

Investigating the Influence of Residential Location and Religious Affiliation on College Students' Attitudes toward Love, Sex, and Marriage

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ABSTRACT

Comprehending the interaction of variables such as residential location and religious affiliation in shaping students' perspectives is crucial for educators, legislators, and counsellors seeking to facilitate students' social and emotional growth. This study explicitly investigates the variation of these views according to residential arrangements and religious affiliations, which are evaluated by null hypotheses. A descriptive survey methodology was employed, utilising questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect comprehensive data from college students. The study sample consists of 350 respondents chosen from five tertiary educational institutions in the Tamale city of Ghana. Respondents were acquired by stratified, purposive, and random sampling methods. Independent-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA were utilised to assess the hypotheses using the SPSS 16.0 software. The findings indicated statistically significant variations in students' beliefs towards romantic relationships, sexual activities, and marriage, influenced by residential location and religious affiliations. The study contributes to understanding the sociocultural and environmental factors shaping college students' perspectives on relationships and marriage. Educational policymakers ought to execute location-specific measures to rectify geographical disparities in students' social and emotional development, including seminars and counselling services. Institutions ought to foster open dialogue around relationships, sexuality, and marriage, thereby enhancing comprehension and respect for varied viewpoints.

1. Introduction

The formative years of college are crucial in influencing students' attitudes and behaviours about romantic relationships, sexual activity, and marriage. These viewpoints are shaped by numerous factors, including geographic region and religious affiliation. Comprehending the interaction of these variables in shaping students' perspectives is crucial for educators, legislators, and counsellors seeking to facilitate students' social and emotional growth (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2012; Lefkowitz et al., 2004).

1.1 Context of the Research

The geographical location significantly influences cultural norms and societal expectations, which subsequently affect individual attitudes toward love relationships and marriage. Students from urban locales may encounter more progressive ideas on dating and sexuality, whilst those from rural places may maintain more conventional

perspectives. The urban-rural gap may result in differing views and behaviours among college students toward romance and marriage (Teo & Simon, 2020).

Religious membership is a significant determinant affecting students' perspectives on romantic relationships, sexual conduct, and matrimony. Research indicates that elevated religiosity correlates with more restrictive sexual views and behaviours. Individuals with robust religious beliefs frequently have negative attitudes toward premarital sex and are less inclined to participate in such activities (Rostosky et al., 2004). Moreover, common religious convictions in romantic partnerships might influence sexual conduct, with increased couple-based religiosity associated with diminished sexual engagement (Uecker et al., 2008).

The convergence of geographical location and religious membership complicates the comprehension of pupils' attitudes and behaviours. Individual religion might affect sexual views, but the wider cultural and religious backdrop of a student's milieu is equally significant. Students in highly religious areas may encounter societal pressures that uphold conservative perspectives on relationships and marriage, irrespective of their individual convictions (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2012).

This study seeks to examine the joint impact of geographic location and religious affiliation on college students' perspectives and conduct on romantic relationships, sexual activity, and marriage. This research aims to elucidate characteristics that can guide the creation of tailored interventions and support systems in higher education institutions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Romantic relationships, sex, and marriage are fundamental aspects of human social development, particularly among college students, as this phase marks a critical period of identity formation and relationship exploration (Arnett, 2000). However, various sociocultural and environmental factors, such as place of residence and religious affiliation, can significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviors in these domains. Despite the growing interest in understanding these influences, there is limited empirical evidence examining how these variables intersect to shape students' relational and marital perspectives.

The residing place of college students—whether in school hostels, private hostels, family houses, or spouses' residences—provides unique social and physical environments that may differently affect their attitudes and behaviors towards romantic relationships, sex, and marriage (Smith & Snell, 2009). For instance, students living in more independent settings, such as private hostels, may have more opportunities for relationship exploration and sexual activity compared to those living under family supervision. Yet, little is known about the extent to which these living arrangements contribute to differences in attitudes or marital intentions.

Similarly, religion plays a pivotal role in shaping values and beliefs about relationships, sex, and marriage. In particular, Christianity and Islam, the two dominant religions in many societies, often provide distinct teachings on these issues (Mahoney, 2010). Additionally, religious beliefs have been shown to influence students' attitudes toward cohabitation and marriage (Britt et al., 2018). While some studies have explored religious influences on sexual and marital behaviors, few have directly compared Christian and Muslim college students' attitudes, leaving a gap in understanding how religion interacts with other factors, such as residence, to influence these outcomes.

Addressing these gaps is crucial, as understanding the nuanced influences of residence and religion on students' relationships, sexual behaviors, and marital attitudes can inform educational and counseling programs in colleges. Furthermore, this knowledge can contribute to broader discussions on how sociocultural and environmental contexts shape relationship development in emerging adulthood.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of residing place and religious affiliation on college students' attitudes and behaviors regarding romantic relationships, sex, and marriage.

Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. Establish if there is no significant difference in college students' romantic relationships, sex, and marriage based on the residing place of students during schooling (that is, school hostel, private hostel, family house, and spouse's residence).
2. Ascertain whether Christian and Muslim college students' do not differ significantly as to their attitudes towards romantic relationships, sex, and marriage.

1.4 Hypotheses of Study

To address the issue of romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marital attitudes among college students in Tamale City, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

1. H_0 There is no significant difference in college students' attitudes towards romantic relationships, sexual orientations, and marriage based on their residing place during schooling (that is, school hostel, private hostel, family house, or spouse's residence).
2. H_0 Christian and Muslim college students have similar attitudes towards romantic relationships, sexual orientations, and marriage.

2. Method

The research utilised a descriptive survey methodology to examine college students' views on love, sexual relationships, and marriage. Descriptive survey research is esteemed for its capacity to collect data that offers a comprehensive overview of existing attitudes, behaviours, and opinions within a designated community (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This methodology is especially successful in practical contexts, as it enables inductive and methodical observation of occurrences to obtain nuanced insights.

The study employed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather extensive data, recognised as effective instruments for descriptive research (Bryman, 2022). Questionnaires facilitated a standardised method for acquiring quantitative data, whereas semi-structured interviews permitted the necessary flexibility to explore the qualitative aspects of participants' experiences. These methodologies allowed the researchers to delineate the traits of prevailing attitudes and define standards for comparison studies. Moreover, the triangulation of data collection methods improved the validity and dependability of the results.

