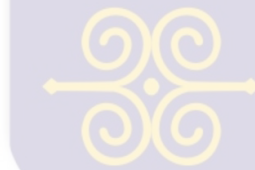


**COHABITATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS OF THE GLOBAL
EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN GHANA**

BY

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(10443755)



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M. PHIL)
STUDY OF RELIGIONS DEGREE.**

JULY, 2015

DECLARATION

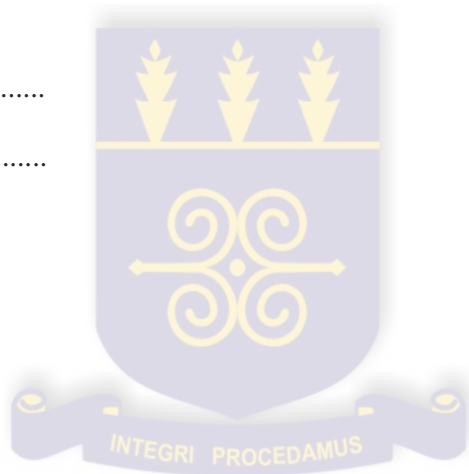
I, Rev. Ron Macaulay, do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research work produced from a study on ‘Cohabitation among Young Adults of the Global Evangelical Church in Ghana.’ Except for literature cited, which have been duly acknowledged, the work is no way a reproduction of any work ever presented for the award of degree.

The thesis is written under the supervision of Dr. Ben-Willie Golo and Dr. Lawrence Boakye, both of the Department for the Study of Religions.

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ABSTRACT

For most Churches, human sexual relationship and its legitimacy is an issue of concern. Among the diversity of these human sexual relationships is cohabitation. It is a sexual practice where people live together as though they are married. From African perspective, sexual intercourse is allowed only within marriage, because it is considered to be sacred, especially, in all the tribes of Ghana. The Global Evangelical Church (GEC) also considers the sacredness of sex only within marriage. Hence, the GEC introduces a teaching known as 'Family life,' which is about legitimate marriage among GEC members. The teaching offers grounds for making marriage legitimate in the concept of the practices of the Ghanaian Christian. Despite the teaching and reprimanding those involved in the practice of cohabitation, some young adults still cohabit. The problem that prompts this study is the phenomenon of cohabitation within the GEC. This leads to the aims and objectives of the study to find out why the young adults cohabit.

In order to achieve the set objectives, the study blends Christian ethical and phenomenological methods as it adopts qualitative technique in data collection and analysis. Both primary and secondary sources have been employed. This study focuses on the GEC's leadership, samples of resident pastors, presbyters and young adults as informants. Individual in-depth interviews and group discussions have been conducted in addition to questionnaires in data collection. It also takes inspiration from the lead provided by some African Christian scholars such as Samuel Wage Kunhiyop, John Mbiti and Bame Nsamenang.

Data collected and analysed reveals that while some cohabit due to economic difficulties and lack of accommodation, others cohabit as a trial marriage. Regarding the teaching of 'Family life,' the young adults indicated that the lesson is not taught as often as they expected. Above all, the position of the GEC on cohabitation is unknown to the majority of the young adults.

However, the GEC's leadership seems to be doing her best to promote sanctity in the church for spiritual growth, as far as marriage is concerned. Though the GEC acknowledges customary marriage, the church appreciates that marriages are brought to the altar for God's blessing. This requires intensive teaching of the GEC, regarding the morality of sexual intercourse and family life. Again, there is the realisation that since the 'Family life' lessons are very technical subject areas; there is the need that trained ministers handle this type of lessons. On this basis, there is the need for the GEC to come up with proper teaching document on cohabitation, because there seems to be no teaching material prepared by the GEC on the subject, 'cohabitation.' To achieve this aim, resource personnel, such as psychologists, ethicists, theologians, sociologists, and philosophers have to come together in order to brainstorm ways the GEC could come up with the teaching document. The call goes out to all Ghanaian Christians to recognise the good things which are divinely provided in their cultural traditions and be proud to give meaning to the Christian revelation in them.

DEDICATION

For the development and production of this thesis, I feel a deep sense of gratitude to dedicate this work to my wife, children, and the entire membership of GEC Bethel Chapel, Washington Ashaiman for their patience and understanding that make it easy for me to complete this programme.



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Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge the administration of the Global Evangelical Church (GEC), who has sponsored my studies and gave me the necessary assistance to upgrade myself in my field of study. I am not able to mention readily the names of many others who have contributed in one way or the other to make my study a success.

May God richly bless you all.

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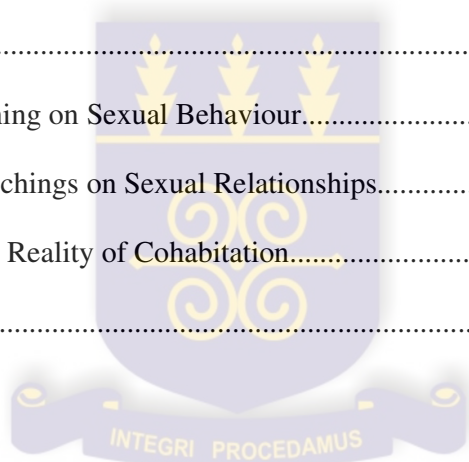
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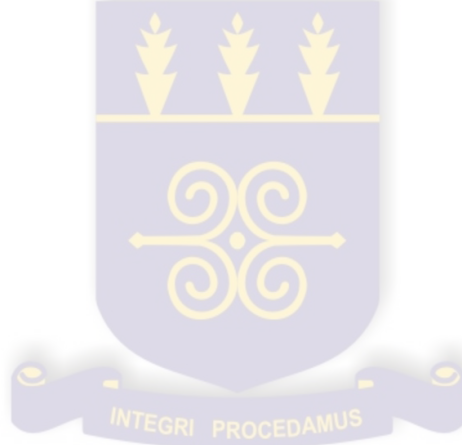
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Among the diversity of human sexual relationships is the phenomenon called cohabitation. Interestingly, much ambiguity seems to surround the legitimacy of this sexual relationship. Cohabitation is a global ethical phenomenon that transcends geographical, political and socio-economic boundaries, regardless of religious backgrounds. It is a sexual practice across all racial groups where people move into sexual relationships without actually bringing it to the level of marriage.¹ Again, cohabitation is a sexual practice similar to the Judeo-Christian term concubinage.² It is ‘the state of cohabitation of a man and a woman without the full sanctions of legal marriage.’³ Cohabitation also means where people live together without sexual relationship. Because cohabitation as a phenomenon has become widespread there are divergent views, which have to do with both ethical and social acceptability of the practice. Though there are divergent views, this work looks at cohabitation from the perspective of where some people live together, and have sex together as though they are married couples.

Looking at cohabitation as a sexual ethical phenomenon from an African perspective, Kofi Asare Opoku established that Africans pride themselves in the moral principle of permissibility of sexual intercourse only within marriage; therefore, sex outside marriage union, such as cohabitation is frowned upon by them. He also noted that Africans are known to have developed sets of sex taboos, which derived from their indigenous ethical knowledge of sexual relationships. Ethical requirements, such as chastity before legitimate marriage, and

¹Bryan Strong, Christine DeVault & Theodore F. Cohen, *The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationship in a Changing Society* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 222.

²Joseph Mullin, *The Catholic Church in Modern Africa: A Pastoral Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Limited, 1965), 155.

³Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Concubinage* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite, 2010).

faithfulness in marriage are cherished among them.⁴ The sacredness of sex is highly regarded among Africans; hence, Mbiti noted that in many African cultures, according to some traditional methods, the girl and boy are not allowed to meet until the marriage rites have been performed.⁵ According to Ansah, sexual chastity is a prohibition of certain sexual acts in a community. He also noted that sex and marriage taboos are respected among Ghanaians because sex is considered to be sacred in all the tribes of Ghana.⁶

Similarly, the African Christian ethicist Kunhiyop emphasised the sacredness of sex and noted that, although different people of the world have now come to understand sex and marriage in accordance with their own world views, marriage is divine.⁷ According to him, sexual intercourse is an important and God-ordained aspect of marriage, and ‘the Bible makes it clear that sexual relationship should only be pursued within the bonds of marriage.’⁸ However, cohabitation as a sexual practice has become a prevalent social phenomenon in Ghanaian society, of which churches are not exception. Interestingly, the practice is discouraged by traditional Christian teachings and churches, of which the Global Evangelical Church (hereinafter called GEC) is one.

The GEC is an evangelical church whose duty is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ; practices the Presbyterian type of governance in decision-making where decisions are taken by a body of presbyters chaired by a pastor at the local level. This church has a structure by which congregations are administered through synod, presbyteries, districts and local sessions; believes in the full manifestation of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit; and a Pentecostal church in its expression of worship.⁹

⁴Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*(Legon: FEP International Private Limited, 1977), 152.

⁵John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 1989), 135.

⁶John K. Ansah, *Taboos in Ghana: The Ethical Wisdom of Our Fathers* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag -Wort and Werk, 1988), 258 and 262.

⁷Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 190.

⁸-----, *African Christian Ethics*, 270.

⁹Global Evangelical Press, *Global Evangelical Church.2013Mini Synod* (Accra: GEC Publication, 2013), 33.

Because the GEC's duty is to spread the Gospel, it has no other authoritative source apart from the Scriptures. Hence, her life building teachings, including teachings on 'Family life,' which are to inculcate Christian moral virtues in the life of the members, are very crucial to the leadership and pastors. What it means by 'crucial' is that moral teachings are extremely important to the GEC. The GEC's leadership believes that if the members of the church are made to understand why they should live a chaste life which would lead to legitimate marriage, then, it would have some impact on the spiritual growth of the GEC.

According to the GEC's statistics, the church comprises children, young adults, and the elderly. The young adults formed about one-half of the total population of the church.¹⁰ They comprise both male and female. These young adults can be found within the various ministries and groups of the GEC. As can be identified with any group of people, these young adults have their functional responsibilities in their respective churches. They have their own meeting periods where they meet to study the Bible and practice their various gifts and talents on specific week days, and are also functional within church service periods. Even though they meet to study, the 'Family life' lesson of the GEC is not taught at their meetings, because the 'Family life' lesson is very technical, which requires an expertise. The overarching purpose of allowing the young adults to study, and exercise their gifts and talents in those ministries and groups is to build their Christian character and make them active, which should affect the entire church growth.

However, it has been observed that while some of the young adults are customarily married, and have their marriage blessed, others are not married. Still, while some are said to be married, they are rather noticed to be cohabiting. This behaviour, according to the GEC, goes against the Scriptures and the GEC's 2008 constitution. This constitution is an official document, which guides what the GEC believes and the administration of the church.

¹⁰Global Evangelical Press, *2015 Executive Calendar* (Accra: Global Evangelical Press, 2015), 208.

According to the 2008 constitution, the GEC considers marriage as a spiritual act, social and legal union of a man and a woman.¹¹ Marriage is a spiritual act because it has a spiritual component in the creation act of God for companionship, and a partner in reproduction. Jesus also mentioned it when he was answering the Pharisees who came to him with the issue of divorce. He referred them to the ideal that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.¹² Also, marriage is social because when a man and a woman are joined together in marriage, the families involved are inevitably joined together in relation to the marriage.¹³ Here, the GEC seems to be in agreement with Ganusah, who establishes that ‘marriage in Africa is not an institution between two persons only; it is a marriage of four families: of the families of the father and mother of the woman, and those of the father and mother of the man.’¹⁴ This means that the GEC acknowledges sexual relationships in only marriages, which involve families who give their seal of approval to the marriage. The GEC is a religious group that operates within Ghana; a secular state governs by civil laws. The governing laws of the state include marriage laws that the citizenry needs to respect and obey. Just as Ghana laws declare marriage as legal, the GEC also sees marriage as such. For this reason, the GEC recognises sexual intercourse within two main forms of marriage, which are marriage under the customary law, and marriage under the Ordinance. This position of the church is also enshrined in its 2008 constitution.¹⁵

Since marriage is a creation act as mentioned earlier, the church considers sexual intimacy as only permissible within marriage, and does not encourage Christians to practice cohabitation. Hence, the position of the GEC prevents cohabiters from assuming leadership responsibilities, such as pastors and presbyters’ (elders’) duties. Also, according to the

¹¹ Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church* (Accra: Global Evangelical Press, 2008), 126.

¹² James Giles, *Biblical Ethics and Contemporary Issues* (Makati City: Carid Baptist Publications, 1994), 180.

¹³ Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 124

¹⁴ Rebecca Y. Ganusah, ‘Informed Choices on Marriage, Childlessness and Reproductive Technologies: An African Christian Theological and Ethical Reflection.’ *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*. New Series Vol. 3 (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2008), 13.

¹⁵ Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 124 - 26.

church's constitution, which is considered to be guided and enjoined by the Bible, those found practising cohabitation and other deviant behaviour are reprimanded, but are not excommunicated.¹⁶ It is against this background that the researcher investigates the phenomenon of cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC, in order to examine the phenomenon and the reasons why young adults of the GEC cohabit.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The GEC's teaching on sexual relationships in 'Family life' teaching encourages chastity, the morality of sex and legitimate sexual relationship among its members. The overarching purpose of the GEC's teaching is that sexual intimacy must be restricted to marriage, and should be honoured among all members of the church as a divine will of God. Therefore, it expects members to marry before living together and engaging in sexual relationships.

Consequently, the church encourages and acknowledges customary marriage as foundational, because without families giving their seal of approval, sexual intimacy is unacceptable within the indigenous Ghanaian culture.

Notwithstanding the numerous teachings on the morality and permissibility of sexual intercourse only within marriage, it has been observed that some members still cohabit. Perhaps, there must have been a gap which may have been serving as grounds for cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC. There may be social problems, such as unemployment and lack of accommodation that people are faced with; others may be psychological and ineffectiveness of the teaching of the GEC as factors. Therefore, the problem that confronts this researcher is the practice of cohabitation within the GEC, a church that prides itself as one of the neo-Pentecostal churches which preaches high moral

¹⁶ Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 129 - 31.

standard and sexual chastity. It is in light of this that the researcher wants to find out why the young adults cohabit.

1. 3 Aims and Objectives

It has been observed that while some of the young adults of the GEC try to live a chaste life and marry legitimately, others move into sexual relationships and cohabit. The main aim of the thesis is to examine the phenomenon of cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC, and to find out why they cohabit irrespective of the teaching and counselling of their church. In order to unfold this main objective, the researcher has set these individual objectives.

- i. To examine the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians and the position of the GEC on the practice of cohabitation.
- ii. To investigate the factors that underlie the young adults' cohabitation in the GEC.
- iii. To discuss the morality of the phenomenon in the light of the teachings of the church, and the factors motivating the practice of cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC.

1. 4. Research Questions

While some of the young adults of the GEC try to live by the teachings of the church, others move into sexual relationships and cohabit. The main research question that the researcher intends to answer is 'Why do some young adults of the GEC cohabit irrespective of the teaching and counselling of their church?' The sub-questions set to assist the researcher to answer the main question are:

1. What is the situation of cohabitation among Ghanaians and what is the position of the GEC on the practice?
2. What are the factors that underlie the young adults' cohabitation in the GEC?

