

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF MARRIAGE PARTNERS: THE
CASE OF FISHER FOLKS AT POASE
(NEW TAKORADI)**



MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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(NEW TAKORADI)**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Social Studies Education,
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of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
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NOVEMBER, 2024

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature.....

Date.....

Supervisor's Declaration

I, hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Ignatius Joseph Obeng

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved husband, Mr. Ebenezer Amissah Krah and our children.



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I wish to convey my gratitude to various individuals who supported me to complete this work. Firstly, I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Almighty God, for giving me protection, wisdom and journey mercy to successfully complete the work.

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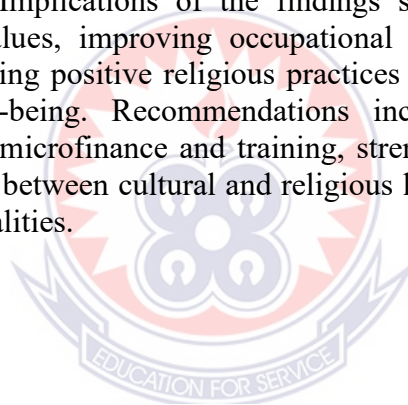
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMDRU:	Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Unit
PNDC:	Provisional National Defense Counsel
STMA:	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly



ABSTRACT

The purpose of selecting a life partner is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon deeply influenced by cultural, social, economic and personal factors. The study sought to explore the factors that influence the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi). Specifically, the study sought to: examine the influence of cultural values on marriage partner choice, explore the influence of occupation on marriage partner choice, assess the role of education in marriage partner choice and examine the role of religion in marriage partner choice. A qualitative research approach with an exploratory descriptive design was employed for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select twenty participants and data for the study was collected using a semi-structured interview guide. The study revealed that cultural values significantly shape partner choices, as fisherfolks often prefer partners from similar cultural backgrounds to ensure harmony. Also, occupation and economic stability were critical determinants, with job security influencing marital decisions. Again, education emerged as both a transformative and moderating factor, while religion strongly guided compatibility and family approval in marriages. Based on the findings, the study concludes that these factors collectively sustain social cohesion and continuity among fisherfolks at Poase. Implications of the findings suggest that policies aimed at preserving cultural values, improving occupational stability, expanding access to education and reinforcing positive religious practices can enhance marriage stability and community well-being. Recommendations include empowering fisherfolks economically through microfinance and training, strengthening educational outreach and fostering dialogue between cultural and religious leaders to harmonise traditional values with modern realities.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Marriage, a legally and socially sanctioned union, usually between a man and a woman that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitudes that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners and accords status to their off-springs, thus if any. Marriage is also a fundamental social institution which serves as a cornerstone in shaping the lives of individuals and the fabric of communities worldwide (Ansari & Khan, 2018; Donnelly et al., 2020; Osei-Tutu & Arthur, 2022). Marriage is an ordained institution established by God as well as the culture of any society in a bid to bring a long-lasting bond between a man and a woman for pleasure, procreation, companionship and sustenance (Animasahun, 2011; Adelabu, 2017). The universality of marriage within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions which it provides, including sexual gratification, which provides opportunity for the married man and woman to enjoy sex for pleasure and procreation.

Married couples are not allowed to have sex outside marriage because of the evils likely to result from such sexual encounters (Acheampong, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2021). In addition, division of labour between sexes, economic production and consumption among members of the family work to promote their economic and social activities with the aim of solving and satisfying members immediate economic and social needs (Dow et al. 2016; Phiri et al. 2023). This is done through the harvest of physical and mental efforts and the satisfaction of personal needs for affection, status and companionship. Perhaps most importantly, the major functions of marriage include education and socialization, as well as the regulation of lines of decent (Cheung & Park, 2019; Lee &

Kim, 2019). Over time, marriage has taken a great number of forms, some of which have been found to exist in all human societies, past and present. The importance of marriage can be seen in the elaborate and complex laws and rituals surrounding it (Pulungan et al., 2019). Although these laws and rituals are as varied and numerous as human, social and cultural organizations. The main legal function of marriage is to ensure the rights of the partner with respect to each other and to ensure the rights and define the relationships of children within a community. Marriage has historically conferred a legitimate status on the offsprings, which entitle them to the various privileges set down by the traditions of a particular society, including the rights of inheritance (Ciftci et al., 2023). Furthermore, in most societies, marriage also establish the permissible social relations allowed for offspring, including the acceptable selection of future spouses (Amoah & Asante, 2023).

Until the late 20th century, marriage was rarely a matter of free choice. In some societies, love between spouses came to be associated with marriage, but in the western cultures (as the novel writers such as Henry James and Edith Wharton attest) romantic love was not the primary motive for matrimony in most eras, and one's marriage partner was carefully chosen (Coontz, 2020; Hirsch & Wardlow, 2019). For instance, some forms of marriage include: Endogamy, the practice of marrying someone from within one's own tribe or group, is the oldest social regulation of marriage. When the forms of communication with outside groups are limited, endogamous marriage is a natural consequence. Even today, cultural pressures to marry within one's social, economic and ethnic groups are still very strongly enforced in some societies (Allendorf & Pandian, 2019; Barros & Berger, 2021). By contrast, exogamy, the practice of marrying outside the group, is found in societies in which kinship relations are complex, thus barring from marriage large groups who may trace their lineage to a common ancestor (Jones,

2018). Similarly, in societies in which the large or extended family remains the basic unit, marriages are usually arranged by the family. The assumption is that love between the partners comes after marriage, and much thought is given to the socio-economic advantage, accruing to the larger family from the match (Albrecht et al., 2021; Yabiku & Gager, 2020). On the other hand, in societies in which the small or the nuclear family predominates, young adults usually choose their own mates. It is assumed that love precedes and determines marriage, and less thought is normally given to the socio-economic aspects of the match (Dommaraju, 2020; Banerjee et al., 2022).

Clearly, choosing one's partner for intimacy and or courtship is often a tough decision to make especially in this life. The choice of marriage partners or mate selection as popularly called in the literature, refers to the decisions that a mature male or female takes when selecting marital partner. According to Adelabu (2017), choosing a marital partner is not necessarily a social need but also a way of increasing humanity through procreation. Smith (2007; Becker, 2019) also assert that choosing one's marital partner is compulsory and integral part of family life, which is highly valued by parents, families, friends and well-wishers. Indeed, the process of selecting a life partner is intricately woven into the intricate tapestry of cultural, social, economic and personal contexts, reflecting the dynamic nature of human relationships and understanding the dynamics of mate selection is crucial for unravelling the complexities that underlie the choices individuals make in pursuit of lifelong companionships.

To begin with, cultural values play a pivotal role in guiding the mate selection process. Cultural norms dictate acceptable qualities and backgrounds deemed suitable for a prospective spouse. These values are often transmitted across generations, creating continuity and stability in marriage partner choice (Čvorović & Coe, 2019; Zhou, 2023).

In particular, in fishing communities, cultural practices and the authority of traditional leader's further shape marriage decisions (Pulungan et al., 2019; Amoah & Asante, 2023). In addition to cultural factors, occupation is also a critical factor. In fishing communities, occupation influences economic stability and social identity. Economic stability and job security are essential in partner selection, with studies showing that individuals often prioritize partners who can ensure financial security (Dow et al., 2016; Ombere, 2018). For fisher folks, unpredictable fishing incomes make occupational stability particularly vital (Fraboni & Vitali, 2019; Koomson, 2020). Furthermore, education strongly shapes marriage choices. Education exposes individuals to broader social values, aspirations, and opportunities, leading to evolving standards in partner selection. Research shows that higher education promotes autonomy in partner choice and challenges traditional norms (Phiri et al., 2023; Sakti et al., 2023). Educational homogamy, where partners seek similar educational backgrounds, is increasingly common (Cheung & Park, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2019).

Finally, religion provides moral and spiritual guidance that shapes marital choices. Religious compatibility is essential for marital harmony, as many communities emphasize endogamy to preserve faith and values. Studies highlight that religion significantly shapes expectations for partner selection (Koenig, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2021; Carvalho et al., 2021; Ciftci et al., 2023).

In the coastal community of Poase (New Takoradi), nestled within Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana, the significance of mate selection is particularly pronounced within the context of the fishing industry. Fisher folks in this community navigate a distinct set of dynamics that not only influence their livelihoods, but also shape the criteria they consider when choosing a marriage partner. The

intersection of cultural traditions, social structures, economic conditions and personal aspirations creates a unique backdrop against which the choices of life partners are made.

Specifically, cultural values play a pivotal role in guiding the mate selection process among the fisher folks in Poase (New Takoradi). The rich cultural heritage of the community intertwines with the beliefs and practices that govern marriage. Cultural norms dictate the acceptable qualities, characteristics, and backgrounds deemed suitable for a prospective spouse. These values are often transmitted across generations, creating a sense of continuity and stability in the mate selection criteria. According to Smith and Brown (2017), cultural values influence on mate selection are deeply ingrained and contribute to the preservation of societal norms. In Poase (New Takoradi), the fishing community's cultural dynamics may manifest in the preference for partners who share similar cultural backgrounds, adhere to traditional practices, or contribute to the continuity of cultural heritage within families.

The fishing industry, being a predominant economic activity in Poase (New Takoradi), exerts a substantial influence on the factors considered during mate selection. Economic stability, financial security and the nature of one's occupation often emerge as critical determinants in the decision-making process. Research by Becker (2019) suggests that economic factors significantly impact mate preferences, particularly in communities where livelihoods are closely tied to specific industries. In the context of Poase (New Takoradi), the unpredictable nature of fishing as an occupation may contribute to the emphasis placed on economic stability when choosing a life partner. Individuals may prioritize mates with a stable income or those engaged in complementary occupations that provide a diversified economic foundation for family. The tight-knit nature of

fishing communities fosters unique social structures that shape the mate selection process. Social networks, community expectations, and inter-personal relationships in the fishing community create a web of influence on individuals' choices. Studies by Murdock (2018) highlights the role of social structures in mate selection, emphasizing the significance of community expectations and approval. As a result, in Poase (New Takoradi), the close proximity and interdependence among community members may contribute to a communal approach to mate selection. Individuals may consider the perceptions and opinions of their peers, family members and community leaders when making decisions about potential life partners. Beyond external influences, personal aspirations and individual preferences also play a vital role in mate selection among the fisher folks in Poase (New Takoradi). While cultural, economic and social factors provide a framework for decision-making, personal values, goals and desires shape the criteria individuals look for in a life partner. Research by Fletcher et al. (2020) underscores the importance of personal aspirations in mate selection, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between individual and external influences.

Therefore, in Poase (New Takoradi), individuals may seek partners who align with their personal aspirations, whether they are shared interests, life goals, or compatibility in values. Overall, the evolving nature of societal norms and the increasing recognition of individuals contribute to the fluidity of aspirations in the mate selection process. To conclude, the background to the study illuminates the multifaceted nature of mate selection among the fisher folks in Poase (New Takoradi). The cultural, economic, social and personal dimensions intricately interweave, creating a rich tapestry that defines the criteria individuals consider when choosing a life partner. By delving into these unique dynamics, this research sought to unravel the complexities and nuances that underpin mate selection in Poase (New Takoradi), contributing to deeper

understanding of the factors influencing marriage choice of partners among the fisher folks.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The process of selecting a life partner is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon deeply influenced by cultural, social, economic and personal factors. The fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi) make marriage decisions, balancing traditional customs, contemporary ideals and shifting socio-economic factors. While extensive research has been conducted on mate selection in various cultural contexts, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the determinants of marriage partner choices among the fisherfolks in the (Poase) New Takoradi Township. This gap in research is particularly significant considering the distinct dynamics of the fisherfolks and the potential impact of the maritime environment on mate selection criteria.

Despite the global significance of fishing communities and their unique socio-economic characteristics, there is limited empirical studies that specifically focus on the determinants of marriage partner choices within fishing communities in Ghana. Existing research on mate selection tends to generalise findings across diverse occupational groups or cultural contexts, overlooking the specific nuances that may characterize the mate selection processes among fisher-folks. The fishing industry, as the predominant economic activity in Poase (New Takoradi), has the potential to significantly impact the criteria individuals use when choosing their life partners. Economic stability and the nature of one's occupation are known to be influential factors in mate selection (Becker, 2019). In the context of Poase (New Takoradi), where the unpredictability of fishing as an occupation introduces unique challenges, understanding how economic factors determine selection criteria become crucial. The

limited research in this area within the context of Ghana hinders a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between economic conditions and mate's selection dynamics among the fisher folks.

The maritime environment of New Takoradi introduces a set of challenges and opportunities that may distinguish mate selection within this setting from other communities. The physical demands of the fishing industry, coupled with the uncertainties and risks associated with maritime activities, may introduce unique factors that influence individuals' preferences in a life partner. Research by Smith and Brown (2017) suggest that environmental factors can shape cultural values and consequently, mate selection criteria. The limited research on fisherfolks in New Takoradi impedes the understanding of how fisherfolks interacts with cultural dynamics to influence mate selection.

An exploration of the factors that guide marriage partner choice among fisherfolks is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in New Takoradi. The fishing industry is not only an economic endeavour but also a central component of the community's identity and way of life. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of mate selection factors is necessary to inform policies, interventions, and community development initiatives that are tailored to the unique needs of fisher folks. Understanding mate selection criteria has broader implications for the well-being of individuals, families, and the community as a whole. The stability and success of marriages within the fishing community can impact social cohesion, economic productivity, and the overall quality of life.

Therefore, the limited research on this specific aspect of fisher folk dynamics in Poase (New Takoradi) have created a significant gap on the subject matter and hinders the

development of targeted strategies for enhancing community well-being. The limited research on the determinants of marriage partner choices among fisher folks in New Takoradi represents a notable gap in the existing literature. This research was, therefore, designed to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive exploration of the factors that influence mate selection in the fishing community, considering the economic, environmental and cultural dynamics at play.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the factors influencing the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks in Poase (New Takoradi). To provide insights into the social dynamics of marriage in Poase (New Takoradi), with potential implications for community development, family life, and the overall well-being of individuals in the fishing industry.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- (i) examine the influence of cultural values on marriage choice of partners among the fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi);
- (ii) explore the influence of occupation on marriage choice of partners among the fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi);
- (iii) assess the role of education on the marriage choice of partners among the fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi); and
- (iv) examine the role of religion on marriage choice of partners among the fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi).

1.5 Research Questions

The study would address the following research questions:

1. What role do cultural values play in influencing the choice of marriage partners among fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi)?
2. What role does occupation play in influencing the choice of marriage partners among fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi)?
3. How does education influence the choice of marriage partners among fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi) fishing community?
4. How does religion affect the choice of marriage among the fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi)?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research on exploring the factors influencing the choice of marriage partner among fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi) holds immense significance across various dimensions, ranging from academic contributions to practical implications for community well-being and policy implementation. The primary beneficiaries of the findings of this study are community members, fisherfolk families and policymakers. The findings of the study would significantly contribute to the academic discourse on marriage partner selection by offering a nuanced exploration of dynamics within a fishing community. While existing literature provides insights into mate selection factors in diverse cultural and occupational settings, there is a scarcity of research specific to fisherfolks. The unique socio-economic and environmental factors that characterize the fishing industry create a distinct context for mate selection, making the findings of this study valuable for scholars in the fields of social studies. The academic contribution extends to the enrichment of theoretical frameworks that guide the understanding of mate selection. By uncovering the specific factors influencing partner

choice at Poase (New Takoradi), the outcome of the study may contribute to the refinement and development of theories that consider the inter-sectionality of occupation, cultural context, and environmental conditions in shaping individuals' preferences in a life partner.

The findings of this research would offer practical insights that can inform policymakers on issues related to family dynamics, community development, and social welfare at Poase (New Takoradi). Understanding the factors influencing marriage choice of partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi) is crucial for developing policies that are tailored to the specific needs of the fishing community. Social workers, equipped with the knowledge generated by this research, can develop culturally sensitive interventions. These interventions may include counselling services that address the unique challenges faced by fisher folks and programs aimed at strengthening family bonds within the community.

Policymakers can use the findings from the study to design interventions that address the unique challenges faced by fisher folks in their pursuit of stable and fulfilling family lives. For instance, policies aimed at enhancing economic stability within the fishing industry may positively influence mate selection criteria related to financial security. Additionally, initiatives focused on preserving and celebrating cultural values may contribute to the well-being of families within the fishing community. The results would help community leaders and social workers play a vital role in supporting the well-being of individuals and families. The study's findings can serve as a resource for community leaders at Poase (New Takoradi) to better understand the factors that contribute to successful marriages within the fishing community. Insights into cultural preferences, economic considerations, and impact of the maritime environment can

guide community leaders in fostering an environment that supports healthy relationships and family life.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to the fishing community of Poase (New Takoradi) in Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. The focus on this specific geographic area cultured for an in-depth exploration of factors that influenced mate selection within the context of the local fishing industry. While the findings may have broader implications, the geographical scope was intentionally limited to ensure a detailed and context-specific investigation.

1.8 Limitations

Limitations, according to Maxwell (2017) are conditions beyond researcher's control which can influence the generalizability and validity of the study's conclusion. Similarly, Creswell (2015) opines that limitations are the conditions beyond the control of the researcher which potentially could place a restriction on the conclusions of the study and its application. Using the metropolis that is under the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) in the Western Region of Ghana will limit the overall generalization of the study. This study was limited to qualitative approach and due to that, data for the study was generated from only a limited number of twenty (20) participants hence the findings of the study cannot be generalized. Also, the instrument used in gathering the data could not cover wide range of issues for the participants to respond to. In view of that there could have been issues of interest or related to the determinants of marriage partner choice of fisher folks in the metropolis. This limits the scope of the study and its outcomes. Also, the study only focused on the metropolis without considering other towns for comparison.

1.9 Definition of Terms

- (i) Fisher folks: In the context of the study, community members of Poase whose livelihoods are actively engaged in fishing activities, including fish trading, processing and boat maintenance.
- (ii) Factors in Marriage Partner Selection: In this study, it refers to the social, cultural, economic, educational, and religious elements that influence individuals' decisions when choosing a spouse.
- (iii) Marriage Partner Selection: In the context of this study, it refers to the process through which individuals choose their spouses, guided by cultural, occupational, educational, and religious factors. It involves criteria such as compatibility, stability, and alignment with community norms.
- (iv) Cultural values: The beliefs, traditions and social norms that are shared by a community and passed down through generations. In Poase, cultural values influence many aspects of life, including marriage and may include factors such as clan, affiliation, family expectations and community approval of marriage partners. In the context of the study, the shared beliefs, customs, and traditions of fisherfolks at Poase.
- (v) Economic factors: In the context of this study relates to finances, income, and occupation that influence decision making.
- (vi) Occupational Factors: In this study, it is defined as the influence of individuals' economic activities particularly fishing, fish processing, and trading on marital decisions. They are measured in terms of income stability, job security, and perceived ability to support household welfare.
- (vii) Educational Factors: In this study, it refers to the influence of formal education on values, exposure and preferences in partner selection. They

are reflected in how the level of education influences aspirations, openness to modern criteria in mate selection, and expectations of compatibility based on educational attainment.

- (viii) Religious Factors: In the context of this study, it refers to the role of faith, doctrines and religious practices in shaping partner selection, emphasizing compatibility within shared spiritual beliefs.

1.10 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one concentrates on the introduction and discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms. Chapter two reviews literature relevant to the study. Chapter three deals with the methodology used for the study. It presents the research paradigm, research approach, research design, study area, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, trustworthiness of instrument, data collection methods, data collection procedure, data analysis, ethical consideration and positionality. Chapter four deals with the presentation, analysis and discussion of findings obtained from the study. Chapter five constitutes the summary, conclusions as well as recommendation and suggestion for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter concentrates on a review of literature related to the study under the following thematic areas:

- (i) Theoretical Framework
- (ii) The Concept of Marriage
- (iii) Concept of marriage related factors (culture, cultural values, occupation, occupational group, economic activities, economic factors, religion and religious factors)
- (iv) Marriage practices among the fisherfolks
- (v) The Customary Marriage Act of Ghana
- (vi) Customary Marriage in Ghana
- (vii) Marriage Partner Selection
- (viii) Fisher Folks Community
- (ix) Empirical review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as a research 'blueprint' or guide (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The study of mate selection theories provides insights into the processes and dynamics that influence the choice of marriage partners. This study is guided by the Structural Functionalism perspective, which offers an explanation of how societal structures function to maintain social order and stability. Structural Functionalism traces its roots to the works of early sociologists such as Durkheim (1893) and Parsons (1951). These scholars posited that society operates as a system where different

institutions (such as family, religion, economy and education) contribute to the overall stability and functionality of the social order.