2.1 Area of study

Tamale is an urban center surrounded by rural settlements characterized by elevated population density. The city is situated at an elevation of approximately 600 feet (183 meters) above sea level on a flat terrain, located about 22 miles (35 kilometers) to the east of the White Volta River (Tamale, 2009). It serves as a critical economic and administrative hub for Ghana's three northern regions, functioning as a confluence point for commerce, transportation, and services. The region accounts for over 31% of Ghana's notable landmarks despite having a population of just 2 million people (Abaneh, 2003).

One notable area within the city is Education Ridge, a suburban neighborhood in the northwestern region of Tamale. Spanning approximately 3 square kilometers, Education Ridge hosts a dense cluster of educational institutions. This includes over 20 schools catering to various educational levels, such as kindergartens, junior high schools, senior high schools, teacher training colleges, and a polytechnic (Abaneh, 2003). Moreover, the administrative offices of the only university in the northern region of Ghana are situated within close proximity to the university itself, further emphasizing the educational significance of this area (Abaneh, 2003).

2.2 Population

The target group for this research comprises students enrolled at the University of Development Studies (UDS), Tamale Technical University (TaTU), Nursing Training College Tamale (NTCT), Bagabaga College of Education Tamale (BCE), and Tamale College of Education (TCE). Table 1 displays the target population of tertiary educational establishments used in the investigation.

Table 1: Target Population of College Institutions in Tamale Metropolis: 2020/2021 Academic Year

No.	Name of Educational Institutes	No. Of Students in Second year
1.	University for Development Studies (Tamale Campus)	180
2.	Tamale Technical University	2173
3.	Tamale Nursing Training College	230
4.	Tamale College of Education	283
5.	Bagabaga College of Education	276
Total		3142

Source: Adopted from Agyei-Sarpong (2020/2021)

2.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for the research consisted of 350 students, as previously stated. This number was chosen based on the "Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population" published by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), as referenced by Sarantakos (1993, p. 149). According to the Krejcie and Morgan sample size chart, a sample size of 346 is considered sufficient for conducting research when the population size is 3500. Based on the findings of Agyei-Sarpong (2010, 2024), it is postulated that a sample size of 350 students, randomly selected from a population of 3142 second-year students across five tertiary educational institutes during the 2020/2021 academic year, would provide a substantial and equitable representation. In order to address the potential impact of uneven variances, a sample size of 70 students was chosen from each of the five tertiary educational institutions. This decision was made based on the recognition that the effects of unequal variances are not significant when the sample size is equal (Walpole & Myers, 1985).

Table 2 displays the different educational institutions that were included in the study, together with the corresponding number of participants chosen from each institution. The data shown in Table 2 indicates that an equal number of participants were chosen from each of the five tertiary educational institutions that were included in the research. A total of seventy participants were recruited from a specific group of tertiary educational institutions.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents from Selected College Institutions in Tamale Metropolis

Schools	Frequency	Percent
UDS	70	20.0
NTCT	70	20.0
TCE	70	20.0
BCE	70	20.0
TaTU	70	20.0
Total	350	100.0

Source: Adopted from Agyei-Sarpong (2020/2021)

The study utilised a blend of stratified, purposive, and random sampling methods. Stratified sampling is frequently employed to guarantee that a sample accurately reflects the population by creating separate subgroups for enhanced representation (Bryman, 2016; Etikan et al., 2016). This study categorised the sample into four strata according to specific variables: the highest level of education achieved (diploma or degree), the religious affiliation of participants (Christian, Muslim, traditionalist, or free thinker), the marital status of participants (married or single), the marital status of the participant's parent or guardian (married or single), and the type of residence (private hostel, school hostel, or day student living with guardians or parents).

Creswell (2014) defines purposive sampling as a non-random method in which participants are chosen based on particular characteristics or expertise pertinent to the study. This study employed purposive sampling to intentionally pick five higher institutions situated in the Tamale Metropolitan Region. These colleges were selected because they are the sole accredited educational institutes in the region providing certificate and degree programs. Seventy participants were randomly selected from each university, primarily focussing on second-year students to ensure a broad and representative sample.

The selection of second-year students was based on their prior exposure to one academic year at the higher educational level, which provided them with a valuable foundation to draw from when answering to the survey addressing their attitudes towards love, sexual relations, and marriage. The researchers used purposive sampling in order to pick the participants for the study, specifically focusing on second-year students. The exclusion of first-year students from the research was based on the rationale that they had not yet fully acclimated to the academic and social aspects of campus life. Consequently, their perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage within the context of higher educational institutions may not have been fully developed. The exclusion of third-year students from the study was mostly due to their engagement in test preparations. However, it is worth noting that third-year students at U.D.S. were an exception to this rule. Nevertheless, in order to maintain consistency and comparability, the researcher opted to focus just on second-year students.

2.4 Instruments

The data was collected via a questionnaire. The survey instrument was designed in a systematic manner, allowing participants to choose from a set of predetermined alternatives that best aligned with their replies to the questions. Additionally, the researcher was physically present at each school throughout data collection to verify that participants provided unbiased and independent responses.

Responses from the participants were obtained using a Likert scale consisting of five points. The surveys mostly consist of remarks pertaining to topics such as love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The 51 instruments were organised in a systematic and consistent manner and used straightforward syntax and phrasing that was easily comprehensible to the respondents, so minimising any difficulty they may have had when providing their responses. Each questionnaire consisted of two primary sections, namely parts I and II. Section I addressed the demographic characteristics of the participants. The study primarily examined the following variables: the names of the participants, the higher educational institution they attended, the sorts of degrees they were granted, their gender, age range, the type of hostel they resided in, the marital status of their parents or guardians, and their own marital status. The second part of the study focused on the participants' perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage. This component was further subdivided into three areas, namely sections A, B, and C. The aforementioned areas included the respondent's perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage in that order.

2.4.1 Evaluation of Instrument Validity

The instruments' validity was established through evaluation by research professionals, specifically professors from the Educational Foundation Departments of the University of Cape Coast and the Counselling Centre. The

instruments were altered through correction, deletion, and the incorporation of more appropriate alternatives. Subsequently, the questions underwent a thorough evaluation procedure, during which they were meticulously reviewed and approved by the supervisors to confirm their relevance and validity in both content and appearance. Additionally, the instrument was subjected to a pilot test at the University of Cape Coast.

2.4.2 Evaluation of Instrument Reliability

The study employed Cronbach's alpha coefficient to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. Due to a substantial percentage of the questions being evaluated through a multiple-choice format, especially utilising a five-point Likert scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was deemed the most appropriate metric for evaluating internal consistency.