3. What is the morality of the phenomenon of cohabitation and the factors motivating the practice of cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC?

1. 5 The Scope of the Study

The study is about cohabitation among young adults of the GEC in Ghana. The age range of the young adults ranges between eighteen (18) years and forty (40) years. The reason for the inclusion of this age group is that, the researcher targets the adult church, which comprises mature adults of the specified age range who are being taught the 'Family life'. Also, according to the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Chapter Five Article 14 clause 1 and 1(e), and Chapter Forty-seven Article 42, anyone at the age of eighteen is no longer considered a child. The person is entitled to his or her personal liberty except for the purpose of education or welfare of a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years. This person of sound mind has the right to vote, and of course, is considered to be an adult who is of age to marry.¹⁷

The reason for the exclusion of members below the age of eighteen (18) is that, they are considered to be children of the church. Again, according to the 2008 constitution of the GEC, it indicates that in compliance with the civil law on marriage, those of lawful age could enter into marriage.¹⁸ Even though the practical evidence on the ground tells us that young males and females at the age of about sixteen years and even below are involving in sexual relationships, the researcher is dealing with young adults, and not young children. Based on this evidence, he decided to fix his target group at the lowest age of eighteen (18) years.

The whole of the church population cannot be used for this work because its branches are scattered all over Ghana and abroad. Hence, the researcher has limited his scope to three branches of the church, the GEC's leadership, and samples of its resident pastors, presbyters

¹⁷ Assembly Press, Ministry of Justice/Allshore Co., *1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana*(Accra: Assembly Press, Ministry of Justice/Allshore Co., 2005), 12 and 39.

¹⁸ Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*,126.

and young adults. Two of the branches of the church are located in the Greater Accra Region; while the third one is in the Volta Region.

1. 6 Limitation of the Study

It is not assumed that the methodology discussed below was without limitations. What the researcher meant by limitations were the constraints that limited the smooth progress of the research.

The researcher noticed that while there were numerous local literatures on marriage, there was scanty material on cohabitation. However, Western literature on cohabitation, premarital sex and marriage were numerous.

The time the researcher met some of the key informants was inconvenient for them. This was due to their busy schedule, which delayed data collection.

Due to the sensitive nature of the phenomenon under study, especially in the questionnaire, variations of open and closed-ended questions were employed. The closed-ended questions enabled the informants to choose from alternative responses. The open-ended questions, likely to be high sensitive ones, helped to reveal the amount of information the informants had. Hence, the informants were re-assured of the anonymity and confidentiality, which their information was accorded.

The researcher experienced a considerable number of interference in the face-to-face interviews conducted. Because of the informants' positions of responsibility, there were a considerable number of interruptions by visitors and workers who came to do business in their offices. As a result, these had hindered smooth dialogue.

Where the researcher utilised mobile phone to gather data by communicating with some of the informants, poor network was a constraint.

One central challenge was the sensitive nature of the issue in view of the fact that people consider sexual matters as purely private and a personal affair, which the researcher was invading into. However, many actively participated in the group discussions.

1. 7. 0 Methodology

This work is an ethical study, but specifically situated in Christian ethics. In order to achieve the set objectives of the thesis, Christian ethical and phenomenological approaches were adopted. The researcher blended the two approaches as he adopted qualitative technique in data collection and analysis.

Ethics is the study of the concepts involved in reasoning about what is good, right, obligation, and other cognate terms in decision-making.¹⁹ It is an area of study, which receives varied opinions on what is morally right or wrong in respect to the conduct or actions people take. It does involve some precision like the sciences, but like art, it is an inexact and sometimes intuitive discipline.²⁰

According to Georgia Harkness, Christian ethical approach is a systematic study of the way of life exemplified and taught by Jesus, applied to the manifold problems and decisions of human existence.²¹ Stassen and Gushee also noted that Christian ethics focuses attention on several kinds of contexts, such as the individual's Christian life and the church context in which Christians together live their lives. This also includes the community/societal context which shapes people's perception, attitudes and practices in myriad ways within which ethical issues arise.²² The researcher chooses Christian ethical method, because the topic under study involves aspects of sexual ethical teachings and

¹⁹Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43. in Agnes Quansah, *A Theological and Ethical Study of Loud Christian Prayer on the University of Ghana Campus*. M.Phil Thesis (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2013), 63.

²⁰B. ScottRae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (New York: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 15.

²¹ Georgia Harkness, *Christian Ethics*, <http://www.religion-online.org> [accessed on 17 February 2014].

²²Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 2003), 114.

practices of the Christian faith in a particular church denomination, which is the GEC. For that reason, he grounded his work in Legitimacy of Marriage as a concept.

Also, in order to make decision that is based on facts rather than on one's feelings or beliefs, phenomenological method is employed. The phenomenological aspect to this work looks at the phenomenon of cohabitation and people's views and responses to it. James Cox in his book '*An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*' indicates that phenomenology is a philosophical method for knowing, or investigating how we know reality by describing what the phenomenon actually is. Furthermore, Edmund Husserl also establishes that phenomenology is the rules for performing epoché, and eidetic intuition for building up an objective picture of the phenomenon.²³ Epoché means that in order to achieve the aim of a study, the researcher must suspend his or her previous judgement about the world, including his or her own feelings, ideas and presumptions. The eidetic intuition enables the researcher to see into the very structure or meaning of the phenomenon under study. This, therefore, follows that the analysis of the findings are based on what the informants provided, and not from the perspective of the researcher.

Hence, Christian ethical and phenomenological approaches have been adopted for the study. The researcher blended the two approaches as he adopted qualitative technique in data collection and analysis. While phenomenological method has been used to explore the phenomenon of cohabitation and the factors, Christian ethical principle has been applied to analyse the act of cohabitation and its effects on the cohabiter and the GEC, and also the morality of the act.

²³James L. Cox, *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*. (2010), 11.
<http://www.books.google.com.gh/books> [accessed on 24 January 2014].

1.7.1 Methods of Data Collection

According to Norman Blaikie, the term method is the systematic ways in which evidence is obtained and used, or more conventionally, the techniques of data collection that most people consider to be normal and right, but that is sometimes shown to be wrong. Also, it is a well-organized and well-planned way of collecting data.²⁴ Therefore, this study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. These methods helped in achieving the objectives of the thesis and also in answering the research questions.

1.7.1.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources for data collection had been employed. According to Blaikie, primary data are generated by a researcher who is responsible for the design of the study, the collection, analysis and reporting of the data. It is a new data used to answer specific research questions.²⁵ In that regard, questionnaires, interview guides, individual face-to-face interviews, and group discussions were employed.

The researcher conducted individual face-to-face interviews, group discussions, and also administered questionnaires to three target young adult groups. Senior pastors who represented the GEC leadership, resident pastors, presbyters (elders) and young adult groups were used in this work. The young adult groups were members of three congregations of the church; two in the Greater Accra Region, and one in the Volta Region. Because of the necessity of the observance of ethical principle of anonymity, the researcher pseudo-named these churches as, Asempa One and Asempa Two in the Greater Accra Region; and Nyanyui in the Volta Region.

²⁴Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research* (New York: Polity Press, 2000), 232-3.

²⁵Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 183.

The senior pastors formed the individual face-to-face informants who provided information on the position of the church. Thus, the researcher conducted a total of four (4) individual face-to-face interviews, which were made up of two (2) males and two (2) females.

The presbyters (elders) selected from the target churches were intellectual laities who understood the teachings of the church. They formed part of the local leadership (church session) of these churches. They were assistant leaders next to the resident pastors in executing their duties and also act in their absence. The researcher chose them because of their position in the church, and their ability to address issues of morality and facilitation of marriage counselling in the church.

Questionnaires were also administered to the target resident pastors, presbyters (elders) and young adults. However, it was realised that the GEC's leadership could not have enough time for the questionnaire, therefore, interviews were conducted.

Finally, the researcher used both English and Ewe to communicate with the informants. In the process of the interviews, the researcher also made use of a recording device by permission from the informants. This enabled the researcher to replay, which adequately assisted him to capture the important data collected for analysis.

1.7.1.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources have also been employed. This formed the basis for this work. This comprised some published and unpublished materials, journal articles, the Bible and dictionaries. These included materials on sexual ethics – cohabitation, premarital sex and marriage. Furthermore, the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the GEC's synod materials, GEC's 2008 constitution, and other teaching materials of the church were contacted. It also sources data from some number of previous research theses. In other words,

other people's related works had been looked at in order to know what the previous researchers had on the subject.

1.7.2 Samples and Sampling Procedure

The study used two (2) male and two (2) female senior pastors who represented the GEC's leadership, three (3) resident pastors, twelve (12) presbyters (elders) and three groups of young adults made up of fifteen (15) per group of the GEC in this work. The three (3) resident pastors were made to answer questionnaires. In addition, the twelve (12) presbyters (elders), and a total of forty-five (45) young adults were also administered with questionnaires. Thus, the researcher administered a total of sixty (60) questionnaires, which give a grand total of sixty-four (64) informants. Fortunately, all the questionnaires were returned, and had been used in this work. Besides the questionnaires, there were group discussions among the young adults who shared their own opinions about the subject matter, cohabitation.

The researcher chose the two (2) male senior pastors because they represented the GEC's leadership as key informants. These senior pastors were capable of providing valid information on the church's position and teaching (Family Life), which the researcher used in this work. Their individual opinions were also sought to augment the data. Again, he chose these senior pastors because they were responsible for steering the affairs of the church, administratively. Finally, they were having oversight responsibility for giving instructions for the preparation of suitable graded study materials for children, youth and adult ministries.

The two (2) female senior pastors had been chosen to contribute to this study because they monitor women's affairs in the church. Since the church consisted of both males and females, the contribution of pastors of both sexes to this study had been relevant. This had made the findings of the study more gender balance, if not gender equal.

The researcher employs the method of purposive sampling and social networking approach to gather data for the work. In purposive sampling, the units of the sample were selected not by a random procedure, but they were intentionally picked for study because they satisfy certain qualities which were not randomly distributed, but they exhibit most of the characteristics of interest to the study.²⁶ This approach had been used in choosing the scope of the study, GEC's leaders to be interviewed, resident pastors, presbyters, and young adults (both males and females). These informants were selected from specific churches because of special characteristics to the topic under discussion. The researcher extremely limited himself to his target samples of these categories of data, which determined the outcome of this work.

Questionnaires by and discussions with the young adults were used in this work. The young adult groups were mixture of males and females. The researcher selected mixed groups because he thought it deemed appropriate and suitable for providing relevant answers to avoid sexually stereotyped information.

As indicated earlier, the whole of the church population cannot be used for this work. The researcher, therefore, used a cross-section of the members of the three churches. The membership of those churches consisted of children, young adults, and elderly men and women from different economic and cultural backgrounds.

1.7.3 Method of Data Analysis

Both Christian ethical and phenomenological approach had been adopted to analyse the responses of the informants. Tables and pie charts, which are expressed in figures and percentages, are also employed to analyse the data collected. This enables the researcher to

²⁶Tom K. B. Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research* (Accra: SonLife Press and Services, 2002), 138. in Agnes Quansah, *A Theological and Ethical Study of Loud Christian Prayer on the University of Ghana Campus, Legon*. M. Phil Thesis (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2013), 14.

have a true view of the phenomenon, which leads to the conclusion of this work and recommendations. The researcher chooses this approach which enables him unravelled the complexity of the phenomenon under study.

1. 8 Literature Review

Cohabitation as a phenomenon is understood by different people of the world in accordance with their own world views, beliefs and core values.²⁷ This calls for systematic study of the existing works of scholars, which are relevant to this research. Though there are numerous relevant literature available on premarital sex, cohabitation, and marriage; few sociological and religious literature are selected and blended in this work.

Literature by Bryan Strong, Christine DeVault and Theodore Cohen, entitled '*The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationship in a Changing Society*' dealt with cohabitation as a sociological study among Americans.

According to Strong, DeVault and Cohen, because cohabitation has become so prevalent, it is no longer considered a moral issue, though the popularity of an action does not make it right. Their literature indicated that cohabitation is a socio-economic issue, which cut across all races in the world, due to unemployment, poor education, and lack of accommodation. According to these authors, there are seven reasons why people cohabit, which seem to make cohabitation a complex phenomenon. They indicated that while some live together on the grounds of economic necessity, others cohabit as trial marriage, respite from being single, and so forth. Also, they noted that while some cohabiters live together without desiring to have children, others eventually marry when children are wanted. The scholars noted that 'the moral criterion for judging sexual intercourse has shifted; love rather than marriage is now widely regarded as making a sexual act moral.'²⁸ Again, according to

²⁷ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 190.

²⁸ Strong, et al., *The Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

them, 'the difference between marriage and living together is losing its sharpness.'²⁹ They noted a lesser level of commitment characterises cohabiting couples when compared to married couples.

These co-authors shed a good light on the researcher's work, but the limitation is that their work has sociological views of cohabitation among the Americans. The researcher noticed that though the work was not done among Christians, yet it has captured the social aspect of cohabitation among the Americans. This work is looking at the Christian religious aspect of cohabitation.

The gap that this researcher's work wants to fill in terms of cohabitation as a phenomenon is to come from the Christian religious perspective, but specifically from a church, which is the GEC.

Another sociological study by Mary DeGenova, and Philip Rice entitled '*Intimate Relationships, Marriage and Families*,' also done among Americans represent the view that there are five types of cohabitation, some of which are trial marriage to test compatibility, prelude to marriage, and so forth. This means that partners test for matching, fitness and performance, and also another way of sliding into marriage. For instance, according to them, it helps them to 'decide if they are meant for each other.'³⁰ Comparatively, cohabiters in general report poorer relationship quality than their married counterparts. According to these scholars, it is hard to know exactly why this is the case, but they indicated that some researchers speculate that it could be due to less overall commitment in relationships of cohabitation. To them, social attachment to cohabitation has some effect on cohabiters. It means, the higher the level of social attachment, the lower the level of psychological distress. To delineate, social attachment, economic support, and emotional support significantly

²⁹ Strong, et al, *The Marriage and Family Experience*, 223.

³⁰ Mary Kay DeGenova & F. Philip Rice. *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families*(New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 201.

reduce stress, and account for the negative effect of cohabitation if such attachment does not exist.

Though DeGenova and Rice's presentation on cohabitation is viewed from sociological perspective, it is relevant to this work which is from Christian religious perspective. It is relevant because it has thrown light on the moral issues, and also helpful in filling a religious gap in the GEC.

John Santrock in his work entitled '*Adolescence*,' which was a sociological study done among Americans, associated cohabitation with adolescent sexual problems. The scholar shared the views on how social media, curiosity and economic stress influence some of the youth to cohabit.

Santrock's special concern is that young adults are misled by the way sex is portrayed in the media. Other areas he identified are how courtship is treated as a competition and featuring women as sexual objects, and how premarital sex leads the youth into cohabitation. This scholar highlighted how courtship is treated as a competition, a battle of sexes. According to the scholar, what makes females sexually active are 'giving in to male pressure, gambling that sex is a way to get a boyfriend, curiosity and sexual desire.'³¹ Also, the book noted that environment and cultural value enable young adults to develop different cultural viewpoints due to acculturation. Additionally, low academic achievement linked the adolescent with the initiation of sexual intercourse in early adolescence. The author tasked parents to serve as regulators of opportunities for their adolescents' social contact with peers, friends, and adults.