Durkheim (1858–1917) was a key figure in the development of Structural

Functionalism. He emphasised the role of social institutions in maintaining cohesion and stability within society. His work, “The Division of Labor in Society” (1893), proposed that social structures, including marriage, function to reinforce shared values and norms. Parsons (1951) further developed this perspective, introducing the AGIL framework (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency) to explain how different institutions contribute to societal stability. According to Parsons, marriage serves as a fundamental social institution that ensures the transmission of cultural values and economic stability within communities (Parsons, 1951). In the context of marriage partner selection among fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi), Structural Functionalism provides a lens to understand how cultural values, occupation, education and religion function as social structures that influence decision-making in partner selection.

Cultural norms and traditions play a crucial role in guiding marriage choices among fisherfolks. In many fishing communities, marriage is not solely an individual decision but a social institution reinforced by customs such as arranged marriages, bride price, and extended family involvement. Durkheim (1912) emphasised that such cultural practices maintain social cohesion by ensuring that marriages align with communal expectations and uphold traditional values. Contemporary research by Mensah and Boateng (2020) on Ghanaian fishing communities highlights how deeply embedded cultural norms dictate acceptable marriage practices, reinforcing social order and continuity. It asserts that occupational roles influence social structures, including marriage choices. Among fisherfolks, marriage is often influenced by the economic

demands of fishing. Partners are chosen based on their ability to contribute to the household economy, either directly through fishing skills or indirectly through fish processing and trade. According to Adjei and Owusu (2021), economic stability plays a crucial role in partner selection among fisherfolks in Ghana, with individuals preferring partners who can sustain the economic demands of their profession. This aligns with Parsons' view that economic roles function to stabilize families and communities. Education serves as a tool for social integration and mobility, influencing marriage choices by shaping values, aspirations and exposure to diverse social groups. Merton (1968) introduced the concept of "manifest and latent functions" to explain how education not only provides skills but also shapes social expectations, including partner preferences. Research by Takyi and Addai (2019) indicates that in Ghana, higher levels of education correlate with a shift in traditional partner selection criteria, as educated individuals tend to prioritize compatibility and personal development over purely economic or cultural considerations.

Religion functions as a stabilising institution that guides moral behaviour, including marriage norms. Many religious doctrines emphasise endogamy (marrying within the same faith) and influence expectations for marital roles. Parsons (1967) argued that religious institutions reinforce social values, ensuring stability within family structures. Studies by Ampofo and Asiedu (2022) on religious influences in Ghanaian marriage practices confirm that faith-based beliefs shape partner selection, dictating expectations for family life and gender roles. Structural Functionalism is appropriate for this study because it highlights how societal structures influence individual decisions. By analysing marriage as a functional institution, this study provides insights into how social structures maintain order and continuity in the fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi).

2.2 The Assumptions of Structural Functionalism

Structural Functionalism, as a sociological theory, is based on several key assumptions that underpin its view of society as a complex system comprised of interconnected institutions and roles. These assumptions provide a framework for understanding how social order is maintained through the functioning of various social structures.

2.2.1 Society is a System of Interrelated Parts

Structural Functionalism posits that society operates as a system of interconnected and interdependent parts, with various institutions such as family, religion, economy, education and politics playing specific roles to maintain stability and social order. Durkheim (1893) was among the early sociologists to argue that society is composed of these social structures, each contributing to the overall functioning of the system. He emphasised that the interdependence of these structures ensures that societal equilibrium is maintained. For instance, the institution of marriage, while often seen as a personal relationship, also serves broader societal functions. It is regulated by the values and norms transmitted by other social institutions, such as family, education and religion, and thus contributes to the continuity and stability of society.

In Structural Functionalism, institutions like family and education work together to regulate behaviours and uphold societal norms. Marriage, for instance, is shaped by family traditions, religious doctrines and educational values, all of which provide frameworks for how individuals select partners and understand their roles within the union. Durkheim (1912) highlighted that such institutions function to ensure the cohesion of society by creating shared values, which help individuals align their behaviours with the expectations of their community. Contemporary scholars, such as Smith et al. (2021), support this idea by demonstrating that the interdependence of

institutions allows societies to adapt to new challenges while preserving stability. In this context, marriage serves the dual purpose of fostering emotional bonds and securing societal order by transmitting cultural values to future generations.

Further, Structural Functionalism holds that the various parts of society, including marriage, are interrelated in ways that ensure equilibrium is maintained. For instance, changes in one institution may influence others, but the system as a whole adjusts in ways that preserve social stability. Marriage functions not only to fulfill personal and emotional needs but also to maintain the cultural, economic and moral frameworks that sustain social order. Smith et al. (2021) argue that this interconnectedness ensures that when one institution undergoes change, others compensate to ensure societal equilibrium. For instance, changes in economic or educational systems may lead to shifts in marriage patterns, but the overall structure of marriage remains intact as it continues to fulfill its societal role of socialising individuals and reproducing societal values.

The institution of marriage thus plays a crucial role in the reproduction of societal norms and the socialisation of future generations. By conforming to the social expectations embedded in family, education, and religion, marriage ensures that individuals align with society's goals and values. As Durkheim (1893) noted, institutions such as marriage are necessary for the functioning of society because they help reinforce collective values and maintain order. Marriage provides a structure within which individuals are socialised into the roles they are expected to play within the family and society at large. This process of socialisation ensures that societal norms are passed on to the next generation, contributing to the continuation of the social system.

2.2.2 Society is Stable and Orderly

Structural Functionalism is grounded in the assumption that society operates in a stable and orderly manner, where social structures function to prevent chaos and maintain equilibrium. Durkheim (1893) introduced the concept of social cohesion, suggesting that the internalization of societal norms and values by individuals leads to predictable and orderly behavior. This stability is crucial for the smooth functioning of society, as it ensures that individuals adhere to shared expectations, reducing the likelihood of conflict and disruption. In this framework, societal institutions, such as family, religion, and education, work in concert to regulate behaviour and maintain social harmony. Marriage, as a fundamental institution, plays a key role in upholding societal order by defining roles, responsibilities and expectations within the family and broader social context.

The regulation of gender roles and family responsibilities through marriage is a clear example of how social structures contribute to societal stability. Marriage helps establish distinct roles for men and women, providing clarity on familial obligations and interpersonal relationships. This regulation of roles, while varying across cultures and time periods, has historically served to structure family life and maintain order within communities. By reinforcing traditional norms, marriage helps individuals understand their positions within the social system and contributes to the overall stability of society (Baker & Thomas, 2020). Brown and Lewis (2022) emphasise that marriage, as an institution, serves not only as a mechanism for organising family life but also as a stabilising force within communities, ensuring that social relationships follow predictable patterns.

The assumption of societal stability within Structural Functionalism also suggests that social structures adapt gradually to changes without resulting in major disruptions. While society may undergo transformations, these changes occur in ways that preserve the overall stability and order of the system. For instance, when changes in economic or educational systems influence marriage patterns, the institution of marriage itself adapts to accommodate these shifts without losing its primary role in maintaining social order. Brown and Lewis (2022) argue that even as social norms evolve, the underlying structures of society work to integrate new values and behaviours, ensuring continuity and cohesion. This adaptability allows society to respond to changes without compromising its fundamental stability.

Furthermore, the assumption of stability and order is reflected in the role that marriage plays in socialising individuals into societal norms. Through marriage, individuals learn the values and expectations necessary for functioning within their social groups. The family, as the primary unit of socialisation, imparts critical norms related to cooperation, responsibility, and social roles. Durkheim (1893) argued that institutions like marriage help transmit shared values, thereby ensuring that individuals align with societal expectations. This process of socialisation helps prevent conflicts by fostering conformity to social norms, contributing to a predictable and stable social environment.

In addition, societal stability is reinforced by the social functions that marriage fulfills, such as regulating sexuality, reproducing the next generation and ensuring the care and upbringing of children. These functions contribute to the overall continuity of society by ensuring that future generations are socialised into the existing cultural and moral frameworks. According to Merton (1968), manifest functions, such as the legal and social recognition of marriage, are intended outcomes, while latent functions, like the

reinforcement of gender roles and social order, operate more subtly but are equally important in maintaining societal stability. Studies by recent scholars, including Jackson and Pierce (2021), highlight how marriage, as a social institution, fulfills both manifest and latent functions, ensuring the perpetuation of societal norms and reinforcing the stability of communities.

The assumption that society is stable and orderly under Structural Functionalism also posits that disruptions to this order are typically the result of dysfunctions within the system, rather than inherent instability. When one institution fails to perform its functions properly, it can create imbalances that affect other parts of society. However, these dysfunctions are seen as temporary and subject to correction as the social system works to restore equilibrium. For instance, changes in the family structure or the breakdown of traditional marriage patterns might lead to temporary disruptions, but these changes are often accommodated within the broader social structure to ensure stability in the long run. This idea is reinforced by scholars like Johnson and Clark (2023), who argue that while societal changes can challenge traditional norms, they do not necessarily result in chaos but rather reflect the system's ability to adapt to new circumstances while maintaining social order.

2.2.3 Social Norms and Value Guide Behaviour

One of the key assumptions of Structural Functionalism is that social norms and values play a critical role in guiding individual behaviour. These norms and values are not merely abstract concepts; they are deeply embedded in social structures and serve as a framework for individuals to navigate social life. Parsons (1951) argued that social norms are internalised by individuals through socialisation and as a result, individuals' behaviours become aligned with the expectations of society. This process of

internalisation ensures that individuals behave in ways that contribute to the overall stability of society by adhering to widely accepted standards of conduct. For example, in the context of marriage, individuals' choices regarding partners are not solely based on personal preferences but are significantly shaped by cultural, economic, educational and religious values that reflect broader societal norms. These societal norms dictate not only who is considered an acceptable partner but also the roles and responsibilities within the marriage, reinforcing societal structures and ensuring stability.

In many cultures, including those in Ghana, marriage is governed by a set of expectations and norms that are deeply influenced by cultural beliefs, economic factors, and religious values. These norms act as a guide for individuals in choosing marriage partners, ensuring that such unions align with the larger societal goals. Johnson and Carter (2020) conducted a study on marriage partner selection in Ghanaian communities and found that cultural traditions and practices, such as the involvement of extended family in marriage decisions and the expectation of bride price, are central to how individuals navigate their choices of partners. These cultural norms ensure that marriage decisions are not made solely based on individual desires but also in accordance with the collective interests of the community, thereby reinforcing social order. This is consistent with Parsons' (1951) argument that social norms function to regulate behaviour and ensure that individuals make decisions that contribute to the functioning and stability of the larger social system.

The influence of social norms on marriage extends beyond the individual and family level; it also reinforces broader societal values. In Ghana, for example, marriage is seen as a socially sanctioned institution that upholds not only the economic and social wellbeing of the family but also the moral and cultural values of the society. As noted

by Amoah and Asante (2023), social expectations surrounding marriage in Ghana are shaped by traditional norms, which emphasise the importance of family approval, economic stability, and cultural compatibility in partner selection. These norms are not only internalised by individuals but are also reinforced by social institutions such as the family, religion and education, which all play a role in shaping attitudes toward marriage and relationships. The pressure to conform to these norms ensures that marriages serve the collective interests of society, thereby contributing to social cohesion and stability.

Economic considerations also play a role in shaping marriage choices, aligning with the broader economic values of society. According to Adjei and Owusu (2021), in many fishing communities in Ghana, marriage decisions are influenced by the economic stability of potential partners. In these communities, marriage is not only seen as a personal union but as an economic partnership that contributes to the overall well-being of the family and the community. This is in line with Parsons' (1951) assertion that social norms are influenced by the economic roles individuals are expected to play, with marriage serving as an institution that helps maintain economic stability within communities. This internalisation of economic norms ensures that individuals select partners who can contribute to the family's financial stability, further reinforcing the social structure.

The role of religion in guiding marriage decisions is also significant. In many societies, including Ghana, religious beliefs dictate specific norms regarding marriage, such as the importance of marrying within the same faith or adhering to particular moral principles. Religion serves as a moral compass, shaping individuals' views on marriage and partner selection. As noted by Ampofo and Asiedu (2022), in Ghanaian

communities, religious doctrines strongly influence marriage practices, including expectations related to gender roles, marital duties, and family structure. These religious norms ensure that marriage aligns with broader societal expectations, which reinforces social stability by promoting behaviors that conform to the moral guidelines of the community.

2.2.4 Functionality and Social Institutions

Structural Functionalism posits that social institutions operate to fulfill necessary functions that contribute to the overall stability and equilibrium of society. Each part of society, from the family to religion, education and marriage, plays a critical role in maintaining social cohesion and regulating behaviour. Durkheim (1912) emphasised that social institutions, including marriage, are essential for promoting social integration and reinforcing societal norms. By performing these functions, marriage, for example, ensures that societal values and practices are transmitted across generations, contributing to the continuity of the social system. It serves not only as a mechanism for emotional and social connection but also as a structure for organising economic roles, regulating behaviours and supporting the production and raising of children. In this way, marriage helps perpetuate the social order by reinforcing the roles and responsibilities necessary for the functioning of society.

Marriage functions as a fundamental institution for the organisation of family life, providing a stable environment for procreation and child-rearing. The family unit, which is often structured around marriage, is where individuals learn and internalise cultural norms, values, and social roles. This process of socialization, crucial for the stability of society, ensures that individuals grow up to understand and adhere to the expectations set by the larger social structure. By raising children within the bounds of

socially sanctioned norms and values, marriage contributes to the reproduction of the social system. In line with Durkheim's (1912) theory of social cohesion, this process ensures that future generations are prepared to take on societal roles, maintaining the equilibrium of society and preventing disruption. Recent studies, such as those by Grier and Fisher (2021), further emphasise the crucial role of marriage in not only promoting emotional and social connection but also in supporting the social integration of individuals. They argue that marriage helps individuals fulfill essential social roles, including the transmission of cultural practices, beliefs, and values.

In addition to child-rearing and socialisation, marriage also plays a significant role in organizing economic functions within society. In many societies, including those in sub-Saharan Africa, marriage is viewed not just as an emotional bond but also as an economic partnership. The division of labour within marriage often corresponds to specific roles in the economy, whether through direct work such as agriculture, trade, or other forms of economic contribution, or through domestic labour and management of the household. By structuring these roles, marriage supports the broader economic stability of families and, by extension, communities. For instance, in Ghanaian fishing communities, where economic demands are high and family cooperation is essential for survival, marriage often functions as a collaborative partnership for economic production (Adjei & Owusu, 2021). This organisation of economic roles within marriage reinforces the interdependence of family members and helps ensure the economic stability of the household, contributing to the overall stability of society.

Marriage also functions as a regulatory mechanism for sexual behaviour and relationships. Social institutions like marriage establish rules for sexual behaviour, which, according to Durkheim (1912), helps to prevent societal chaos and ensures the

regulation of reproduction. By channeling sexual relations into socially approved forms, marriage contributes to the social order by providing clear expectations for family formation and the raising of children. This regulation of sexual behaviour prevents disruptions in the social system and maintains a stable demographic structure. Furthermore, by legitimising relationships and providing legal recognition of families, marriage helps to structure the social roles and responsibilities that govern the interaction between individuals, families, and the larger society.

In contemporary societies, marriage continues to fulfill these functions despite shifts in societal values and norms. As Grier and Fisher (2021) noted, marriage remains a cornerstone institution that helps to promote stability and maintain social order. Even as marriage practices evolve, particularly in terms of gender roles and family structures, the fundamental functions of marriage such as child-rearing, socialisation, and economic organization continue to play an essential role in ensuring the continued stability of communities. The evolution of marriage does not diminish its function as a stabilising force in society but rather reflects the adaptability of social institutions to changing social contexts.

Merton's Theory of Dysfunctionalism under Structural Functionalism

While Structural Functionalism, as developed by Durkheim (1893) and Parsons (1951), emphasises how institutions such as marriage promote stability and cohesion, Robert K. Merton (1968) refined the theory by highlighting that social structures can also generate dysfunctions. According to Merton (1968), not all social practices contribute positively to the smooth functioning of society; some may create instability, inequality, or unintended consequences. He introduced the concepts of manifest and latent

functions to explain that institutions may produce both expected (manifest) outcomes and hidden (latent) effects.

In the context of marriage partner selection among fisherfolks, Merton's dysfunctionism provides an important lens. While marriage contributes to social integration, cultural continuity and economic cooperation, it may also reproduce inequalities or generate conflict. For instance, arranged marriages that prioritise economic or occupational compatibility may ensure household stability but could also limit individual freedom and create marital dissatisfaction (Mensah & Boateng, 2020). Similarly, the cultural emphasis on marrying within one's group may foster cohesion but simultaneously exclude intermarriage, reducing opportunities for broader social integration. Merton's framework therefore enriches Structural Functionalism by showing that the same institution can have both stabilising and destabilising effects. Applying this to fisherfolks reveals that while marriage remains a critical institution for social survival, its associated norms and expectations can produce dysfunctions such as gender imbalances, economic dependency or social exclusion. Recognising these dual dimensions allows for a more nuanced understanding of marriage as both a functional and potentially dysfunctional social institution.

2.2.5 Consensus over Conflicts

A foundational assumption of Structural Functionalism is that society is held together by a general consensus of shared values and norms. This contrasts with conflict-based theories that stress the role of power struggles, inequality and competition in shaping social relations. In Structural Functionalism, the emphasis is placed on how a collective adherence to shared values facilitates social harmony and order. According to Parsons (1951), society functions optimally when its members internalize common values and

norms, which, in turn, promote social cooperation and minimize conflict. These shared norms are not only central to ensuring that individuals engage in predictable, orderly behavior but also to maintaining the stability of social institutions. Marriage, as an essential social institution, plays a key role in fostering unity by aligning individuals' actions with broader societal expectations, thereby contributing to the overall cohesion of society.

Marriage is a prime example of how shared cultural values function to preserve stability and social order. In many communities, including those within Ghanaian fishing villages such as Poase, marriage is not solely an individual choice but is deeply embedded within a network of social and cultural expectations. Partner selection in these communities is guided by collective norms that reflect long-standing traditions and beliefs. These cultural values ensure that marriage decisions align with the broader goals and needs of the community, maintaining social cohesion by regulating behaviours in accordance with societal expectations. For instance, in Poase, marriage norms dictate that individuals should select partners based not only on personal preferences but also on factors such as family approval, economic compatibility and adherence to cultural traditions (Amoah & Asante, 2023). By adhering to these norms, individuals contribute to the stability of the community, reducing social conflict and reinforcing the social fabric.

Moreover, marriage in these contexts plays a critical role in the socialization process, where individuals learn and internalize societal norms and values. In Ghanaian fishing communities, for example, marriage is seen as more than a personal union; it is a community affair that reinforces the transmission of cultural practices and collective values. As Amoah and Asante (2023) highlight, the collective endorsement of certain

marriage practices, such as the involvement of extended family members and the importance of bride price, helps to preserve stability within these communities. By engaging in these practices, individuals reinforce the shared norms that guide social relationships and contribute to the continued harmony of the community. These norms are integral to ensuring that marriages function as stabilising forces, both on the individual and societal levels.

Furthermore, Structural functionalism assumes that societal consensus is key to reducing conflict, and the institution of marriage exemplifies this idea. In contrast to conflict-based perspectives, which emphasise the role of inequality and social struggles, Structural Functionalism highlights how shared beliefs function as a unifying force. In the context of marriage, these beliefs help to ensure that individuals make decisions that are in alignment with community expectations, which in turn minimizes potential sources of conflict. In Poase, for example, adherence to marriage customs prevents social discord by ensuring that individual actions do not disrupt the social order. By fulfilling culturally prescribed roles, individuals help sustain a social equilibrium that benefits the community as a whole.

Research by Amoah and Asante (2023) further supports this assumption by demonstrating how shared cultural values surrounding marriage contribute to reducing conflict in Ghanaian fishing communities. They note that these communities place a high value on social cohesion and unity, which is achieved through the adherence to collective norms governing marriage. These norms not only guide the selection of marriage partners but also shape family roles, responsibilities, and expectations, all of which work to reinforce societal stability. By aligning personal decisions with the broader cultural values, individuals contribute to the continuity and harmony of the

social system, ensuring that the institution of marriage remains a stabilising force within the community.

2.3 The Relevance of the Structural Functionalism Theory to the Study

This theory is particularly valuable in exploring the factors influencing the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi), as it considers the multiple factors that shape the choice of fisherfolks among at Poase.

2.3.1 Social Stability

Marriage is an essential social institution in Structural Functionalism, playing a pivotal role in maintaining societal stability. In the context of Poase (New Takoradi), marriage functions not only as a personal commitment but also as a societal mechanism that regulates behaviors, reinforces cultural norms and promotes community cohesion. Parsons (1951) argued that marriage helps to regulate gender roles, family responsibilities, and social relationships, thus ensuring the stability of society. In Poase, marriage transcends personal choice, as it is shaped by the broader cultural, familial, and community expectations that govern partner selection. The study by Appiah et al. (2022) on Poase's fishing communities further illustrates this point, emphasizing how marriage serves as a structural mechanism that reinforces both individual and communal stability. For example, in Poase, marriage is not only about emotional or personal compatibility but is also influenced by economic factors, such as mutual support in fishing activities and the sharing of household responsibilities.

