agencies like the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should through public education, sensitize the youth to understand the rudiments of the Marriages Act 1884-1985, CAP. 127. This will help the would-be couples to take informed decisions.

Also, the churches and the marriage counsellors should embark on education to help the youth understand the reasons for the performance of marriage ceremonies. Furthermore, marriage counsellors should help would-be couples clear their doubt on the customary marriage ceremony as being engagement. In addition, the church and the media houses should educate the citizenry on the existing laws that protect the interest of the couple and their children even when one of them or both are no more. For example, is the PNDCL 111.

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