The researcher thinks this literature shed light on his work, but the limitation is that the work has sociological views of cohabitation among the adolescents among Americans.

³¹John W. Santrock, *Adolescent*, 12th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 205.

The gap that this researcher's work wants to fill in terms of cohabitation as a phenomenon is to come from the Christian religious perspective in a particular church in Ghana.

Another scholar, Gill Jones in his book entitled '*Youth*' defined youth as the period between childhood and adulthood. He noticed that the youth represented hope for society. He also viewed youth sexual problem from sociological perspective that they are sexually and aggressively driven and see themselves as the centre of the universe. The scholar noted that young adults are misled by the way sex is portrayed in the media. Hence, they see marriage as a means of becoming independence. This means that because they are influenced by the media, they refused to remain under the control of their parents until they marry. They are faced with lack of opportunity in the labour market because of poor education. Though they are full of lofty idealism, they are easily influenced by media representations of romantic love. For instance, Jones indicated that 'they form the most passionate love relations, only to break them off as abruptly as they began them.'³² Because of the youths' passion for love, it is now far common for young people to remain in the parental home until they marry.

The limitation of Jones' literature is that it is not from a religious perspective. The researcher intends to fill the religious gap in a particular church denomination in Ghana, which is the GEC.

According to Lawrence Steinberg in his book '*Adolescence*,' becoming sexual is a common development process during adolescent stage. He also did his work as a sociological study among young Americans. This author indicated some sociological theories of adolescence which have often focused on relations between the generations and emphasise the difficulties young people have in making transition from adolescence into adulthood. According to Steinberg, for adolescent girls, early sexual relationships are far more likely to involve love and intimacy. The scholar indicated that the younger people are when they enter

³²Jones, *Youth*, 8.

sexual relationships, the greater their chances of experiencing marital problems. Steinberg attributed cohabitation and early marriage to 'economic stress and low levels of education, and therefore poor job prospects.'³³ According to him, some cohabit because of premarital pregnancy. He shared his views on how social media, curiosity and economic stress influence some of the youth to cohabit. The author highlighted on parent-child communication about sex, and indicated that adolescent sexual behaviour depends on who is doing the communication and what is being communicated.

Having taken a critical look at Steinberg's work, it shed a good light on the sociological points of cohabitation, especially, among the adolescents and identified the causes of cohabitation. But, the limitation is the work was not done from a religious perspective. Therefore, he was not able to find out why members of a church, both adolescents and adults cohabit irrespective of the church's moral teachings.

This work intends to fill the religious gap in a particular church denomination in Ghana, which is the GEC, to find out why some members cohabit.

A book authored by Bame Nsamenang entitled '*Human Development in Cultural Context: A Third World Perspective*,' profile marriage as a creation ordinance. This author did his work among Africans from cultural and religious perspective, but not in a particular church denomination. The author talked about the historical roots of sacredness of sex in marriage in relation to West Africa's heritage. He lamented about how no part of the earth has been a greater recipient of alien influences and foreign invaders than Africa. He posed the question, why and how did Africa become a flourishing common market for other cultures? Nsamenang talked about how very often, men and women get attracted to each other where sexual intercourse takes place without being properly married. He attributed disregard for the African culture to psychological acculturation, which is confusing both adults and children.

³³Lawrence Steinberg, *Adolescence* (New York: The McGraw Hill, 1999), 328.

He asserted that ‘the desire for children cannot be satisfied except in a legitimate marriage.’³⁴ Therefore, West African cultures sanction procreation and parenthood only within the institution of marriage. Also, with regard to fertility, the author indicated that it is God who gives or denies fertility, a situation which should not attract trial marriage. The scholar noted that as people change, their values and lifestyles also change which enable young adults to develop different cultural viewpoints due to cultural assimilation. He noted that the African’s challenge is to preserve an African identity.

Though his work is relevant and would be used in my work, he did not deal with cohabitation among Christians and its effects on the church and the individuals. This work will fill the gap of dealing with the phenomenon in a church within Ghanaian culture, which he had not done, because he did not work among Ghanaians.

Another author, John Mbiti in his book ‘*African Religions and Philosophy*,’ also profile marriage as a creation ordinance, which is to be honoured by all. Mbiti did his work among Africans from African religious and philosophical perspective. This scholar shared various views on marriage and cultural assimilation.

Mbiti’s work shed light on traditional marriage as it is done among Africans in various degrees. He extensively dealt with how the African cherishes virginity, chastity before marriage and faithfulness in marriage. Puberty as the initiation rites is also cherished to initiate young people into adulthood, without which they are not recognised or allowed to marry. Moral sanctions of tribes give definite direction on courtship behaviour. According to the scholar, in order to honour the woman’s family, bride gift (wealth) is paid in varying degrees among Africans. He indicated that among Africans, the uses of intermediaries are important whose duty is to arrange for the marriage. Most importantly, according Mbiti, ‘the girl and boy are not allowed to meet until the wedding has taken place’ within some

³⁴A. Bame Nsamenang, *Human Development in Cultural Context: A Third World Perspective* (California: Sage Publications Newbury Park, 1992), 125.

traditions.³⁵ He argued that West Africans marry primarily for procreation, and that the desire for children cannot be satisfied except in a legitimate marriage. Mbiti having said this about sexual relationships in marriage from religious and cultural perspective, it is very relevant for my work because it has shown light on sex in marriage as I will explore in my work. But what we see lacking is that he did not deal with sex in marriage among Christians and its effects on the church and the individuals. This work will fill the gap of dealing with the phenomenon within Ghanaian culture and Christianity, which he had not done, because he did not work among Ghanaians.

Samuel Wage Kunhiyop in his book *'African Christian Ethics,'* also dealt with sex in marriage from a Christian religious perspective. Kunhiyop's literature extensively dealt with African Christian ethics. According to him, sexual union is understood by different people of the world in accordance with their own world views, beliefs and core values.³⁶ He argued that everything human in this world has gone wrong; therefore, the Scriptures must play a normative role. 'They are a reliable guide as to what we should believe and how we should live.'³⁷ He dealt with how the moral decision the Christian makes in life must reveal his or her holiness. Thus in each situation, it is required of Christians to know the decision to make about what is right and wrong. Also, how marriage is recognised among African Christians. The scholar explicitly elucidated that marriage is ordained for curbing fornication and adultery. He asserted that the original sin committed by Adam has had a significant effect on sexual intercourse in only marriage. He noted that 'sexual intercourse is an important and God-ordained aspect of marriage. It is the primary and natural means of procreation and a source of mutual pleasure for a man and woman. This emphasis on pleasure does not, however, mean that every type of sexual activity that gives someone pleasure is legitimate.'³⁸

³⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 134.

³⁶ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 190.

³⁷ -----, *African Christian Ethics*, 70.

³⁸ -----, *African Christian Ethics*, 270.

Kunhiyop did his work among African Christians; however it was not done in a particular church. Therefore, the gap this work wants to fill in terms of cohabitation as a sexual ethical phenomenon is to come from a specific Christian religious perspective, which is the GEC.

Hans Haselbarth in his book '*Christian Ethics in the African Context*,' did his work from a Christian religious perspective. This scholar shared some views on marriage and cohabitation. But Haselbarth attributed the cause to the attitude of families. For instance, he noted that 'the high sums demanded by some parents prevent marriages for years thus invite fornication and eloping,' which contribute to cohabitation.³⁹ Again, he indicated that when people wish to cherish virginity, chastity and self-control, they are regarded as old-fashioned moralists. He reflected upon the dynamic interrelationship between the Christian's attitude toward sex and marriage. According to Haselbarth, 'Christians find it difficult to explain their better arguments that, for instance, the virtue of self-control enhances the joy of love.'⁴⁰ Nonetheless, he pointed to bride gift (wealth) as a sign of strengthening the bride's position, which affirms new fellowship between families. Haselbarth did his work among African Christians.

This work will fill the gap of cohabitation as a phenomenon, which is similar to marriage, among young adults in a specific religious perspective, which is the GEC.

Finally, Paul Landis in his book '*Adolescence and Youth: The Process of Maturing*,' worked among American Christians from Christian religious perspective. Landis deals with how scepticism increases and all traditions are challenged among the youth when they are approaching adulthood. They harbour serious doubts about basic Christian beliefs. He turns to the church and pointed out that moral character needs to be integrated into the moral fibre of the youth. According to Landis, the concern of the church should be 'to emphasise the

³⁹Hans Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1976), 81.

⁴⁰-----, *Christian Ethics in the African Context*, 82.

great moral teachings of Christ, their direct application to current social affairs, and to identify religious worship and loyalty with the practice of these moral principles.’⁴¹Landis’ work indicated how society still value chastity before marriage, and scare at how abortion is on the increase among unmarried youth. He related that the church should be the source of most sex education besides parents and counsellors; not peers, movies and magazines.

What was happening in America when this information had been given seems not to be different from what is currently happening among Ghanaian Christians. This scholar’s work is situated in a particular religion, which is Christianity. This means that what was happening among the Americas seems not to be different from what is happening among young adults of the GEC. Though Landis’ work is said to be done within Christianity, it is not done among Ghanaian Christians of the GEC. Hence, the gap this work wants to fill in terms of cohabitation as a phenomenon is to come from a specific Christian religious perspective, and from a particular Ghanaian church, which is the GEC.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

This work is grounded in the concept of *Legitimacy of Marriage* as the conceptual framework, based on both African and Christian ethical and theological principles of marriage. The legitimacy of marriage is the acknowledged standard of marriage, which complies with recognised rules or traditions of a community.

The African believes that marriage is an institution of the Supreme Being, which is similar to the belief in Christianity that marriage is an institution ordained by God. Africans pride themselves in the moral principle of sexual intercourse only within marriage; therefore, sex outside marriage union, such as cohabitation is frowned upon by them.⁴² Similarly, Christians also recognise the moral principles of sex only within marriage. One example of

⁴¹Paul Landis, *Adolescence and Youth: The Process of Maturing* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 184.

⁴²Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 152.

the approval of marriage as its legitimacy among Africans is that, from traditional point of view, marriage is social rather than an individual affair. It is an important occasion among Africans, particularly within most Ghanaian tribes which involves families. It is a social contract in which the lineages of the contracting parties – both the man and the woman's families – are greatly interested. One significant aspect of marriage among Ghanaians is whenever customary marriage is performed, moral values and advices are given to the man and woman.⁴³

According to Mbiti, initiation rites are performed prior to marriages, which have great educational purpose. The occasion often marks the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is otherwise not accessible to those who have not been initiated. It is a period of awakening to many things. They learn to endure hardship; they learn how to work and build their own houses; they learn to live with one another; they learn to obey; and they learn the secrets and mysteries of the man and woman relationship.⁴⁴ According to Quarcoopome, unless these rites are performed a man is not considered as an adult, and therefore, not fit to marry, and he may not be entrusted with responsibilities. A woman also may not get a husband. Chastity before marriage is highly treasured.⁴⁵

Mbiti indicated that, for Africans, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet. Where legitimate marriage has taken place, the two families are involved in a relationship.⁴⁶

In Africa, according to Kunhiyop, ethical principles and rules of conduct have been preserved over the ages in various customs and traditions that provide explanation of the reasons, motivations, values and purpose of behaviour. History as a vital ingredient of knowledge is maintained by the elders of every community of people, who are the custodians

⁴³T. N. O. Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 1987), 121.

⁴⁴ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 1989), 119.

⁴⁵ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 113.

⁴⁶ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 130.

of the rules and the regulations that guide the whole community of people. For instance, most parents wait for the prospective husband to provide the bride-price before allowing the woman to join him. Nowadays, a Bible and a ring are added to the items presented to a Christian or educated woman at the customary marriage (engagement) ceremony. The marriage (engagement) ring is supposed to keep away other suitors.⁴⁷

In Ghana, most churches allow customary rites, which involve the approval of families to be performed prior to church blessing, since Christianity develops not in a vacuum, they are in a society of people who cherish their customs and traditions. It can also be established that the churches constitute a sizeable population in Ghanaian society, and are situated where customs and traditions are originated, which embodied the heritage of the communities.

Generally, it is expected that Christians cherish moral values as prescribed in the Bible, which are vital for their existence. Sex is a fact of life, nevertheless, in Christianity it is required that the Christian should abstain from it till he or she is ready and legitimately married. In this regard, churches play a critical moral role in both rural and urban communities in Ghana over the years.

In Christianity, sexual acts apart from legitimate marriage, such as fornication which is similar to premarital sex; cohabitation; adultery; and prostitution are considered sinful. These are some of the moral life challenges that confront many Christians, which influence their behaviour. Notwithstanding challenges, Christians are expected to live chaste life, which means to avoid moving into sexual relationships without performing marriage rites. It also means fidelity to husband or wife during marriage. According to Lauren Winner, chastity before marriage is a spiritual discipline for the entire Christian church. It is the Christian virtue by which Christians take God's character and goals into account in their relationships

⁴⁷Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 9.

with the opposite sex.⁴⁸ They are expected to live according to the biblical principles as taught by Jesus Christ, which substantiate their claim that they are his followers.

This concept operates within the principle of Christian deontology, which means an action is morally obligatory as a moral command which mandates it or forbids it. Therefore, in Christianity, the concept of the *Legitimacy of Marriage* is based on Christian ethics, such as deontological principles. One example is that of Geisler in his book 'Christian Ethics,' which says that whatever is traceable to God's unchanging moral character is a moral absolute, for example, holiness. Therefore, Christians do not find their moral duties in the standard of Christians, but in the standard for Christians, which is the Bible.⁴⁹ This is because to the Christian, the Scriptures are the arbiter in matters of morality, faith and practice.

Another example of this position is that of Judith Boss. According to her, chastity as a Christian moral virtue can be acquired from God's commands, because no other justification is necessary for an action to be right among Christians other than God commanding it.⁵⁰ This means that it is not morally right for a Christian to live unchaste life, such as to cohabit, since he or she belongs to a particular religion, which is Christianity with its moral principles. We believe this also means that the idea of chastity is at the heart of God's self-revelation, which is revealed in the Bible. Living a chaste life, which leads to legitimate marriage, is the reflection of God's holiness in his people, which shows the standard of holy living in worshipping him. Chastity expresses itself in a variety of ethical commands which apply in sexual and social relationships. Chastity demands individual integrity, which is the quality of

⁴⁸Lauren F. Winner, 'Sex in the Body of Christ,' <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/may/34.28.html> [accessed on 18 June 2015]

⁴⁹Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options* (Michigan: Baker Academic. Grand Rapids, 2010), 39.