In this way, marriage helps ensure that both partners contribute to the economic well-being of the family, which, in turn, supports the larger community's economic stability. Additionally, marriage practices in Poase often reflect broader cultural and familial

expectations, such as the involvement of extended family members in the decision-making process and the payment of a bride price. These practices, rooted in tradition, reinforce the importance of marriage as a communal institution designed to maintain social cohesion and stability. The communal nature of marriage in Poase is vital in ensuring the continuity of social norms and practices that bind the community together. As Appiah et al. (2022) point out, the institution of marriage in these communities' functions as a vehicle for preserving shared cultural values, which ultimately helps mitigate social disruption and conflict, ensuring the collective stability of the community.

2.3.2 Shared norms and values in guiding partner selection

In Structural Functionalism, shared norms and values are fundamental to maintaining societal stability and cohesion. These norms guide individual behavior by ensuring that people conform to the expectations of their community, thereby promoting social order. In Poase, a fishing community in Ghana, marriage partner selection is heavily influenced by cultural norms that prioritise family approval, economic compatibility, and adherence to traditional practices. These shared norms ensure that marriage decisions go beyond personal preferences and contribute to the broader societal goals of economic stability, social cohesion, and cultural continuity.

Mensah and Boateng (2021) emphasise that in Poase, cultural beliefs and customs shape acceptable marriage practices, reinforcing the community's collective values. These practices ensure that individuals' marriage choices align with societal expectations, which helps maintain order and stability within the community. For instance, in Poase, it is common for families to play a significant role in the selection of marriage partners, with extended family members' approval being a key factor. This aligns with the

collective nature of marriage in the community, where personal preferences are balanced with the broader societal norms. By adhering to these shared norms, individuals contribute to the continuity of traditional practices and social harmony.

Furthermore, shared cultural values around marriage help to ensure that partner selection supports the economic needs of the family. As noted by Mensah and Boateng (2021), individuals in Poase often choose partners who can contribute to the household's economic stability, particularly in the context of the fishing industry. Marriages are frequently seen as partnerships that enable both partners to engage in fishing, fish processing, or trading, ensuring that the family is economically viable. This economic compatibility is essential to the community's overall stability, as it reduces the likelihood of financial strain, which could lead to social disruption.

The role of shared norms and values in guiding partner selection in Poase underscores how Structural Functionalism explains the function of marriage as a means of maintaining social cohesion. By ensuring that individuals adhere to these communal expectations, marriage serves to reinforce the social structure, reducing the risk of conflict and promoting stability. In essence, the shared norms around marriage in Poase reflect the broader societal need for cooperation, economic support and cultural continuity, thus ensuring the community's long-term stability.

2.3.3 Economic Independence in Marriage

One of the core tenets of Structural Functionalism is the idea of economic interdependence, where different societal parts work together to contribute to the overall stability of the community. In Poase, this concept is particularly evident in marriage, where decisions are influenced by economic considerations that go beyond individual desires. The practical aspects of marriage, such as the ability to contribute to

the household's economic needs, play a central role in partner selection. As highlighted by Adjei and Owusu (2023), marriage partners in Poase are often chosen based on their ability to contribute to the economic stability of the family, particularly through fishing, fish processing or trade activities. This economic interdependence within marriage helps maintain stability within the family unit and the broader community, ensuring that both partners contribute to sustaining their livelihoods.

Marriage in Poase, therefore, serves not only a social or emotional purpose but also functions as an economic arrangement that organises roles within the family. Individuals seek partners who can complement their skills, ensuring that both parties can contribute effectively to the economic survival of the household. For example, one partner may be skilled in fishing, while the other may specialise in fish processing or trading. By dividing labour in this way, families increase their economic productivity, which in turn supports the stability of the community. This economic partnership reduces financial strain and contributes to a collective sense of responsibility, ensuring that resources are pooled and shared among family members, which strengthens the community's economic foundation (Adjei & Owusu, 2023).

Moreover, economic interdependence in marriage reflects the broader socio-economic structure of the Poase community, where survival and success are often tied to collaboration and mutual support. The reliance on fishing and related activities for economic survival makes marriage an important institution for ensuring the community's continued prosperity. As Adjei and Owusu (2023) argue, the economic considerations involved in marriage decisions reinforce the stability of the family unit, which is a fundamental component of social cohesion in Poase. This reflects the

functional role that marriage plays in organizing economic roles and maintaining social order, supporting both the family's and the community's economic health.

2.3.4 Marriage and Social integration

Marriage serves as a vital institution for social integration, a key concept in Structural Functionalism, which posits that social institutions are crucial for integrating individuals into the societal system. In Poase, marriage plays a significant role in binding individuals to the larger social fabric by ensuring conformity to societal norms and values. As highlighted by Brown and Lewis (2020), marriage in fishing communities such as Poase is not merely about personal relationships but serves a broader purpose of maintaining cultural continuity and integrating individuals into both the economic and social structure of the community. Marriage, therefore, functions as a tool for socialisation, helping individuals understand and adhere to the values, roles, and expectations that are critical to the stability and continuity of the society.

In Poase, the institution of marriage is deeply embedded in cultural practices that reinforce the collective identity of the community. One example of this is the involvement of extended family members in the decision-making process surrounding marriage. This practice helps ensure that marriage choices are aligned with the broader social and cultural expectations of the community, fostering social cohesion. The collective involvement of families not only strengthens social ties but also reinforces the transmission of cultural values from one generation to the next. These values, passed down through marriage customs, play a crucial role in maintaining the community's traditions and ensuring that the social structure remains intact. Brown and Lewis (2020) emphasise that these marriage customs ensure the continuity of the community's

cultural identity, further promoting social integration by binding individuals to the community's values and way of life.

Additionally, marriage practices in Poase serve as an important means of reinforcing the community's economic integration. By entering into marriages based on shared economic interests such as fishing and related activities individuals become integrated into the community's economic framework, contributing to the collective well-being of the society. The mutual support provided through marriage allows for the pooling of resources, which is essential for the economic survival of families in the fishing industry. This mutual dependence between married partners and their families ensures the overall stability of the community.

2.3.5 Marriage as a mechanism for social continuity

Marriage in Structural Functionalism is a key mechanism for ensuring social continuity, particularly in terms of transmitting cultural values and norms from one generation to the next. In Poase, marriage plays a vital role in the socialisation of children, teaching them the traditions, values, and expectations that shape the community's way of life. As noted by Agyekum and Nkrumah (2022), marriage serves as the primary institution through which children are introduced to the cultural and social norms of the community. By growing up in a family unit where these values are practiced and reinforced, children internalise societal expectations related to gender roles, family responsibilities and economic cooperation, ensuring that they contribute to the community's stability as they mature.

At Poase, the continuity of marriage practices is essential for maintaining the cultural identity of the community. The transmission of values through marriage ensures that traditional roles within the family such as the division of labour between men and

women are passed down to future generations. These practices are not only vital for social cohesion but also for the economic stability of the community, where cooperation in fishing and related activities are integral. Agyekum and Nkrumah (2022) argue that marriage acts as a vehicle for the reproduction of social structures, with each new generation being socialised into roles that sustain the community's economic and cultural practices. In this way, marriage functions not only as a personal commitment but as an ongoing process that preserves the community's way of life.

Furthermore, the social continuity facilitated by marriage at Poase extends beyond family and economic roles. By maintaining cultural traditions related to marriage, the community ensures that future generations are well-prepared to navigate and uphold the social and cultural fabric that defines their way of life. The involvement of extended family members in marriage decisions and the adherence to customs such as bride price and familial approval help preserve these traditions. These practices contribute to the transmission of shared values, reinforcing social bonds and promoting stability within the community.

2.4 Concept of Culture

The concept of culture plays a significant role in marriage partner selection among fisher folks, shaped by various social norms and community practices that influence choices and preferences regarding intimate relationships. Research highlights how cultural contexts inform partner selection, particularly in marginalised communities such as those engaged in fishing. Understanding these cultural dynamics reveals the importance of both familial expectations and community norms, especially as they pertain to traditional beliefs around marriage.

Research by Locke et al. (2020) emphasises the influence of cultural factors on partner preferences, indicating that individual choices are often moderated by familial and cultural expectations. This study underscores how specific traits are preferred based on cultural backgrounds, suggesting that fisherfolks might prioritise different partner characteristics depending on their socio-cultural context. Guo et al. (2017) made similar observations, indicating that traditional cultural values significantly affect mate preferences, especially within collectivist societies. These findings suggest that community context, including local economic and occupational arrangements, interacts with cultural values to shape mate selection criteria.

Moreover, contemporary studies demonstrate that cultural influences are dynamic and evolve with shifts in modernisation, education and exposure to global norms. As noted by Sagiv and Schwartz (2022), cultural values are relatively stable yet responsive to social and economic transformations, influencing how individuals conceptualise desirable traits in potential spouses. Within the fisherfolks at Poase, where economic volatility and occupational risks are common, cultural expectations around resilience, family support, and adherence to tradition may play a stronger role in shaping partner choices compared to other settings. Thus, culture as a concept provides a critical lens for examining partner selection among fisher folks. It captures how deeply held values, collective norms and intergenerational traditions guide marriage decisions, while also showing how such processes are embedded in broader socio-economic and occupational contexts. By recognizing the cultural foundations of partner choice, this study situates marriage practices within the lived realities of fisher folk communities.

2.4.1 Cultural values

Cultural values represent the shared beliefs, norms, and moral priorities that guide behaviour and decision-making within a society. They provide individuals and communities with standards for what is considered desirable, acceptable, and appropriate in social life. In the context of marriage partner selection, cultural values play a central role by shaping how individuals evaluate potential spouses and what traits are prioritized. For fisherfolk at Poase, where traditions are deeply embedded, cultural values often serve as benchmarks for decisions about family life and partner choice.

According to Sagiv and Schwartz (2022), values function as guiding principles that shape not only personal decisions but also collective practices, making them crucial in understanding why particular marriage preferences persist. For example, values such as respect for elders, loyalty to family and adherence to communal traditions may drive preferences for partners from the same cultural or ethnic group. Similarly, Guo et al. (2017) argue that collectivist values place family approval and social harmony at the centre of partner selection, reducing the emphasis on individual preference alone.

Recent studies by Inglehart (2018) also highlight how cultural values evolve under the influence of modernisation, education and globalization. He describes this as a shift from ‘survival values’ emphasizing economic and physical security to ‘self-expression values,’ which prioritize individual choice and autonomy. In fishing communities, however, economic uncertainties and occupational risks often reinforce traditional values, as families prefer partners who can uphold stability, continuity, and resilience within the household.

Therefore, cultural values function as a bridge between broader socio-economic conditions and intimate choices such as marriage. For fisherfolk, these values determine

not only which partners are deemed appropriate but also which marriages are likely to secure community approval and long-term household sustainability. By recognising the influence of cultural values, this study underscores how deeply embedded beliefs continue to shape partner selection even in contexts of economic change and social transformation.

2.4.2 Occupation

Occupation is generally understood as the type of work or livelihood activities individuals engage in to earn a living. It not only determines income and access to material resources but also provides social status, identity and networks that shape everyday life. In the context of marriage partner selection, occupation plays a crucial role because it reflects stability, economic security, and the ability to support a household. Among fisherfolks, where economic activities are highly seasonal and uncertain, the occupation of a potential spouse is often a central consideration in partner choice. The occupational categories are not merely economic markers but also shape individual well-being and social meaning, with implications for family life and mate preferences (Williams et al., 2022). Partners engaged in occupations perceived as stable or lucrative may be prioritised, while those in precarious or low-income occupations may face challenges in the marriage market. This reflects broader findings from occupational stratification research, which shows that job attributes such as autonomy, task complexity, and income influence not only worker experiences but also social desirability (Barbieri et al., 2020).

Among fisherfolks at Poase, occupation is closely tied to household strategies and resilience. Amadu et al. (2021) observe that livelihood resilience in small-scale fisheries depends on both the direct activities of fishing and complementary roles such as fish

processing and trading, often carried out by women. These gendered occupational divisions influence partner selection because households benefit when spouses engage in complementary economic activities. Thus, the occupation of each partner contributes to household survival, resource pooling, and long-term stability.

Moreover, occupation interacts with structural challenges in the fisheries sector, such as overfishing, industrialisation, and policy restrictions, which affect income security and social status (Ayilu et al., 2023). In contexts where occupational instability is common, families and individuals often prefer marriage partners who can either diversify household income or provide resilience through alternative occupations. This highlights the dual role of occupation as both a material and symbolic factor in partner selection, linking economic survival with cultural expectations around family responsibilities and marriage suitability.

Overall, occupation shapes marriage partner selection among fisherfolk not only through its economic implications but also through its social and cultural meanings. It determines access to resources, influences gender roles within households, and interacts with cultural values to guide decisions about appropriate partners. Recognising the significance of occupation thus provides a comprehensive view of how livelihoods and marriage intersect in fishing communities.

2.4.3 Occupational group

An occupational group is generally defined as a category of individuals engaged in similar types of work who share common tasks, skills, and social recognition within the division of labour. Beyond their economic functions, occupational groups also shape the identities, norms, and social practices of their members (Barbieri et al., 2020). With fisherfolks at Poase, the occupational group encompasses a wide range of

interdependent roles including harvesting, fish processing, trading, net mending and boat construction. These shared practices form a collective identity that not only provides economic sustenance but also influences family life and partner selection.

Research demonstrates that occupational groups structure access to resources and determine resilience to livelihood shocks. Amadu et al. (2021) argue that within small-scale fisheries in Ghana, membership in the fisher folk occupational group provides both social identity and household stability. Such membership affects partner preferences, as individuals often value spouses who can complement household economic activities or contribute to occupational resilience. For example, women engaged in fish processing may prefer partners involved in harvesting, creating complementary roles that sustain family livelihoods.

The relevance of occupational groups extends beyond the immediate economic domain to social and cultural expectations. Ayilu et al. (2023) highlight how industrialisation and coastal policy reforms in Ghana are reshaping the occupational group of fisherfolk, altering access to marine resources and redefining community livelihoods. Under these circumstances, partner selection is increasingly influenced by occupational resilience: individuals and families may prioritise partners who can withstand occupational challenges or diversify household income.

In sum, occupational groups are critical for understanding marriage partner selection among fisherfolk. They operate as both economic categories and cultural communities that define access to resources, regulate social expectations and structure the intergenerational transmission of skills. Thus, in fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi), occupational group membership plays a pivotal role in determining marital suitability, linking livelihoods to cultural values and family strategies.

2.4.4 Economic activities

Economic activities refer to the livelihood practices and productive engagements through which individuals and households generate income, sustain their livelihoods, and meet social obligations. In coastal Ghana, fisherfolks engage in diverse economic activities that extend beyond direct harvesting of fish to include processing, trading, boat building, and ancillary services (Amadu et al., 2021). These activities are not only means of survival but also shape household structures, gender roles, and partner preferences. With fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi), the centrality of these activities to household well-being underscores their significance in marriage partner selection.

Small-scale fisheries are often characterised by gendered divisions of labour. While men predominantly engage in offshore harvesting, women are central to fish processing, preservation, and marketing (Ayilu et al., 2023). This complementary structure of economic activities means that households benefit from spousal partnerships where roles are aligned to sustain livelihood cycles. For instance, marriages between fishers and processors create synergies that enhance household resilience and income stability. As such, partner selection in these communities is frequently guided by considerations of occupational complementarity and the economic contributions that potential spouses can make.

However, the economic viability of fishing activities is increasingly under pressure due to overfishing, industrial competition, and regulatory restrictions. Ayilu (2023) notes that the expansion of industrial fishing and coastal development projects has displaced small-scale fishers, reducing catch volumes and undermining local livelihoods. In such contexts, households are compelled to diversify their economic activities by engaging in petty trading, small-scale farming, or artisanal work to cope with uncertainties

(Amadu et al., 2021). These dynamics influence marriage partner selection, as families often value spouses with the capacity to diversify income sources or adapt to fluctuating economic conditions.

Economic activities also shape the symbolic and social aspects of marriage. In many coastal communities, individuals engaged in stable or profitable economic activities are perceived as more desirable partners, as they signal an ability to provide financial security and social status (Williams et al., 2022). Conversely, economic instability or engagement in declining occupations may lower perceived suitability in the marriage market. Thus, economic activities influence both material survival and the cultural framing of marriage, linking livelihood practices with notions of social desirability and family sustainability. By recognising the central role of economic activities, this study highlights how livelihood practices intersect with cultural values and occupational identities to shape partner choice in fishing communities.

2.4.5 Economic factors

Economic factors constitute one of the most significant determinants of marriage partner selection, particularly in communities where livelihoods are precarious and heavily reliant on natural resources. Economic stability, financial capability, and access to material resources are often viewed as indicators of a partner's suitability, since they directly affect household survival and social standing (Williams et al., 2022). In fishing communities, where livelihoods are characterised by high levels of uncertainty and seasonality, economic factors play an even more critical role in shaping marriage preferences and decisions.

Studies by Barbieri et al. (2020) show that economic security influences marital desirability by signalling the ability to provide for current and future family needs. They

argue that occupation and income are important axes of stratification that not only determine life chances but also shape attractiveness in the marriage market. In fisher folk communities, individuals with access to fishing capital (boats, nets, engines) or alternative sources of income are often prioritised as desirable partners, as they are perceived to offer greater long-term stability.

Economic pressures stemming from external factors such as overfishing, industrialisation, and coastal policy changes have also intensified the importance of economic considerations in partner selection. Ayilu et al. (2023) highlight how industrial encroachment and the expansion of the blue economy in Ghana undermine small-scale fishers' livelihoods, reducing catches and threatening household income security. In such contexts, families often encourage marriages that provide diversification of income sources, for example between fishers and traders, or between fishing households and those engaged in non-fishing economic activities.

Furthermore, globalisation and modernisation have altered how economic factors intersect with cultural expectations. Inglehart (2018) observes a global shift toward valuing self-expression and individual autonomy; however, in economically insecure communities, survival values such as financial stability, resource pooling, and household resilience remain dominant. This tension highlights how economic vulnerability reinforces traditional economic considerations in marriage, even amidst exposure to new global norms. For fisher folk in Poase (New Takoradi), the interplay between occupational instability, economic diversification, and cultural expectations ensures that economic considerations remain pivotal in defining marital suitability.

2.4.6 Religion and Religious factors

Religion remains a central influence on partner selection, particularly in societies where spiritual beliefs and practices are closely tied to social identity, morality, and family life. Religious factors shape marital decisions by prescribing values, defining acceptable behaviours, and outlining norms regarding whom individuals should marry (Garedew & Mekonnen, 2017). In Poase among the fisherfolks, where traditional and faith-based practices often intersect, religion provides an important framework through which individuals and families evaluate marital suitability.

Guo et al. (2017) suggest that religion functions both as a cultural system of meaning and as a source of social control. They highlight that religious and cultural values often overlap, reinforcing collectivist expectations such as family involvement in partner choice and conformity to religious norms. Religious affiliation can therefore determine not only whether a potential spouse is considered acceptable but also whether the marriage will receive community and familial approval.

Contemporary research by Locke et al., (2020) further demonstrates that religious homogamy marriage between individuals of the same religious background is highly valued across many societies. Such marriages are believed to reduce conflict, enhance family cohesion, and provide stability in childrearing. In Ghana, religious institutions often play a direct role in sanctioning marriages, reinforcing expectations of faith alignment between spouses. For fisherfolk, religious compatibility may also intersect with occupational realities, as families seek partners whose spiritual beliefs align with resilience, discipline, and moral responsibility.

Moreover, religion interacts with broader socio-economic and cultural conditions. Sagiv and Schwartz (2022) argue that religious values function as guiding principles

that shape not only personal life choices but also community-level expectations. In contexts of economic uncertainty, religion can strengthen traditional norms that prioritise stability, fidelity, and family support. At the same time, exposure to modernisation and pluralistic religious influences has created opportunities for greater individual choice, even within communities that remain strongly guided by faith (Inglehart, 2018). Religious affiliation, values, and practices serve as criteria for marital suitability, demonstrating the deep intersection between spiritual life, socio-economic conditions, and intimate relationships in fishing communities.

2.4.7 Marriage practices

Marriage practices among fisher folk in Ghana are deeply rooted in cultural traditions, economic realities, and community norms. As a social institution, marriage among these communities goes beyond individual choice to encompass family involvement, occupational complementarity, and religious expectations (Aheto et al., 2019). Marriage is thus seen not only as a personal union but also as an alliance between families and occupational groups, reinforcing social cohesion and ensuring the continuity of fishing-based livelihoods.

(i) Family and community involvement

Among the fisherfolks at Poase, the process of partner selection is strongly influenced by family and community elders. Decisions regarding marriage are often negotiated collectively, with emphasis on maintaining lineage, preserving family honour, and sustaining socio-economic stability (Locke et al., 2020). Bridewealth, symbolic gifts, and other customary exchanges remain central features of marriage, reflecting the importance of kinship ties and communal approval (Aheto et al., 2019). These practices signify the merging of families and establish enduring obligations between households.

