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Youth Perspectives on Inter-Ethnic Marriages in Ghana: The Case of Tafo-Pankrono Municipality

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Abstract: Literature on youth perspectives on inter-ethnic marriages in Ghana remains scarce. This study explored the perspectives of the youth engaged in inter-ethnic marriages in the Tafo-

Pankrono Municipality. A qualitative approach and case study design were adopted. The purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve participants for the study. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the youth involved in inter-ethnic marriages view inter-ethnic marriage as a blend of cultures, a costly endeavour, and a thing of cultural and social significance but characterised by inheritance issues and misconstrued by the public. Findings also indicate that the youth engaged in inter-ethnic marriages because of the understanding of their partner's ethnic group, love and care for one's partner, career opportunities, and rejection from their ethnic group. Moreover, the study revealed the following challenges: distance challenges, financial challenges, bias and discrimination, communication challenges, and meeting cultural demands. The study concludes that youth involved in inter-ethnic marriage view it positively, whereas misconceptions regarding inter-ethnic marriage can only be dispelled through personal encounters with inter-ethnic marriage. The study recommends that the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and the Tafo-Pankrono Municipal Assembly collaborate with local cultural organisations and community leaders to organise cultural integration workshops. These workshops should promote the understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of diverse ethnic groups in Ghana.

Keywords: Ghana, inter-ethnic marriage, perspectives, youth

Introduction

Inter-ethnic marriages, which connect people from various ethnic backgrounds, are becoming more common in diverse societies worldwide. As globalisation and cultural interchange intensify (Mantie & Risk, 2021), traditional social barriers that once separated diverse ethnic groups have blurred, making it easier for people from different cultural backgrounds to form intimate relationships (Sattar et al., 2022). Although inter-ethnic couples experience problems such as differing values and stereotypes, many overcome these obstacles and contribute to beneficial societal developments (Benko, 2023). In Sub-Saharan Africa, inter-ethnic marriage rates have averaged 19.4% and correlated positively with factors including urbanisation (Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2021). Inter-ethnic marriage is more prevalent in urban areas, likely due to the greater ethnic diversity of urban populations (Kyei, 2022). Educational attainment also significantly increases the propensity for inter-ethnic marriage, supporting the hypothesis that education offers opportunities to join more ethnically diverse networks (Kyei, 2022). Ethnicity has been identified as a significant predictor of the socio-demographic processes that affect population well-being, such as fertility (Adebowale & Palamuleni, 2024). According to Kyei (2022), heterogamy, that is, marrying persons with different characteristics, has implications for social cohesion, something that is particularly relevant for ethnic homogamy. In a world where conflicts can arise from ethnic tensions, some conflicts may be avoided where there is extensive social interaction between groups. Marriage is the union of individuals, families, and communities. Hence, inter-ethnic marriage is a way to develop bridges between different groups. Over time, inter-ethnic marriage may make it more difficult for ethnic tensions to escalate if there are enough members of a group married to the members of the opposing group to resist emerging conflicts.

Demarest and Haer (2021), who used interethnic marriage to measure intimate inter-ethnic contact in their cross-national study of 24 sub-Saharan African countries, found that inter-ethnic marriage correlates with reduced likelihood of conflicts. Several other studies suggest cultural attitudes and familial expectations influence young people's views on inter-ethnic marriages. Inter-ethnic marriages can be difficult due to persisting inter-ethnic conflicts, which shape the younger generation's perspectives. Despite some youth's openness to inter-ethnic marriages, underlying ethnic rivalries can impede full acceptance (Juma, 2019). Similarly, the national youth service in many countries, which promotes connections between young people of different ethnicities, has positively impacted acceptance rates. Despite this improvement, traditional beliefs persist, making some young people sceptical of inter-ethnic relationships due to cultural compatibility and linguistic challenges (Ochonogor & Ikems, 2019). The influence of social integration and multicultural environment on youth perceptions has also been explored. Young people are increasingly amenable to inter-ethnic marriages due to their regular interactions with peers from other ethnic backgrounds. This intercultural exposure has normalised inter-ethnic relationships, pushing conventional barriers and encouraging more inclusive attitudes (Raghunathan, 2022).

According to Sokolić (2022), some young see inter-ethnic marriage as a step towards reconciliation in post-conflict societies, while others are still influenced by memories of past ethnic hostilities, which shape their social perspectives. This suggests that young attitudes about interethnic marriages might vary significantly depending on historical and geopolitical contexts. According to Yulianto et al. (2022), young couples frequently face resistance from family members who value cultural uniformity. This resistance can cause identity issues for young people as they strive to balance respect for their cultural history and their desire for inter-ethnic union.