⁵⁰Judith A. Boss, *Perspectives on Ethics* (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998), 105.

being honest and strong about what you believe to be right, and single-minded devotion to God.⁵¹

Because chastity is abstinence from sex as mentioned earlier, where sex is used as a means of physical pleasure because two people think they are in love, then, it becomes an unchaste life, which is fornication or cohabitation. According to Mackinnon, sex should not be an expression of love because we need not be ‘in love’ with someone sexually in order to love them. We can love our friends, parents or children, and yet we are not in love with them sexually. However, quite often, to be in love attracts sexual activity, which raises the question of its morality.⁵²

The Christian is expected to practise chastity both inside and outside the church. Where chastity is not practised, but people move into sexual relationships before marriage is known as premarital sex. Premarital sex is a sexual practice which takes place between two opposite sexes prematurely. This practice is also known as fornication. Fornication or premarital sex and cohabitation are closely related for the fact that both are sexual activities that take place between people who move into sexual relationships without being married. Surprisingly, according to Haselbarth, people who still cherish virginity, chastity and self-control are regarded as old-fashioned moralists and seen to fight a losing battle. Because of such prejudice, serious young Christians find it difficult to explain their better arguments that, for instance, the virtue of self-control enhances the joy of love in marriage.⁵³

Chastity can also be practised among legitimate marriage couples. This is where married couples abstain from having sex outside the marriage. Living unchaste life by having sex outside marriage is known as ‘adultery’ or ‘unfaithfulness.’ According to Feinberg and Feinberg, adultery is forbidden in Christianity because it is against Jesus’ teachings. They

⁵¹I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman, *New Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (eds), (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 478.

⁵²Barbara Mackinnon, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 5th ed. (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 199.

⁵³Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context*, 82.

argue that while chastity is recognised as having sex with only ones husband or wife, it is recognized that sex is both natural and enjoyable, but it should never be used merely for physical gratification. Rather, it should be the expression of deep love and affection, especially between husband and wife.⁵⁴

Can Christians refuse to cohabitate in order to prove their chaste lives? Christians can prove their chaste life only when they are faced with situations that can arouse their sexual feelings, or meet their economic needs. This sexual feeling has to be controlled as they make the decisions about how to express their behaviour, though they are sexually aroused or faced with economic difficulty. According to Stassen and Gushee, the reason why Christians have to live a life of chastity is that, ‘Jesus is the model for Christians, the one whom Christians are called to follow.’ They argue that the essence of the Christian life is really character or virtue.⁵⁵ They explicated what Jesus taught as qualities of character, which are type of habit. Habits are tendencies or patterns of behaviour or thought. For example, the Christian is to live a chaste life and marry legitimately. It has often been justified from Scripture, and the examples of personal and social behaviour that are thought to be ordained therein as one seeks the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁶

Stassen and Gushee argue that it is not enough for the church to teach rules and principles about right and wrong, we need to nurture the kind of character and virtues that lead people actually to do the right and avoid the wrong.⁵⁷

From this premise, the concept considered in this work will not be seen as distinct, but to achieve the objectives of this work. The researcher chooses to employ this concept for this work because it offers viable guidelines for the work as to how Christians should marry. This

⁵⁴John S. Feinberg & Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*. (Illinois: Crossway Books. A Division of Good News Publishers. 60187, 1993), 11.

⁵⁵Stassen et al., *Kingdom Ethics*, xi.

⁵⁶-----, *Kingdom Ethics*, 38.

⁵⁷-----, *Kingdom Ethics*, 60.

also enables the researcher to investigate the practice of cohabitation, causes of cohabitation, the effects, and give recommendations that are brought to the fore at the end of this work.

1. 10 Organisation of the Chapters

The researcher arranges his work in five chapters as follows:

Chapter one which is the introduction gives a general introduction to the background of the thesis. This includes the statement of the problem, the aims and objectives as to what the work would achieve in the end. It also includes research questions to be addressed, the scope of the study, the limitation of the study, methodology used to study the phenomenon and the methods of data collection. This also immensely includes some relevant literature that have been reviewed to argue the purpose and direction of the thesis. It also deals with the conceptual framework, organisation of the chapters and the significance of the study.

Chapter two introduces us to the understanding of cohabitation, the statistics and the legality of the phenomenon in some nations. It discusses the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians. It also includes the distinction between cohabitation and marriage.

Chapter three covers Christian ethical teaching on sexual behaviour. It covers the GEC's ethical teachings on sexual relationships, and Christian ethics and the reality of cohabitation. It briefly explains moral choice-making and its responsibility.

Chapter four covers the presentation of responses, which comprises the data collected from the GEC's leadership, resident pastors, presbyters, and the young adults. This is the chapter which discusses the findings, which gears toward the determination of the outcome of the research work.

Finally, Chapter five covers the summary, major findings, the researcher's recommendations and conclusion of the study.

1.11 Significance of the Study

The research is highly significant because it has made some relevant contributions to knowledge, and original contribution to literature. The researcher noticed the variety of views of the scholars cited in the background of the study, and also in the literature review.

Also, the purpose of this study is to hear the voices and perspectives of the GEC; leadership, pastors, presbyters, and young adults of the GEC on cohabitation. It is evident that there are numerous views on sex, cohabitation and marriage. While some of the views of the scholars are similar, others are dissimilar. Though the various views seem to oppose one another, my appreciation for the authors has been growing because their views are to prove how moral and immoral cohabitation is. While discussing these relatively familiar aspects of cohabitation, the authors succeeded in bringing fresh and stimulating perspectives, which proved ethically relevant. While much of this discussion is relevant to the churches in Ghana, the primary emphasis is on the young adults of the GEC. All the key informants sampled emphasised quality of character, as well as legitimate marriage, as basic for assuming leadership responsibilities. Their suggestions to improve morality of marriage in the GEC are relevant.

The findings benefit young adults since the study provides basis for awareness and better understanding of how cohabitation affects their spiritual life and the church. Finally, the study contributes to literature, and also assists the GEC in dealing with sexual relationships, particularly, cohabitation.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter gives the general background to the thesis. The general overview of cohabitation as a phenomenon, which gives a clearer picture or understanding to the statement of the problem, which is the focus of the thesis has been provided. The aims and objectives of the

study and the scope of the study are clearly stated. The chapter then continues with the methodology, methods and the design the researcher employed. The researcher looks at relevant literature of other scholars, and uses Christian chastity based on Christian deontological principles. Again, the challenges and the significance of the study have been presented.

The next chapter looks at sexual ethics which involves understanding cohabitation, the factors and its legality and the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians. This leads us to the distinction between marriage and cohabitation.

CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING COHABITATION

2.1 Introduction

Cohabitation as a sexual practice has received varied opinions from different people of the world in accordance with their own beliefs and core values. It has become a prevalent social phenomenon in Ghanaian society, of which churches are not exception.

This chapter seeks to understand the phenomenon of cohabitation as a sexual ethical issue. The work considers the rate of growth, the legal basis of the practice of cohabitation within some nations of the world, and the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians. Finally, it touches on the distinction between marriage and cohabitation.

2.2 What is Cohabitation?

Cohabitation is a phenomenon which cuts across all racial groups where people move into sexual relationships, regardless of the principle of permissibility of sex only within marriage.⁵⁸ It means that they live together and have sex together as though they are married couples. Cohabitation, according to Law dictionary indicates two broad views of living together, which are: living together as a husband and wife; and having the same habitation, but not as a husband and wife.⁵⁹ Julien Teibler and Nancy Reichman also share the view that cohabitation is where two people are in an intimate relationship, live together and share a common domestic life, but are neither joined by marriage nor a civil union.⁶⁰ This means that

⁵⁸Bryan Strong, Christine DeVault & Theodore F. Cohen, *The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationship in a Changing Society* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 222.

⁵⁹Law Dictionary 2nd ed. (Black's Law Dictionary. Free Online Legal Dictionary) <http://www.thelawdictionary.org/cohabitation>. [accessed on 9 March 2015].

⁶⁰Julien O. Teibler & Nancy E. Reichman, *The Concept of Cohabitation: An Elusive Concept* (Washington D.C: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2001) <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/projects>. [accessed on 9 March 2015].

since the two people are in an intimate relationship, they move into sexual relationship without being married.

According to Mackinnon, there is the conviction that the human being, irrespective of the culture to which he or she belongs, is essentially a sexual being by nature who will, sooner or later, come to see himself or herself appreciate the need to have sex. Sex does not only occur between a husband and wife, but can also take place between those who are not married and are cohabiting. This conviction of being sexual will lead the person to evolve in specific ways in the form of sexual activities, because the belief in sex is common. He or she may either choose to have sex by cohabiting or marrying. Because cohabitation and marriage are very similar in nature, they are sexual relationships which are in a way guided by human nature.⁶¹

Generally, cohabitation is a global sexual practice where people move into sexual relationships for many reasons without being married.⁶² Axinn and Thornton hold the view that while some people move into cohabitation and use it as a screening device to choose a mate with whom they could form a successful marriage; others also see it as the best way to test the fertility of the woman prior to marriage.⁶³

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, Opoku noted that Africans pride themselves in the moral principle of permissibility of sexual intercourse only within marriage, and therefore, sex outside marriage is unacceptable among them. However, the possibility of cohabitation, which goes against African ethical norms enable them to develop sets of sexual ethical rules, which derived from their indigenous ethical knowledge of sexual relationships. Ethical requirements, such as 'chastity before marriage, and faithfulness in marriage' are

⁶¹Mackinnon, *Ethics*, 97.

⁶²Strong, et al. *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁶³W. G Axinn & A. Thornton, *The relationship between cohabitation and divorce: Selectivity or causality*, 1992, 29(3):357–374.

cherished among them.⁶⁴ This implies that unchaste life is possible, and therefore, not cherished among them. Hence, ethical rules, such as sex taboos are made to guide them.

In order to ascertain how fast cohabitation is growing in the world, and the legal basis within which the phenomenon is practised, three nations are selected from three continents. These three nations are the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and of course, Ghana. In the quest for information on statistics of cohabitation, M. Jay provided substantiating data, which shows how cohabitation is increasing in the United States of America. Thus, in 1960 the data indicated 450, 000 cohabiters, while in 2011 there had been a significant increase as 7, 500, 000(7. 5 million) cohabiters were recorded.⁶⁵ From this data, it is clear that within fifty-one years there had been an increase of 7, 050, 000 cohabiters in the United States alone. Similar statistics has been provided by the United States Census Bureau.⁶⁶

Also, in the United Kingdom, statistics indicated that in 1996 15 per cent of people aged between 25 and 34 were cohabiting and this rose to 27 per cent in 2013.⁶⁷ From this data, it means within seventeen years there had been an increase of 12 per cent cohabiters.

As the above mentioned nations have their statistics on cohabitation available; unfortunately, we have no reliable statistics on cohabitation, which indicate the rate at which the phenomenon is growing in Ghana. The above statistics show how cohabitation is growing very fast in the above nations, and also there various legal bases that show whether cohabitation is legal, or illegal as compared to marriage laws.

In the United States, laws vary from one state to another in defining cohabitation. Some states have statutes which make cohabitation a criminal offence under adultery laws.

⁶⁴Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*(Legon: FEP International Private Limited, 1977), 152.

⁶⁵M. Jay, *The Downside of Cohabitation before Marriage* (New York Times. Retrieved 2012. [accessed on 8 December 2014].

⁶⁶United States Census Bureau [accessed on 17 November 2014].

⁶⁷Cohabitation in the United Kingdom 2012, <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code> [accessed on 12 November 2014].

Living together, or cohabitation in a non-marital relationship, does not automatically entitle either party to acquire any rights in the property, which the other party acquired, during the period of cohabitation. However, adults who voluntarily live together and engage in sexual relationships may enter into contract to establish the respective rights and duties of the care of their properties. The states make registration forms available to those who wish to enter into contract to establish the rights to do so.⁶⁸

Also, in the United Kingdom, when a man and a woman are living together in a stable sexual relationship without being married is referred to as a common law marriage or spouse. However, living together in a sexual relationship without being married is not legally protected in England and Wales. Although cohabiters do have some legal protection in several areas, cohabitation gives no general legal status to a couple, like marriage and civil partnership from which many legal rights and responsibilities derived. Cohabiters may wish to enter into a cohabitation agreement, and this can act as an encouragement for them to consider what they would want to happen if the relationship ends.⁶⁹

In Ghana, there are two bills before the national legislature since 2012, which are 'Property Rites of Spouses Bill' and 'Intestate Succession Bill.' The aim of these bills is 'to ensure that men who failed to formalise their relationships with their companions, will soon see their properties shared with such women.' This will be done 'even if they failed to perform the necessary marriage rites.'⁷⁰This does not disqualify the fact that cohabitation as a sexual phenomenon is practised in Ghana.

Notwithstanding differences, there are clear similarities and divergent views in all of the two legal systems that cohabiters are not legally supported by law. However, where

⁶⁸ Cohabitation Law, <http://www.USLegal.com> [accessed on 4 November 2014].

⁶⁹ Catherine Fairbairn, *Common Law Marriage and Cohabitation*. <http://www.parliament.uk> Updated: 11 November 2013. [accessed on 15 December 2014]; Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Common-law marriage* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite, 2010).

⁷⁰ Ghana News, *Ghana to Recognise Cohabitation as Marriage*, <http://www.womec.org> and <http://www.myjoyonline.com> Published 2/8/2012. [accessed: 17 November 2014].

cohabiters who live together and engage in sexual relationships may enter into contract to establish the respective rights, and duties of the care of property is not clear. This is because the states have registration forms available to those who wish to enter into contract to establish the rights to do so. This also means that cohabiters are backed by law, though not officially in that, where the relationship is dissolved the registration authorise one party to challenge the right to property in a court of jurisdiction as legal. Therefore, one would conclude that cohabitation is both legal and illegal in some parts of the above mentioned nations; especially, in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. As we are faced with this bewildering array of the legal basis of cohabitation; whether the practice is legal or illegal, the practice is very popular.

The popularity of cohabitation as a phenomenon has made its distinguishing characteristics to be noticed in many forms. For instance, while scholars, such as Strong, DeVault and Cohen, indicated seven types of cohabitation, DeGenova and Rice noted five types. The two groups of scholars shared similar views about the phenomenon. For instance, the two groups of scholars indicated 'trial marriage. It is a popular form of cohabitation where couples try to discover if they want to marry each other. In this regard, according to the above scholars, there seems to be a variety of practices of cohabitation as explained below.

According to Strong, DeVault and Cohen, while some live together on the grounds of economic necessity, others cohabit as trial marriage, and still, others cohabit as a respite from being single. They also indicated that others cohabit because they come from divorced homes; while some cohabiters are younger, others are less religious persons. According to these scholars, people who cohabit may be more accepting dissolution and therefore less committed to the relationship. Thus, they may expend less effort at developing good marital communication skills because they are less sure they will stay permanent or get married.

Also, the scholars noted that while some cohabiters live together without desiring to have children, others eventually marry when children are wanted. According to them, morality has lost its value in marriage. For instance, these scholars said that ‘the moral criterion for judging sexual intercourse has shifted; love rather than marriage is now widely regarded as making a sexual act moral.’⁷¹ Again, according to them, ‘the difference between marriage and living together is losing its sharpness.’⁷² They noted a lesser level of commitment characterises cohabiting couples when compared to married couples.