(ii) *Occupational and economic considerations*

Fishing as an occupation is highly seasonal and subject to fluctuations caused by environmental and structural pressures. Consequently, occupational considerations shape marriage practices. Amadu et al. (2021) show that fisherfolk households frequently prioritise partners who can contribute economically, either directly through fishing or indirectly through fish processing, trading or other complementary activities. Such arrangements help to strengthen household resilience in the face of uncertain incomes. In this way, marriage is not only a cultural practice but also a livelihood strategy, linking household survival to the occupational structures of the fishing community.

(iii) *Religious and cultural influences*

Religion also plays a crucial role in shaping marriage practices. Christian, Islamic, and traditional religious beliefs often guide expectations around fidelity, gender roles, and marital responsibilities (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022). Religious institutions frequently sanction marriages, providing spiritual legitimacy and community acceptance. In addition, cultural norms reinforce gendered roles within marriages: men are typically responsible for fishing, while women take on roles in processing and marketing, with both roles viewed as critical to household stability (Ayilu et al., 2023).

(iv) *Evolving trends*

While traditional practices remain influential, globalization, modernization, and education are reshaping marriage practices among Ghana's fisher folk. Younger generations increasingly exercise individual choice, sometimes challenging parental preferences or traditional expectations (Inglehart, 2018). Migration, exposure to urban lifestyles, and access to education have introduced new criteria for partner selection,

such as formal education and diversified sources of income. Nevertheless, cultural values and economic considerations continue to exert a powerful influence, ensuring that traditional marriage practices remain resilient amidst social change.

2.5 The Concept of Marriage

Relationships are the foundation of human connection everywhere. The motivations for a relationship can be found in physical, self-actualisation, safety, love and self-esteem needs, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Marriage constitutes one of the most essential bonds that people create all through their lives. Marriage is the union of two people. This relationship is spiritual and mental as well as physical. Marriage, according to Brown (2009), marriage constitutes one of the most important and loyal choices for both men and women. According to Abdullah, Li, and David (2011), couples cannot be truly excited if they do not appreciate one another. Thus, without taking into account the other crucial criteria, the chance of happiness in marriage is limited. Except for Catholic priests, marriage is the preferred status of every citizen in Ghana. Social expectations to marry and have children are crucial, regardless of educational, socioeconomic, or career level (Addai, Opoku-Agyeman, & Amanfu, 2015). Marriage is defined as a relationship between two people who have committed to stay together for the sake of posterity, honor, social, and economic gains (Wimalasena, 2016). This union must be between a man and a woman in Ghana. It is acknowledged as an important component of the social system that propagates society (Ankrah, 2016). Though Western culture and modernization have had an impact on Ghana, traditional marriage rituals remain relevant. Family influence is still practiced (Manuh, 1997). Most ethnic and religious groups in the country continue to disregard love connections, enforce virginity before marriage, and demand bride price (Nukunya, 2003; Takyi, Miller, Kitson, & Oheneba-Sakyi, 2003). Marriage is done differently in Ghana

according to ethnic groupings and religious faiths. As a result, customary, religious, and common laws govern marriage in Ghana. These marriage customs, religious rites, and beliefs provide the person with numerous options for marriage. Individuals in Ghana are free to marry according to their religious views (traditional, Islamic, or Christian) and/or by ordinance. (Addai, Opoku-Agyeman, & Amanfu, 2015; Ankrah, 2016).

2.5.1 Customary Marriage in Ghana

In Ghana, customary marriage is viewed as a relationship of the couple and their families (Ankrah, 2016). Marriage is an important institution in Ghanaian culture, and it is viewed as a sacred union between two individuals who have decided to spend the rest of their lives together. Traditionally, marriages in Ghana were arranged by the parents of the couple, who will select a suitable partner based on their family background, financial stability, and social status. However, in modern times, many Ghanaians choose to marry for love and the decision is now often made by the couple themselves.

The first step in a Ghanaian marriage is the “knocking ceremony” During this ceremony, the groom and the family visit the bride family to formally ask for her hand in marriage. The groom present gift to the bride`s family, including a bottle of schnapps, money and other items. If the bride`s family accept the proposal, they will pour libation and give the groom permission to marry their daughter. After the knocking, the couple will start preparing for the traditional wedding, also known as “Engagement”. In Ghana, weddings are often grand events and it is not uncommon for hundreds of guests to be invited. The bride and groom will wear traditional clothing, with the bride wearing a brightly colored kente cloth, which is a type of fabric made from interwoven silk and cotton.

During the engagement ceremony, the couple exchange vows and rings are often exchanged as a symbol of their love and commitment to each other. Traditional dances are performed, and guest will enjoy a variety of Ghanaian foods and drinks.

Thus, marriage is historically considered as the foundation of a permanent bond between the two families, which persists even after the couple's death. The marriage ceremony of the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi) are no different from the Ghanaian way of marrying, some rites among fisher folks are usually performed at the marriage ceremony of a fisher folks getting married and a group of those fisher folks made it a must to attend and crown the ceremony

2.5.2 Marriage Partner Selection

Marriage partner selection is a complex process influenced by a myriad of factors, including cultural norms, personal preferences, socioeconomic factors, and familial expectations. These factors shape individuals' perceptions, choices, and decisions regarding potential partners for marriage.

2.5.3 Cultural Norms

Cultural norms play a significant role in guiding marriage partner selection. In many societies, cultural traditions and practices dictate specific criteria for choosing a spouse. For example, in collectivist cultures, such as many Asian societies, familial approval and compatibility with extended family members may be paramount (Chen & Yeh, 2018). Conversely, individualistic cultures may prioritize personal autonomy and compatibility with one's own values and goals (Lee & Kim, 2019). Cultural norms exert a profound influence on marriage partner selection, shaping individuals' perceptions,

preferences, and decisions regarding potential spouses. These norms vary significantly across cultures and can dictate specific criteria and expectations for choosing a partner.

In these cultures, individuals may prioritize the harmony and cohesion of the family unit over individual desires and preferences. Partners are evaluated not only based on their suitability as a spouse but also on their compatibility with the broader family network. For instance, research by Chen and Yeh (2018) highlights how filial piety and respect for elders are deeply ingrained cultural values in many Asian societies. Consequently, individuals may seek partners who demonstrate deference to family authority and who are perceived as compatible with the expectations and values of their prospective in-laws. Family approval and endorsement are often sought before proceeding with marriage, underscoring the importance of collective familial interests in partner selection.

Conversely, in individualistic cultures, such as those prevalent in Western societies, personal autonomy and compatibility with one's own values and goals tend to be prioritized in partner selection (Lee & Kim, 2019). In these cultures, individuals are encouraged to pursue their own aspirations and fulfill their personal needs and desires. Consequently, marriage partner selection is often guided by considerations of individual happiness, fulfillment, and compatibility. Lee and Kim (2019) emphasize how individualistic cultural norms promote the idea of personal agency and self-expression in partner selection. Individuals in these cultures are encouraged to seek partners who resonate with their own values, interests, and life goals. Compatibility in terms of personal aspirations, lifestyle choices, and shared interests takes precedence over familial expectations or obligations.

2.5.4 Personal Preferences

Individuals' personal preferences and desires also influence partner selection. Factors such as physical attractiveness, personality traits, shared interests, and values often play a crucial role in determining compatibility and relationship satisfaction (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). Research suggests that individuals tend to seek partners who align with their ideals and aspirations, leading to greater relationship compatibility and longevity (Jones & Smith, 2021). Personal preferences exert a significant influence on partner selection, shaping individuals' perceptions, choices, and satisfaction in relationships. These preferences encompass a wide range of factors, including physical attractiveness, personality traits, shared interests, and values.

Research by Garcia and Martinez (2020) underscores the importance of personal preferences in partner selection. Their study highlights how individuals are drawn to partners who possess qualities and characteristics that resonate with their own ideals and aspirations. Physical attractiveness, for example, often serves as an initial point of attraction, influencing individuals' initial impressions and interest in potential partners.

Shared interests and values also contribute to relationship compatibility, fostering mutual understanding and connection between partners (Jones & Smith, 2021). Personality traits and compatibility play a crucial role in determining relationship satisfaction and longevity. Individuals tend to seek partners who exhibit traits that complement their own personality and communication styles (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). Jones and Smith's research (2021) suggests that individuals' personal preferences are closely tied to their relationship satisfaction and overall well-being. Partners who align with individuals' ideals and aspirations are more likely to experience greater

relationship compatibility and longevity. Conversely, mismatches in personal preferences may lead to dissatisfaction and conflict within relationships.

Moreover, personal preferences in partner selection are influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural norms, societal expectations, and individual experiences. Cultural influences shape individuals' perceptions of attractiveness, personality traits, and relationship dynamics (Lee & Kim, 2019). Societal norms and expectations may also influence individuals' preferences for certain traits or characteristics in a partner.

2.5.5 Socio-economic Factors

Socio economic considerations significantly impact marriage partner selection. Economic stability, education level, occupation, and financial prospects are often important factors in evaluating potential partners (Smith, 2021). Individuals may prioritize partners who offer financial security or socioeconomic status similar to their own, reflecting a desire for stability and shared goals (Chen & Yeh, 2018). Socio economic factors play a pivotal role in marriage partner selection, influencing individuals' perceptions, decisions, and aspirations in relationships. These factors encompass various aspects such as economic stability, education level, occupation, and financial prospects. Research by Smith (2021) underscores the significance of socio-economic considerations in partner selection. Smith's study highlights how individuals often prioritize partners who offer economic stability and financial security. Economic stability serves as a foundation for future planning and mutual well-being within the relationship.

Moreover, education level and occupation are important determinants of socio-economic status, which can influence partner selection preferences. Individuals may seek partners who possess similar levels of education or occupational prestige,

reflecting shared values and aspirations for upward mobility (Chen & Yeh, 2018). Partners with compatible socioeconomic backgrounds are perceived as more suitable matches, fostering a sense of stability and mutual understanding. Chen and Yeh's research (2018) further elucidate how individuals may prioritize partners with socioeconomic status similar to their own. Shared socioeconomic status is often associated with shared goals, values, and lifestyle preferences. Partners who share similar socioeconomic backgrounds are better equipped to navigate financial challenges and pursue common aspirations together.

2.5.6 Familial Expectations

Family expectations and approval can exert considerable influence on marriage partner selection. In many cultures, families play an active role in matchmaking and arranging marriages based on factors such as social status, ethnicity, and religion (Lee & Kim, 2019). Familial expectations may also encompass considerations of lineage, reputation, and the continuity of family traditions (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). Familial expectations wield significant influence over marriage partner selection processes across diverse cultural contexts. Families often take an active role in facilitating and guiding the search for a suitable spouse for their members, with considerations extending beyond individual preferences to encompass broader familial and societal concerns.

In numerous cultures worldwide, families actively participate in matchmaking endeavors, drawing upon various criteria such as social status, ethnicity, and religious affiliation to identify potential partners (Lee & Kim, 2019). These factors serve not only to ensure compatibility between individuals but also to uphold social conventions and preserve cultural heritage within the community.

For instance, research by Lee and Kim (2019) underscores the impact of familial expectations on partner selection preferences, particularly in collectivist societies where familial harmony and unity hold paramount importance. In such cultural milieus, families may prioritize partners who align with established cultural norms and religious beliefs, thereby safeguarding the continuity of familial traditions and values.

Moreover, familial expectations often extend beyond surface-level considerations to encompass deeper facets such as lineage, reputation, and the perpetuation of family customs and rituals (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). Individuals may feel compelled to select partners who not only meet their own criteria but also satisfy the expectations and approval of their families. Failure to comply with familial expectations can engender social ostracism or familial discord, underscoring the pivotal role of familial consent in the matrimonial decision-making process.

Garcia and Martinez's qualitative analysis (2020) further elucidates how familial expectations influence partner selection dynamics, particularly in societies where family honor and prestige hold paramount significance. Individuals may face pressure to choose partners who embody familial ideals and values, even at the expense of their personal preferences or desires

2.6 The Fisher Folks Community

This provides an understanding of the unique characteristics of the fisher folks community in New Takoradi. Consider their lifestyle, traditions, economic activities, and social structures.

2.6.1 Lifestyle

The lifestyle of the fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi) is deeply intertwined with the sea and fishing activities. Fishermen often lead physically demanding lives, waking up early to prepare for fishing trips and spending long hours at sea (Adomako, 2020). Their lifestyle is characterized by a strong connection to the ocean and a reliance on traditional fishing practices passed down through generations. The fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi) leads a lifestyle deeply ingrained with the rhythms of the sea and the demands of fishing. As Adomako (2020) notes, fishermen in this community typically commence their day before dawn, awakening early to prepare for their fishing expeditions. These early mornings are a testament to their dedication and the necessity to capitalize on prime fishing hours. Once preparations are complete, fisher folks set out to sea for extended periods, often spending entire days navigating the waters in search of bountiful catches (Adomako, 2020). The arduous nature of their work is evident in the long hours spent at sea, battling the elements and braving the unpredictable conditions of the ocean.

The lifestyle of the fisherfolks community is characterized by a profound connection to the ocean, which serves as both a source of sustenance and a livelihood (Adomako, 2020). Generations of fishermen at Poase (New Takoradi) have relied on traditional fishing practices passed down through familial and communal knowledge. These timehonored techniques, honed over centuries, are a testament to the community's deepseated reverence for the sea and its resources. The lifestyle of fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi) embodies a spirit of resilience and adaptability in the face of environmental challenges and economic uncertainties (Adomako, 2020). Despite the inherent risks and hardships associated with fishing, members of this community

display a steadfast commitment to their way of life, rooted in traditions that have sustained them for generations.

2.6.2 Traditions

Traditional customs and practices hold profound significance within the fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi), serving as a cornerstone of their cultural identity and collective heritage. As Boateng and Osei (2019) observe, rituals and ceremonies associated with fishing are honored with deep reverence, underscoring the community's profound respect for the sea and its pivotal role in sustaining their livelihoods. One of the most cherished traditions among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi) is the observance of rituals before embarking on fishing expeditions. Prior to setting sail, fishermen gather to invoke blessings for safe voyages and abundant catches (Boateng & Osei, 2019). These rituals are steeped in symbolism and tradition, symbolizing the community's reliance on the sea and their reverence for its bounty.

Furthermore, ceremonies marking significant milestones in the fishing calendar, such as the beginning of the fishing season or the blessing of newly constructed boats, are commemorated with great pomp and ceremony (Boateng & Osei, 2019). These rituals serve not only as occasions for celebration but also as opportunities for community bonding and the preservation of cultural heritage.

The traditions upheld by the fisherfolks community at Poase are a testament to their deep-seated connection to the sea and their reliance on its resources for sustenance and livelihood (Boateng & Osei, 2019). Through these rituals and ceremonies, the community reaffirms its ties to the ocean and pays homage to the ancestral knowledge and wisdom that have guided generations of fishermen.

In essence, the traditions observed by the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi) serve as a means of honoring their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of unity and belonging within the community, and reaffirming their symbiotic relationship with the sea.

2.6.3 Economic Activities

Fishing is the primary economic activity for the fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi), providing livelihoods for many households (Amankwah, 2021). Fishermen engage in various fishing techniques, including net fishing, line fishing, and canoe fishing, to capture a diverse range of marine species (Boateng & Osei, 2019). Additionally, women in the community often participate in fish processing activities, such as smoking and drying fish, to supplement household incomes.

Fishing stands as the cornerstone of economic activity within the fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi), as highlighted by Amankwah (2021). The livelihoods of numerous households are intricately linked to the fishing industry, with fishermen playing a central role in harvesting marine resources from the nearby waters.

Various fishing techniques are employed by fishermen at Poase (New Takoradi) to capture a diverse array of marine species, reflecting the community's adaptability and resourcefulness (Boateng & Osei, 2019). Net fishing, line fishing, and canoe fishing are among the commonly practiced methods, each tailored to the unique characteristics of the local marine environment and targeted fish species.

The economic activities within the fisherfolks community extend beyond fishing itself to encompass downstream activities such as fish processing and trade. Women in the community often engage in fish processing activities, including smoking and drying fish, as a means of adding value to the catch and generating additional income for their

households (Amankwah, 2021). These activities contribute to the economic sustainability of the community while also fostering gender inclusivity within the fishing industry. Furthermore, the fishing industry at Poase (New Takoradi) serves as a vital source of employment and income generation, providing opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labor (Boateng & Osei, 2019). Fishermen, fish processors, boat builders, and traders form integral components of the local fishing economy, each contributing to the overall prosperity and resilience of the community.

2.6.4 Social Structures

The fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi) exhibits strong social cohesion and mutual support networks. Fisher folks often work together in fishing cooperatives or associations, pooling resources and sharing knowledge to enhance their collective productivity (Adomako, 2020). Social gatherings, such as community festivals and fishing tournaments, provide opportunities for camaraderie and cultural exchange among community members.

Adomako (2020) emphasizes the presence of strong social cohesion within the fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi). Fisher folks often come together to form fishing cooperatives or associations, pooling their resources and expertise to enhance their collective productivity and bargaining power in the fishing industry. These cooperatives serve as platforms for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective decision-making, contributing to the overall resilience and sustainability of the community's fishing endeavors. Moreover, social gatherings play a significant role in strengthening community ties and fostering a sense of belonging among fisher folks in New Takoradi. Community festivals and fishing tournaments are common events that provide opportunities for camaraderie, cultural exchange, and celebration (Adomako,

2020). These gatherings serve as occasions for members of the community to come together, share experiences, and reaffirm their shared identity as fisher folks.

The social structures within the fisherfolks community extend beyond formal organizations to encompass informal networks of support and reciprocity among community members. Fisher folks often rely on each other for assistance during challenging times, whether it be in the form of lending a helping hand during fishing expeditions or providing emotional support during personal hardships (Adomako, 2020). These informal support networks contribute to the resilience and solidarity of the community in the face of adversity.

2.7 Empirical Review

Fisherfolk, like other communities, adhere to cultural norms and values that guide their social interactions, including marriage (Čvorović & Coe, 2019). These norms often dictate the acceptable characteristics and qualities sought in a potential spouse, shaping the criteria used in partner selection (Zhou, 2023). In many cultures, including fishing communities, the practice of arranged marriages is prevalent, impacting the mate choice process (Agey et al., 2021). Arranged marriages can influence the selection of partners for both sons and daughters within these communities, reflecting the cultural significance placed on marital unions (Agey et al., 2021).

Moreover, gender roles and societal expectations play a crucial role in determining marriage partners among fisherfolk. Women's participation in fish processing and packaging, as highlighted in studies conducted in rural communities, sheds light on the gender dynamics within these societies (Anyim et al., 2021). The unequal treatment of women as equal partners in progress can lead to disparities in education levels among female fisherfolk, affecting their choices in marriage partners (Anyim et al., 2021).

Additionally, factors such as age and gender can influence the decision-making process, with male fisherfolk being more likely to discontinue relationships compared to men in other occupational groups (Kagaayi et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the prevalence of HIV infections in fishing communities due to high-risk behaviors underscores the importance of interventions aimed at promoting behavioral change among fisher folk (Nanyonjo et al., 2020; Akobi et al., 2022). These interventions, such as promoting condom use and abstinence, are crucial in addressing health risks within these communities and can impact partner selection and relationship dynamics (Akobi et al., 2022). Thus, the choice of marriage partners among fisher folks is intricately linked to cultural norms, traditional values, gender roles, and societal expectations. Understanding these influences is essential for developing targeted interventions and support systems that cater to the unique needs of fishing communities in navigating the complexities of partner selection and marital relationships.