Inter-ethnic marriages provide unique obstacles, particularly for young people. Youth frequently encounter social exclusion and prejudice, complicating their integration into their spouses and communities (Siraj et al., 2023). This underlines the need for more public acceptance and support for inter-ethnic partnerships. Inter-ethnic marriages, on the other hand, can help to promote social cohesiveness. Young couples who marry across different ethnic backgrounds frequently serve as cultural exchange and integration agents, helping to break down ethnic barriers and promote a more inclusive society (Oyoo, 2022).

Ghana's cultural landscape is deeply influenced by ethnic differences, manifesting in various societal domains, including marriage, politics, and education. Ethnic homogamy is standard, with only 12.3% of marriages being interethnic, reflecting strict social borders (Kyei, 2022). Individuals engage in intra-ethnic marriages because such people are mainly raised from the same background, with similar ideals and world views, thus creating spousal compatibility. They communicate better because they speak the same language. Their families can also relate better because they are culturally aligned and view marriage similarly (Ismail et al., 2023). However, couples who marry within their ethnic groups may encounter substantial obstacles generally caused by cultural expectations, communication barriers, and familial dynamics. Even in same-ethnic relationships, disagreements over values and previous relationship experiences can cause dissatisfaction. For instance,

miscommunication can escalate tensions regarding family expectations (Machette & Cionea, 2023; Sappor & Affum, 2023).

Inter-ethnic marriages are becoming a common phenomenon in Ghana, especially in the Kumasi Metropolitan in the Ashanti Region in recent times due to urbanisation. In this world, where peace is paramount for societal survival, inter-ethnic marriages could serve as an avenue to unite people, making it difficult for people to fight or create conflicts among themselves as a family. Research indicates that openly sharing cultural experiences and discussing differences improves cultural self-awareness and identity integration, resulting in higher relationship satisfaction (West et al., 2024). A study revealed that intra-ethnic marriages in many societies tend to manifest a greater prevalence of divorce than inter-ethnic marriages (Sappor & Affum, 2023). Marriage is not only the concern of the man and woman who contract it but also of their kinfolk. Its effects on each spouse's lineage are far-reaching, so every marriage should receive permission and approval from the lineage head of both the man's and the woman's lineage to be lawful. Among the Akan, Abusua Panyin is crucial in granting permission, ensuring that marriages align with lineage expectations (Mensah et al., 2023). Parents are primarily responsible for their children's guidance in selecting an acceptable life partner. Ghana provides an appropriate setting to study inter-ethnic marriage since it is home to a diverse population; the 2010 census estimated there are almost 100 ethnic sub-groups that can be classified into eight categories based on linguistic and cultural similarities that made up 98.5% of the population in 2010 (Kyei, 2022).

Research Problem

A healthy family atmosphere is often considered to enable spouses to trust each other, to have love and respect for each other, to develop abilities to solve problems, and to maintain healthy communication with each other. Studies show that inter-ethnic marriages frequently experience considerable communication issues due to linguistic differences (Dovie, 2023; Machette & Cionea, 2023). These challenges stem from disparities in language competency, cultural backgrounds, and communication styles, which can result in misunderstandings and confrontations. Language preferences in modern times present intergenerational communication issues exacerbated as younger generations often favour English, complicating interactions with older relatives who may not be fluent in it (Dovie, 2023). As a result, Tom (2023) reported that most individuals believe that inter-ethnic marriages are more complex, stressful, unhealthy, and more likely to result in divorce. Concerning the system of inheritance, some ethnic groups in Ghana, such as the Ewe, the Ga, the Akwapem, the Dagbani and the Dagomba, practice the patrilineal system, whereas others, such as the Asante and the Fante, subscribe to the matrilineal system. Children born from patrilineal and matrilineal marriages (mother inheriting patrilineal and father inheriting matrilineal) are sometimes confused about their identity and unable to trace their origins precisely to where they belong.

In addition, in our observation in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality, communication problems and issues with raising children, couples, and children living to the demands of each other's distinct ethnic cultures appear to be challenges for youth who engage in inter-ethnic marriage. Moreover,

Tafo-Pankrono municipality was selected for the study because views on inter-ethnic marriage highlighted on radio programs in the Municipality appear to be associated with challenges.

The results will help policymakers in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to understand the need for policies and programmes that promote diversity and intercultural understanding. It can also aid in crafting policies to overcome any identified impediments to inter-ethnic marriages. Also, the study can assist the Department of Gender in various districts and municipalities in Ghana to identify any biases, stereotypes, or prejudices young people may have towards inter-ethnic marriages. The resulting information can be used to create community-wide plans to promote diversity and tolerance. The information gathered in this study will also serve as a resource to help the youth interested in inter-ethnic marriages with their unique situations and needs. This study is undertaken with the hope that the data will be helpful to social studies teachers, family life educators, and home economists who teach the concept of marriage in management and living. The study will fill the gap in the academic literature on youth inter-ethnic marriage and marriage counselling and will also be helpful to future researchers on the topic.