The choice to employ Cronbach's alpha coefficient was informed by the viewpoint of Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1990), which posits that Cronbach's alpha is suitable for instruments comprising multiple-scored items. McDaniel (1994) posits that the alpha coefficient can be utilised in various assessment formats, encompassing traditional examinations with binary responses (i.e., "correct" or "incorrect") and evaluations featuring response options like "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the instruments was 0.62, signifying an adequate level of reliability for the instrument.

2.4.3 Pilot Study

According to Donald (1990), the importance of doing pilot testing lies in its ability to assist the researcher in determining the feasibility and value of continuing with the project. Additionally, it provides the chance to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of the data gathering tool. Gay (1992) concurred with the notion that a pilot test should be used to modify any questions in the guide that may be deemed ambiguous or elicit unfavourable responses from participants. According to Fraenkel and Warren (2000), doing a "pre-test" of the questionnaire or interview schedule may serve to identify any ambiguities that may exist and determine the clarity of the instrument for the respondents. Therefore, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test at the Kumasi Technical University, Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

The questionnaire used in this research underwent a pilot test on a sample of 50 students, consisting of 25 men and 25 females. The participants were selected using a systematic approach from Valco Hall, located at the University of Cape Coast. The participants from the university had comparable characteristics to those included in the primary research. The primary objective of conducting the pilot test was to ascertain the validity of the instrument to be used in the main investigation. Based on the outcomes of the pre-testing phase, the questions that were not comprehended by the respondents, namely items 10, 31, and 40, were subjected to revision. Additionally, item 14, which had a misspelt word, was rectified.

2.5 The procedure for data collection

The data collection period spanned four months, namely from May to August 2022, to accommodate the variations in academic calendars among the tertiary educational institutions included. The researcher got formally acquainted with the leaders of several institutions via a written correspondence facilitated by the Director of the Counselling Centre at the University of Cape Coast. The researcher further sought the assistance of administrators and educators from several institutions in facilitating the administration of the survey.

All students who were chosen for the study were assembled in a lecture hall at each of the tertiary educational institutions involved in the research. The participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives, after which they were given copies of the research instrument. Participants were advised to engage in individual work. The researcher engaged in active communication with the respondents in order to clarify any potential ambiguities. Additionally, the researcher provided direct supervision to promote autonomous work. The questionnaires were collected from each of the tertiary educational institutions on the same day after the completion of the activity. The purpose of this measure was to guarantee a return rate of 100%.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data collected for the research was subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS 16.0 programme. This analysis included calculating percentages, means, and standard deviation, doing independent-samples t tests, and performing one-way ANOVA. According to the research conducted by William (2006), the independent-samples t test is used to evaluate the statistical significance of the difference between the means of two distinct groups. This analytical approach is suitable in situations when a researcher intends to compare the means of two distinct groups. Given that hypothesis 1 included populations with two independent variables, it was deemed most suitable to use the independent-sample t test. Hypothesis 1 examined independent variables of religious affiliation, specifically comparing individuals who identified as Christians and Muslims.

According to Choudhury (2009), the use of analysis of variance (ANOVA) is applicable in situations involving multiple groups above two. When a researcher is working with a limited number of samples, namely two, the t-test may be used to assess the difference between the means of these samples. However, it is important to note that the reliability of the t-test diminishes when dealing with more than two samples. Consequently, the researcher conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine hypothesis 2, as it involved multiple independent variables. Specifically, school hostel, private hostel, day school, and residing in the family house. Tables were used as a means of strengthening the analysis and enhancing its clarity. The researcher developed a scoring rubric to assess the different replies provided in the surveys.

To simplify identification, a unique code number was assigned to each questionnaire throughout the scoring process. The data obtained from the different items were subjected to coding and subsequent tabulation. The purpose of this document is to provide comprehensive guidance for scoring and calculating complimentary scores for different outcomes. When assigning scores to the questions on the Likert questionnaire using a five-point scale, each item was assigned a specific weight as outlined below:

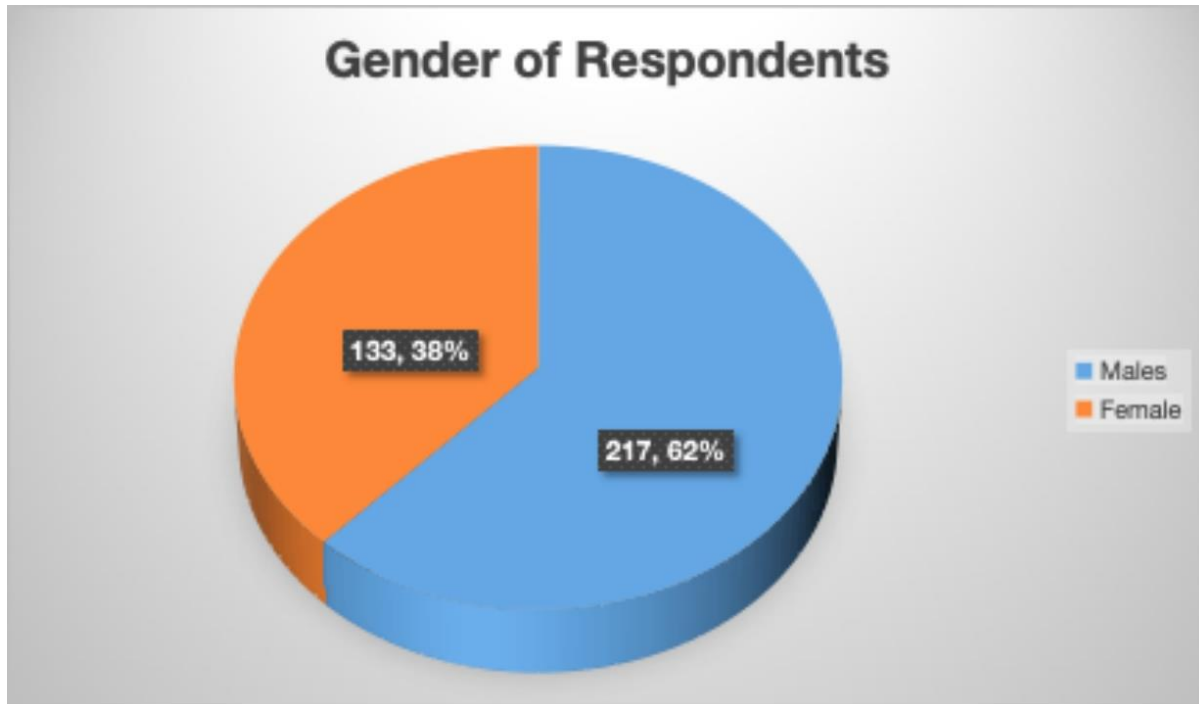
Strongly Agree SA 5
 Agree A 4
 Uncertain U 3
 Disagree D 2
 Strongly Disagree SD 1