Strong, DeVault and Cohen indicated that sexuality is more widely considered to be an important part of a person’s life, whether married or not.⁷³ The first type of cohabitation, according to these scholars is ‘temporary casual convenience.’ DeGenova and Rice also share similar view which is named ‘utilitarian arrangement.’ It is where cohabiters share the same living room because of high accommodation cost without sexual relationship. This is similar to one part of the Law dictionary’s definition that cohabitation means having the same habitation without having sex. In this regard, electricity bill and other utility bills are shared because it is convenient to do so. Thus, a good number of people live together in order to save money by sharing living quarters, expenses and the work of housekeeping. Their goal is to maximise pleasure, and minimise suffering of each other. It is convenience to live together because the two people enjoy being with each other.⁷⁴ The cohabiters share the same room with good intention because of the high accommodation cost situation, which they find themselves in. As they live together in order to save a situation, they help one another as they see themselves as friends. However, the temptation to be attracted to each other is possible.

According to Strong, DeVault and Cohen, ‘affectionate dating or going together’ is the second type of the phenomenon of cohabitation. It is where the two people who are

⁷¹Strong, et al., *The Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁷²-----, *The Marriage and Family Experience*, 223.

⁷³-----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁷⁴-----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

planning to marry move together, visit each other and affectionately assist each other, which is liable to involve sex.⁷⁵

The third type of cohabitation the scholars indicated is ‘trial marriage’ as mentioned earlier. According to Strong, DeVault and Cohen, cohabitation as a phenomenon is not only confined to the young adult population. It is a phenomenon which equally involves some adults. Testing the relationship before marriage is one of the possible reasons for this type of cohabitation, which reflects some desire for future togetherness, but also some uncertainties. They are uncertain, because they are not sure if they would marry. This type of cohabitation is where some people want to live together to test their compatibility. This they think would help them to decide if they are meant for each other if they want to get married. It is a type of cohabitation where cohabiters test behaviour, fertility and potency, which is also considered as ‘little marriage’ to see if a ‘big marriage’ will take place, and therefore, last.⁷⁶

‘Economic advantage’ is the fourth type of cohabitation. This means that while some may choose to cohabit as an answer to high economic pressure, these type of cohabiters move into the practice as ‘economic advantage,’ so that their properties would not be shared if the relationship had been dissolved.⁷⁷ It has aroused considerable interest to know that even among the elderly, living together without marriage has become increasingly common. According to them, especially in the United States of America, even though approximately 80% of cohabiters are under age 45, older people find that they can retain their financial benefits by cohabiting if they are not married.⁷⁸

‘Respite from being single’ is the fifth type of living together. According to Strong, DeVault and Cohen, this is another popular form of cohabitation. This means that when some adults realise that they are growing old, and being caught up with age without getting

⁷⁵ Strong, et al., *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁷⁶ -----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 200.

⁷⁷ -----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁷⁸ -----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

married, and also pressurised by peers, they resort to cohabitation. This includes widows who know men are not ready to marry them. Because they cannot wait any longer, they cohabit as a recipe from being single, in order to avoid ridicule and humiliation of family members and friends. It also offers them a comfortable and a domestic living place.⁷⁹

The sixth type of cohabitation is known as ‘temporary alternative’ to marriage, which refers to the situation where two people live together, have sex together as though they are married couples when marriage date is postponed. In other words, it is where a man or woman offers an alternative, because the timing of a marriage has been postponed. Because they cannot wait any longer, they cohabit temporarily waiting for an opportune time to marry properly.⁸⁰

The seventh form of cohabitation, according to Strong, DeVault and Cohen, is ‘permanent alternative to marriage,’ which is for those who reject traditional marriage.⁸¹ This type of cohabitation involves, especially, those who come from broken homes and because of the bad treatment they have received from families, are not willing to recognise tradition.

DeGenova and Rice also noted five types of cohabitation. The first form is where people live together on ‘utilitarian arrangement’ as mentioned earlier.⁸²

The second type of cohabitation is the ‘intimate involvement’ with emotional commitment. This type of cohabitation includes those who love each other, want to have sex together, and want to be together in a monogamous relationship. Thus, to live together with one person at a time, while having a strong commitment to each other. Though they live together and are committed to each other, they do not consider themselves as married couples

⁷⁹ Strong, et al., *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁸⁰ -----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁸¹ -----, *Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

⁸² Mary Kay DeGenova & F. Philip Rice, *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 200.

because they want to wait and see what happens.⁸³ Hence, there is no plan in place which can lead them into marriage.

The third type of cohabitation, according to DeGenova and Rice, is a 'trial marriage' as mentioned earlier.⁸⁴

The fourth type of cohabitation is where a number of people move in or live together as a 'prelude to marriage' before they get married. Since they have already committed themselves to marriage, they do not see the reason why they should be part or separated in the mean time.⁸⁵

The fifth type of cohabitation is an 'alternative to marriage.' While some people cohabit as a prelude to marriage, those in the category of alternative to marriage are cohabiting as a substitute for marriage. This includes those who are married to someone else and separated, but not divorced. These types of people are receptive to the ideas of others and susceptible to fall in love with someone else. Also, this includes those who have been unhappily married and have become sceptical about the viability of legal marriage. Again, it is for those who have witnessed their friend's unhappy marriage and have concluded that legal marriage is not for them.⁸⁶ This shows the meaning and types of cohabitation, which has made the phenomenon a complex sexual relationship, which is practised by different people with different reasons in some parts of the world.

It means that there must have been some factors, which serve as grounds for promoting the practice. The causes of cohabitation can be attributed to many factors. According to Steinberg, some of the factors are economic necessity, which has to do with human needs, accommodation, food and clothing. Yet still, other factors are sexual desire, fear of divorce, lack of faith in marriage, escape from family homes, and compromise with a

⁸³ DeGenova et al., *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families*, 200.

⁸⁴ -----, *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families*, 200.

⁸⁵ -----, *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families*, 201.

⁸⁶ Lawrence Steinberg, *Adolescence* (New York: The McGraw Hill, 1999), 325 and 327.

partner who does not want to be married.⁸⁷ Generally, other scholars, such as Kunhiyop, Horton and Leslie, Narayan and Petesh, Christine Opong, Yaa Opong and Irene Odotei have attributed cohabitation to poverty and material deprivation. According to Kunhiyop poverty is the major cause of sexual problems in many African countries.⁸⁸ Thus the poor has no choice than to come to terms with the fact that because of poverty they have to live with someone who can provide their needs. Poverty, according to Horton and Leslie, is a condition affecting a significant number of people in ways undesirable. It is a social complex phenomenon, which needs to be understood in a broader context.⁸⁹

A survey report edited by Narayan and Petesh also revealed that living in poverty entails the state of material deprivation, some of which are lack of income, difficulty in meeting one's needs, lack of access to education or knowledge and resources, and skill.⁹⁰ According to the survey, 'rape or forced sex is common experience for girls because of poverty. There are also few reports of girls being given up into marriage to cover a family's debt' in some rural areas.⁹¹

Further research reports edited by Christine Opong, Yaa Opong and Irene Odotei, noted that women who usually migrate to many Ghanaian towns do so to escape rural poverty. A situation, which compels them to cohabit, and also leads them into other forms of sexual practices.⁹² According to these scholars, 'women who migrate to towns do not intend to return to constrictive rural settings.'⁹³ To a large extent, the economic stress compels many to fall in love as the last resort.⁹⁴ In Ghana, most of the time, those who travel to the urban

⁸⁷Steinberg, *Adolescence*, 328.

⁸⁸Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*(Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 136.

⁸⁹Paul B. Horton & Gerald R. Leslie, *The Sociology of Social Problems* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Educational Division, 1970), 4.

⁹⁰Deepa Narayan & Patt Petesh, translated, *Voices of the Poor from Many Lands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34.

⁹¹-----, translated, *Voices of the Poor from Many Land*, 38.

⁹²Christine Opong, Yaa P. A. Opong & Irene Odotei. (eds), *Sex and Gender in an Era of AIDS: Ghana at the Turn of the Millennium*. Accra, Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006), 47.

⁹³-----, (eds), *Sex and Gender in an Era of AIDS*, 47.

⁹⁴Steinberg, *Adolescence*, 328.

centres are engaged in odd jobs, such as hawking. According to Steve Tomah, a survey showed that most of the street hawkers in central Accra who were between 21 and 40 years become stranded in the urban centres.⁹⁵ Because of lack of accommodation, some live with those who can assist them with such facility. This leads some to be attracted to each other sexually. Lauer and Lauer also noted that those who live on the streets cannot afford any kind of housing. Since they are homeless, it causes them to experience more sexual practices, which compel some to cohabit.⁹⁶ The fact that cohabitation is an ethical phenomenon which involves sex, it makes marriage and the practice of cohabitation closely related that the distinction between them needs to be explored. Therefore, what the next topic seeks to do is to explore the difference between cohabitation and marriage.

2.3 The Difference between Marriage and Cohabitation

According to Emmanuel Asante, sex has very little place in the generality of the Ghanaian culture. Hence, in most African societies idioms are used to describe sexual organs. Also, sexuality remains an issue rarely discussed publicly. He cited John Agbeti that ‘the mating which most people tell about in the world is about sex. This is so because from time immemorial sex has been shrouded in society.’⁹⁷ For several years the subject of sex was a taboo, dealt with only obliquely, and sanctioned only within the institution of marriage.⁹⁸ However, currently, sex has lost its oblique reference, and now publicly discussed within marriage, as well as outside marriage.

Although sex is also discussed outside marriage, Ansah noted that sex in marriage has sex taboo regulations, therefore, have as their general aim the strengthening of the sanctity of

⁹⁵Steve Tomah, *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Accra: Department of Sociology, University of Ghana Research and Publication Unit. 2009), 194.

⁹⁶Robert H. Lauer & Jeanette C. Lauer, *Social Problems and the Quality of Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 2006), 171.

⁹⁷Emmanuel Asante, *Stewardship* (Kumasi: Wilas Press Limited, 1999), 130.

⁹⁸Gerhad Gollwitzer, *Sex Eros* (New York: Mertal Love, The Swedenborg Foundation Inc. 1982), 15.

sex, teaching and safeguarding the proper uses of sex. This is why the violation of these rules are among the most detestable offences. Sex taboos form a code of sexual behaviour. For instance, it is a taboo for a girl to become pregnant before her puberty rite has been performed. This taboo is to deter physically mature girls from taking upon themselves the responsibility of motherhood for which they are not prepared.⁹⁹ Chastity before marriage is highly treasured. They also ensure that their sexual lives are intact or not damaged. In that regard, severe punishment is meted out to those who break the sexual taboos before the age of puberty.¹⁰⁰

According to Gyekye, marriage is a basic institution in every human society, including Ghana. In a larger context, women in African societies want and hope to be married by men. An unmarried woman is considered to be an anomaly.¹⁰¹ In that regard, for the African people, to do the right thing is primarily a moral obligation. Marriage is very important for many African tribes that, the youth who are not married are not allowed to take part in decision making, among the elders of some communities.¹⁰² This happens because in every home and community, marriage is regarded as societal norms handed down from generation to generation. Awolalu held the view that, ‘Africans tenaciously hold the belief that moral values are based upon the recognition of the divine will.’¹⁰³ This agrees with Opoku’s assertion that marriage is seen as divine, therefore, the morality of sex flows from God.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, according to Mbiti, the fact that marriage is seen as a gift from God; it is also an honour given to the parents, especially, when the bride-price is paid. This is done to authenticate the marriage in order to acknowledge the care taken to raise their daughters, and

⁹⁹John K. Ansah, *Taboos in Ghana: The Ethical Wisdom of our Fathers* (Neitetal: Stayler Verlag, Wort Werk, 1988), 262 -3.

¹⁰⁰T. N. O. Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 1987), 113.

¹⁰¹Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 78.

¹⁰²Evelyn Yaa Denteh, ‘The Nchumuru Marriage Rite: A Case Study of the Chonki Clan,’ M. Phil. Thesis. (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2011), 51.

¹⁰³J. Omosade Awolalu, “Sin and Its Removal in Traditional Religion.” Reviewed work(s): Source: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 44. No. 2 (Jun. 1976): 278. Published by: Oxford University Press. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1462340>. [accessed: 26 December 2011].

¹⁰⁴Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Legon: FEP International Private Limited, 1977), 153.

thank them for the good training. This, consequently, gives the right to couples to protect their marriages.¹⁰⁵

There are numerous ways of contracting marriage among the various ethnic groups in Ghana. Customary marriage among ethnic groups in Ghana is very significant where moral values and advice are given to the married couples, which reminds couples who are already married.¹⁰⁶ It is something, which is not done in cohabitation. This also reminds those who are already in marriage of their responsibilities, and how to develop their relationships.

Among some Ghanaian tribes, parents arrange marriages for their adult children. This is done when a respectable, hard working, and friendly young girl is spotted by an elder of the man's family. While negotiation is ongoing, the man and the woman should not be seen together at 'secret' corners. No intimacy is allowed till all the necessary rites have been performed. This is to prevent the temptation of premarital sex, which may later develop into teenage pregnancy.¹⁰⁷

According to Mbiti, while intermediaries are used in some cases, for instance to avoid blood relations, some young people themselves make their own choice and afterwards inform their parents about it. Then, the parents and relatives begin the betrothal and marriage negotiations. In the interim, both families investigate each other to see if there are any impediments to the union of the young man and woman, or the two families. Their investigation may cover the moral conduct of the individuals involved and their family. This includes their medical history, religious affiliations, and possible negative practices, such as witchcraft, sorcery and the nature of inter-family relationship between the two.¹⁰⁸ This marriage procedure can be found among the many ethnic groups in Ghana, especially, among the Ewes and Akans.

¹⁰⁵John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 1989), 137.

¹⁰⁶Hayford Ebenezer K. Caesar, *Religious and Moral Education* (Tema: Kanezer Publications, 2001), 263.

¹⁰⁷Denteh, 'The Nchumuru Marriage Rite,' 51.

¹⁰⁸Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 131.

According to Hayford Caesar, to recognise any sexual union as marriage among Ghanaians, the ceremony of ‘knocking,’ is the first ritual, though not part of the bride-price. Knocking as a ritual among Ghanaians is a simple ritual of inquiry, which is done by presenting one or two bottle(s) of ‘schnapps’ or ‘akpeteshie,’ to a lady’s family when a young man wants to marry the lady, which varies from society to society. This is done to ascertain that the woman is single, and her parents are receptive to a proposal. The second part which is the customary marriage rites, popularly known as ‘engagement’ is the presentation of gifts to the family of the woman to engage her formally.¹⁰⁹ Some of these gifts include a trunk full of the woman’s clothing, assorted drinks, bag for the woman, cloth for the father and mother in laws, and so forth. This also depends on the custom of the people, which varies from one society to another. The traditional marriage itself as the third part is an elaborate one with gifts and merry-making, which involves the wider community, is now lost.¹¹⁰ The ceremony makes it clear to everybody that the young man is really serious in his love and does all to win her for marriage, which also announced to the entire community that the woman is married.¹¹¹ According to Mbiti, this type of marriage is ‘practised all over Africa, though in varying degrees.’ It is done to acknowledge the care taken by parents to raise their daughters and thank them for the good training.¹¹²

In marriage, according to Mbiti, a lady’s virginity is what accorded a considerable prestige to her parents. Examples of these can be found in some African cultures where ‘stains of virginity are the greatest credit to the mother and family of the bride,’ after the customary marriage rites are performed.¹¹³ However, according to Haselbarth, its meaning is

¹⁰⁹ Caesar, *Religious and Moral Education*, 263-4.