Research Focus

In the Ghanaian context, despite studies on marriages (Kyei, 2022), there is a paucity of literature on the perspectives of the youth on inter-ethnic marriage. Thus, there is a need to conduct an in-depth study on the attitudes of the youth who engage in inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono municipality. Therefore, this study was designed to bridge the existing gap.

Research Aim and Questions

The study's main aim was to explore the perspectives of the youth on inter-ethnic marriages in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perspectives of youth on inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality?
2. Why do the youth engage in inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality?
3. Which challenges do the youth face in their attempts at getting married to the opposite sex of other ethnic groups in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality?

Theoretical Overview

The Contact Theory was initially proposed by Gordon Allport in 1955. The Contact Theory suggests that inter-group contact, under certain conditions, can reduce prejudice and promote positive attitudes toward outgroup members (Sokolić, 2022). According to the theory, increased contact between different ethnic groups can lead to better understanding, empathy, and acceptance of one another (McLeod, 2023). In inter-ethnic marriage, the Contact Theory can provide insights into how individuals' perspectives may be influenced by their interactions and relationships with people from different ethnic backgrounds (Sokolić, 2022). The theory suggests that individuals with more frequent and positive contact with individuals from other ethnic groups are more likely to have favourable attitudes toward inter-ethnic marriage.

The contact theory is helpful for the study to examine the youth perspectives on inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono. Based on the findings of their perspectives, the theory can help identify if there is increased understanding and acceptance between married young couples, especially with the different ethnic groups, Asante and Ewe, in context. Additionally, contact theory can help identify potential barriers or challenges to inter-ethnic marriage and inform strategies to promote greater social integration and understanding.

Research Methodology

General Background

This chapter discusses the research methodology and procedure employed to study the perspectives of the youth on inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. This study adopted the qualitative approach. Qualitative research is interpretive (Mason, 2018). The interpretive advocates maintain that the researcher has a profound influence on the research, and due to the complex nature of the social world, scientific laws do not adequately explain the nature of the social world (Bryman, 2012). A case study design was used for this study. This design was used because it aims to understand the case involved and its natural setting, recognise its complexity and context, and have a holistic focus aimed at preserving and understanding the wholeness and unity of the case (Punch, 2013). Also, since the case study design holistically explores a phenomenon in its natural setting, it was necessary to employ it to unearth the perspectives of the youth on inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality.

Sample

Given that the study aims to explore the perspectives of the youth engaged in inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality, the purposive sampling technique helped select 12 participants. This number of participants was arrived at as a result of data saturation. Participants were selected based on specific criteria for identification, such as age range (18 to 35 years), marital status (engaged in inter-ethnic marriage), and residence in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality (predominately Asante).

Instrument and Procedures

The interview guide served as the data-gathering instrument. The kind of interview guide used was semi-structured. The semi-structured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers. It can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data while allowing the interviewees to express their viewpoints (Madhuri et al., 2022). The kind of interview conducted in the field was a face-to-face interview. Interviewing is typically done in a face-to-face encounter (Self, 2021). Through interaction informed by ethical consideration, we gathered the required data to fulfil the study objectives.

Data Analysis

Data from this study was analysed using thematic analysis, whereby themes were developed from the collected data based on the research questions. The analysis involved listening, reading, re-reading, inductive reasoning, reflection, coding the interview transcripts, and drawing out significant themes from the collected data.

Results

This section discusses the study's data on the youth's perspectives on inter-ethnic marriages in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality in Ghana.

Demographic Data of Participants

There were 6 females and 6 males who participated in the study. The participants in the study ranged between the ages of 27 to 35 years. Out of the 12 participants in inter-ethnic marriage, the majority (10) were Asante, while 2 were Ewe. The majority of them (9) had tertiary education. The majority of the participants were teachers and nurses, with few traders. The fact that most participants in inter-ethnic marriages were Asante reflects the study's emphasis and depth of insights related to Asante's perspectives. Also, equal representation of males and females provided some form of balance in the responses.

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives of youth on inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality

Research question one purposely sought to gather data on the perspectives of youth on inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. The following themes emerged from the participants' responses: culture and societal significance, misconceptions, inheritance issues, and a blend of culture and costly endeavour. Cultural and societal importance is first discussed.

Cultural and Societal Significance

The first theme that emerged from the study was culture and societal significance. Participants emphasised the importance of cultural exchange while emphasising positive viewpoints on inter-ethnic marriages. Marrying someone from a different ethnic group allows them to enjoy and learn about diverse cultures, including cultural trials such as clothing, food, and festivals. Some participants remarked on their spouse's culture's simplicity and cost-effectiveness in rituals and traditions. Inter-ethnic marriage is also considered a way to create togetherness in Ghana's varied communities.

One participant said the following:

It is good to marry from another ethnic group because it is an opportunity to appreciate and learn from other cultures, including how they dress, the kind of food they eat, and the festivals they perform.