2.8 The Role of Cultural Values in the Choice of Marriage Partners among Fisher Folks

The influence of cultural values on marriage choices among fisherfolks can be examined through multiple dimensions, including socio-economic roles, gender expectations, and cultural rituals prevalent in fishing communities. These aspects are deeply intertwined with the unique lifestyles and socio-cultural frameworks within which fishers operate. One significant factor is the socio-economic roles defined by cultural practices in fishing communities. Research indicates that traditional gender roles often dictate that men have dominant positions in decision-making regarding fishing activities, while women's roles are typically confined to supportive functions or domestic responsibilities (Aura et al., 2017; Hafid & Akhmad, 2024). This patriarchal

structure can influence marriage choices, as women may be inclined to seek partners who conform to these culturally ingrained gender norms. This dynamic creates a socioeconomic framework within which partner selection is often predetermined by the prevailing gender expectations within the community. Moreover, the socio-cultural values surrounding fishery practices also impact reproductive and marital choices. In many fishing communities, early marriage is common and can be attributed to both economic necessity and cultural expectations. Young women may marry early to ensure economic stability or to comply with social norms that favor early childbearing and familial expansion (Sah, 2018; Tanzil, 2024). The blending of these marital expectations with economic survival strategies often leads to a cycle where early marriage becomes a norm perpetuated by cultural adherence rather than individual choice. Furthermore, health issues prevalent in fishing communities, such as high rates of HIV and intimate partner violence, can influence marriage dynamics and partner selection. Evidence suggests that risky sexual behaviors, including unprotected sex and multiple partnerships, are more pronounced in these communities, potentially changing perceptions around marriage and partnership stability (Sabri et al., 2019; Quinn et al., 2018). This environment can lead to a consolidation of cultural values around marriage, where the need for financial security and community cohesion overshadows traditional partner selection based solely on love or compatibility. Cultural rituals and practices in fishing communities also play a crucial role in shaping marriage choices. The presence of traditional leaders who guide marriage practices illustrates the powerful influence of cultural rituals on social structures and individual choices within these communities (Pulungan et al., 2019). These leaders often emphasize adherence to cultural customs surrounding marriage, reinforcing expectations for marriage structures that may favor unions primarily based on social compatibility and economic stability rather than

romantic love. Lastly, the integrated understanding of these cultural dimensions underscores the necessity of considering broader socio-environmental changes when analyzing marriage choices. Environmental degradation, such as declining fish stocks caused by overfishing and climate change, can alter traditional roles within these communities, leading to shifts in marriage patterns as families adapt to new economic realities and social pressures (Obiero et al., 2015; Norgaard et al., 2017). In conclusion, the interplay between cultural values, traditional socio-economic roles, health challenges, and environmental factors significantly influences marriage choices among fisherfolks. Understanding these dynamics requires a multi-faceted approach, taking into account the unique cultural frameworks and economic challenges that define life in these communities.

2.9 The Role of Occupation in the Choice of Marriage Partners among Fisher Folks

The influence of occupation on marriage choices among fisherfolk is multifaceted, encompassing economic stability, social dynamics, and traditional roles inherent within fishing communities. The occupation of an individual not only shapes their economic standing but also impacts their social status and potential mate selection within these culturally rich contexts. Fisherfolk communities generally emphasize the role of occupation as a critical determinant in marital selection. Economic stability is often a key consideration in marriage negotiations, where individuals or families assess the financial viability and income-generating capacity of potential partners Dow et al. (2016). For instance, as fishing can be characterized by irregular income and economic uncertainty, women may prefer to marry men who either hold stable positions within the fishing industry or possess alternative sources of income. The perceived economic resilience associated with certain occupations can, therefore, make individuals from

those backgrounds more attractive as marriage partners (Ombere, 2018). This is observed in research showing that stable jobs often correlate with positive marital outcomes, where potential partners who are economically secure may lead to enhanced well-being within the household; however, these specific dynamics are still under examination in various contexts and may differ based on individual communities (Seeley & Allison, 2005). Furthermore, in many fisherfolk communities, traditional gender roles significantly shape partner selection, linking a person's occupation to expectations of familial roles. For instance, men are often expected to be the primary earners, and women may seek partners who can fulfill these expectations, thereby influencing their choice (Fraboni & Vitali, 2019). This aligns with observations in agricultural and artisanal communities where the normative expectations of masculinity and femininity dictate marriage choices, as men's occupations validate their status as providers and heads of the household (Sharma, 2019). Thus, in fishing communities, a man's capability in fishing or related activities often serves as a measure of his suitability as a partner. Occupational mobility also plays a crucial role in shaping marriage decisions. Fisherfolk who migrate for work, often due to seasonal changes or economic pressures, may develop new social networks that can affect their marriage prospects (Ombere, 2018; Ombere et al., 2015). Migration introduces complexities such as new socio-cultural norms that may diverge from traditional community standards, thus creating avenues for varied marital choices. Fishermen who work in different geographic locales might encounter diverse marital practices which then influence their subsequent partner selections upon return to their original communities (Hartley & Robertson, 2008). The implications of this include shifts in traditional practices, where partners may be chosen based on new cultural experiences acquired during migration, rather than strictly local norms. Moreover, the interplay between occupation and

education further complicates marriage choices in fisherfolk communities. Education is closely tied to employment opportunities, determining not just occupational choice but also influencing social standings within the community. Higher educational attainment is typically associated with better occupational prospects, thereby making individuals with advanced education more desirable marriage partners (Phiri et al., 2023). Studies indicate that educated women, within these communities, may assert greater agency in partner selection, challenging traditional norms that previously dictated structured matches (Sakti et al., 2023). In summary, occupational influences on marriage choices among fisherfolk are deeply rooted in economic considerations, social norms, and traditional expectations surrounding gender roles. Economic stability derived from one's occupation significantly enhances one's attractiveness as a marital partner, while migration for work introduces variations in marriage patterns, potentially reshaping traditional values. Furthermore, shifts in educational attainment among fisherfolk challenge conventional partner selection processes, allowing individuals greater autonomy in making marital choices.

2.10 The Role of Education in Choice of Marriage Partners among Fisher Folks

The role of education in the marriage choices of fisherfolk is a critical factor that intersects with socio-economic stability, perceptions of partner suitability, and community dynamics. In fishing communities, where livelihoods are often precarious and gender roles are traditionally defined, the influence of education on partner selection can lead to significant changes in relationships, family structures, and community health outcomes. Firstly, education is often linked to economic opportunities and social mobility, both of which play pivotal roles in marriage choices. Higher levels of education typically correlate with better job prospects and increased income potential, which can enhance an individual's attractiveness as a partner. This is

particularly pronounced in fishing communities, where economic stability is often a key concern for individuals when choosing a spouse. Educated individuals may have access to alternative sources of income or may inherit educational advantages that lead to more stable financial situations compared to their less-educated counterparts (Sahoo et al., 2015; . Studies have shown that women, in particular, tend to prioritize a partner's educational background when considering marriage, as it reflects not only financial stability but also social status and the potential for future support (Sabri et al., 2019; Schoen & Cheng, 2006). This reflects a broader trend across various communities where higher education is increasingly associated with desirable partner traits, shaping the dynamics of marital selection. Moreover, education influences awareness and decision-making regarding health practices within fisherfolk communities, particularly around issues such as reproductive health and sexual safety. An educated individual is generally better able to navigate health systems, understand health-related information, and advocate for better health outcomes within the family (Sabri et al., 2019). For instance, a study found that women with higher educational attainment were more likely to engage in safe sexual practices and less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as transactional sex, which is prevalent in some fishing communities (Sabri et al., 2019; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2022). The implications of this are vast, as individuals might prioritize partners who not only share similar educational backgrounds but also have a responsible approach to health, ultimately affecting family wellbeing and community health practices (Lubega et al., 2015). The intersection of education and partner selection also manifests in shifting gender dynamics. As women in fishing communities gain access to education, their expectations regarding marriage may evolve. Educated women often seek partners with similar or higher educational levels, fostering a trend termed "educational homogamy" where partners match socio-educational backgrounds (Qian

& Qian, 2014). This shift can destabilize traditional roles, as women begin to assert greater agency in choosing partners based on compatibility rather than solely on economic necessity or social expectations (Sahoo et al., 2015; Sabri et al., 2019). Research highlights how this shift aligns with broader social trends of women gaining more independence and empowerment, which allows for more informed choices in partner selection. Furthermore, education can directly influence marital timing and patterns. Higher educational attainment often leads to delayed marriage, as individuals focus on career development and personal growth before partnering (Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Abalos, 2014). This is particularly important in fishing communities, where early marriages can perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for both partners. Delayed marriage allows for greater focus on educational completion and career establishment, leading to more economically stable unions later in life (Qian & Qian, 2014; Schwartz & Mare, 2005). In conclusion, education plays a critical role in shaping marriage choices among fisherfolk, influencing economic viability, health awareness, gender dynamics, and marital timing. The intertwining of education with partner selection posits that as educational attainment rises within these communities, so too does the complexity of marital choices, potentially leading to more stable, economically viable, and healthy family structures.

2.11 The Role of Religion on the Choice of Marriage among Fisher Folks

Religion plays a central role in shaping cultural practices and rituals surrounding marriage within the fisherfolks community at Poase (New Takoradi). As noted by Boateng and Osei (2019), ceremonies such as weddings and blessings are imbued with religious elements and symbols, reflecting the spiritual significance attributed to the marital union. These rituals serve not only to celebrate the union of the couple but also to sanctify the marriage within the context of their religious faith.

In many instances, weddings among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi) are solemnized in accordance with religious traditions and customs, with ceremonies conducted by religious leaders or officiants (Boateng & Osei, 2019). These ceremonies often incorporate prayers, scripture readings, and blessings, underscoring the divine blessing bestowed upon the marital union. The presence of religious symbols and rituals reinforces the spiritual dimension of marriage, emphasizing the commitment, fidelity, and unity of the couple within the framework of their faith.

Moreover, religious leaders play a significant role in guiding individuals through the process of mate selection and providing counsel on matters of compatibility and marital harmony (Boateng & Osei, 2019). As trusted figures within the community, religious leaders offer spiritual guidance and pastoral care to couples, helping them navigate the complexities of relationships and ensuring that their union is grounded in shared values and beliefs.

Religion fosters community cohesion among the fisher folks at Poase, providing a sense of belonging and support within the context of shared religious beliefs. Religious gatherings, such as church services and prayer meetings, serve as opportunities for social interaction and networking among community members (Boateng & Osei, 2019). Within this communal framework, individuals may seek potential marriage partners who are active participants in the religious community, fostering connections based on shared faith and values. Religious beliefs and practices often intersect with familial expectations regarding marriage among the fisher folks in New Takoradi. Families may place importance on finding a partner who shares their religious affiliation and is committed to upholding religious traditions and rituals (Boateng & Osei, 2019). As a

result, individuals may feel pressure to select a spouse who aligns with these expectations, ensuring harmony and continuity within the family unit.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to carry out the study. It presents the research paradigm, research approach, research design, the study area, population, sample and sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, trustworthiness, data collection methods, methods of data analysis, ethical consideration and positionality.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study adopted the interpretivism research paradigm. This paradigm holds the belief that knowledge is value laden and that true objective knowledge is difficult or even impossible to accomplish (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The paradigm posits that existing realities can change and which are different to measure. Interpretivism therefore helps to come to some understanding of how people construct their own meaning about their perceptions of the world. It assumes that there many ways of knowing apart from the scientific method. (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that knowledge comes from many realities rather than one reality. Interpretivism as a research paradigm emphasizes understanding social phenomena through the subjective meanings that people attach to their experiences. In the context of studying the factors influencing the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi), the use of interpretivism facilitated exploring the perceptions, beliefs, and values that influenced individuals' decisions, regarding marriage partner selection within their cultural and social context. This paradigm acknowledges that individuals' interpretations shape their behaviours and choices, which is crucial for understanding the complexities of partner selection. This paradigm commonly employs qualitative

research methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, to gather rich, detailed data that reveals the participants' viewpoints and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the interpretivism paradigm helped to uncover the nuanced, subjective factors that influenced people's their choice of marriage partners. This involved exploring the cultural, social, economic, and personal dimensions that shaped their decisions. Cultural norms and social structures play a significant role in marriage partner selection. Interpretivist research revealed how traditions, beliefs, and social expectations within the fishing community impacted these choices. Boateng (2018) asserts that marriage within the same community or clan might be preferred to maintain social cohesion and continuity. Economic factors are also crucial. In fishing communities such as Poase, economic stability and resource availability can influence marriage decisions. Interpretivist studies might explore how economic interdependencies within the community, such as shared fishing resources and economic cooperation, affect partner selection (Atta-Mensah, 2019). It would consider how individuals negotiate their personal desires with societal expectations and familial pressures (Gyimah, 2020).

3.2 Research Approach

Qualitative research, approach was adopted for the study. Qualitative research involves the gathering of narratives on variables in order to gain insights into issues. It is well suited for exploring nuanced experiences and perspectives. Bryman (2006) highlights that qualitative methods enable researchers to delve deeply into the meanings and interpretations of participant experiences. Ary et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of understanding phenomena from the viewpoint of participants. It pays close attention to the context in which social interactions occur, allowing researchers to understand the situational dynamics that influence behaviours and decisions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

A qualitative research approach is well-suited for exploring the nuanced meanings and experiences surrounding the choice of marriage partners among fisher folks. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussion allow researchers to delve deeply into participants' perspectives, motivations and decision-making processes. By adopting a qualitative approach, I can capture the richness and diversity of factors that influence partner selection within this community.

The research design is often flexible, evolving as the study progresses to allow for deeper exploration of emerging themes and insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It relies on non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and textual materials, which provide rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomena being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the context of Poase's fisherfolks, a qualitative approach involved exploring the intricate social, cultural, economic, and personal factors that influenced marriage partner choices. This approach enabled me to delve into the lived experiences and societal norms that shape these decisions. Oppong (2018) explains that qualitative research can uncover how cultural norms, traditions, and social expectations within the fishing community influence marriage choices. For instance, researchers might explore how cultural values around family honor, clan affiliation, and community cohesion impact partner selection. Similarly, it can uncover how cultural norms and social expectations within the fishing community influence marriage choices. Economic considerations are critical in marriage partner choice. A qualitative approach can reveal how economic stability, resource sharing, and livelihood dependencies within the fishing community influence marriage decisions. Koomson (2020) emphasizes how interviews might uncover how economic hardships or wealth accumulation affect partner preferences and individual stories as well as personal agency are central to understanding marriage partner choices. Qualitative research methods such as in-depth

interviews can highlight how personal experiences, aspirations, and emotional connections play a role in partner selection. This approach allows for capturing the nuances of individual decision-making processes (Asante & Agyemang, 2017).

3.3 Research Design

The study employed an exploratory descriptive design to explore the factors influencing the choice of marriage partners among fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi). This design enables the exploration of participants' subjective experiences and provides a comprehensive description of the factors that influence decision-making, without attempting to establish causal relationships. As noted by Creswell (2019), exploratory research is particularly useful when little is known about a topic, as it helps identify key factors, themes, and patterns that may be relevant for further investigation.

The aim of this design was to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of fisher folks by collecting detailed descriptions of their marriage choices through interviews. This descriptive research approach, as defined by Polit and Beck (2021), focuses on providing an accurate depiction of the phenomenon under study, capturing participants' experiences without manipulating variables. The goal was to describe the nature of partner selection in Poase (New Takoradi), rather than to explain or predict behaviors.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method, allowing participants the freedom to express their experiences, values, and perceptions regarding their marriage choices. According to Guest et al. (2021), semi-structured interviews are highly effective in qualitative research because they allow for a combination of focused questioning and flexibility, facilitating the capture of rich and nuanced data. The open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their insights

on the cultural, familial, and individual factors influencing their decisions. The data analysis process involved identifying themes and patterns from the responses. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2021), was employed to categorize the data and identify recurrent themes that emerged during the interviews. This process provided a deeper understanding of the underlying social, cultural, and personal factors influencing marriage partner selection among fisher folks in Poase (New Takoradi).

An important aspect of the exploratory descriptive design is the consideration of context. According to Flick (2020), understanding the socio-cultural and economic context in which participants live is crucial for accurately interpreting their experiences. In this study, particular attention was given to the influence of local customs, community practices, and economic factors in shaping participants' choices.

By utilizing an exploratory descriptive design, this research provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the factors influencing marriage decisions within the unique cultural context of Poase (New Takoradi). This approach allowed for the discovery of new insights, emphasizing the complexity of the decision-making process in this community.

3.4 Study Area

The research was conducted at Poase (New Takoradi) in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. Poase (New Takoradi) is a coastal community located in the Western Region of Ghana. The area is predominantly inhabited by fisher folks, whose livelihoods and daily activities are centered around the sea. The geographical location has a significant impact on the social and economic dynamics of the community. As a coastal town, Poase is characterized by its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, which influences both the economic activities and cultural

practices of its residents (Addo et al., 2018). The environment accommodates fishing harbors, beaches, and market areas where fish trading occurs. The population of Poase (New Takoradi) includes a mix of indigenous ethnic groups, with a high concentration of people engaged in fishing and its related activities. This demographic composition affects social structures and community interactions (Amponsah, 2019). The socioeconomic conditions at Poase (New Takoradi) are deeply intertwined with the fishing industry, which is the primary source of livelihood for most residents. Economic stability and resource availability play crucial roles in shaping social behaviors and decisions, including marriage partner choice. Fishing is the backbone of the local economy, providing employment and income for the majority of households. Asiedu and Mensah (2020) assert that the economic status of individuals and families can influence marriage decisions, as economic stability is often a key consideration in partner selection. The economic challenges faced by fisher folks, such as fluctuating fish stocks and market prices, can affect living conditions and social dynamics. These conditions, in turn, impact how individuals approach marriage and family life (Ninsin, 2021). Traditional beliefs and practices related to marriage, such as dowry systems, clan affiliations, and marriage ceremonies, play a significant role in partner selection. These cultural norms help maintain social order and continuity within the community (Opoku, 2018). Social interactions and networks within the community are vital in influencing marriage decisions. Family ties, friendships, and community relationships often guide individuals in their choice of marriage partners, emphasizing the importance of social approval and support (Akyeampong, 2022). The fisherfolks of New Takoradi share a strong collective identity based on their occupation and lifestyle. This sense of community influences marriage choices, as individuals often prefer partners who understand and appreciate their way of life (Yeboah & Aboagye, 2019).

The common experiences of living and working in a fishing community, such as dealing with the uncertainties of fishing as a livelihood, foster a sense of solidarity and mutual support. These shared experiences can influence partner selection by prioritizing those who can navigate the unique challenges of the community (Mensah & Owusu, 2020). The primary occupation of the people is fishing, with secondary activities including fish processing and trading. Economic conditions vary, with income levels often dependent on seasonal fishing yields and market dynamics (Asiedu & Mensah, 2020). Economic stability is a significant factor in marriage decisions, where individuals with higher or more stable incomes may be considered more desirable partners (Addo et al., 2018).

3.5 Population

Population in research is defined as the total number of units (individuals, dyads, groups, organizations, events, objects, or items) from which samples are selected for measurement (Kindy, et al, 2016). The target population is the specific, conceptually bounded group of potential participants to whom the researcher may have access to that represents the nature of the population of interest (Kindy, et al, 2016). The accessible population is the population in research to which the researchers can apply their conclusions. This population is a subset of the target population and it is from the accessible population that researchers draw their samples (Asiamah et al., 2017). The population of this study comprised fisher folks residing at Poase (New Takoradi) who married. This population was made up individuals who engage in fishing activities as their primary occupation and are part of the local community at New Takoradi. The target population of the study were the fisher folks (both males and females) who are married and resides at Poase. The target population is the specific, conceptually bounded group of potential participants to whom the researcher may have access that represents the nature of the population of interest (Kindy, et al, 2016). The accessible

population were 20 fisher folks out of the 50 targeted population. This population includes individuals directly involved in fishing activities as well as those indirectly connected, such as fish traders. The fisherfolk community consists of a diverse age range, from young adults to the elderly, with a mix of both men and women actively participating in the fishing industry. Men typically dominate fishing activities, while women are often involved in processing and trading fish (Elias & Armah, 2019). The fisher folk community includes a broad age range, from young adults (typically 18 years and older) to the elderly. There is a notable gender division of labour, with men predominantly involved in fishing and women mainly involved in processing and trading fish (Akyeampong, 2020).

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample is a set of respondents (people) selected as representative individuals from a large population or a subset of a population selected to participate in a study, it is a fraction of the whole, selected to participate in the research project (Kindy et al, 2016). Sampling is defined as the act, process, or technique for selecting a sample thus the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population (Brink 2016). The determination of sample size was guided by the principle of data saturation, where data collection continued until no new information or themes emerged. Given the complexity of the research topic and the varied perspectives of the participants, an iterative approach was taken for the sample size determination, allowing for flexibility based on the richness and depth of the data obtained.

A sample is a set of respondents selected as representative individuals from a larger population or a subset of a population chosen to participate in a study (Kindy et al., 2016). Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the

entire population (Brink, 2016). For this study, the determination of the sample size was guided by the principle of data saturation, where data collection continued until no new information or themes emerged.

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher deliberately selects participants based on their knowledge, experiences, or specific characteristics relevant to the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In this case, the target group was fisher folks in Poase (New Takoradi) who were married. This group was selected because they could provide in-depth insights into the cultural, occupational, economic, and religious factors influencing marriage partner selection within their community.

A total of twenty (20) participants were selected, consisting of both men and women actively engaged in fishing-related activities such as harvesting, processing, and trading. This sample allowed the researcher to gather diverse perspectives across gender and occupational roles while still focusing on individuals who were directly connected to the phenomenon under study.

This approach ensured that the sample was not only relevant to the study objectives but also rich in providing the lived experiences of married fisher folks. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), purposive sampling is particularly suitable for qualitative studies that seek to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those most directly involved.