¹¹⁰ -----, *Religious and Moral Education*, 263-4.

¹¹¹ Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in African Context*, 81.

¹¹² Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 137.

¹¹³ -----, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 137.

lost and has become a thing of the past because of the shame and ridicule which accompany with it.¹¹⁴

After marriage rites are performed, the couples are seen as ambassadors of the families, and if the marriage fails, the families have failed.¹¹⁵ They ensure that marriage does not involve close blood relations, a situation which sometimes occurs among cohabiters. Again, Mbiti noted that in traditional societies marriage is not allowed between close relations.¹¹⁶

To believe that there is such a thing as sexual relationship that is consistent with marriage, also implies that there can be sexual relationship that is inconsistent with marriage, such as cohabitation.¹¹⁷ Though cohabitation as a phenomenon is popularly practised, it seems to be antisocial among Africans. It is antisocial because African society disapproves of sexual practices, which are not brought to the level of marriage. This means that when people move into sexual relationship that is inconsistent with marriage, it is considered to be immoral.¹¹⁸

According to Peter Sarpong, in most Ghanaian communities, to marry each other, the two partners sometimes try to know each other's character, likes and dislikes, temperament and qualities.¹¹⁹ This practice can be found among both prospective married couples and cohabiters where there is the possibility of sexual practice. Cohabitation and marriage are sexual relationships, which are closely related to each other and look similar. Though the two sexual unions are similar, they are not the same. It is in the light of this that the morality of sex and the phenomenon of cohabitation are seen through the prism of marriage. While cohabitation is to live together and have a sexual relationship without being married, marriage is the relationship between two people who are legitimately married. Simply put,

¹¹⁴Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in African Context*, 82.

¹¹⁵Mbiti, *Africa Religions and Philosophy*, 136.

¹¹⁶-----, *Africa Religions and Philosophy*, 134.

¹¹⁷Mackinnon, *Ethics*, 203.

¹¹⁸Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Legon: FEP International Private Limited, 1977), 152.

¹¹⁹Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspect of Ghanaian Culture* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 78.

legitimate marriage means that the people are legally and acceptably married to each other, according to their custom and tradition. Additionally, legitimate marriage is the state in which men and women can live together in sexual relationship with the approval of their social group, particularly, the families.¹²⁰ Marriage, according to Quarcopome, is highly regarded among Africans, which is usually taken care of by the elders of the family after puberty.¹²¹ Because the elders take keen interest in marriages, they try to ensure that cohabitation is avoided among young people.

Nukunya held the view that cohabitation is not encouraged among Ghanaians. He argued that the performance of marriage rites is very important among Ghanaians, and that marriage as a sexual union has a communal recognition between families, and not individuals as it is in the case of cohabitation.¹²² Hence, Quarcoopome noted that marriage is regarded as societal norms handed down from generation to generation, and is a social rather than an individual affair among the people of West Africa. Also, chastity before marriage is highly treasured, and the lineages of the contracting parties are greatly interested.¹²³ Comparatively, cohabitation involves only the individuals, which is the opposite of the social nature of marriage.

Cohabitation, according to Nukunya, is not the same as marriage. According to him, marriage is where families are involved to give their seal of approval, and also celebrate it as a community.¹²⁴ Comparatively, cohabitation is about two people who are in love, live together and have sex together without the performance of marriage rites. According to Gyekye, marriage involves the kin of both families. According to him, marriage is not merely an affair between two individuals who have fallen in love and plan to spend the rest of their

¹²⁰Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 133.

¹²¹Quarcopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 113.

¹²²G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*(Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2003), 42.

¹²³Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 121.

¹²⁴Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, 42.

lives together. It is a matter in which the lineage groups of both the man and the woman are deeply interested.¹²⁵ The families take keen interest in the relationship as they wish the success of the marriage, and also give their seal of approval.¹²⁶ Thus, the difference is that, while family members are witnesses to the relationship and approve of a marriage, cohabitation is not witnessed and approved by family members. However, all are sexual relationships between two persons. According to Opoku, in African cultures the high moral principles of permissibility of sex is grounded in only marriage. It is best understood that if marriage is a sexual moral act, then, cohabitation must also be a sexual moral act. The dichotomy between the two sexual acts is the rightness or wrongness, and the degree to which it becomes acceptable or unacceptable. Hence, in Ghanaian tribes sex is considered to be a moral act, which becomes immoral if it is not done in a proper and acceptable way. Therefore, sexual union outside marriage, such as cohabitation is unacceptable phenomenon among them, as indicated in chapter one.¹²⁷

The discussion above has informed our thought to seek to understand some of the phenomenon of cohabitation in Ghanaian society.

2.4 The Phenomenon of Cohabitation among Ghanaians

Cohabitation is a common phenomenon which means to live together and have a sexual relationship without being married. The ideas about what cohabitation is as discussed under the previous topics provide a suitable background for an exploration of the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians. According to Gyekye, there is the claim that every human being 'has moral overtones grounded as it is in the conviction that there must be something intrinsically valuable in God.'¹²⁸ This means that human beings, especially Africans have a

¹²⁵Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 78.

¹²⁶Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 133.

¹²⁷Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 152.

¹²⁸Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 150.

sense of the Supreme Being, therefore, have his moral nature in their psyche, as much as sexual matters are concerned. Also, according to Ansah, it is believed that, sex is sacred and divine, which has to be used only in marriage for procreation, which everyone has the right to, and convinced that it is a mysterious act, but how to use it is the issue. These ideas underlie the attitude of the traditional Ghanaian towards sex. Because sex is sacred, it is expected that it is properly used.¹²⁹ But cohabitation as a phenomenon where people move into sexual relationships, without bringing it to the level of marriage is also practised alongside marriage among Ghanaians, which makes the subject a complex one. This is because among some Ghanaian tribes, when people live together as married couples and the man died, the woman is denied the right to inherit the property by the man's family.

This makes the legality of marriage and cohabitation confusing, thus whether cohabitation is legal or illegal. As far as the legality of sexual union in Ghana is concerned; the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana Chapter Five, Article 22 contains three clauses which are clause 1, 2 and 3. Clause 1 states that a spouse shall not be deprived of a reasonable provision out of the estate of a spouse whether or not the spouse died having made a will. Clause 2 says parliament shall, as soon as practicable after the coming into force of this Constitution, enact legislation regulating the property rights of spouses. Clause 3 says with a view to achieving the full realisation of the rights referred to in clause 2 of this article, (a) spouses shall have equal access to property jointly acquired during marriage; (b) assets which are jointly acquired during marriage shall be distributed equitably between the spouses upon dissolution of the marriage.¹³⁰ This shows that those who are married are covered by this Article 22 clause 1, 2 and 3.

¹²⁹ John K. Ansah, *Taboos in Ghana: The Ethical Wisdom of our Fathers* (Neitetal: Stayler Verlag, Wort Werk., 1988), 262.

¹³⁰ Assembly Press. Ministry of Justice/Allshore Co., *1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom, and Representation of the People*(Accra: Assembly Press. Ministry of Justice/Allshore Co., 2005), 23.

However, as mentioned earlier, according to the *Ghana News* in particular, there are two bills before the national legislature since 2012, which are ‘Property Rites of Spouses Bill’ and ‘Intestate Succession Bill.’ The aim of these bills is ‘to ensure that men who failed to formalise their relationships with their companions, will soon see their properties shared with such women.’ This will be done ‘even if they failed to perform the necessary marriage rites.’¹³¹ These bills are to cover those who move into sexual relationships without the performance of marriage rites, which have been brought before parliament.

Why these bills? The bills are actually an attempt to institutionalise cohabitation in Ghana. Because these bills in the near future, may give right to people to move into sexual relationships, not actually bringing them to the level of marriage by performing the due customer rites. However, answering Joy News evening broadcast, Kofi Amartey indicated that when the parliament committee responsible for the bills met, cohabitation has been rejected to be protected by these bills. According to him, cohabiters are rather advised to regularise their marriages to enable them to be covered by Article 22 clause 1, 2 and 3.¹³² This means that cohabitation is not encouraged among Ghanaians.

The fact that this phenomenon is closely related to marriage, and at times mistaken for marriage, it is difficult to understand due to its popularity. Now, to explore the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians, there is the need that the phenomenon is better understood in contrast to and within the context of marriage.

According to Quarcopome, when children are coming up of age, puberty rites are performed to initiate them into adulthood. Unless this rite is performed a young man is not considered as an adult, and a young lady may also not be considered ready to get a husband. ‘They ensure that their sexual lives are intact.’¹³³ This means that the elders make sure the

¹³¹ Ghana News, *Ghana to Recognise Cohabitation as Marriage*, <http://www.womec.org> and <http://www.myjoyonline.com> Published 2/8/2012. [accessed: 17 November 2014].

¹³² Kofi Amartey, interview conducted by Ayisha Ibrahim on Joy News. 8pm Saturday 16 May 2015.

¹³³ T. N. O. Quarcopome, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 1987), 113.

youth live a chaste life until they are ready for marriage. However, when people move into sexual relationships without the performance of the rites, especially, those ascribed to marriage; then, they are said to be cohabiting.

Within the African society the only customarily sanctioned sexual relationship is that which occurs within marriage. However, in contemporary times, sexual relationships and living together is that which occurs without the performance of customary rites. How cohabitation occurs among Ghanaians is that some women do not wait for the man to provide a trunk full of the woman's clothing, as it is done among many Ghanaian tribes, before they join the man. This type of cohabitation is allowed after a 'knocking,' which means *vɔfofo* among the Ewes, or *ɔpon-akyi bɔ* among the Akans, has been performed.¹³⁴ Because of the passion for sex, the man and woman come to live together as husband and wife. By so doing, they defy cultural conventions of marriage by living together without being married. Though not accepted as marriage, it is accommodated and allowed even with conditions that the right rituals should be performed later. This is similar to Mbiti's assertion that traditionally, 'some families allow the boy to take the girl until a child is born,' then the marriage rites are performed.¹³⁵

As mentioned earlier, according to Peter Sarpong, in most Ghanaian communities, the two partners also come to know each other's character, likes and dislikes, and qualities.¹³⁶ When the woman's parents, especially the mother, get to know about the relationship, though the marriage rituals are not yet performed, she begins to call the young man her 'son-in-law.' When the young man and the woman involved in sexual activities, especially when they elope, the families wait until any eventuality when the man would be required to perform the rites in addition to other fines. For instance, among the Ellebelle

¹³⁴Caesar, *Religious and Moral Education*, 131.

¹³⁵Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 135.

¹³⁶Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, 78.

Nzema, friendship is a relationship between a man and his regular sex partner, which later leads to marriage. Within this period of cohabitation, pregnancy should not result. If it does, the father alleges that 'you have broken my fence.' If the woman dies during the time of such a relationship, the corpse is not buried until the traditional requisite rites are performed.¹³⁷

Another reality of cohabitation is that union as living together as husband and wife, which follows *Fugbefadede* among the Ewes, or *Ye funu nkaibɔ* among the Akans. This happens due to unchaste life on the part of the couples when they engage in premarital sex. Traditionally, it is against the custom of the people, especially among the Ewes and Akans. Mostly, it happens when the young woman is still living with the parents. In this situation, the man is asked to take care of the woman till she gives birth to the child. While cohabitation seems not to be a recognised phenomenon among Ghanaian tribes, to many young adults it is the common practice of finding a compatible husband and wife, and to test fertility and potency. This shows how children in sexual relationships have become the determinant of the performance of marriage rites. According to Ganusah, 'children are highly valued, not only in African society, but in many cultures throughout the world.'¹³⁸

Similarly, some young adults cohabit, but they do not live in the same community together with their partners. While the man resides in another community, the woman also lives in a distant community, however, they cohabit. The woman visits the man and lives with him, sometimes for some number of days and returns to her place of residence or village. The woman cooks and washes for the man, and also does other household chores. Since the focus in some of these relationships is a child, many men make sure the woman is pregnant before

¹³⁷ Opong, et al. (eds.), *Sex and Gender in an Era of AIDS*, 95.

¹³⁸ Rebecca Y. Ganusah, 'Informed Choices on Marriage, Childlessness and Reproductive Technologies: An African Christian Theological and Ethical Reflection.' *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*. New Series Vol. 3 (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2008), 35.

the proper marriage is done.¹³⁹ However, according to Opong, Opong and Odotei, it later leads some to marriage, even without a child, when they have the relationship regularised.¹⁴⁰

In some cases, when a widow is not inherited by the dead husband's relative, she cohabits as a 'recipe from being single.'¹⁴¹ For many, recipe from being single serves as a comfortable alternative to marriage, which is very common among women who accept proposal from men who come forward to take care of them. The woman is not sure if they would marry, therefore, does not involve families.

Though all of these sexual relationships are not accepted as marriage, it depends partially on the level of social attachment society has given to them. Social attachment, economic support and emotional support reduce stress and cohabiters feel as if they were married. Among some cohabiters the negative effect of cohabitation is felt if social attachment and economic support do not exist. This is similar to DeGenova and Rice's assertion that the effect of cohabitation among Americans depends partially on the level of social attachment in the relationship.¹⁴²

Finally, though cohabitation as a phenomenon seems to be popular in Ghanaian society, this sexual practice is not encouraged among Ghanaians.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter explains some human sexual behaviour in sexual ethics, and the nature of cohabitation that are pertinent for assessing the morality of cohabitation. We have attempted in the chapter to demonstrate that there are myriad of forms of cohabitation. We also realised that there are many forms of the practice of cohabitation as a phenomenon among Ghanaians. The study indentifies that some families wait for eventualities when the

¹³⁹The Mirror, *The Room-mate Love Affair*. No. 3112. (September 5 – 11 2014), 31.

¹⁴⁰Opong, et al., (eds), *Sex and Gender in an Era of AIDS*, 94.

¹⁴¹Strong, et al., *The Marriage and Family Experience*, 222.

¹⁴²DeGenova et al., *Intimate Relationships, Marriage and Families*, 202.

man would be asked to pay fines, and also perform the marriage rites in case the woman has died, before the corpse is buried. It is worth noting that while sex within marriage is considered as a moral issue, cohabitation is also considered a moral issue. It was indicated that though cohabitation and marriage are sexual relationships, they are not the same.

This informs us to explore what Christian teachings also say about cohabitation and marriage. Therefore, the next chapter focuses on Christian teaching on sexual ethics, the 'Family life' teaching of the GEC, and the moral choice people make and its effect.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS, THE GEC AND COHABITATION

3.1 Introduction

Cohabitation remains a phenomenon that poses challenges to Christian tradition and social relationships. Because it is the tradition of the church to address immorality and all manner of sexual ethical issues, such as cohabitation, evangelical churches based their teachings on Christian deontological principles, which are largely based on the Bible. This chapter looks at cohabitation in the light of Christian ethical teachings on sexual behaviour. In addition, the chapter considers Christian ethics and the reality of cohabitation, which poses challenge to people when they are faced with difficult challenges, the choices that are made, and the responsibility of those choices.