Another also said:

My husband's culture is simple and less costly regarding customs and traditions. When his uncle died in Kumasi, he was buried here and took his hair, finger, and toenails to the northern region as their Frafra custom demands. [P. 10]

Another participant also contended that because of our multiethnic society, it is important that we marry from other ethnic groups to foster the unity we want in Ghana.

The participants' viewpoints reflect a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriage, emphasising the beneficial aspects of cultural exchange. Marriage between ethnic groups is an opportunity to learn about and appreciate other cultures, including their addressing, culinary practices, and festivals. The mention of simplicity and cost-effectiveness in a spouse's culture implies that inter-ethnic marriages might provide practical benefits regarding customs and traditions.

Misconceptions

Participants expressed common misconceptions about inter-ethnic marriages. People frequently have misconceptions about the problems that may occur from marrying someone from another ethnic group. Those who have direct experience with inter-ethnic marriages, on the other hand, emphasise that their real experiences differ from the myths. They emphasise the good parts of their marriages, expressing love and satisfaction, and reject common misconceptions. Some participants shared the following:

Well, there are a lot of misconceptions regarding inter-ethnic marriages. People have a lot of perceptions about another ethnic group, thinking that if you marry from one, there are some issues up and down. But, until you enter into it, you won't know. I am an Asante and married to an Ewe lady. I love everything about her, especially her cooking skills. We are having a great marriage. [P. 8]

Participant One also confirmed that *I am an Asante married to an Akuapem. My perception before marrying and now, I have different experiences from people's wrong perceptions. [P. 1]*

Again, the fifth participant shared a similar view:

When I was a child, I heard so many negative comments about the Ewe ethnic group, but since I got married to my husband, I have not seen anything wrong with his ethnic group. I am enjoying the marriage.

This suggests that there are misconceptions regarding inter-ethnic marriages. However, the participants, who had had firsthand experience in inter-ethnic marriages, challenged these misconceptions. The contrast between the participants' actual experiences and the misconceptions held by others highlights the importance of personal experiences in challenging preconceived notions.

Inheritance Issues

Participants shared concerns about inheritance issues in inter-ethnic marriages, particularly related to differences in ethnic inheritance systems. Some expressed initial worries about where children would go in divorce, considering the contrasting patrilineal and matrilineal inheritance systems. However, over time, participants realised that staying together in a mixed-ethnic marriage tends to result in one ethnic group's dominance, and children naturally adopt more from that group, alleviating the anticipated challenges. The participants expressed:

There are ethnic groups that inherit patrilineally and others matrilineally. So, formally, I always ask myself, where will the children go when you're divorced? Because the children can be mine due to paternal issues, or they can be hers because of maternal problems. But later, I realised that when you stay together, one ethnic group dominates the other. And the children automatically start picking more from one person. Automatically, what you've considered a challenge will no longer be a challenge. [P. 2]

The eleventh participant also expressed:

I think that marrying from another ethnic group can bring inheritance issues. I am an Asante, and my wife is an Ewe. While we practice the matrilineal system, they practice the patrilineal system. I have a friend of mine who got divorced, and there was an issue about their children. [P. 11]

The above responses revealed that the reality of living together in a mixed-ethnic marriage often results in one ethnic group's dominance. This, in turn, simplifies inheritance matters as children naturally adopt from the dominant ethnic group. The evolution of their perspectives suggests that the anticipated challenges related to inheritance in inter-ethnic marriages may be mitigated through the dynamics of shared family life, leading to a more harmonious understanding of inheritance practices.

A Blend of Cultures

Participants view inter-ethnic marriage as blending cultures, where two distinct cultural backgrounds converge to form a common culture. Shared experiences in the household, such as enjoying diverse traditional foods, exemplify the fusion of different artistic practices. The dynamic nature of culture is acknowledged, with participants highlighting that cultural variations existed in various aspects, including funerals and marriage celebrations. The acknowledgement of cultural dynamism is seen as essential in navigating potential challenges in inter-ethnic marriages. They shared the following:

I see inter-ethnic marriage as two cultures becoming one. For instance, my children and I enjoy fufu with snails in my house, which is typical Akuapem food. She will prepare some meals I've never had before as an Asante. When I taste it, I see that it is very gumptions [P. 2]

The other participant also shared:

A lot of my friends complain about specific issues. One complained that he married an Asante and went to perform the funeral of his in-law and regrets marrying an Asante. But, one should know that culture is dynamic. So, I see that the culture varies regarding issues such as funeral and marriage practices. [P. 11]

The recognition of culture as dynamic is crucial in participants' views. This understanding helps navigate potential challenges, as cultural variations are acknowledged in various aspects, including funeral and marriage celebrations. The notion that culture is dynamic implies an openness to evolving practices and traditions, fostering adaptability within inter-ethnic marriages.