3.7 Instrument for Data Collection

To explore the factors influencing the choice of marriage partners among fisherfolks at Poase (New Takoradi), interview guide was used for data collection. According to Koul (2011), with the semi-structured interview guide, series of questions can be asked, and the order of the questions are decided in advance, the interviewer can rephrase the questions, modify them and add new questions to the list. It also allows both the interviewer and interviewees to seek clarification on issues that may be unclear to each other. The validity of a research instrument is crucial in ensuring that the data collected accurately reflects the concepts being investigated. In this study, both face validity and content validity of the research instruments were established before their administration. According to Taherdoost (2016), face validity refers to the degree to which an instrument appears effective in measuring what it is intended to measure. To ensure face validity, the questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by experts in educational research and social sciences who assessed the clarity, language, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the study objectives. Feedback from these experts led to minor revisions that improved the comprehensibility and alignment of the questions with the research focus.

Content validity, on the other hand, concerns the extent to which the items of an instrument represent the entire domain of the construct being measured (Bolarinwa, 2015). To establish content validity, the items in the instrument were mapped against the study's objectives and research questions to ensure comprehensive coverage of all relevant dimensions. The instruments were also subjected to expert review by two lecturers in research methodology and a subject specialist in social studies education. Their evaluation confirmed that the instrument adequately captured the factors

influencing marriage partner selection among fisher folk, thereby satisfying the requirements for content validity.

This systematic review and revision process ensured that the instrument not only appeared valid on the surface (face validity) but also adequately measured the constructs of interest (content validity). Establishing these forms of validity increased the credibility of the findings and provided confidence that the data generated would be both accurate and relevant to the study context (Mohajan, 2017).

This instrument was exclusively used for gathering insights from the fisher folks about how they select their spouses. Interviews are primarily done in qualitative research and occur when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. Often audiotapes are utilized to allow for more consistent transcription (Creswell, 2015). The researcher often transcribes and types the data into a computer file, in order to analyse it after interviewing. Interviews may be useful to follow-up with individual respondents after questionnaires, for example to further investigate their responses (Creswell, 2015).

3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Pilot & Beck, 2014). The criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the data and the interpretations of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is similar to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research. Involving participants in the verification of the data and interpretations to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). The researcher ensured credibility by spending time in the field to build trust with participants and gain a deep understanding of the context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This helped me to gather in gathering in-depth and accurate data for the study. Another way involves participants reviewing the data and the researcher's interpretations to ensure the accuracy of the data collected (Birt et al., 2016). Finally, the researcher allowed participants to verify the data collected from them to strengthen the study's credibility.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts. It is analogous to external validity or generalizability in quantitative research. Providing detailed and rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings allows readers to determine if the findings are transferable to other settings (Holloway & Galvin, 2017). This involves describing the cultural, social, and economic context of Poase (New Takoradi's) fisher folk community in depth. Selecting a diverse range of participants who can provide comprehensive insights ensures the findings encompass various perspectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

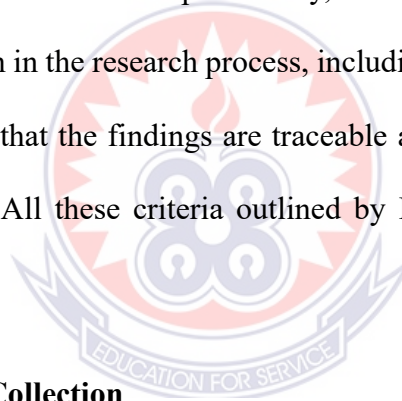
3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency and stability of research findings overtime and across different contexts. The researcher ensured dependability by keeping a detailed

record of all research activities, decisions, and changes throughout the study process (Nowell et al., 2017). These include documenting how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Coding the data, taking a break, and then recoding the same data to check for consistency in the results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Reflecting on the researcher's own biases and how these may affect the research. Maintaining a reflexive journal helps in documenting personal reflections, biases, and decisions made during the research process (Berger, 2015). Similar to dependability, the researcher kept a comprehensive record of all steps taken in the research process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, ensures that the findings are traceable and can be confirmed by others (Nowell et al., 2017). All these criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were followed.



3.9 Methods of Data Collection

To effectively collect data for the study, one main instrument was used: Interview.

Semi-structured interview was conducted on the fisher folks. Prior to the actual data collection, the fisherfolks within Poase for the study were officially consulted. This enabled the researcher to establish familiarity with them. It was conducted to gather in-depth insights on how fisher folks select their partners, what role does culture play in influencing the choice of marriage partners, what role does occupation play in influencing the choice of marriage partners, how does education affect the choice of marriage partners and how does religion affect the choice of marriage partners among fisher folks at Poase.

3.10 Methods of Data Analysis

Data presentation and analysis in the interviews involved a systematic process of breaking down, examining, and interpreting interview data to uncover meaningful insights. This process aided in answering research questions. The recorded conversations (interviews) were transcribed into written texts. The transcribed texts were broken down into smaller units, often called “codes.” The codes were grouped into broader themes that represented the common topics or patterns (research questions) across the interviews. The codes were categorized thematically in a systematic manner and analysed, allowing for a rich and descriptive understanding of the implementation process. The identified themes were examined, their meanings interpreted, and conclusions drawn based on the data collected during the interviews.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research are a set of principles that guide research designs and practices. They include the genres that the researcher followed to protect the rights in developing research strategies and building a trusted relationship between the study participants and investigator. Research ethics is important in our daily life research endeavours and requires that researchers should protect the dignity of their subjects and publish well the information that is researched (Wallington, 2018). The researcher secured informed consent from the identified research participants before their involvement in the study. The researcher ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This involved taking steps to protect the identity and personal information of participants in the qualitative data collection. As part of ensuring confidentiality, pseudonyms were used. Data was securely stored and only accessible to trusted and authorized personality. In order to make sure there was originality and credibility for the study, the interview procedures were carefully planned and

structured. The researcher offered participants the right to withdraw from the research at will and all inconveniences on the part of participants were drastically minimized.

When reporting the study findings, the researcher accurately represented the data collected, providing a fair and balanced representation of the qualitative data. The researcher presented an unbiased interpretation that reflects the complexities of the research topic. These ethical considerations ensured that the rights and well-being of research participants were protected. It enhanced the credibility and integrity of the research. Data was safeguarded by ensuring that it was stored securely and protected from unauthorized access.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the presentation and analysis of data gathered for the study. The chapter is in two parts, namely section A and B. Section A looks at the demographic characteristics of participants. Participants' demographic characteristics which have been analysed are their sex and age distribution, their education. Section B centers on the analyses of data gathered for the study, which has been analysed thematically.

4.1 Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

4.1.1 Sex, Distribution of Respondents

The respondents were born males and females. The males constituted 12(60%), while females were 8(40%), showing the dominance of males among fisherfolks at Poase.

4.1.2 Age Distribution

In terms of age distribution, the minimum age was 45 years while the maximum age was 52 years, thus participants fell between 45 and 52 years.

4.1.3 Educational Qualification

The study found that 14(70%) of the participants had middle school leaving certificate, while the rest 6(30%) had no formal education.

4.2 Section B: Analysis of Data

This sub-section presents the findings and discussion from the study based on the research questions.

4.2.1 Research Question One

What role do cultural values play in influencing the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi)?

This study sought to find out from the fisher folks on the role of cultural values in the selection of their marriage partners. Five themes were identified under the research question: cultural alignment, family and community influence, desired traits, traditional matchmaking and Traditional values and Personal Preferences conflicts.

4.2.1.1 Cultural alignment

This theme sought from fisher folks; how cultural values influence their choice of a marriage partners. Majority of the fisherfolks emphasised the importance of choosing a marriage partner from the same community, ethnic group or religious background, as this was believed to foster mutual understanding, minimise conflicts and promote unity. Shared values, beliefs, language and customs were viewed as essential for ensuring harmony, effective communication, and family cohesion. Culturally, majority of the fisherfolks contended that these preferences stem from traditions where marriage partners from the same community or ethnic group help preserve cultural continuity, ease social integration and ensure that both partners and their families share similar lifestyles, values, and ideologies. This cultural alignment was believed to reduce misunderstandings and strengthen the bond between the couple and their extended families.

One of the participants said:

One custom is to marry someone from the same community, it makes it easier in the relationship since they will all have the same exposure and common way of life, and this in effect minimizes misunderstanding and quarrels among the couples.” (FF, 1)

Another participant stressed:

Marrying someone from the same ethnic group enhances oneness and communication. (FF, 4).

Another participant emphasised:

One must marry someone with the same lifestyle and values. Marrying someone with different lifestyles and values always brings about both partners having different view on things, and this will always bring misunderstanding. (FF, 14).

Moreover, a respondent opined:

One should marry one with equal ideas and principles since it ensures effectiveness of understanding. (FF, 18).

These findings on fisherfolks on selecting marriage partners from the same ethnic groups are in consonance with the findings of Mensah and Adomako (2018) who indicate that couples from similar socio-cultural environments are more likely to share common goals and values, leading to more stable and satisfying relationships. The authors stress that marrying within the same community is often associated with a greater understanding of each other's background, culture, and family dynamics, and this helps to reduce conflicts, and hence promotes harmony. This alignment in upbringing and exposure strengthens communication and mutual support in the marriage.

Religious compatibility also plays a significant role in marriage choices. Shared religious beliefs are viewed as critical for the spiritual and emotional growth of both partners, as well as the stability of the family unit. Studies indicate that religiously aligned couples experience fewer conflicts and are more likely to raise their children with a clear and consistent religious identity (Schroeder & Fisher, 2019). Religious

harmony has been linked to long-term marital satisfaction, as it helps couples navigate moral and ethical challenges together (Nguyen & Cheung, 2020).

Language and communication are equally vital in partner selection, particularly in multilingual or multicultural contexts. Couples who speak the same language tend to have better communication and are able to resolve conflicts more effectively. Miscommunication due to language barriers is often a source of tension, especially when it involves raising children in a multilingual environment. Linguistic compatibility, therefore, is seen as a foundation for emotional intimacy and family cohesion (Boakye & Dako, 2021).

Finally, shared values and ideologies are consistently highlighted as important in marriage partner selection. Partners who hold similar views on life, family, and societal roles tend to have stronger relationships, as value congruence minimizes disagreements and promotes unity. Mills and Clark (2022) emphasize that couples who share core beliefs and principles are more likely to experience long-term marital success, as they are better equipped to make joint decisions and maintain a cooperative dynamic. This emphasis on shared values reflects the broader cultural belief that marriages thrive when partners align on major life issues.

4.2.1.2 Family and community influence

This theme sought to find out from fisher folks on how important family and community opinions influence the choice of a marriage partners.

The role of family and community members in participants' decision to marry was considered crucial by many individuals. Some fisherfolks highlighted that families and communities acted as advisory bodies, providing guidance and support during the marriage selection process. Their acceptance of a partner was seen as vital, as it could

significantly impact the couple's marital journey. When families and communities approve of one's partner selection, they offer invaluable support. Additionally, families and community members often take on the responsibility of investigating potential partners and their backgrounds, ensuring that individuals make informed choices. They are also recognized as mediators in resolving disputes that may arise within the marriage, serving as essential pillars for maintaining harmony. Furthermore, minority of the participants emphasised that families and communities are immediate sources of support during marital conflicts, making their involvement even more significant. Majority believe that validation from family and community members is essential for a successful marriage, as their opinions can influence the overall stability and satisfaction of the relationship.

However, there were differing views, with few participants arguing that the ultimate decision lied with the couple themselves, suggesting that family and community may not play a significant role in individuals' partner selection. Nonetheless, the overall consensus underscores the importance of family and community support, in helping individuals to make informed marriage decisions and ensuring a successful married life. These were some of their responses of the participants:

The family and community members serve as an advisory body in one's decision in marrying. (FF, 1)

Another participant stressed:

The family and community are important in the decision of marrying in such that their acceptance really matter in the marital journey since they will give their full support if they tend to accept the person you are going to get married to. (FF, 2)

Another participant said:

The community and family are the main organs in settling disputes and misunderstanding in marriages so they are important in the decision making when choosing a marriage partner.(FF, 7)

Also, a participant emphasised:

The family and community are important in the decision in marriage since they are the immediate people to run to when there are disputes in marriage. (FF, 9).

The findings on fisherfolks validating family and community members in decision to marry are in alignment with Pérez and Rojas (2021), who state that the opinions and acceptance of family members significantly impact an individual's choice of partner, as families provide both emotional and practical backing when they approve of the union. In cultures that value collective decision-making, the endorsement of family members is particularly important, as it can lead to greater stability in marital relationships.

Furthermore, families and community networks are essential for resolving conflicts that may arise in marriages among fisher folks. They often serve as mediators during disputes, and this helps to sustain harmony and stability in relationships. Research has emphasized the important role that extended family and community members play in addressing marital disagreements, highlighting their significance in promoting conflict resolution and emotional support for couples (Nguyen & Cheung, 2020).

Additionally, the immediate availability of family and community members during times of marital strife underscores their importance in the partner selection process. Individuals in fishing communities frequently turn to their family networks for advice and assistance when navigating challenges in their relationships (Mills & Clark, 2022).

This dependence on family support is especially pronounced in contexts where cultural norms prioritize family unity and communal ties.

4.2.1.3 Desired Traits

This theme sought to ascertain from the participants on the specific traits or qualities valued in potential marriage partners. The responses highlight various traits and qualities that fisherfolks value in potential marriage partners, reflecting their cultural traditions. A significant emphasis was placed on good behaviour, with majority of respondents indicating that qualities such as respect, humility, and a positive attitude were crucial in selecting a marriage partner. Good behaviour is seen as foundational for fostering positive relationships and raising children effectively.

In addition to good character, few respondents recognised the importance of being responsible, hardworking and family-oriented in partner selection. These qualities are viewed as essential for creating a stable and supportive home environment. Majority of respondents mentioned the importance of family background and moral standards, suggesting that a partner's upbringing and values play a significant role in their desirability.

Overall, the responses convey a cultural tradition that prioritises personal virtues and character traits, reflecting a collective understanding of what constitutes a suitable marriage partner within the fisherfolk community. These qualities not only aim to ensure individual happiness but also contribute to the well-being of families and the broader community.

These were some views expressed by the participants:

I will go for a woman with good behaviour as a trait or quality in my potential marriage partner. It will be difficult for someone with a good behavior to treat me bad but someone without a good behavior can treat one bad. (FF, 3)

A prospective partner with a good behavior should be a specific trait or quality to value in making a decision about a potential marriage partners in my cultural traditions. A good behavior are qualities that make marriage and relationship work easily (FF, 6)

One main trait I will value in a potential marriage partner is respect. One thing I can't stand in a relationship or marriage is disrespect, so respect is one main quality I will look for in a potential marriage partner. (FF, 8)

I will look for a responsible, hardworking and family oriented marriage partner because that's what my culture and tradition values seek in every potential marriage partner. (FF, 16)

The findings on fisherfolks on upholding qualities such as respect, humility and positive attitudes fit the assertions of Graham & Diebels (2019), when they said that good behaviour and a positive attitude contribute to relationship satisfaction and its longevity, as partners who exhibit these traits tend to create harmonious environments conducive to emotional well-being. The perception that individuals with good behaviour are less likely to engage in negative actions align with findings that highlight the importance of trust and respect in building healthy marital relationships (Tao & Fong, 2020).

Respect emerged as a crucial quality valued by participants, reflecting the notion that mutual respect is fundamental in choosing a marriage partner and furthermore making marriage successful. Raja and Fakhri (2022) indicated that respect between partners fosters better communication and also prepares the ground for conflict resolution, ultimately enhancing quality relationship. The cultural emphasis on seeking responsible and hardworking partners aligns with broader societal expectations that prioritize

stability and support in family structures. Studies show that partners who embody these qualities are often viewed as more reliable and capable of contributing to the household, thus promoting a sense of security and cooperation (Kumar & Muthuraj, 2021).

4.2.1.4 Traditional Matchmaking

This theme sought to examine the traditional matchmaking or courtship practices, followed by the participants.

Majority of the fisherfolks indicated that there was no formal tradition of arranged marriages within their culture. Instead, individuals had the freedom to choose their partners, often with guidance from their families regarding the traits and qualities to look for a spouse, such as good behaviour, respect, and responsible attitude. While there is no formal matchmaking, few participants mentioned that family involvement could occur after the partners themselves have agreed to marry, serving more as a mutual agreement between families rather than an imposed arrangement. Generally, the culture of the people determines choice of a marriage partner, though family advice plays a supportive role. These were some of the responses from the participants:

There is no such traditionally arranged marriages in my community (FF, 11)

Tradition and culture only teach us the qualities to consider in any potential marriage partner but they do arrange marriages for us. (FF,14)

Traditionally, the community does not arrange marriages for anyone, but rather advises prospective spouses on what to look out for in their potential marriage partners. (FF, 17)

When I wanted to marry, my family decided to choose someone for me, but I refused and married the one I loved (FF, 19).

The absence of traditional matchmaking practices among the fisher folks aligns with broader shifts in marriage patterns observed in many cultures. Research suggests that while arranged marriages were historically common in various communities, many people now emphasize personal choice in selecting a marriage partner. This is evident in the fishing community, where respondents overwhelmingly indicated that there was no formal matchmaking as a practice, individuals were thus free to choose their partners, though family advice may play a supportive role (Adeniran, 2020). In such contexts, the selection of a marriage partner is often guided by personal preferences and cultural values rather than family-arranged unions (Pérez & Rojas, 2021).

The role of the family in advising on marriage partner selection is still prominent in some cultures, including the fishing community, where families often emphasize qualities such as good behavior, respect, and responsibility (Nguyen & Cheung, 2020). Although there is no formal matchmaking as a practice, families may offer guidance on the desirable traits in a spouse, promoting characteristics that align with cultural expectations. Other respondents mentioned that in rare cases, there may be a mutual agreement between the families involved, but this occurred only after the couple had decided to be together, reflecting a shift towards individual autonomy in marriage decisions (Mills & Clark, 2022). This trend reflects a broader move away from traditional arranged or match making practices in marriages in favor of personal choice, while still maintaining the influence of the family in providing counsel on partner selection decisions. This phenomenon has been observed in other fishing communities as well, where cultural practices increasingly favor individual preferences in partner selection, with the family and community support, acting more as a guide rather than a directive (Rahman et al., 2021).

4.2.1.5 Traditional values and Personal Preferences conflicts

This study sought to ascertain how traditional values conflict with personal preferences in marriage partner selection. The responses highlight a recurring tension between traditional values and personal preferences in the selection of marriage partners among fisher folks. Majority of participants expressed that cultural norm such as ethnic alignment, family consent and financial expectations from men, often conflicted with their individual choices. For instance, the expectation to marry within one's ethnic group could hinder personal preferences if their preferred partner is from a different ethnic background. Additionally, the traditional requirement for parental approval created difficulties when the parents' choice differed from their own, leading to delays or obstacles in marriage decisions.

The expectation for men to be financially stable before marriage was another major point of conflict. Minority of the participants believed that both partners should be able to contribute to the financial needs of the family, yet traditional norms place the burden solely on men. This prolonged marriage timelines, creating tension for those who are ready to settle down despite the man's financial status. Furthermore, traditional views that women must be homemakers to be in charge of cooking and other household chores conflicted with the preference of some individuals who are willing to share these responsibilities more equally. The responses of the participants are captured below:

Traditions which believe that parents of both partners must consent to the marriage before it can hold creates serious conflict if the individual's choice of partner preference differs from that of the parent. FF, 2).

The traditional value where I should be someone who is financially stable to cater for the family can conflict with my personal preference in the sense that I might meet a woman who is manageable or okay to settle down .If both of us join hands to cater for the home but the tradition where a man is expected to do

almost all of the financial expenses can conflict with my interest since when it happens like that, it means I must hold on with settling down till everything financial on the side become stable, this can prolong the time and duration I would want to marriage even into years (FF, 3).

Similarly, a participant said:

The traditional values where it is expected of every woman to be able to cook and take care of the home conflict with my personal preference since I wouldn't mind marrying someone who isn't perfect in cooking and taking care of the house since I am also capable of doing such things for the family, but tradition doesn't accept it. (FF, 4).

One participant had this to say:

The view that its shouldn't be that the man is supposed to be able to cater for the family before he can get married, hinders my preference in partner selection in the sense that I wouldn't mind, but if the man is not able to provide and I am able to provide and there is understanding among us, then we must get married and nothing should be able to stop us. (FF, 8)

Another participant said:

Some traditional values affect personal preferences in partner selection. Traditional values such as family acceptance of marriage partners conflicts with people's choice of marriage partners. (FF,10)

The findings on fisherfolks on how cultural norms conflicts with individual choices in the selection of marriage partners align with Ghimire and Axinn, (2022) that one of the key traditional values is parental consent in marriage, which is seen as essential in maintaining family honor and continuity. This practice is common in many African societies, where marriage is not just a union of two individuals, but a relationship between families (Ghimire & Axinn, 2022). However, for individuals who wish to exercise more autonomy in partner selection, this can create conflicts. The parents' expectations regarding the suitability of a partner may not align with her personal

choice, reflecting a shift in modern preferences where individuals prioritize emotional compatibility over family approval (Madhavan & Gross, 2020).

Financial stability is another traditional criterion often emphasized in partner selection.