3.2 Christian Ethical Teaching on Sexual Behaviour

Ethics is the study of the concepts involved in reasoning about what is good, right, obligation, and other cognate terms in decision-making.¹⁴³ To the Christian, according to Georgia Harkness, this moral value can be acquired by a systematic study of the way of life exemplified and taught by Jesus, applied to the manifold problems and decisions of human existence.¹⁴⁴ To be able to access this knowledge, Fedler indicated that there are four recognised sources of Christian guidance or wisdom in the Christian traditions, which are the Bible, tradition, experience, and reason.¹⁴⁵ According to Fedler, the Bible is the source of Christian teachings as it unites Christians and anyone who calls himself or herself a

¹⁴³Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43. in Agnes Quansah, *A Theological and Ethical Study of Loud Christian Prayer on the University of Ghana Campus*. M. Phil Thesis (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2013), 63.

¹⁴⁴Georgia Harkness, *Christian Ethics*, <http://www.religion-online.org> [accessed on 17 February 2014].

¹⁴⁵Kyle D. Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2006), 51.

Christian.¹⁴⁶ Also, the Bible is the moral life story of the people of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the early Christian church. It is through the stories of God's dealings with the Jews and early Christians that we come to know who God is and what God wills.¹⁴⁷ However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of the Bible is when Christians apply the words it contains, which is able to transform their moral life in order to live a life of chastity.

Since Christians are to apply the word the Bible contains, sexual relationship lies at the heart of Jesus. According to Stassen and Gushee, the creation story lies at the heart of Jesus' approach to marriage. Jesus first said when he had an encounter with the Pharisees when they seek to tempt him publicly that, 'God made them male and female.'¹⁴⁸ Marriage is the joyful companionship of male and female in a one-flesh union. According to the scholars, God drew woman from the very body of man and brought her to him, eliciting from him a cry of joyful satisfaction. 'This is at last a bone of my bones.' Those who have enjoyed marriage at its peak know that this one-flesh union is one of the most profound of God's gracious gifts to human beings.¹⁴⁹ It also means that marriage is a covenant relationship intended to be faithful and permanent. God intends marriage to be permanent. It lasts until one spouse dies, and what God has joined together no one should separate.¹⁵⁰ This agrees with Ganusah that 'marriage institution is seen as a divine one, instituted by God himself,' therefore, rules, such as, Christians are to have no part in sexual immorality should be a first resort.¹⁵¹ Geisler argues that Christians do not find their ethical duties in the standard of Christians, but in the standard for Christians, which is the Bible.¹⁵² Hence, Kunhiyop also noted that Christian

¹⁴⁶Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 52.

¹⁴⁷ -----, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 52.

¹⁴⁸Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 2003), 275.

¹⁴⁹ -----, *Kingdom Ethics*, 275.

¹⁵⁰ -----, *Kingdom Ethics*, 275.

¹⁵¹ Rebecca Y. Ganusah, 'Informed Choices on Marriage, Childlessness and Reproductive Technologies: An African Christian Theological and Ethical Reflection.' *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*. New Series Vol. 3. (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2008), 33.

¹⁵² Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options* (Michigan: Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2010), 16 – 17.

teaching on sexual ethics makes it clear that sexual relationships should only be pursued within the bonds of marriage as God's institution. It is only in this relationship that a man and a woman can truly have intimate sexual relationship with each other in the same way that Adam 'knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain.'¹⁵³ This first couple set the paradigm for marriage and sexuality. Again, according to Kunhiyop, since sexual intercourse is an important and God-ordained aspect of marriage, it is the primary and normal means of procreation, as well as an expression of love. It is also a means of satisfying sexual desire and source of mutual pleasure for a man and woman. However, according to the scholar, the emphasis on pleasure does not mean that every type of sexual activity that gives someone pleasure is legitimate. This is because sexual intercourse takes place in varieties of ways, such as in premarital sex (fornication or cohabitation), rape, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, and so forth.¹⁵⁴

Premarital sex is a sexual practice which normally takes place between two opposite sexes before marriage. It is a feeling that two people may have for one another involving sex. Premarital sex and cohabitation are closely related for the fact that both are sexual activities, which take place between people who move into sexual relationships prior to marriage, and without being married. According to Feinberg and Feinberg, premarital sex is personal gratification without any thought for the other person and a powerful destroyer of relationships. According to them, premarital sex brings confusion and tears down the climate of respect, trust, and credibility so essential for solid marriages and secure children.¹⁵⁵ According to these scholars, there are three views on premarital sex, which are 'natural impulse view,' 'affection view,' and 'abstinence view.' To them, the natural and affection views are closely related, while the abstinence view is clearly distinct from the two.

¹⁵³ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 270.

¹⁵⁴ -----, *African Christian Ethics*, 270.

¹⁵⁵ John Feinberg & Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Illinois: Crossway Books. A Division of Good News Publishers, 1993), 22.

According to the ‘natural impulse view,’ proponents argued that since sex is a natural impulse or instinct, it ought to be followed without limiting it to, even, one partner. They also hold the view that just as good food is served in variety of settings, so one can enjoy casual sex without deep feeling of love.¹⁵⁶

Proponents of the ‘affection view’ argued that one is expected to have a number of sexual partners during one’s lifetime. Sexual freedom is praised, and it is a feeling that two people may have for one another for a night, for a year or for a lifetime.¹⁵⁷ They go together, live together, and then, if things work out, ratify their relationship by marriage. These practices go against the concept of Christian chastity and attitude toward legitimate marriage, because where sex is used as a means of physical pleasure because two people think they are in love, then, it becomes an unchaste life.

The ‘abstinence view’ has often been justified from Scripture and the examples of personal and social behaviour that are thought to be ordained therein. Not all, however, who advocate this position do so on the basis of divine revelation. There are those who justify the conservative view on the basis of a utilitarian interest in the maximization of human happiness. It is argued that the sex act involves the whole person, bonding physically and psychologically two individuals in a unique way. Therefore, while sex may bring gratification to two uncommitted partners, in at least some cases that pleasure is trivial and fleeting.¹⁵⁸

Some people would like to stay away from sexual immorality, but unfortunately fall victim to rape. According to Mackinnon, ‘physically forcing a person to engage in sexual intercourse against his or her will is coercion, which is rape.’¹⁵⁹ The question is: should rape be considered sexually immoral? According to Kunhiyop, some Christians would argue that a girl who is raped must marry the rapist. This argument is also rooted in the belief that sex is

¹⁵⁶Feinberg, et al., *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 24.

¹⁵⁷-----, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 24.

¹⁵⁸-----, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 28.

¹⁵⁹Barbara Mackinnon, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 5th ed. (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 202.

the decisive factor in determining when a marriage actually takes place. However, he noted that it is important to recognise that sexual relations did not automatically result in a marriage. For instance, according to Kunhiyop, if a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins (Exodus 22: 16 – 17).¹⁶⁰ This biblical example does not automatically result in a marriage.

There are some sexual relationships, such as prostitution, which do not serve as marriage. Prostitute refers to any woman, married or single, who practices unlawful sexual indulgence, whether for lust or monetary gain. According to Kunhiyop, they sometimes serve as temporary wives. This form of relationship provides sex and perform household chores such as cooking, washing and cleaning for a fixed period, say, two or three months. At the end of this time, they move on to serve another man.¹⁶¹

Nevertheless, Christian teaching on sex condemns prostitution because the woman's value as an individual is minimised. They become sex objects to be traded as commodities.¹⁶² According to Feinberg and Feinberg, the sex act does not have a certain meaning to one partner and something else to the other. It is not something we give meaning to by our choice or circumstances. Rather, it is already filled with meaning, and we disregard this to our own harm.¹⁶³ Thus, Christian teaching on sex encourages the morality of sex only within marriage.

Another form of the morality of sexual relationship, which arouses considerable interest, is homosexuality. Homosexuality involves sexual attraction to those of the same sex.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, simply put, homosexuality is to have a preference for sexual relations with

¹⁶⁰ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 276.

¹⁶¹ -----, *African Christian Ethics*, 284.

¹⁶² -----, *African Christian Ethics*, 289.

¹⁶³ Feinberg & Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 6.

¹⁶⁴ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 303.

and feel attracted to persons of the same sex. Lesbianism is the female side of homosexuality. Another name for homosexuality is 'sodomy.' Sodomy is a sexual act in which a man puts his sex organ into someone's anus, especially that of another man. This practice is prohibited in Scripture where the penalty for homosexual acts is death (Leviticus 18: 22; Deuteronomy 20: 13). According to Kunhiyop, Christians should never compromise their basic submission to the teaching of Scripture. As Helmut Thielicke puts it, 'Homosexuality cannot be put on the same level with the normal created order of the sexes.' Therefore, we should not naively derive an 'ought' from an 'is,' and so we cannot say that the fact that homosexuality exists means that it ought to be accepted.¹⁶⁵

Robin Gill cited Aquinas's view of procreation as an essential function of all occasions of sex intercourse has proved especially significant.¹⁶⁶ Again, Aquinas did not deny the fact that sex is also for pleasure, especially in marriage, however the most essential part of it is for procreation.¹⁶⁷

Lewis posited that because some sexual practices are immoral, the Christian should either marry, with complete faithfulness to his or her partner, or else total abstinence. To him, it is recognized that sex is both natural and enjoyable, but it should never be used merely for physical gratification. The limitation of sex to marriage is necessary for the forming and maintaining of family units. The restriction of sex to marriage will encourage people to get married and stay married. The prohibition of sex outside of marriage will tend to strengthen marriages.¹⁶⁸ In this regard, we want to know what the GEC, as a Christian church has on ethical teaching on sexual family life as taught within the GEC.

¹⁶⁵ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 309-310.

¹⁶⁶ Robin Gill, *A Textbook of Christian Ethics* (New York: A Continuum imprint, 1995), 482.

¹⁶⁷ -----, *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*, 493.

¹⁶⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 89.

3.3 The GEC's Ethical Teachings on Sexual Relationships

As mentioned earlier, the GEC is an evangelical church whose duty is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to teach ethical principles of morality, which are based on the teachings of the Bible to her members. This church has about eight hundred and nineteen (819) branches within all the regions of Ghana, and few international branches at the time of this study. It currently has about two hundred and sixty-five (265) pastors in active service, and a considerable number of presbyters during the time of this research.¹⁶⁹

The GEC's ethical teachings on the permissibility of sexual intercourse only within marriage found in its 'Family life' teaching are not different from the teachings of other evangelical churches in Ghana. The church's 'Family life' and marriage counselling teachings are taught at the church's seminary called the Global Theological Seminary (GTS) largely reflect the views of the GEC on the morality of sex and sexual relationships. Pastors are also encouraged to prepare their own lessons from related literature to augment what has been taught at the GTS.

According to 'The Christian and Culture,' literature produced by the BSPF of the GEC, when a man and a woman are joined together in marriage, the families involved are inevitably joined together in relation to the marriage.¹⁷⁰ That is why the two families must consent to the marriage and be happy with it. Hence, the church teaches and encourages that the prospective spouses should make sure that the families put their seal of approval to enhance the marriage. According to this teaching, customary marriage rite among Ghanaians is very important, and that the families take keen interest in it, though there are changing attitude toward marriage among the youth. It indicates that customary marriage includes 'knocking' and 'engagement' rituals.¹⁷¹ Because the church encourages customary marriage,

¹⁶⁹ Global Evangelical Press, *Global Evangelical Church 2015 Calendar*(Accra: Global Evangelical Press, 2015), 54.

¹⁷⁰SonLife Printing Press and Services, E. P. Church of Ghana. *The Christian and Culture*, 15 – 22.

¹⁷¹-----, E. P. Church of Ghana. *The Christian and Culture*, 21-22.

it maintains that formal and legal marriage under customary law is recognised.¹⁷²The GEC, therefore, accepts customary marriage and often insists that it should be performed before church blessing. The reason is that, the church acknowledges that marriage is purely a social contract, which involves families, and unless this is fulfilled the marriage may suffer. The church, therefore, sees to it that it is done properly in a way that brings honour to the families involved. It is also because when a man and a woman are join together in marriage, the families involve are inevitably joined together in relation to the marriage.¹⁷³ The GEC believes that the performance of customary marriage is very important. Hence, the church encourages members to uphold Ghanaian culture to show their identity. This shows that marriage is of crucial importance to the GEC because the church is made up of family units, and marriage is the means by which families are begun. If marriages are properly organised according to God's plans and purposes, it will translate into the laying of good foundations for the church and families. And when those families come together as a church, the foundations of that church will be strong, and all aspects of life in the church will be organised. According to the GEC, society depends on the stability of the home for the future generation of each society.

According to the Marriage and Family Life of the GEC, Scripture abhors cohabitation because it falls under the teaching of sexual sin, such as fornication and adultery. The church's view is similar to that of Emil Brunner. In his very illuminating discussion, Brunner indicated that, 'marriage does not consist in the mere fact that two persons feel that they are bound to each other in love. Marriage only exists where the divine order of marriage is recognised.'¹⁷⁴ Hence, the GEC tries to instil into its members healthy attitude of sane approach to marriage, which is the foundation to be laid for a stable family and society.

¹⁷²Global Evangelical Press, 2008 *Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 126.

¹⁷³SonLife Printing Press and Services, E. P. Church of Ghana. *The Christian and Culture*, 15 – 22.

¹⁷⁴Clinton E. Garder, *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics* (ed.), (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 229.

Regarding Christian marriage, it is the belief of the church that the Bible's books were inspired by God, and therefore, grounded its teachings in it. Thus the church teaches that the Bible is the major and only source of knowledge of what is right and wrong, as far as Christianity is concerned. Since cohabitation as a phenomenon has become the concern of the GEC, this church wishes that members are customarily married, and also have their marriages blessed by the church.

A formal and legal marriage under customary law is recognised by the GEC as indicated earlier. If contracted before admission to the church, the church encourages that it should be blessed, and only when the couples desire such blessing. The GEC encourages new comers that illicit marriage must be dissolved completely before admission to the church.¹⁷⁵ Members are taught to understand the types of marriages recognised by the GEC. As indicated earlier, the church recognises two main forms of marriage, which are: marriage under customary law, and statutory marriage under the Ordinance (Cap 127). Under the marriage ordinance are: marriage by a registrar of marriages (Court wedding); marriage by marriage officer (Church wedding); and marriage by special license from the registrar general after it has been registered for twenty-one days.¹⁷⁶ Marriage by registrar of marriages includes PNDC Law 111 and any amendment made to it. Also, customary marriage must be registered with the Registrar of Marriages in the district. This agrees with Evelyn Denteh.¹⁷⁷

The formal customary marriage (engagement) preceding church blessing shall be intimated to the session, but the minister can perform the marriage ceremony only if no satisfactory objection against the marriage is lodged after the publication of banns. In the interest of the parties concerned, marriage should avoid unnecessary expense and

¹⁷⁵Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 126.

¹⁷⁶Ghana Publishing Corporation, *Marriage (Gold Coast) An Ordinance for Regulating the Law of Marriage* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1884), 410 – 435.