Costly Endeavor

Participants view inter-ethnic marriages as a costly endeavour. The fear arises from the perceived high costs related to customs, traditions, and rituals in specific ethnic groups. This happens when something happens to an in-law, leading to monetary obligations. The term "designee" in the Ashanti culture comes in, representing a financial responsibility that brings fear to those in inter-ethnic marriages. Some of the participants expressed the following:

Marrying from a particular ethnic group comes with a lot of cost. I married an Asante, but with my experience, I am always afraid of the cost of some customs, traditions, and ritual performances. [P. 3]

The other participant also said:

When you marry from another ethnic group, and something happens to your in-law, there is always a price to pay for it. It is money-draining. Along the Asante, we call it "designee". This scares people from marrying from another ethnic group other than their own. However, marrying from the same ethnic group also comes with paying such prices. [P.1]

The fear of these financial implications, such as the Asante's "adesiedee," seems to create fear in those marrying from the Asante ethnic group because it seems those into inter-ethnic marriage are made to pay more. The study shed light on a practical challenge individuals may face when considering inter-ethnic unions. The financial cost associated with specific cultural practices and obligations can create apprehension and impact the decision-making process for those contemplating marriage outside their ethnic group.

Research Question 2: Why do the youth engage in inter-ethnic marriage in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality?

Research question two purposely sought to gather data on why the youth engage in inter-ethnic marriages in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. The following themes emerged from the study: understanding another's ethnic group, love and care for one's partner, rejection from one ethnic group, and career opportunities.

Understanding of another's Ethnic Group

Participants highlighted the importance of understanding another's ethnic group as a key factor in inter-ethnic marriages. In the modern era, diversity is recognised, and individuals believe that knowing and understanding a partner's ethnic group is crucial for a successful inter-ethnic marriage. Examples, such as appreciating the partner's foods, festivals, and language, contribute to a positive inter-ethnic marital experience. Some of the participants shared the following.

We have reached an era where we can quickly learn about one another's ethnic groups. In the past, we stuck to family issues, but in modern times, diversity is key, so I think inter-ethnic marriage is good if one has an understanding of the would-be partner's ethnic group. [P. 3]

The next participant shared a similar view:

I married my Ewe wife because I like their foods, festivals, and language. Marrying from another ethnic group is good if only two people understand each other's ethnic group regarding customs, traditions, and beliefs. [P. 9]

Understanding another's ethnic group is identified as a crucial element for individuals engaging in inter-ethnic marriages. The participants stressed the contemporary value of diversity and emphasised the necessity of knowing a partner's ethnic group for the success of such unions. Examples, such as liking the partner's foods, festivals, and language, illustrate the tangible aspects of understanding that contribute to positive inter-ethnic marital experiences.

Love and Care for one's Partner

Participants viewed love and care for their partners as central motivations for engaging in inter-ethnic marriage. The decision to marry someone from another ethnic group is often driven by genuine affection, attraction, and a deep emotional connection. The participants emphasised that their choices were not influenced by the expectation of material benefits but rooted in the sincere love and care they felt for their partners.

The first participant expressed the following.

I was blinded by love and tried to see if I would be accepted. So, when my parents had no problem with it, I joined. If I am to tell you the truth, I didn't consider marrying an Akuapem because I would get some benefit. [P. 1]

The second participant shared a standard view and averred: *I married because I loved my husband in the first place. The way he talks and his sense of humour got me attracted to him. So, it was out of love."*

The third participant also expressed that *I married my Frafra husband because he cared for my son (whom I had with my own ethnic group man) and me. [P. 10]*

Love and care influence participants' decisions to engage in inter-ethnic marriage. The participants highlight their genuine emotional connections with their partners, citing attraction, sense of humour, and care as pivotal elements. The statements show the significance of emotional bonds and personal connections in shaping decisions related to marriage.

Rejection from one own Ethnic group

Participants cited experiences of rejection or mistreatment from their ethnic group as a motivating factor for engaging in inter-ethnic marriages. Instances where individuals faced rejection due to pregnancy or were not treated well by their ethnic group led them to seek relationships outside their ethnic group. Over time, some participants shared that their partners from different ethnic groups proved to be caring and better suited for marriage, eventually gaining acceptance from their families.

Some of the participants shared the following:

I am an Asante lady, and I was dating someone from my ethnic group. However, I got impregnated by the Asante man who refused to take responsibility. Along the way, I met a Frafra man who cared and was concerned about me. He proposed marriage, but my parents refused because he is not an Asante. Two years later, my parents realised how good the Frafra man was and eventually allowed him to marry. My Frafra husband proved that any other ethnic group in Ghana can marry an Asante and be a better partner. [P.10]

The other participant also said, *"I was not accepted and treated well by my ethnic group, which is why I decided to marry an Ewe man who now treats me well".*

Experiences of rejection or mistreatment from one's ethnic group emerge as significant motivations for participants to pursue inter-ethnic marriages. The rejection, often linked to pregnancy or unfavourable treatment, prompted individuals to seek relationships outside their ethnic group. The narratives suggest that in some cases, individuals found acceptance, care, and better treatment from partners of different ethnic groups.