In many cultures, a man's ability to provide for his family is seen as a prerequisite for marriage (Behrman et al., 2020). Few fisherfolks noted that they preferred to marry someone who has a normal life status and with whom they could build a future. The tradition of requiring financial independence from the man delays or complicates her personal preferences. Research indicates that such expectations are evolving as more couples adopt a collaborative approach to managing household finances, moving away from the traditional sole-provider model (Ward & Finkle, 2021).

Gender roles in marriage also present a conflict between traditional expectations and modern personal preferences. Traditionally, women were expected to handle domestic responsibilities, including cooking and household management (Doss et al., 2018). However, some of the responses clashes with personal preferences about some men who are willing to share or even take on these responsibilities. This shift in gender role expectations reflects broader societal changes, where men are required to perform nontraditional roles in the household, though such changes may not always be accepted by older generations or within more conservative communities (Levtov et al., 2019).

Finally, the acceptance of marriage partners by families is a traditional value that often conflicts with personal choices. Participants highlighted how family acceptance could directly conflict with individual preferences, limiting the freedom to choose based on personal attraction or compatibility. As marriage is increasingly viewed as a personal

rather than family affair, tensions arise by upholding tradition on one hand and honoring personal choice (Hirsch, 2019).

4.2.2 Research Question Two

What role does occupation play in influencing the choice of marriage partners among fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi)?

The study sought to elicit responses from the fisher folk's on how economic factors influence marriage decisions within the community. Three themes were identified under this research question: occupational influence, economic compatibility, and evolving economic criteria.

4.2.2.1 Occupational Influence

This theme sought to examine how occupational considerations influence marriage partner selection.

The influence of a potential spouse's occupation on marriage partner selection among the participants revealed a diverse range of perspectives. Few participants believed that occupation was not a critical factor in their choice of marriage partners, emphasising that what matters most is the income generated from that occupation rather than the job itself. Majority of them argued that as long as the partner can provide financial support, the specific nature of their work is irrelevant.

Conversely, some expressed that the type of occupation of a prospective partner influences their choice, particularly in terms of stability and sustainability. These individuals often seek partners with reputable jobs that can ensure consistent income and financial security for the family. Few respondents specifically mentioned the importance of avoiding partners from certain occupations due to negative perceptions

associated with those jobs. Overall, while few respondents downplayed the importance of occupation in their partner selection, majority highlighted the necessity of financial stability and the reputational aspects of certain jobs, suggesting a complex interplay between financial considerations and societal perceptions of work in marriage decisions. These were some of the responses gathered from the participants:

“The occupation of my potential marriage partner will influence the choice of marriage partner. I cannot marry a partner with a certain kind of occupation.”
(FF,16)

With the kind of stories about the attitude of certain people in some occupations, I have decided not to choose any partner from there, so occupation does influence my choice of potential marriage partner. (FF,18)

On the other hand, three participants had these to say:

The type of work the person does doesn't matter only if it's not criminal. The financial stability or income is what I will consider but not the occupation.(FF,9)

Occupation does not matter in my choice of a potential marriage partner. The occupation of a marriage partner does not guarantee a successful marriage therefore it does not in any way influence the selection of a potential marriage partner. (FF,14)

For me, every occupation is okay provided it brings food to the table. It is enough if my partner is working regardless of the occupation. (FF,17)

The findings on fisherfolks on the necessity of financial stability against occupation in the selection of marriage partners align with assertions by Osei and Danso (2018) that the perceptions about certain occupations can influence individuals' marital choices, as people may wish to align with partners who uphold specific societal standards and provide financial help when the need arises.

Amoah et al. (2020), emphasised that financial stability, rather than occupational prestige, often plays a more significant role in marriage decisions, particularly in economically-vulnerable communities. Furthermore, the belief that a partner's occupation does not guarantee a successful marriage underscores the idea that emotional compatibility and mutual support are fundamental to marital success, as highlighted by Wang and Liu (2021). Their research illustrated that while economic factors are important, the quality of the relationship and shared values ultimately determine long-term satisfaction in marriage.

4.2.2.2 Economic Compatibility

This theme sought to elicit responses from fisherfolks on how similar economic background is important for marriage partner selection. Majority of participants indicated that a similar economic background is not a critical factor for marital selection. They expressed that focusing too much on economic similarity could lead to complications, such as excessive scrutiny of each other's finances or potential conflicts arising from shared financial issues.

Conversely, minority believed that having a similar economic background is beneficial, as it could foster mutual understanding and shared values. However, the prevailing sentiment leaned towards the idea that emotional qualities such as humility, love and support are more crucial for a successful marriage than economic status. In all, some respondents suggested that successful partnerships were built on compatibility and support rather than mere economic parallels. The following responses threw more light on the above discussion:

Having a similar economic background will even make your partner have an eye in whatever you're doing which could even bring issues so it's not important to look out for in the selection of one's marriage partner. (FF,9)

Some participants also expressed their thoughts as these:

Similar economic background does not matter. I don't even want to have a similar economic background with my potential married partner. (FF,11).

Similar economic background is not an important factor to consider in selecting marriage partner. Having the same economic background has its own problems since the partner may know every income that comes into your hands. (FF,14).

Having a similar economic background is not an important factor to consider in selecting a marriage partner. It is even not good to have a similar economic background so that one partner can hold the family together in case the other partner's economic situation goes bad. (FF,19).

The findings on fisherfolks on economic similarity as a factor for marriage partner selection corroborate the assertions by Jiang and Probst (2019), that financial scrutiny can contribute to tension and dissatisfaction in relationships, indicating that the dynamics of financial interdependence are complex, and may lead to misunderstandings if partners are overly aware of each other's financial situations. Moreover, the assertion that having a similar economic background is not necessarily advantageous is reflected in research that emphasizes the importance of economic diversity within partnerships (Williams & Chen, 2020). They noted that men and women often bring different financial experiences and resources into a marriage, which can lead to complementary strengths that enhance the family unit. This suggests that differences in economic backgrounds may allow partners to support each other more effectively in navigating financial challenges.

Additionally, the view that having dissimilar economic backgrounds can provide a safety net for a couple is supported by findings that emphasize the value of economic resilience in relationships. As stated by Mensah and Boateng (2018), partners with varied economic backgrounds can create a more robust financial foundation, where one

partner can stand in for the family if the other's economic situation falters. This perspective underlines the importance of adaptability and support in financial matters, which can strengthen marital bonds, despite economic differences.

4.2.2.3 Evolving Economic Criteria

This theme sought to find out from fisherfolks on how shift in economy influences selection of marriage partner. The main ideas reflect a notable awareness among participants about the shift in economic criteria, when selecting a marriage partner in recent years. While majority of participants still do not see changes or prioritise financial status as a critical factor, several individuals acknowledge that financial stability has become more important in today's marriage decisions. Participants highlighted that in the past, a woman's financial background was less emphasised, but now economic capacity is a decisive factor, with individuals increasingly seeking partners who can provide financial support. Economic status, wealth and the ability to meet financial needs are seen as influencing partner selection, with some participants sharing personal or anecdotal experiences of losing potential partners to individuals with stronger financial backgrounds. Economic hardship has led to heightened scrutiny of a potential spouse's financial ability, making it a significant consideration in modern marriage dynamics. The views of the participants were captured clearly. One said,

Financial stability before marriage wasn't that important in past years but it is very predominant now in recent times. (FF, 3)

Another respondent emphasized:

There have been changes in the economic criteria for selecting marriage partner in recent years. People now select partners based on their economic capacity unlike before. (FF,5)

Similarly, two participants say the following:

I am aware of the changes in the economic criteria for selecting marriage partners. Now, even the male partners consider the economic capacity of their potential marriage partners. (FF,12)

There have been a lot of changes in the economic criteria for selecting marriage partner in this day and age. Some potential partners will not even accept you because you are not driving a car. (FF,15)

On the other hand, two other participants had these to say:

I am not aware of the recent changes in the economic background as a criterion for partner selection. (FF,10)

There is no such thing as I am concerned. (FF,13)

The findings on fisherfolks at Poase on the shift in economic criteria in the selection of marriage partners corroborate with Therborn's (2019) study who opined that economic factors have increasingly influenced marriage partner choices as societal expectations around financial stability have evolved. This is particularly evident in communities where economic pressures are growing, making financial capacity a significant consideration in partner selection. The increasing emphasis on financial stability, as mentioned by some participants, reflects broader global trends. Khan et al. (2020) argue that, in contemporary society, individuals prioritize financial readiness as a critical criterion for marital success, partly due to rising living costs and the need for dual income households. This view aligns with the participants who noted that, unlike in the past, people may now choose partners based on economic stability.

Moreover, there is evidence that men, too, are becoming more conscious of the economic background of potential spouses, as noted by Mensah and Oppong (2021), who found that men increasingly view their partner's economic contribution is vital in modern marriages, shifting traditional gender expectations. However, not all

individuals are aware of or place importance on these changes. Aspects of marriage selection that downplay economic considerations remain, particularly in communities where cultural traditions dominate. According to Bakker and Bucher (2020), in certain societies, partner selection continues to be influenced by non-economic factors, such as family background, emotional connection, and compatibility, suggesting a coexistence of traditional and evolving views on marriage.

4.2.3 Research Question Three

To what extent does education influence the choice of marriage partners of fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi)?

This study sought to elicit responses from respondents on the extent to which education influences the selection of marriage partners among fisher folks at Poase community. Four themes were identified under this research questions: educational impact and influence, contemporarily development, level of educational qualification and Extent of blending between tradition and modernisation by potential marriage partners.

4.2.3.1 Educational Impact and Influence

This theme sought to elicit response from fisherfolk's on how a potential partner's level of education has on an individual's decision when selecting a marriage partner. It highlights how education shapes perceptions of compatibility, future stability, and social standing in relationships.

Majority of participants felt that a partner's level of education does not play a big role in their decision to marry. Instead, they prioritized qualities such as responsibility, hard work, and the ability to provide for the family. For them, education was not necessarily tied to having a successful marriage or being a good provider. However, minority group saw education as important, particularly when it comes to practical matters such as

helping children with their homework or fostering better communication. These participants believed that a certain level of education was essential for choosing a spouse. Additionally, a few noted that while education was not always a priority, it has become more important in today's world.

Some participants had these to say:

The educational level should be in line. (FF,2) Similarly, three participants had these to say:

The educational level of the partner should it be at least something little to match up. (FF, 3)

I will like a partner whose academic level will match up my level. (FF,5)

The level of education of potential marriage partner do affect the choice of marriage partner. some level of education will help the partner assist the kids in their homework. (FF,18)

Other participants had different opinions:

The level of education does not matter in the choice of a marriage partner because I did not go to school. (FF, 9).

The level of education of a potential partner does not affect my choice. (FF, 10)

To me what's important is a responsible and a hard-working partner. (FF, 11)

I will not consider the level of education of my potential partner because someone could be educated but is irresponsible. (FF, 12)

The findings on the impact and influence of education of fisherfolks on the selection of marriage partner align with Brouillette and Dronkers's (2018) study that educational similarity among partners enhances relationship satisfaction by allowing for a more harmonious interaction. Respondents who indicated a preference for partners with

comparable educational backgrounds believed that this alignment was important for mutual understanding and collaboration in family responsibilities.

Moreover, some respondents acknowledged the practical benefits of having an educated partner, particularly when it comes to assisting children with their homework. This viewpoint is reinforced by Sanders and Wilkins (2020), who highlighted that higher educational attainment can significantly enhance parental involvement in children's education, contributing to the family's overall success. These individuals view education as a necessary factor for ensuring that children receive the support they need academically. Similarly, McLanahan (2018) emphasizes the role of education in enhancing parenting practices, suggesting that educationally advanced individuals are more likely to engage in activities that promote children's academic achievements.

However, some respondents maintained that they prioritized qualities such as responsibility and a strong work ethic over education. According to Glick and Lin (2019), personal attributes such as reliability and dedication are often more critical to long-term relationship satisfaction than educational attainment. Respondents conveyed that a partner's ability to be responsible and hardworking outweighs the importance of formal educational achievements, suggesting a practical approach to mate selection based on character rather than credentials. This sentiment is echoed by Harknett and Schneider (2018), who argued that emotional support and shared values often play a more significant role in relationship satisfaction than educational background.

Furthermore, few participants noted the irony that an educated person could still be irresponsible. This notion is supported by findings from a study by the Pew Research Center (2020), which indicated that while education is valued, it does not guarantee maturity or stability in personal relationships. Respondents voiced that having an

educated partner does not necessarily equate to having a responsible and supportive spouse, reinforcing the idea that character traits hold significant weight in their choice of partners. In a similar vein, Smith and Kearney (2021) found that educational credentials can sometimes mask underlying issues related to maturity and interpersonal skills, leading individuals to overlook essential characteristics in their partner selection.

4.2.3.2 Contemporarily Development

This theme sought to establish the changing criteria and values that individuals and communities use to assess potential partners for relationships.

Majority of the participants shared that modern values and lifestyles had not changed how they or their community selected marriage partners. For them, qualities such as responsibility, hard work, and cultural values remained the most important factors. They still prioritized tradition, with family support playing a central role in partner selection.

On the other hand, a few respondents acknowledged that modern influences had impacted their views. These individuals were more open to considering factors such as appearance, communication style, and financial stability in line with current societal trends. Some noted that modern values had made marriage more expensive, making it less appealing to younger people. In general, the community is split with many holding onto traditional criteria for partner selection, while others recognized that modernization had shifted some expectations. Some participants expressed the following:

Modern values and lifestyles have made marriage expensive hence, pushes the youth off marriage. (FF,5)

Modern values and lifestyle have changed the way the community view partner selection. I look for partner who dresses, acts and even speak in an enlightened way. (FF,16)

Similarly, a participant stressed the following:

Modern value and lifestyle have brought some new level as to how I view partner selection. A certain class and modern way of dressing, talking and vibing is necessary. (FF,18)

The world is changing now so if you don't change along, you will be left out. My perspective has changed as to how I view the selection of marriage partner.(FF, 20).

On the other hand, two participants noted:

Modern values and lifestyle have not changed how the people of New Takoradi view partner selection. The traditional and cultural values are the defining factor in the selection of marriage partners.(FF,9)

Modern values and lifestyle have not changed the way I see partner selection. To me it's all about hardworking and responsible partner. (FF,11)

The shift towards modern values and lifestyles has had a profound effect on marriage patterns, with many scholars identifying rising financial pressures as a key driver. As Fisher and Low (2021) point out that the increasing costs associated with weddings and living standards have made marriage less attainable for many young adults. This is consistent with the fisherfolk's perspective that modern values have made marriage more expensive, thereby discouraging younger individuals from pursuing it. Similarly, Schwartz and Mare (2020) note that heightened material expectations, such as financial stability and lifestyle compatibility, are reshaping marriage decisions, aligning with the views that a partner's presentation, communication, and class now play a role in partner selection.

However, not everyone is influenced by these modern shifts. According to Besharov and Ginsberg (2018), traditional values and cultural heritage remain central to partner selection in many communities, where attributes such as responsibility, work ethics, and alignment with traditional roles are prioritized over modern lifestyle trends. This is reflected in some respondents' commitment to cultural norms, viewing traditional values as a more reliable guide for selecting a marriage partner. These views echo other research, such as that by Glass and Neyer (2022), who found that in certain communities, traditional values remain more relevant than modern social shifts, when it comes to choosing a life partner.

4.2.3.3 Level of educational qualification

This theme deals with the impact that fisher folks' level of education has on decisions or behaviors, in this case, on marriage practices within a community.

Some participants averred that education does not play a big role in choosing marriage partners within their community. Instead, they prioritise qualities such as being responsible, hardworking, and being able to contribute in caring for the family. This is especially true in a fishing community where everyday survival and stability seem to matter more than educational achievements.

On the other hand, a few participants felt that education did matter when it comes to choosing a spouse. They believed that having a similar level of education helps in understanding each other better, and supporting the children's education. For them, education is becoming more relevant as the community starts to recognize its importance for the next generation. There were also those who held traditional views, stating that education does not guarantee a successful marriage. Some even expressed concerns that an educated person might still lack the responsibility needed in a partner,

reaffirming that personal traits such as character and work ethics remained key factors in their choices. These were some of the responses from the participants:

The level of education affects the selection marriage practices in New Takoradi. The community though predominantly fisher folks now desire to have their kids educated so they now look for partners with some level of education. (FF,18)

Education level affects the selection of marriage partners in the community. To me, some level of education for marriage partners is very important in order to help support the kids in their education. (FF,20)

To other participants:

The education level does not affect the selection of marriage partners in New Takoradi because educational level does not bring about a successful marriage. Someone can have a higher level of education and still be irresponsible. (FF,12.)

Another participants said:

I do not think education level affect the selection of marriage partners in this community since one's level of education is not what puts food on the table for the people in the community. (FF,14)

The findings from the fisherfolks reflect that education plays an increasingly significant role in marriage selection, which align with contemporary research findings by Schwartz and Mare (2017), who found that educational homogamy, where partners share similar educational backgrounds has become more common as families prioritize education as a key factor in their children's upward mobility. Similarly, Cheung and Park (2019) emphasize the importance of educational alignment for both partner compatibility and the potential to provide academic support for children, particularly in societies where education is increasingly viewed as a pathway to success. Respondents who expressed that education is vital for marriage partners, especially in terms of

supporting children's schooling, reflect this modern outlook, showing that the role of education in family life extends beyond the couple to the next generation.

On the other hand, some respondents argued that one's level of formal education do not necessarily contribute to a successful marriage, a view that is consistent with a finding by Harknett and Schneider (2018), who asserted that personal traits such as responsibility and work ethic often outweigh formal educational qualifications in a relationship satisfaction. The idea that education does not "put food on the table" is also reflected in economic studies, such as the one by Glick and Lin (2019), who suggest that in communities with lower economic mobility, practical attributes such as financial responsibility may be valued more than formal education. Further reinforcing these perspectives, a finding by Pew Research Center (2020) found that while education may be increasingly valued in some areas, it does not guarantee success in personal relationships. Many still prioritize qualities such as trustworthiness and practical skills over academic credentials, mirroring the respondents who highlighted that education does not necessarily equate to maturity or responsibility.

4.2.3.4 Extent of Blending between Tradition and Modernisation by Potential Marriage Partners

This study sought to highlight the balance that younger generations of fisher folk are attempting to strike between adhering to traditional values and embracing modern perspectives when selecting marriage partners. This theme emphasises the importance of respecting long-standing cultural norms, such as family heritage, respect for elders, and social maturity, while also recognizing the influence of contemporary factors like education, economic status, and personal style.

In exploring how younger generations balance traditional values with modern views on marriage partner selection, the perspectives were varied. Some individuals maintained a neutral stance, indicating either uncertainty on the matter. However, several respondents expressed the view that younger generations still uphold traditional values in marriage while incorporating modern elements. For instance, some believed that while modern influences like social media have a strong impact, the younger generation continues to respect family traditions, such as honouring elders and ensuring that partners align with family values.

Conversely, others argued that younger generations are increasingly swayed by modern ideals, often prioritizing education, economic status, and personal style over traditional cultural practices. Handful of fisher folks even suggested that modern trends have led to negative outcomes, such as the rise of teenage pregnancies or a disregard for important social customs. On the other hand, there is recognition that, through education and advocacy, younger people are finding ways to blend both traditional and modern values, striving to maintain a balance between respecting cultural heritage and adapting to contemporary views. Overall, while some believe traditional values still hold significant influence, others argue that modern views, particularly those shaped by social media and changing economic circumstances, are beginning to dominate the process of marriage partner selection among the younger generation. A participant noted,

The younger generations still do the traditional and customs of marriage then add the modern lifestyle of marriage. (FF, 4)

Similarly, a participant expressed that:

The young generation do well to blend modern views with traditional values. (FF,9)

Moreover, a respondent emphasized,

The young generation still consider traditional values such as respect, family lines in the selection of marriage partners thereby balancing traditional values with modern views on marriage partner selection.

Another respondent had different view and said:

It is neutral for me. (FF, 1)

The young generation through advocacy and education on traditional values in the selection of marriage partner are able to blend modern views and traditional values in the selection of marriage partners. (FF,19)

On the other hand, two participants had these to say:

The minds of the young generation have been engulfed by modern views on marriage partner selection to the disregard of traditional values regarding the selection of marriage partner. Young generation look at flashy and styled personalities, educational and economic capacity to the disregard of socially matured and respectful personality. (FF,18).

The modern views especially social media trends on marriage selection have made the young generation disregard the traditional values in the selection of marriage partner. If you ask the young generation about traditional values, they cannot even tell you what the traditional values in selecting marriage partners are. (FF,20)

The responses from the participants on how younger generations balance traditional values and modern views on marriage partner selection highlight a complex interaction between cultural preservation and the influence of contemporary ideals. Traditional values, such as respect for family lines, maturity, and social customs, continue to shape marriage partner selection for many, as evidenced by some respondents. Similarly, Kashyap & Esteve (2018) posit that in many rural or close-knit communities, traditional values remain central to the process of marriage partner selection. They

further highlight that even in societies exposed to globalised ideals, traditional norms often guide important life decisions, including marriage.