A mean score was calculated for each statement using a five-point scale. Participants who achieved mean scores of 2.6 or above were deemed to exhibit agreement with the provided statements, indicating a good attitude. Conversely, participants who obtained mean scores of 2.4 or below were considered to express disagreement with the supplied claims, reflecting a negative attitude. A mean score falling within the range of 2.41 to 2.59 suggests a state of neutrality or uncertainty. These studies allowed the comparison and determination of whether the participants had a favourable or unfavourable disposition towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The discussion regarding the frequency distribution of the responses is based on the assumption that combining the various categories of the five-point Likert scale into three distinct categories, namely agreed (consisting of strongly agree and agree), uncertain, and disagree (comprising strongly disagree and disagree), provides a more coherent representation of the response patterns.

3. Results

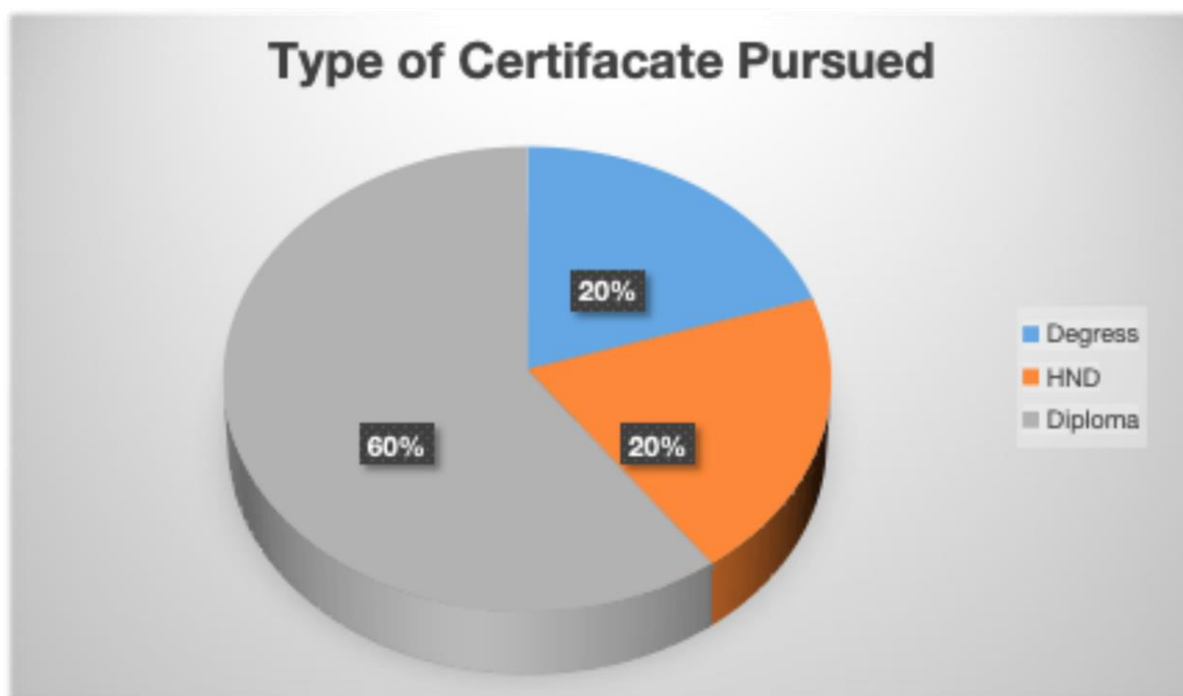
3.1 Analysis of Results of Demographic Data about Respondent

The study involves a sample of 350 respondents from five selected college schools in the Tamale metropolis. Details of frequencies and percentages for the personal information of the students are used, and the data is presented in graphs. Graph 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to their gender.



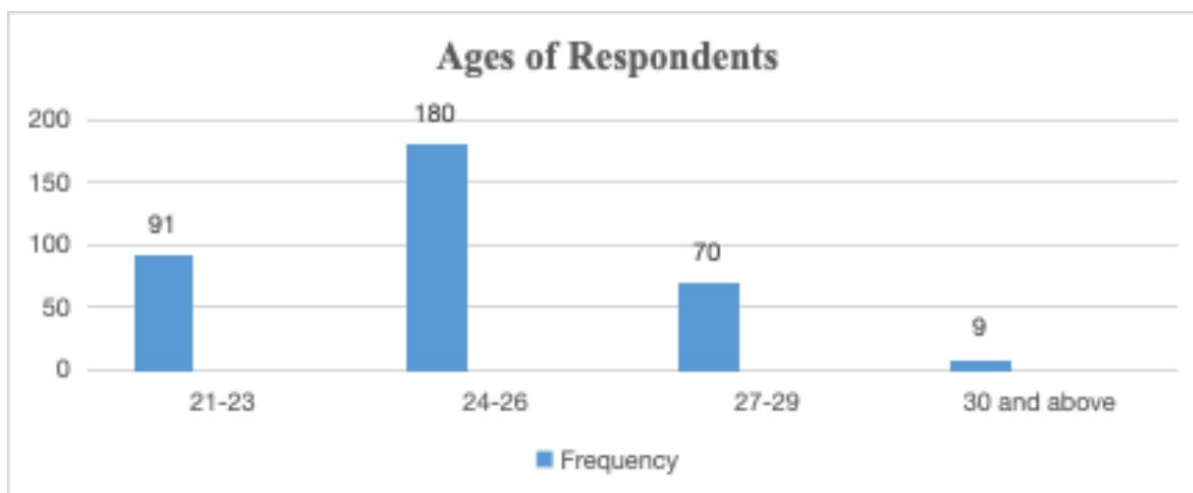
Graph 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Graph 2 displays the distribution of participants based on the kind of certificate sought throughout their educational journey, namely degree, higher national diploma, and diploma. Among the whole sample of 350 participants, it was found that 20% (n=70) were enrolled in degree courses, another 20% (n=70) were pursuing upper national diploma programmes, and the remaining 60% (n=210) were engaged in diploma programmes.