Career Opportunities

Some participants mentioned career opportunities as a motivation for engaging in inter-ethnic marriages. Instances include being posted to work in a different ethnic community and meeting a partner during work. The geographical aspect of work postings and shared professional backgrounds contribute to the decision to marry from another ethnic group.

One of the participants recounted, *"I was posted to Tafo-Prankrono to work, and at the same time, I was not committed to a man, so when my husband approached me, I readily accepted".*

Another participant shared a similar view: *"I met my partner during work here. Fortunately, she is a career woman herself. If not because I have to travel for work, I guess I wouldn't have married from another ethnic group."*

Career opportunities motivate some participants to pursue inter-ethnic marriages. The geographical aspect, such as being posted to work in a specific location, creates a situation where individuals may meet potential partners from different ethnic groups. As mentioned by one participant, shared professional backgrounds further contribute to the decision to marry outside one's ethnic group.

Research question 3: Which challenges do the youth face in their attempts at getting married to the opposite sex of other ethnic groups in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality?

Research question three purposely sought data on the challenges to interethnic marriages in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. The following themes emerged from the responses to answer the research question: distance challenge, financial challenge, bias and discrimination, communication challenges, and meeting cultural demands.

Financial Challenge

Participants expressed concerns about the financial challenges associated with interethnic marriages. Marrying into a certain ethnic group is perceived as coming with significant costs, particularly related to customs, traditions, rituals, and funerals. The expenses linked to these cultural practices are seen as a potential source of financial strain on individuals involved in interethnic marriages, one participant noted.

I came here because of work. So, I married an Asante, but I have been burdened with so much cost when honouring customs. The Asante make their funeral so attractive that it comes with a lot of cost. [P. 12]

Another participant also collaborated on the above and said:

When you marry from another ethnic group, and something happens to your in-law, there is always a price to pay for it, and this is money-draining. This scares people from marrying into another ethnic group other than their own. It seems costlier for people from another ethnic group. [P. 1]

Financial challenges emerged as a common theme in the context of inter-ethnic marriages, with participants expressing apprehension about the perceived high costs associated with customs, traditions, rituals, and funerals conveyed by certain ethnic groups. The financial burden is seen as a deterrent, and individuals share their experiences of feeling financially drained due to the cultural obligations that come with marrying from another ethnic group.

Bias and Discrimination

Participants reported instances of bias and discrimination in the context of inter-ethnic marriages. They described experiences of attracting negative comments and judgments from individuals from their partner's ethnic group, questioning the choice to marry someone from a different ethnic group. These comments contributed to feelings of discomfort and hurt. A participant shared the following:

I went to my husband's hometown, but because they knew I didn't understand and couldn't speak the Ewe language, they commented that instead of my husband marrying from his ethnic group, he went and married an Asante. What at all has he seen in me? I asked my in-laws, who interpreted everything for me and cautioned them. [P. 6]

Another participant also shared a standard view:

I initially came here because of work. But while doing the work, I met one Asante lady I like so much. We are 3 years into our marriage. However, specific comments I hear make me feel bad. One is why wicked people like us marry from the Asante ethnic group. [P. 7]

Bias and discrimination emerge as significant challenges in inter-ethnic marriages, with participants recounting instances where they felt targeted for marrying outside their partner's ethnic group. The views centred on the choice of an Asante spouse indicate a form of prejudice or bias against individuals from specific ethnic backgrounds. These experiences highlight the interpersonal challenges faced by couples in inter-ethnic marriages, where societal attitudes and biases may affect their sense of acceptance and belonging.

Communication Challenge

Participants highlight communication challenges as a significant aspect of inter-ethnic marriages. Instances where language barriers exist between spouses and their respective families lead to feelings of loneliness and exclusion. Effective communication becomes complex, especially when partners and their families speak different languages. Participants shared the following:

I feel lonely and excluded whenever I visit my husband's family in the Volta Region because I don't speak or understand the Ewe language. I think it is advisable to engage in inter-ethnic marriage when one understands the whole or a bit of one's partner's language. [p. 12]

Another participant confirmed the above by saying:

My husband finds it difficult to mingle with my family and friends when he is in our homeland. In the same way, I also find it difficult to socialise with his people when I visit his homeland. As I said, I am an Asante, and he is a Frafra. He and I communicate in English, while our children communicate with him in Frafra and also with me in Twi. [P. 10]

Communication challenges emerged as a notable hurdle in inter-ethnic marriages, mainly when language differences exist between partners and their respective families. The feeling of loneliness and exclusion during visits to the partner's family or homeland reflects the difficulty of effective communication without a common language. This aspect indicates the importance of effective communication in sustaining healthy relationships, and the language barrier can become a

substantial challenge. It also emphasises the potential need for couples in inter-ethnic marriages to find effective ways to bridge language gaps, fostering better understanding and integration into each other's families and communities.