On the other hand, modern views, especially those influenced by education, economic stability, and social media are increasingly becoming prominent factors in partner selection. Güveli et al. (2020) note that younger generations are more inclined to value individual autonomy and economic viability when choosing partners, reflecting broader societal changes.

However, as some respondents pointed out, there are young individuals who view the blending of modern and traditional values as essential for a balanced approach. This view aligns with findings from a study by Liu et al. (2019), who emphasized the adaptability of young people in navigating both sets of values, incorporating modern expectations while still respecting familial and cultural traditions. Yet, there are also those who believe that modern values have negatively impacted the selection of partners, with younger individuals focusing more on appearances and social status, sometimes at the expense of deeper, traditional qualities such as respect and responsibility. This concern is echoed by research indicating that social media's influence often skews perceptions of what is important in partner selection (Perry & Cushing, 2019).

Overall, the responses from the participants showcases the difference between traditional customs and the growing influence of modernity in partner selection. While some communities still hold fast to long-standing cultural values such as age difference, religious beliefs etc., especially with younger generations navigating a hybrid approach where both traditional and modern factors play a role in determining their choice of marriage partners.

4.2.4 Research Question Four

How does religion affect the choice of marriage among the fisher folks at New Takoradi?

This research question sought to elicit responses from respondents on how religious beliefs and practices influence their criteria and preferences for selecting marriage partners in this community. Four themes were identified from the research question: religious compatibility, religious guidance, the extent of religious influence, and religion versus culture and economic stability.

4.2.4.1 Religious Compatibility

This theme concentrates on the importance the fisher folk's place on sharing the same religion when choosing a marriage partner. The responses reflect a range of views on the significance of sharing the same religion when selecting a marriage partner among the fisher folks. Some participants emphasized the importance of religious compatibility, believing it fosters unity, shared values, and a common direction in raising children. They argued that marrying someone with the same faith can create a supportive environment for spiritual growth and reinforce family cohesion.

Conversely, some others expressed that sharing the same religion is not a crucial factor in their partner selection. They pointed out that qualities such as responsibility, hard work, and mutual respect are more important than religious alignment. Some participants mentioned successful interfaith marriages in their families as examples of how differing beliefs can coexist.

A participant said:

It is very significant to marry same religion because it helps the couple to grow in same faith. (FF, 1)

Another participant also maintained:

It builds unity when one marries same religion and helps to bring up the kids in one faith. (FF,4)

Similarly, a participants opined:

Religion is significant factor to consider so you can be aware of the kind of religious orientation being given to your partner and family. (FF, 5)

However, one participant shared his view:

It doesn't really matter to me to marry someone I share the same religion with. (FF,7)

Another participants shared a similar sentiment when he said:

Having a partner who shares the same religion does not matter to me because my father is a Muslim and mother a Christian yet have married over 50yrs. (FF,10)

Moreover, a participant stressed:

A partner sharing the same religion with me is not a significant factor to me. If the partner is in a different religion which teaches respect and humility, then it is not significant to be in the same religion. (FF,13)

The findings on fisherfolks on marrying their partners who share the same align with the assertion by Hossain et al;(2022) that, marrying someone of the same religious background is significant because it promotes spiritual growth and unity, facilitating a cohesive upbringing for children This perspective also aligns with the findings of Yavuz and Mert (2020), who suggested that religious homogeneity in marriage contributes to shared values and stability within families.

On the other hand, some participants noted that sharing the same religion is not a critical factor in partner selection. Fisherfolks argue that successful marriages can occur despite

differing religious beliefs, as long as core values such as respect and responsibility are present (Hoffman et al., 2021). This sentiment resonates with research finding by Mavridis and Karanikola (2023), who found that interfaith couples often prioritize personal qualities and mutual respect over religious alignment. In general, these contrasting views underscore the complexity of marriage choices among the fisher folks at New Takoradi, reflecting a balance between traditional expectations and individual preferences in the context of modern marital relationships.

4.2.4.2 Religious Guidance

This theme sought to examine how the religious beliefs and practices of fisher folks influence their choices and decisions regarding marriage partner selection. The responses to the question about religious beliefs or practices that guide marriage partner choices revealed a diverse range of perspectives by the respondents. Majority individuals indicated a lack of knowledge or specific beliefs regarding religious guidance in marriage selection. However, some participants highlighted key principles that influence their decisions. Some individuals emphasized moral values such as abstinence before marriage and the importance of maintaining high moral standards after marriage.

Some participants expressed the desire for partners who embody characteristics such as being God-fearing, hardworking, responsible, and respectful. The belief in monogamy, which is explained as "one man, one wife," also emerged as a significant guiding principle for some of the participants. In general, the responses suggest that while there is a mixture of indifference and the acknowledgment of religious beliefs, the emphasis on moral character and specific virtues plays a crucial role in shaping marriage partner selection among the participants.

A participants opined,

The practice that guides my choice of marriage partner is abstinence from sex before marriage- fornication. (FF,2)

Another participants emphasized,

One should not be sleeping at your partners place before marriage. (FF,4)

Similarly, a participant stressed,

One should be respectful, hardworking and God-fearing partner. (FF,7)

Another participants had this to say,

It doesn't really matter to me as far as the person has a good character.(FF,13)

Again, a participant averred,

There is no religious belief or practice that guides choice of marriage partner.(FF,15)

The emphasis on abstinence before marriage aligns with research finding by Miller (2020) that, many cultures and religions advocate for sexual restraint prior to marriage as a means to foster a solid marital foundation and ensure fidelity. This is echoed in a study suggesting that pre-marital abstinence contributes to healthier marital outcomes (Adams & Danziger, 2021). The idea that sleeping at a partner's place before marriage is discouraged reflects traditional values that prioritize pre-marital chastity. Research shows that adherence to such practices can promote relationship stability and satisfaction, as partners often seek to establish trust and commitment (Graham et al., 2019). The notion that a partner should be respectful, hardworking, and God-fearing highlights the importance of character traits in partner selection. According to Amato and Keith (2018), shared values and respect are crucial for marital harmony and conflict resolution. Additionally, the emphasis on a partner's moral standing, including being

God-fearing, is often linked to religious teachings that underscore the importance of faith in relationships (Koenig, 2018).

The perspective that a good character is paramount, regardless of specific religious beliefs, aligns with research indicating that individuals often prioritize character traits over religious affiliation in their partner choices, reflecting broader social changes and the evolution of personal values (Harrison, 2021). The absence of religious beliefs guiding partner choice among some respondents highlights a growing trend toward secularism, where personal values and compatibility take precedence over religious doctrine. Studies indicated that as societies become more diverse, individuals increasingly seek partners based on mutual respect and shared life goals rather than strictly adhering to traditional religious practices (Smith & Davidson, 2022).

4.2.4.3 The Extent of Religious Influences

This theme sought to determine from the participants how religion influences their choice of marriage partners. The responses regarding the influence of religion on marriage partner selection revealed a varied landscape of beliefs among the participants.

Most participants expressed that their religions do not impose any restrictions or preferences, emphasizing personal choice in selecting a partner. This perspective suggested a degree of autonomy in making marriage decisions, where fisherfolks feel free to choose without religious constraints.

However, some participants highlighted the existence of restrictions imposed by their religious beliefs. Certain participants noted that their faiths require adherence to specific guidelines, such as avoiding partners from different religions or undergoing religious scrutiny. These restrictions often reflect a desire for compatibility in faith and

values, emphasizing the importance of shared beliefs in a marital relationship. Overall, the insights indicate a dichotomy between those who enjoy religious freedom in their choices and those who adhere to specific religious criteria, showcasing the complex relationship between faith and marriage in the community.

These were some responses from the participants:

My religion does not impose any restrictions regarding marriage. (FF,12).

My religion advises me from marrying an unbeliever but does not impose or restrict me. (FF, 14).

My religion does not impose any restriction or preferences regarding marriage partner selection on me (FF,16).

Other three participants had different responses:

My religion restricts me from selecting a partner with a different religion. (FF,9).

My religion restricts or imposes preferences by demanding that potential marriage partners go through a certain religious orientation as a means of selection criteria. (FF, 18).

My religion puts restrictions by inviting one's potential partner for scrutiny whether they are believers or not. (FF, 19).

The findings from the participants regarding religious restrictions or preferences in marriage align with Blom and Hämäläinen (2020) that increased autonomy in partner selection, particularly in more liberal religious communities. For instance, many modern faith practices emphasises on individual compatibility over rigid doctrinal rules (Grönlund & Kiviniemi, 2021).

However, other participants shared that their religions imposed certain restrictions, particularly against marrying outside their faith or requiring religious scrutiny of

potential partners. This reflects findings by Carvalho et al. (2021), who noted that some religious groups maintain traditional restrictions to preserve faith continuity within families. Similarly, studies indicate that religious teachings often shape marriage preferences, advocating for shared religious values as critical to marital harmony (Johnson et al., 2019). Religion-driven scrutiny of potential partners to ensure shared beliefs can be seen as a mechanism for ensuring alignment in faith-based values, which researchers such as Ciftci et al. (2023) argue is crucial for long-term relationship satisfaction. Ultimately, the diversity of responses suggests that while some individuals operate with religious freedom, others adhere to more structured religious expectations in marriage partner selection.

4.2.4.4 Religion versus Culture and Economic Stability

This theme sought to elicit from fisher folks how significant religious beliefs are in comparison to other factors like cultural traditions or economic considerations when choosing a marriage partner.

The main ideas from the responses reveal a divide among the fisher folks regarding whether religious beliefs or other factors such as culture and economic considerations influence their choice of marriage partner. Some participants see religious beliefs as a more significant factor, emphasizing that religious teachings provide guidance in partner selection. Others believe that culture and economic stability play a larger role, asserting that these factors had deeper roots in their community and influence practical decisions in marriage. A few participants also highlight that religion, culture, and economics are intertwined, each contributing to the decision-making process in varying degrees. These were some of the responses from the participants:

Religion influences me and many other people in the selection of marriage partner than culture or any other thing. I believe my religion shares Gods mind concerning marriage. (FF, 9)

Religious belief goes a long way to determine one's choice of marriage partner as compared to cultural or economic factors. People tend to follow their religious doctrines concerning marriage than culture.(FF,11)

Religion has opened my eyes to what best to look up for in a marriage partner than culture. Though cultural and economic considerations are there but religious doctrines influence more in one's choice of marriage partner. (FF,14)

Culture and economic factors determine one's choice than religion. To me culture which is a way of life before the introduction of certain religions and it practices, therefore culture has major influence on people's choices of marriage partners than religion.(FF, 16)

Other participants shared similar views:

Culture is culture and will continue to influence my life forever, regardless of religious intrusions. My belief is that culture has not changed and it influences my choice for everything including that of my marriage partner. (FF, 15)

Economic and cultural considerations matter to me than religious beliefs, even though I prefer a partner who is humble, respectful and supportive. (FF, 17)

The findings on fisherfolks on the influence of religion, culture, and economics in marriage partner selection is supported by findings by various researchers. Research by Mahoney (2021) has shown that religious beliefs play a significant role in shaping marital choices, particularly in communities where religion provides a framework for values and behaviors. Religion can influence individuals' expectations of marriage, including qualities such as commitment, shared values, and moral guidance (Lehrer, 2018). According to Perry (2019), many individuals perceive religious teachings as

divine guidance, which influence their choice of marriage partner, especially in settings where religious institutions hold considerable power.

On the other hand, cultural and economic factors also substantially influence marriage decisions. Studies by Sarkar (2022) and Hira (2020) indicated that in many traditional societies, cultural norms and economic considerations had historically shaped marriage partner selection. These factors include expectations around family roles, inheritance, and social status. In such contexts, culture often persists as a dominant influence, sometimes even resisting changes brought by religious teachings (Anderson & Wolf, 2021).

In many communities, economic stability is a key consideration, with people prioritizing financial security over religious compatibility when selecting a marriage partner (Lichter et al., 2017). For instance, financial considerations and shared economic goals are often more significant determinants in marital decisions, especially in lower-income communities where survival and livelihood are crucial (Zagorsky, 2020). Cultural endurance and economic necessity, therefore, continue to shape marriage choices alongside, or sometimes above, religious beliefs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. In addition, suggestions are offered for further studies.

5.1 Summary

This study explored the factors influencing marriage partner selection among fisher folk in Poase (New Takoradi). The problem addressed arose from the observation that, although marriage practices in Ghana have been widely examined, little attention has been given to how occupationally defined groups such as fisherfolks at Poase select marriage partners within the interplay of cultural, occupational, economic and religious expectations.

The study was grounded in Structural Functionalism, with special emphasis on Merton's Theory of Dysfunctionalism, to provide a nuanced understanding of marriage practices in the study area. While Durkheim and Parsons highlighted the functional role of marriage in maintaining social cohesion and stability, Merton extended this perspective by recognising that not all social practices contribute positively to the social system. Through his concepts of manifest and latent functions, Merton argued that institutions such as marriage can generate both stabilising effects and unintended dysfunctions. Within fisherfolks at Poase, marriage thus produces functions such as cultural continuity, economic cooperation and social cohesion, but may also create dysfunctions such as gender inequalities, limited personal autonomy, or economic dependency. The application of structural functionalism by incorporating

Merton's dysfunctionism to show how marriage practices perform both integrative and destabilising roles in occupationally defined communities.

The study employed a qualitative research design, drawing on interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select married fisherfolks, ensuring that participants possessed the lived experiences necessary to address the research questions. A total of twenty participants were selected for the study, using the purposive sampling technique. A semi-structured interview guide was used as the instrument for data collection. Data collected was analyzed thematically.

Findings revealed that marriage partner selection is shaped by a complex mix of factors. Cultural norms and values emphasised respect for tradition, family approval and group identity. Also, occupational roles influenced preferences, with households valuing complementary roles between fishing and fish-processing activities. Again, economic factors, particularly income stability and access to fishing capital, played a decisive role in determining marital suitability. Finally, religious expectations, including shared faith and moral approval, further legitimised unions. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that marriage among fisher folk is not merely an individual decision but a social and economic strategy embedded within community life.

The results highlight the need for policies that address the livelihood insecurities of fisher folk, as these insecurities directly influence marital choices and stability. Government agencies and NGOs could strengthen social protection and livelihood diversification programs to reduce economic pressures that influence marriage practices. Community leaders, religious authorities and family elders can use these findings to strike a balance between preserving cultural traditions and accommodating evolving expectations of individual choice, gender equity and household well-being.

Although the study generated valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in only one fishing community, thus the fisherfolks at Poase in New Takoradi, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other fishing communities in Ghana. Second, the study relied solely on qualitative methods, which, while effective in capturing depth, did not provide quantitative breadth. Third, given the sensitivity of marital issues, some participants may have withheld information or under-reported personal challenges, which could have affected the richness of the data.

5.1.1 Research Objectives

The four research objectives that guided the study were:

1. Examine the role cultural values play in influencing the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi).
2. Explore the role occupation plays in influencing the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi).
3. Assess the role education in the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi) fishing community.
4. Examine the role of religion in the choice of marriage partners among the fisher folks at Poase (New Takoradi).

5.1.2 Major Findings

The major findings of the study include the following:

- (i) The study revealed that cultural values play a major role in the choice of marriage partners of fisher folks. The participants generally preferred to marry within their own community, tribe, believing that shared values and common

language help foster better understanding, reduce conflict, and maintain harmony.

- (ii) The study found that fisher folks prioritise job stability since it helps in generating income to meet household needs and reduces stress. Some prioritised job stability and the reputation of a partner's occupation. Also, some participants placed greater value on emotional qualities like love and support, believing that strong emotional bonds can sustain a marriage even in the absence of job stability.
- (iii) The study revealed that that fisher folks tend to prioritise qualities such as responsibility and hard work over education when selecting a marriage partner. To the fisher folks, education is seen as beneficial for fostering understanding and not considered a guarantee of marital stability although some value education for practical reasons such as supporting their children's education.
- (iv) The study found that the fisher folks identified religion, especially same religion as a factor that influences marriage partner selection. According to them, religion fosters unity, shared values, and a cohesive family life.

5.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions have been made based on the findings obtained from the study:

- (i) The study concludes that, the cultural values significantly influence marriage partners choices among the fisher folks at Poase. The preference for marrying within one's community or tribe highlights the importance of shared values, language, and customs in promoting mutual understanding and success in marriages.

- (ii) The study concludes that, job stability is one of the major factors that influence the choice of marriage preferences among the fisher folks. The emphasis on job stability reflects the practical need to meet household needs and reduce stress, highlighting the importance of economic considerations essential for family well-being.
- (iii) Fisherfolks prioritise personal qualities such as responsibility and hard work over formal education when selecting a marriage partner. While education is appreciated for its practical benefits such as supporting children's education it is seen a guarantee for marital stability.
- (iv) The study concludes that, the fisherfolks value shared religious beliefs for marital harmony and success, and therefore, do not sacrifice or compromise their beliefs in their choice of marriage partners.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

- (i) Community leaders and educators should support the cultural values that influence marriage partner choices among fisher folks at Poase. Programs should be organised for community leader to promote the shared values, customs, and traditions that foster unity and social harmony in the community.
- (ii) Economic empowerment programmes should be introduced to improve the finances of the fisher folks to enable them take good care of their homes. In addition, the metropolitan assembly and non-governmental organization should introduce the fisher folk community to alternative sources of income, including beads making and soap making for the fish mongers, and rabbit and grass cutter

rearing for the fishermen. Such a move will empower them financially to take good care of their families.

(iii) Sensitisation programme should be organised to foster community members understanding of the qualities they should seek for from would be partners. This will enable individuals have a proper understanding of their choice of marriage partners for a successful marriage life.

(iv) Religious leaders and groups should promote respect for diverse marriage choices. They should encourage the acceptance and respect for various marriage preferences, including inter faith marriages, by focusing on shared values and character rather than rigid religious alignment. Moreover, educational and premarital counselling programmes should be organised to highlight the importance of responsibility, respect and work ethics in building successful marriages, irrespective of one's religious alignment.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Studies

In light of the scope, methods and findings of this study, some key directions for future research are offered to extend understanding of marriage partner choosing across Ghanaian communities.

First, since this study was limited to Poase (New Takoradi) within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region, future research could be extended to cover all fishing communities across the Western Region. Such an expansion would provide deeper insights into possible regional variations and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural, occupational, educational and religious influences on marriage partner choices among fisherfolks.

Second, further studies could be replicated among other occupational groups such as farming, trading, and mining. Examining these diverse groups would enrich comparative analysis, highlighting how different livelihoods and socio-economic contexts shape values, preferences, and decision-making processes in marriage partner selection across Ghanaian communities.



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APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FISHER FOLKS

This interview is aimed at eliciting responses from fisher folks on the factors influencing the choice of marriage partners at Poase (New Takoradi). You are kindly requested to genuinely answer the questions and to the best of your knowledge. The information you supply will be given the utmost confidentiality. Thank you.

☐ Opening

1. Establish Rapport: familiarize yourself with the respondent
2. Purpose: inform respondent about the purpose of the interview
3. Motivation: establish confidentiality for the interview
4. Time Line: state the maximum duration for the interview

A. Roles culture values play in influencing the choice of marriage partners

- i. Can you describe any cultural customs that influence your choice of a marriage partner?
- ii. How important are family and community opinions in your decision to marry someone?
- iii. Are there specific traits or qualities valued in potential marriage partners according to your cultural traditions?
- iv. Do you follow any cultural matchmaking or courtship practices? If so, please describe them.
- v. Can you provide examples of how cultural values might conflict with personal preferences in partner selection?

B. Role occupation plays in influencing the choice of marriage partners

- vi. How important is a potential partner's financial stability in your decision to marry them?
- vii. Does the occupation of a potential partner influence your choice? If yes, in what way?
- viii. Do you believe that having a similar economic background is important for a successful marriage? Why or why not?
- ix. How do you balance economic considerations with other factors when choosing a marriage partner?
- x. Have you observed any changes in the economic criteria for selecting a marriage partner over recent years?

C. The influence of education in the choice of marriage partners

- xi. How does the level of education of a potential partner affect your choice?
- xii. Have modern values and lifestyles changed the way you or your community views marriage and partner selection?
- xiii. Do you think that education has an impact on traditional marriage practices in your community? How?
- xiv. How do you perceive the influence of education on the roles and expectations of marriage partners?
- xv. How do younger generations balance traditional values with modern views on marriage and partner selection?

D. The influence of religion in the choice of marriage partners

- xvi. How significant is it for you to marry someone of the same religion?
- xvii. Can you share any religious beliefs or practices that guide your choice of a marriage partner?
- xviii. Does your religion impose any restrictions or preferences regarding marriage partners?
- xix. How do religious values compare to other factors like cultural or economic considerations in partner selection?
- xx. How has the influence of religion on marriage choices changed over time in your community?

End of Interview- Thank You