Graph 2: Distribution of Respondents by Certificate Pursued

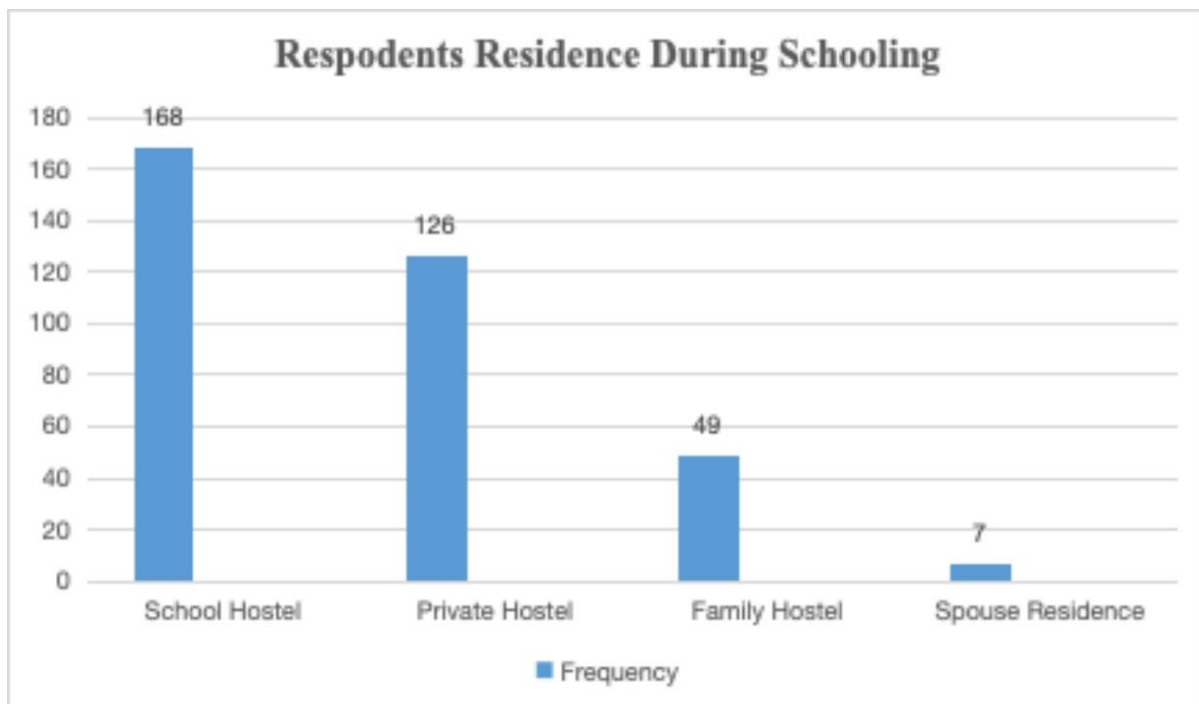
Respondents' ages were further analysed. Graph 3 looks at the distribution of respondents according to age.



Graph 3: Distribution of Respondents by Ages

Graph 3 shows that the modal age group is 24-26. One hundred and eighty students, representing 51.4%, fall within this category. This indicates that most of the respondents were in their early adult years. Only 9 (2.6%) were above 30 years old.

Respondents were further asked to indicate where they stayed during schooling. The details are provided in Graph 4.

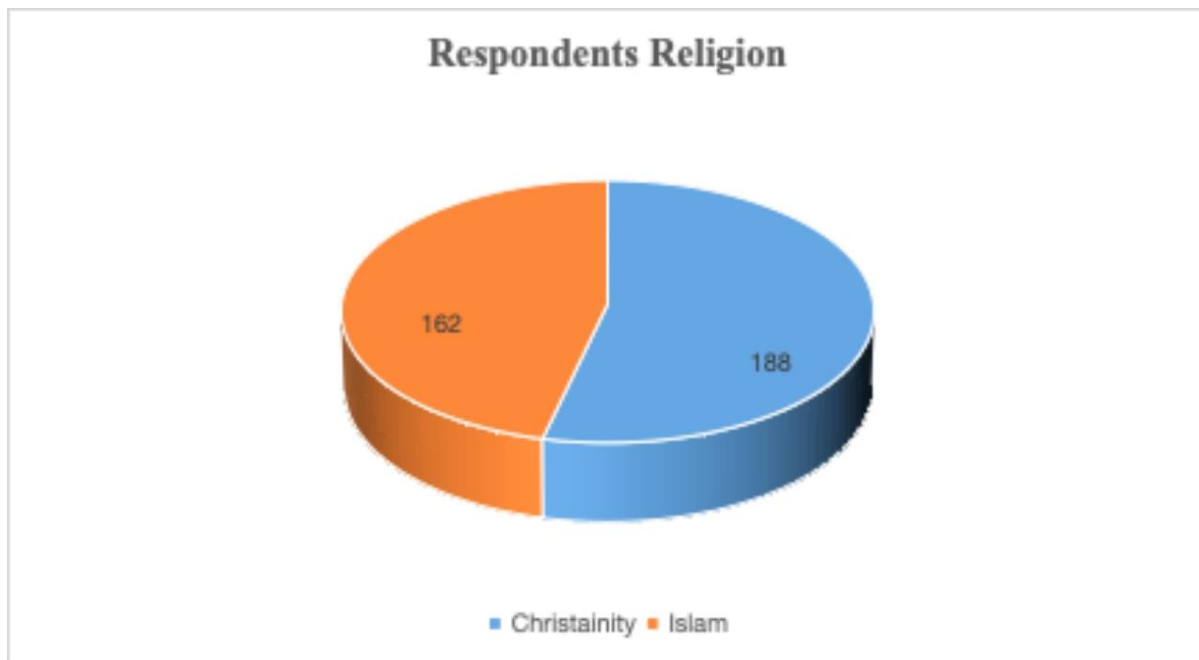


Graph 4: Distribution According to Residence of Respondents During Schooling

When respondents were asked where they stayed during schooling, various responses, as shown in Graph 4, were provided. It is evident from Graph 4 that the majority of respondents, 168 (48%), were staying in school hostels, while 126 (36%) were staying in private hostels. Only 7 (2%) indicated they were staying in the residences of their spouses during schooling. This presupposes that the majority of young adults stay with peers during schooling. From Table 6, it can be seen that 84% (that is, 48% plus 36%) of tertiary students stay mainly with peers.