Distance Challenge

Participants highlighted the challenge of distance as a significant issue in inter-ethnic marriages. Marrying someone from a different ethnic group often finds a means of dealing with the geographical separation of clustered ethnic communities. Commuting between the marital home and the partner's hometown, which may be situated in a different region, is seen as financially burdensome. One participant said,

"It is costly when you marry from another ethnic group. My husband hails from Keta in the Volta Region, so I often commute from Tafo-Pankrono to his hometown. Another participant shared a standard view:

Like the Asante, who are all clustered, the Ewe are also clustered. So, if an Asante marries an Ewe, distance becomes the issue. That is my problem right now. I travelled to the Volta Region for a considerable sum of money. So, why don't I pick somebody who is just around? [P. 1]

The distance challenge emerges as a notable issue in interethnic marriages, especially when partners come from different clustered ethnic communities. In this instance, the geographical separation between the Asante and Ewe poses a significant hurdle, requiring frequent travel that leads to substantial financial costs.

Challenge of Meeting Cultural Demands

Participants expressed challenges in meeting cultural demands, particularly related to food preferences. Cooking traditional dishes from their partners' ethnic backgrounds proved difficult, and adapting to different culinary preferences creates tension in some inter-ethnic marriages. The participants expressed made the following comments:

My husband, an Ewe, likes Akple and Fetri Toto as his favourite meals. The problem is I cannot prepare the Fetri Toto to his taste even after visiting my in-law to learn it. So, for me, preparing his cultural food is a challenge. [P. 6]

Participant One said something similar:

We come from different ethnic groups and have been trained in different kinds of food, so coming together to eat each other's ethnic group's food is not easy. I remember my wife prepared Kokonte with ground pepper. How can I use ground pepper to eat Kokonte? Nobody will say there is no challenge. [P. 1]

The study shows that preparing dishes can be challenging, especially for women in interethnic marriages. The example of struggling to cook Fetri toto to the husband's taste illustrates the cultural

nuances associated with food and the challenges of adapting to each other's culinary preferences. These challenges show the importance of cultural understanding and flexibility within interethnic marriages.

Discussion

Research question one was targeted at determining the perspectives of the youth about inter-ethnic marriages in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. The findings revealed that youth in inter-ethnic marriage view inter-ethnic marriage as a blend of cultures, a costly endeavour, and a thing of cultural and social significance. They also viewed inter-ethnic marriage as having misconceptions and inheritance issues. There is the identification of Ghana's multi-ethnic society as a motivator for inter-ethnic marriages. This implies that such relationships can help build unity in a larger societal context. This viewpoint is consistent with the notion that accepting variety in marriage partnerships can positively affect social cohesion and harmony. Chukwu (2021) believes that inter-ethnic marriages promote social cohesiveness by encouraging openness, tolerance, and understanding between different ethnic groups, resulting in generations who value diversity and contribute to national integration. The narratives on misconceptions revealed in this study suggest that misconceptions about inter-ethnic marriages can be dispelled through real-life experiences, fostering a more nuanced and accurate understanding of such unions. Cerchiaro (2022) reveals that inter-ethnic marriage tends to be overshadowed by negative perceptions. This is mainly due to the influence of popular writing and media coverage that sensationalise selected cases of high-profile inter-ethnic marriages among celebrities and public figures.

Secondly, research question two was targeted at examining the reasons why the youth engaged in inter-ethnic marriages in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. Findings indicate that youth engage in inter-ethnic marriage because of the understanding of their partner's ethnic groups, the love and care for one's partner, rejection from one's own ethnic groups and career opportunities. Participants had a good understanding of their partner's ethnic group. This perspective shows the importance of cultural awareness and appreciation in fostering successful inter-ethnic relationships. Persons who enter inter-ethnic partnerships may enjoy learning about each other's ideas and value systems. Furthermore, media influences the transmission of numerous societal norms, and many experts believe that early social learning is crucial to forming marital views and values (Johnson et al., 2022). The emphasis on love as a primary motivator aligns with the idea that successful inter-ethnic marriages are often built on deep emotional understanding and affection between partners. Some participants were rejected by their ethnic group members, who later found love in another. This highlights the complexity of interpersonal relationships and the influence of personal experiences on the decisions individuals make regarding marriage. Charsley and Bolognani (2023) explored marriage choices among the youth. They expressed that the youth choose to marry from another ethnic group because it provides a more organised life in terms of lifestyle and structure. Career opportunities led to others marrying from other ethnic groups. This highlights the impact of career-related factors on personal relationships and marriage decisions, showcasing how professional contexts can shape individuals' choices in inter-ethnic marriages.

Thirdly, research question three (RQ3) sought to analyse the challenges faced by the youth in their attempts at getting married to the opposite sex of other ethnic groups in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. Findings revealed the following challenges: distance challenge, financial challenges, bias and discrimination, communication challenges and the challenge of meeting cultural demands. The economic development shown in the study sheds light on the practical implications of inter-ethnic marriages, emphasising the need for individuals to carefully consider the financial aspects and cultural expectations associated with their partner's ethnic group. The perceived higher costs may influence decision-making and contribute to the challenges faced by couples in inter-ethnic marriages. Yulianto et al. (2023) found that partners from culturally different families frequently have diverse beliefs about how money should be spent and under what circumstances. The bias and discrimination in context imply the need for greater understanding and acceptance of diverse marital choices from various communities, which becomes evident in addressing these challenges. Sappor and Affum (2023) state that cultural stereotypes often serve as a basis for misunderstandings due to these distorted perceptions.

Again, Zixi (2024) observes that communication difficulties may arise if inter-ethnic married couples do not agree on a common language to employ. Even when a shared language is used, possible hurdles are likely to occur since differences in communication practices might influence the perception of criticism, changes in emotional state, and overall relationship satisfaction of mixed couples to some extent. The findings contradict a prior study by Dovie (2023), who discovered that individuals believe inter-ethnic marriage promotes marital communication. The distance challenge revealed in the survey indicates practical difficulties associated with maintaining a relationship across considerable distances, which can strain financial resources and the emotional well-being of the couples involved. The decision-making process for inter-ethnic marriages may need to consider the potential impact of geographical separation on the sustainability of the relationship. The challenge in meeting cultural demands calls for couples to navigate and negotiate cultural differences in various aspects of their lives, including food, to foster a harmonious relationship that respects and embraces each partner's cultural identity. Sappor and Affum (2023) opine that inter-ethnic married couples have to work out house rules that satisfy them regarding what is served and how it is prepared.

Limitations of the Study

The study was not without limitations. Participants had privacy concerns. As a result, they were reluctant to share their views, especially on the challenges they face as individuals in inter-ethnic marriages. They felt that they were sharing their personal experiences with the public. We had to create an open environment for them to share their perspectives. They were informed that the study was for academic purposes only and that their names would not be reported. Although an effort was made to gather their perspectives and experiences, the initial hesitation about privacy and the sensitivity of sharing personal experiences could make participants share incomplete information on inter-ethnic marriage. The study was conducted in Tafo-Pankrono Municipality, an area predominantly Asante. Therefore, the cultural, social and ethnic dynamics in the study area may

differ from those of other parts of Ghana, which are dominated by the Ewe, Ga, Mamprusi, or Dagomba. This, therefore, limits the extent to which generalisation can be made.

Conclusions and Implications

Generally, youth involved in inter-ethnic marriage view it positively. The positive attitudes towards cultural exchange and the recognition of the dynamic nature of culture suggest a willingness to embrace diversity. However, misconceptions about inter-ethnic marriage can only be dispelled through personal encounters with inter-ethnic marriage. Also, a nuanced interplay of cultural, emotional, interpersonal, and practical considerations shapes youth decisions regarding inter-ethnic unions in the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality. These decisions revolve around understanding another ethnic group, love, care, rejection from one's ethnic group, and career opportunities. Therefore, some multifaceted reasons or motivations drive individuals towards inter-ethnic marriages. The challenges confronting youths in inter-ethnic marriages encompass geographical, financial, interpersonal, communicative, and cultural dimensions. However, these challenges can be overcome by cultural understanding and flexibility of partners in inter-ethnic marriage.

The study recommends that the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and the Tafo-Pankrono Municipal Assembly collaborate with local cultural organisations and community leaders to organise cultural integration workshops. These workshops should promote understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of diverse cultures. Marriage Counselors should incorporate cultural integration discussions into counselling sessions and guide couples in navigating cultural differences.

The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection should establish localised marriage counselling centres within the Tafo-Pankrono Municipality, ensuring accessibility for couples needing support. These centres can serve as hubs for cultural integration, financial planning, and language and communication training. Future research should explore the role of social media in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards inter-ethnic marriages. The study should also examine how online platforms influence individuals' opinions, experiences, and decision-making processes when choosing a partner from a different ethnic background. Also, further research should examine the strategies employed by inter-ethnic married couples in adapting to each other's cultures and traditions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore the role of social media in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards inter-ethnic marriages. The study should also examine how online platforms influence individuals' opinions, experiences, and decision-making processes when choosing a partner from a different ethnic background. Also, further research should examine the strategies employed by inter-ethnic married couples in adapting to each other's cultures and traditions.

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Conflicts of Interest

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