The study sought to find the marital state of respondents' parents/guardians. The responses reveal that most parents/guardians were married. From Graph 5, 178 (50.9%) were still married, 49 (14%) were single fathers, 21 (6%) were single mothers and 102 (29.1%) were divorced.

Responding to the religion they are affiliated with, 188 (53.7%) indicated they were Christians, and 162 (46.3%) indicated they were Muslims. Graph 7 shows the distribution of respondents according to their religions of affiliation.



Graph 7: Distribution According to Religious Affiliation of Respondents

3.2 Analysis of Results of the Main Data

3.2.1 Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one

The first null hypothesis stated was,

H_0 There is no significant difference in college students' attitude towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage based on the place of residence of students during schooling (that is, school hostel, private hostel, family house, and spouse's residence).

The concern of this hypothesis was to determine whether the residing place of students during schooling is a key factor in respondents' attitudes towards love, sexual relations, and marriage. Table 12 presents the results of the hypothesis testing.

The hypothesis was tested at alpha level 0.05. One-way ANOVA was used to test for the degree of significance for hypothesis 3 since the independent variables were more than two (that is, the school hostel, private hostel, family house, and spouse's residence), as indicated in Graph 4.

Table 5: ANOVA Test Results for Respondents' Attitude Towards Romantic Relationships, Sexual Orientation, and Marriage Based on Place of Residence During Schooling

Variables	Sources	S S	DF	MS	F	Sig.
Place of residence during schooling	Between	13556.770	3	4518.923	7.658	.000
	Within	204160.444	346	590.059		

Source: Fieldwork 2021/2022

Table 5 shows the result of hypothesis 3 and the result revealed p-value to be .000, which is significant at 0.05. Again, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

The second null hypothesis tested was,

H_0 Christian and Muslim tertiary students' do not differ significantly as to their attitude towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage.

The concern of this hypothesis was to find out whether Christians and Muslims differ significantly regarding their attitude toward romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage. Independent-sample t test was employed in testing the hypothesis because the factors employed were two (Christians and Muslims). Table 6 shows the statistical results of the test.

Table 6: Mean Comparison of Independent Sample t-test on Christian and Muslim Tertiary Students' Attitude Towards Romantic Relationships, Sexual Orientation, and Marriage and Marriage

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-value	Sig.
Religious	Christians	188	1.7323	19.3592	348	-.560	.576
Affiliation	Muslims	162	1.7473	30.2615			

Source: Field Work 2021/2022

Table 6 shows the p-value to be .576, more than 0.05, the conventional marker of significance results. Inferring from a p-value of .576, the null hypothesis is accepted.

4. Discussions

4.1 Examination of Demographic Information Regarding Respondents

The research encompasses a sample of 350 participants from five designated colleges within the Tamale metropolis. Graphs illustrate the frequencies and percentages of pupils' personal information.

4.1.1 Respondents categorised by gender

The gender distribution illustrated in Graph 1 indicates that 217 (62%) of the respondents were male, while 133 (38%) were female. In the 2005/2006 academic year, the male to female enrolment ratio was 65:35 in universities and 70:30 in polytechnics, presently designated as Technical Universities (Kwapong, 2007). Multiple research (Evans 1995; Compora 2003; Plummer 2004; Przymus 2004; Agyei-Sarpong 2024) demonstrated that cultural perceptions of women and their productive and reproductive roles influence their engagement in formal education. Society views women primarily as homemakers and carers; hence, any engagement that diverts them from these conventional roles is disapproved of. Consequently, women encounter challenges in pursuing additional education, particularly after adulthood, when they have started to establish children.

4.1.2 Analysis of respondent distribution based on the type of certificate obtained in school

Graph 2 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on the type of credential obtained in school, namely Degree, Higher National Diploma, and Diploma. Of the 350 total responders, 70 (20%) were enrolled in degree programs, 70 (20%) in higher national diploma programs, and 210 (60%) in diploma programs.

4.1.3 Analysis of respondent age distribution

The ages of the respondents were analysed in greater detail. Graph 3 examines the distribution of respondents by age. Graph 3 indicates that the predominant age group is 24-26. One hundred eighty pupils, constituting 51.4%, belong to this category. This signifies that the majority of responders were in early adulthood. Only 9 individuals (2.6%) were above 30 years of age.

4.1.4 Analysis of distribution according to residence of respondents during schooling

Respondents were further asked to indicate where they stay during schooling. The details are provided in Graph 4. When respondents were asked where they stay during schooling, various responses, as shown in Graph 4, were provided. It is evident from Graph 4 that the majority of respondents, 168 (48%), were staying in school hostels, while 126 (36%) were staying in private hostels. Only 7 (2%) indicated they were staying in the residences of their spouses during schooling. This presupposes that the majority of young adults stay with peers during schooling. From Table 6, it can be seen that 84% (that is, 48% plus 36%) of tertiary students stay mainly with peers. This makes peers a key factor in this study in that attitudes are acquired sometimes through direct contact (Coon, 1996), in this case, with peers. The social learning theories support this viewpoint.

Inferring from Bandura (1977), individuals tend to use the behaviour of others as a paradigm for their own behaviours. That is to say; students use the behaviour of other students (peers) as a paradigm for their own behaviour. Hence, the attitude toward romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage of respondents, to a large extent, depends on the prevailing situation within their peers. This assertion is also supported by Oskamp and Mindick (1991) and Agyei-Sarpong (2024).

4.1.5 Analysis of distribution according to religious affiliation of respondents

Responding to the religion they are affiliated with, 188 (53.7%) indicated they were Christians, and 162 (46.3%) indicated they were Muslims. Graph 7 shows the distribution of respondents according to their religions of affiliation.

4.2 Discussion of the Main Data

The present discourse revolves on the examination and analysis of several hypotheses.

4.2.1 Hypothesis One

The objective of this study was to investigate if the geographical location of students' residency throughout their educational years is a significant determinant of their views regarding romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage. The findings of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 5.

The hypothesis was evaluated using a significance threshold of 0.05. Hypothesis 3 was tested for significance using a one-way ANOVA due to the presence of several independent factors, including school hostel, private hostel, family dwelling, and spouse's domicile, as shown in Graph 4. The findings of hypothesis 3 are shown in Table 5, indicating a significant p-value of .000 at a significance level of 0.05. Once again, the null hypothesis has been rejected. Hence, it may be inferred that the location of residence of individuals throughout their educational years has a pivotal role in shaping their perspectives on romantic partnerships, sexual orientation, and marital unions. The formation of personal relationships throughout the transition to adulthood may be influenced by social status (Meier & Allen, 2008). According to their assertion, individuals belonging to the lower socioeconomic class, particularly women, may possess intense aspirations for matrimony. However, they encounter challenges in fulfilling the typical conditions associated with marriage. This implies that one's socioeconomic standing has the potential to influence their perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage.

According to Oswald (2022), the geographical location where individuals reside while attending school might have an impact on their views about love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The research conducted by the author examined the correlation between parental relationships and the marital perspectives, attitudes, and relationships of college students. The findings indicated that individuals who resided in rural regions during their educational years exhibited more traditional viewpoints regarding love, sexual relationships, and marriage compared to their counterparts residing in urban areas. This implies that the socio-cultural context in which individuals are raised might influence their attitudes and anticipations towards romantic partnerships.

In general, the findings of the study indicate that the geographical location in which individuals reside throughout their educational years may have a substantial influence on the perspectives of college students about romantic partnerships, sexual orientations, and marital commitments. The views in question may also be influenced by factors such as socioeconomic level, familial environment, and marital status.

4.2.2 Hypothesis Two

The objective of this study was to examine potential differences between Christians and Muslims with respect to their views about romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage. The hypothesis was tested using an independent-sample t test due to the presence of two distinct groups, Christians and Muslims. Table 13 presents the statistical findings obtained from the test.

Table 6 illustrates that the calculated p-value is above the threshold of 0.05, which is often regarded as the usual level of statistical significance. Based on the obtained p-value of .576, the null hypothesis is deemed to be accepted. This study suggests that there is a lack of substantial disparity between those identifying as Christians and Muslims in terms of their perspectives on love, sexual relationships, and marriage. Thus, it may be inferred that religion, namely Christianity and Islam, does not significantly influence the views of university students towards love, sexual relationships, and marriage. The present discovery, which suggests that religion does not have a significant role in shaping the views of college students regarding romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage, contradicts the conclusions found by McFarland, Uecker, and Regnerus (2011).

The research proposes that religion has the potential to influence individuals' sexual views and actions, extending beyond the context of marriage. In a study conducted by Bozhabadi et al. (2020) titled "The Relationship between Religious Orientation and Promotion of Sexual Satisfaction and Marital Satisfaction in Women of Reproductive Age," findings indicated a noteworthy and favourable correlation between religious orientation and both sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Religious devotion plays a significant role in the promotion of both sexual and marital fulfilment since higher levels of religious commitment are associated with greater levels of satisfaction in both domains. Nevertheless, there is a lack of consensus about the association between religion and sexual pleasure, as shown by the divergent findings reported by Bozhabadi et al. (2020). In general, while religion may have an influence on individuals' perspectives towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage, it does not emerge as a prominent determinant of college students' views toward these subjects.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section summarises the major findings of the study and draws a conclusion. It then makes recommendations and suggests areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

The study - Romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marital Attitudes among College Students in Tamale City: A case study in the Tamale metropolis, Northern Region of Ghana, was conducted specifically to study the correlations between romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marital attitudes among college students.

The following null hypotheses were also tested:

1. H_0 There is no significant difference in college students' attitude towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage based on the residing place of students during schooling (that is, school hostel, private hostel, family house and spouse's residence).
2. H_0 Christian and Muslim college students' do not differ significantly as to their attitude towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage.

The sample of the study comprises of 350 respondents selected from five tertiary educational institutions in the Tamale metropolis of Ghana. Respondents were obtained through stratified, purposive and random sampling procedures.

5.2 Main Findings

The research revealed a number of findings with respect to the tertiary students' attitudes toward love, sexual relations, and marriage. These findings, which have significant implications, are summarized in this chapter.

The main findings of the four null hypotheses were as follows:

1. The results of the third hypothesis also led to the conclusion that the residing place of respondents' during schooling is also a key factor in determining college students' attitudes towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage. The results revealed the existence of significant differences in college students' attitudes towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage and their residing place during schooling (that is school hostel, private hostel, family house and spouse's residence).
2. The results of the fourth hypothesis uncovered that there is no significant difference between Christians and Muslims regarding their attitude toward romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage. It was therefore concluded that Christianity and Islamic religions are not key factors regarding college students' attitudes towards romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage.

5.3 Conclusions

The aforementioned findings led to the following conclusions:

1. The geographical location of students' residences at higher educational institutions throughout their schooling has been shown to have a statistically significant impact on their attitudes about romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage.
2. There is no statistically significant disparity seen in the views regarding romantic relationships, sexual orientation, and marriage among college students who identify as Christian and those who identify as Muslim.

5.4 Recommendations

1. Implement Location-Based Interventions: Educational policymakers must devise and execute programs that mitigate the effects of geographical inequities on students' social and emotional development. These interventions may encompass workshops and counselling services designed to assist students in addressing difficulties stemming from their residence's impact on perceptions of romantic relationships, sex, and marriage.
2. Encourage Inclusive Discourse on Relationships and Marriage: Educational institutions ought to facilitate open and inclusive dialogues around romantic relationships, sex, and marriage. This can be accomplished by incorporating these subjects into student forums, seminars, or courses, highlighting comprehension and respect for other perspectives.

3. **Promote Interfaith Understanding:** Despite the absence of notable differences in perspectives between Christian and Muslim students, initiatives should continue to emphasise unity and encourage interfaith dialogue. Encouraging pupils to express their viewpoints may enhance mutual respect and understanding.

4. **Mitigate Socioeconomic Disparities:** Governments and higher education institutions must allocate resources to alleviate the influence of geographical location on students' comprehensive development. These may encompass scholarship opportunities, access to mental health resources, and professional mentorship programs.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

1. This study emphasises the significance of geographical context in influencing students' social attitudes, offering novel insights into how location affects perceptions of romantic relationships, sex, and marriage.

2. **Interfaith Similarities:** The results indicate that religious affiliation, particularly among Christian and Muslim college students, does not yield statistically significant variations in perspectives on key social conceptions. This enhances the comprehension of the interaction between religion and social attitudes, contesting the presumption of significant diversity based solely on faith.

3. **Intersection of Education and Socialisation:** This research highlights the relationship between higher education and individual attitudes, emphasising the dual function of educational institutions as venues for both intellectual and social advancement.

5.6 Suggestions for Additional Investigation

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Future studies may investigate the impact of geographical location on students' opinions over time, monitoring shifts from youth to maturity.

2. **Expanded Demographic Scope:** Broadening the study to encompass students from diverse religious affiliations, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds may yield a more thorough comprehension of the elements affecting social attitudes.

3. **Comparative Analysis Across Nations:** Executing analogous studies in different nations may illuminate the universality or particularity of these findings, thus enhancing cross-cultural research in education and social psychology.

4. **Impact of Urban and Rural Dynamics:** Additional research might examine how urban and rural settings uniquely influence students' perceptions, resource accessibility, and exposure to varied perspectives.

5. **Psychological and Emotional Impacts:** Research on the psychological consequences of geographic disparities on students' self-esteem and interpersonal relationships may provide profound insights into the implications for well-being.

In conclusion, it is important for the next research endeavours to acknowledge and address the constraints inherent in the present study while using its results as a foundation to enhance our comprehension of the variables that impact the views of university students towards romantic partnerships, sex, and matrimonial unions.

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Ethics approval: I got ethical clearance from the College of Education Studies Ethical Review Board at the University of Cape Coast prior to conducting the study. Additionally, consent was obtained from participants prior to the initiation of the study. All stakeholders and participants were informed of the study's objectives, purposes, and prospective publication of its findings. Participants were assured access to a copy of the final product upon request. Research participants were given anonymity and secrecy about the distribution of the study's findings.

Data Availability: All data generated or analysed in this study are available for sharing upon request. Interested parties are invited to contact the respective authors, who will ensure the fast and proper transmission of the data.

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APPENDICES

Appendix D

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

TOPIC: EXPLORING THE CONSEQUENCE OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS, SEXUAL ACTIVITIES, AND MARITAL ATTITUDES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Thank you for considering participating in this survey on the topic stated above. Without your participation, the valuable information generated from this investigation would not be possible. Please remember that your participation in this research endeavour is confidential and anonymous.

The research is being carried out as partial fulfilment of an M.A thesis at the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential; do not put your name on any part of the survey. No one other than the researchers involved with this project will have access to the completed questionnaires. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge.

On the following pages, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that assesses your attitude towards Love, Sex and Marriage. There are no known risks associated by participating in this survey. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without receiving any negative consequences. Your completion of this survey indicates your willingness to participate. Any questions regarding the conduct of this research or your rights as a research participant may be directed to the researchers on telephone number 0244715660. We anticipate your usual co-operation.

DIRECTION: for each item, tick [☐] the appropriate box which indicates your choice or the appropriate response(s) in writing.

PART I

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENT

1. Name of your school?.....
2. The level of certification you are pursuing

Masters degree [☐]

Degree [☐]

Higher National Diploma [☐]

Diploma [☐]

Others specify.....

3. Gender

Male [☐]

Female [☐]

4. Age

5. I live with mywhen in school

Parents []

Father only []

Mather only []

Guardians []

Husband []

Wife []

Boy friend []

Girl friend []

Others specify.....

6. Marital status of parents?

Single Mather []

Single father []

Divorce []

Married []

Others specify.....

7. Are you from a monogamous home?

Yes []

No []

8. Presently, I am resident in

School hostel []

Private hostel []

Family hostel []

My spouse residence []

9. Marital status

Married []

Single []

Divorce []

Engaged []

Others specify.....

10. Religious affiliation

Christian []

Islam []

Traditional []

Others specify

11. Your tribe

Akan []

Morshi- dagomba []

Ga/ Adange []

Ewe []

Others specify.....

PART II
ATTITUDE TOWARDS ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP
SECTION A

Regarding your attitude towards love, you are required to respond strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Uncertain (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) to the following questions by ticking [☐] the cell that indicates your degree of agreement.

	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
12	Only date some one you love					
13	Sex is a demonstration of love between a couple					
14	Love is important in sexual relationship					
15	I believe that it is important to be in love before having sex.					
16	You would not divorce your married partner for some you love					
17	If you love your partner wait till you marry					

SECTION B: ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEX

Regarding your attitude towards sex, you are required to respond strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Uncertain (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) to the following questions by ticking [☐] the cell that indicates your degree of agreement.

	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
18	Sex is important in a relationship					
19	Any type of homosexual behaviour is wrong.					
20	Bi-sexuality is acceptable.					
21	Pornographic materials cause males to be sexually aggressive.					
22	Sexual intercourse between same genders should be illegal.					
23	I believe that premarital sex increases the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases.					
24	A person's decision to engage in premarital sex is greatly influenced by culture.					
25	Participation in premarital sex promotes promiscuity.					
26	Premarital sex is a part of a normal relationship.					
27	Having sexual partners before marriage is natural.					
28	Premarital sex is acceptable with only one person.					
29	Premarital sex happens because of peer pressure.					

30	Premarital sex can lead to a healthy relationship between two individuals.					
31	Premarital sex is a good way to get to know someone on a deeper level.					
32	Premarital sex shows a commitment to one another.					
33	Premarital sex could ruin a relationship.					
34	Premarital sex is acceptable if you love your partner.					
35	There is nothing wrong with premarital sex.					
36	Premarital sex helps you pick a partner for marriage.					
37	Premarital sex causes an increase in teen pregnancy.					
38	Premarital sex is acceptable with contraceptives.					
39	There can be negative consequences when you have premarital sex.					

SECTION C ATTITUDE TOWARDS MARRIAGE

Regarding your attitude towards marriage, you are required to respond strongly Agree(SA), Agree(A), Uncertain (U), Disagree(D) and Strongly Disagree(SD) to the following questions by ticking [☐] the cell that indicates your degree of agreement.

	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
40	Couples who engage in premarital sex are less likely to cheat on their partners in marriages					
41	Premarital sex establishes a closer relationship before marriage					
42	I recommend marriage with all qualities without love					
43	If love disappears from marriage make a clean break					
44	A woman who is not a virgin is less desirable as a marital partner					
45	Trial marriage is good					
46	There is nothing wrong with living together with your partner (cohabitation) before marriage					
47	Individuals should remain a virgin until marriage					

48	Practicing abstinence until marriage makes a stronger marriage					
49	Sex after marriage is worth waiting for					
50	Premarital sex can cause damage to future marriages					
51	Premarital sex devalues sex after marriage					

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9403-2668?lang=en>