¹⁷⁷Evelyn Yaa Denteh, *The Nchumuru Marriage Rite: A Case Study of the Chonki Clan*. M. Phil. Thesis (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, 2011), 52.

extravagance.¹⁷⁸ Hence, the GEC embarked on teachings about sexual relationships and marriage known as ‘Family life’ teaching in the church. The GEC holds that members cannot commit sexual sin with their physical bodies without damaging their souls; therefore, all kinds of sexual immorality are to be abhorred. Hence, the church teaches that members should run from sexual sin, because no other sin clearly affects the body as this one does.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, sexual immorality is a sin against one’s own body, because God knows how sexual immorality can destroy, and therefore no one should underestimate its power to destroy families, churches and communities.¹⁸⁰

The GEC believes and teaches that it is good to marry in order to avoid the sin of sexual immorality, and prostitution. It is because sexual temptations are difficult to withstand, hence marriage provides God’s way to satisfy these natural sexual desires against temptation.¹⁸¹ In that regard, married couples have the responsibility to care for each other; therefore, husbands and wives should not withhold themselves sexually from one another, but to fulfil each other’s needs and desires.¹⁸² The GEC emphasises sexual relationship as a personal partnership, because the Bible sets very high standards for sharing of life of married couples. For example, sharing of one another’s body during sexual relationships; sharing of two minds by reasoning together; and sharing of spiritual fellowship need to be highly considered. Thus, in marriage, their bodies do not belong to themselves but to their partners.¹⁸³

Sex in marriage as a topic is treated during premarital counselling session as a God-given characteristic of man and woman, and that it is holy and pure only within marriage. Sexual union consummate the marriage, and adultery severs the union. Sexual union is not

¹⁷⁸Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 126.

¹⁷⁹Viertel et al., *Marriage and Family Life*, 67.

¹⁸⁰-----, *Marriage and Family Life*, 178.

¹⁸¹-----, *Marriage and Family Life*, 61.

¹⁸²-----, *Marriage and Family Life*, 122.

¹⁸³-----, *Marriage and Family Life*, 122.

the sum total of marriage but expresses the intimate relation and responsible commitment of partners to each other. This means that sexual intimacy does not constitute the legitimacy of a marriage or a problem free marriage; otherwise cohabitation would be accepted as a legitimate marriage. Again, there are other duties, which couples must do to enhance the marriage. These are used to prepare the new couples prior to legitimate marriage.¹⁸⁴

Regarding cohabitation, because the GEC hardly has materials on cohabitation as a particular phenomenon of sexual relationship, the researcher contacted the GEC's leadership for oral data to serve as the basis of what the GEC teaches on cohabitation. In this regard, four senior pastors were interviewed individually.

The GEC's teaching on morality of sex and permissibility of sexual relationships only within marriage is known as 'Family life,' yet, it is noticed that some members still cohabit irrespective of the church's teachings. In order for the discussion to rest on some tenets of the GEC, the face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher, which involved the four senior pastors who represent the GEC's leadership, have been transcribed to reflect the position of the GEC on cohabitation. Due to the ethical principle of anonymity, all the names of the informants are withheld. The four senior pastors of the GEC's leadership have been pseudo-named senior pastors A, B, C, and D (males and females), respectively.

Male senior pastor 'A' was interviewed in his office at Accra in the Greater Accra Region.¹⁸⁵ He responded to questions about the core values that guide the church. He also answered questions, which had to do with the position of the GEC on cohabitation. He, furthermore, responded to the teachings on 'Family life' of the church, especially in relation to whether there had been any proof of its effectiveness in the church.

This senior pastor argued that in order to come out with a theme to guide the spiritual growth of the church, the leadership prays for God's guidance. This helps them to know

¹⁸⁴ Viertel, et al., *Marriage and Family Life*, 148.

¹⁸⁵ Male Senior pastor 'A,' Interview, Tuesday 16 December 2014, GEC Head Office, Accra.

God's direction as to what theme the church has to use within a particular year. In addition, he explains that reports received from other leaders of the church, such as presbytery chairmen, and pastors also informed their decision to come out with a relevant theme. These themes, which guide the church, are concurrent and consistent with the church's core values. According to him, all these information put together help them to know how and where the church has not been performing well, and where correction needs to be made. The themes that guide the church also change with any given administration, because the leader that comes into office chooses a theme that can guide the church. For instance, 'Knowing God the Holy Spirit' was adopted in 2014 which was about Bible study, prayer and music in order to know the character, the will of God and how to relate to him. 'Walking with God the Holy Spirit' has been brought to the fore at 2014 synod to take the church through 2015, which requires obedience, holiness and to be led by the Holy Spirit. This calls for total surrendering to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁶

The researcher asked whether the senior pastor was suggesting that immorality had been done away with because of the introduction of yearly themes. The senior pastor disagreed and said that breakdown in morality can only take the grace of God to be eradicated. He indicated that it is possible that whatever happens in the outside world, with regard to sexual immorality can creep into the church. Those who are morally weak backslide into sexual immorality. However, the church comes out with topics to address some of those issues. The church prepares themes that help pastors and other leaders to teach on the morality of sex and marital issues once in every three months. This teaching he mentioned as 'Family life.'

When the senior pastor was asked whether the GEC would allow cohabitation on the grounds of economic hardship the members are faced with, because they are human beings

¹⁸⁶ GEC Publication, *Global Evangelical Church.2014 Synod: Moderator's Keynote Address* (Accra: GEC Publication, 2014), 19.

who have their rights to life, or the worst thing could happen. According to the senior pastor, the GEC disallows members to practise cohabitation as an answer to economic hardship. In order to curtail hardship, the church encourages members to help one another, especially, those in need of accommodation and job. He disagreed that the church should ever encourage cohabitation, because even the Ghanaian culture frowns on it. According to the informant, there is a moral life standard which members should follow, which is the teaching of the Bible, and the church has a very typical role to play in that regard. This senior pastor referred to the GEC's 2008 constitution, which indicated that marriage is a state recognised and blessed institution ordained by God, and is a symbol of the relation between Christ and his church. Therefore, it should not be contracted without careful thought and dependence upon the Lord for guidance. In addition, members of GEC entering into Christian marriage are urged to seek premarital counselling, and the blessing of the Lord.¹⁸⁷

The researcher asked if some members of the GEC were cohabiting. If it were true, what were the factors to the practice? The senior pastor responded that he could not deny the fact that cohabitation is practised among some young adults. According to him, it has been asserted that due to financial difficulty, some cohabit in order to avoid high sums charged by some parents. However, he indicated that due to the importance of marriage, the church strongly disagrees that young adults should be allowed to cohabit due to parents' attitude toward marriage. The church's position is that cohabitation is unacceptable, and that under no circumstances should the church encourages her members to indulge in any sexual sin.

The researcher asked if there were any disciplinary action taken against those found to be involved in cohabitation. The senior pastor responded that the church discourages cohabitation because it is similar to fornication. He referred to the 2008 constitution, which guides pastors how discipline should be meted out. He, however, said that the GEC does not

¹⁸⁷Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 124.

excommunicate cohabiters from the church. Though immorality is openly disciplined, it is done after whoever involves has been reprimanded, which always accompanied by admonition. This has to be administered in the presence of four witnesses, or of the entire leadership of the local church. If this proves fruitless, one of the more serious forms of censure is applied, such as suspension from the next communion. When a lot of persuasion has failed, then a much more serious form of discipline is applied. The leadership disallows such persons to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.¹⁸⁸ To enforce the morality of sex, cohabiters are also asked to desist from executing any leadership role until the end of the disciplinary period. They are however taken through some teachings organised by pastors.

Though some may be assisting in performing leadership duties unnoticed, yet, it does not guarantee that their situation should be accepted. Anyone who is aspiring for leadership position, but has been found to involve in this behaviour is not allowed to take up such position. This is done to serve as a deterrent to other members of the church. This is because God is interested in marital affairs as an institution ordained by him. According to the senior pastor, individuals and corporate bodies are encouraged to pursue holiness through the work of the Holy Spirit as the process of personal sanctification. Because the GEC discourages cohabitation, it prevents cohabiters who are in sexual relationship from assuming leadership responsibilities. To assume leadership responsibility in the GEC demands a very high moral standard. When the researcher referred the senior pastor to those who were involved in similar practices in the Bible, such as Samson, David and Solomon who took many concubines and yet they were used by God; he disagreed. He responded that though some men of God had practised something similar to cohabitation, the practice had not been approved of God.

¹⁸⁸Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*,134.

He was asked if the church would allow ‘trial marriage,’ where members would be on test for compatibility. In response, he noted that the reason sounds fairly well and plausible. However, he has made it clear that though it is unfortunate that such issues are possible, the church cannot allow its members to be on trial marriage. Even though it looks logical that couples be allowed to try their compatibility and fertility, which would in turn minimise the high rate of divorce among Christians, yet it is wrong. According to him, cohabitation is similar to fornication, which is unacceptable in the sight of God. He concluded that it is the responsibility of the church to promote high standard of morality to enable members seek first the kingdom of God, in order to be blessed by God.

Male senior pastor ‘B’ also was interviewed in his office at Accra in the Greater Accra Region. The informant also answered questions on the position of the church regarding cohabitation, and why the church had refused to condone with the act. The senior pastor indicated that, the Bible is the church’s moral constitution. Since, Scripture disallows sexual immorality, such as cohabitation, the church cannot condone what the Bible clearly prohibits.¹⁸⁹This senior pastor was also asked what answer the GEC has for those who would refer to some characters in the Bible, in terms of the many men of God who had been involved in sexual relationships, such as Samson, David and many others, yet they were used by God? He admitted that though some men of God had practised sexual immorality, such as Samson in the Bible, he suffered the consequences; therefore, could not be a good example which any Christian should emulate. He noted that the characters in the Bible also had their weaknesses like us, therefore, are not our moral standards.

With regard to the impact of the church’s ‘Family life’ teaching, he indicated that it has been making significant impact on the church and families. According to the informant, the proof was because some of those who cohabited for some time had their relationships

¹⁸⁹Male Senior pastor ‘B,’ Interview, Tuesday 16 December 2014, GEC Head Office, Accra.

regularised and blessed. There had also been mass blessings, which were organised by some churches, which characterised the impact of GEC's 'Family life' teaching. He indicated that some churches assist couples by providing refreshment to augment what the couples have.

On the issue of difficult economic situations, he mentioned the fact that both Christians and non-Christians are equally faced with difficult economic problems; it should not be a ground for Christians to compromise their faith. Once you are a Christian you are supposed to behave in a particular way. The fact that you have become a Christian, you have to look up to the Lord when faced with life problems.

When the informant was asked if the GEC would allow members to practice trial marriage because infertility and potency seem to be factors of marriage breakdowns? According to the informant, the church disallows trial marriage, a situation where young adults live together to test their compatibility and fertility of women. To avoid this situation, impotency in particular, has to be disclosed during marriage counselling. The church cannot encourage trial marriage to prove potency and fertility, because it is equal to fornication, which is against the teachings of the Bible.

When the senior pastor was asked if the church would allow young adults to cohabit to avoid high sums demanded by parents, he disagreed. According to him, the church cannot deny the fact that customary marriages sometimes are very expensive because that is where the parents would like to take all that they want from the man. While some young adults may want to escape legitimate marriage and rather choose to cohabit; others would choose to organise their marriages in an extravagant manner. In this regard, the church consciously discourages ostentatious and extravagant approach to marriage. This is done, particularly, when a marriage is to be blessed in the church, and therefore encourage simple way of marrying. According to the senior pastor, when marriage is properly contracted and families come together as a church, the foundations of that church will be strong, and all aspects of

life in the church will be organised. According to the GEC, society depends on the stability of the home for the future generation of each society. Parents who are members of the church are also educated not to charge high sums, which enable most young adults to be saddled with huge debts, which scare the rest, and promote eloping. He, however, agreed that it is common among young adults that in order to avoid high sums demanded by some parents, they elope and cohabit. According to him, the church strongly disagrees that young adults should be allowed to cohabit because of the above reason. The senior pastor maintained that the church's position is that cohabitation is unacceptable and should in no circumstances encourage her members to sin. He reiterated the need to educate parents, especially, those who are members of the GEC not to demand high bride prices so that young adults can be encouraged to marry legitimately. On the issue of who qualifies to assume leadership responsibilities in the GEC, he noted that the Bible sets a standard for leaders, and those involved in cohabitation are disallowed leadership positions. They are also denied the Lord's Supper as a disciplinary measure, until their relationships are regularised.

Female senior pastor 'C' was interviewed at Ashaiman in the Greater Accra Region.¹⁹⁰ This female senior pastor admitted that young adults still cohabit, which has become one of the moral challenges of the church. She related it to ignorance and unwillingness on the part of some members to follow the teachings of the Bible. As a result, some are led to involve in sexual activities, which are harmful to their own Christian lives. She referred to Women Ministry lessons on marital issues, which they use at their meetings to teach on sexual and family issues. According to the informant, the GEC disallows cohabitation because it is similar to fornication. The GEC holds that sexual intercourse outside marriage is unacceptable, and that sexual intercourse only in marriage is legitimate. Hence, premarital counselling is imperative for prospective couples. They are taken through

¹⁹⁰ Female Senior Pastor 'C,' Interview, Tuesday 16 December 2014, Ashaiman.

various lessons in order to prepare them for legitimate marriage. Sex is not allowed during this period because sex in marriage is a God-given characteristic of man and woman, and that it is holy and pure only within marriage. Sexual union consummate the marriage, and adultery severs the union. Sexual union is not the sum total of marriage but expresses the intimate relation and responsible commitment of partners to each other. According to the informant, this means that sexual intimacy does not constitute the legitimacy of a marriage or a problem free marriage; otherwise cohabitation would be accepted as a legitimate marriage.¹⁹¹

According to her, economic hardship is a contributory factor to cohabitation. However, she noted this should not be an excuse because the church does not allow cohabitation under any circumstances. She was of the view that for young adults to try to pragmatically go around solving economic problems by cohabiting is not the best way of solving the problem. According to her, if people are faced with accommodation and unemployment problems, the church encourages members who are capable of assisting some of these young adults to do so.

She disagreed with the view that, in order to reduce the increased rate of divorce among young adults, they should be allowed to test their fertility and compatibility prior to marriage, though it is possible. According to the informant, cohabitation is against the ethics of the Bible, and that members cannot be allowed to test their marriage by way of finding out if the woman is fertile or the man is potent.

According to the female senior pastor, when members are marrying, the church, especially, the women ministry plays the role of assisting those who are marrying by providing few amenities. This is done to encourage members to avoid fornication, and to

¹⁹¹Global Evangelical Press, *Women Ministry Study Guide* (Accra: Global Evangelical Press, 2001).

marry legitimately. The welfare of some churches also helps the couples by contributing towards the marriage financially.

Female senior pastor 'D' was interviewed at all pastors and their spouses' conference held at Ho, the regional capital of the Volta Region. According to her, the GEC disallows sexual immorality, such as fornication which is similar to premarital sex and cohabitation.¹⁹² Adultery is also not allowed. She noted that one area which calls for particular attention has to do with improper marriages, such as cohabitation, which the church considers as sinful. The church believes that in Christianity, it is required that the Christian should abstain from sex till he or she is ready to marry, and legitimately married. According to the informant, if two people sexually cohabit; they live together in a sexual relationship illegitimately, which is known as cohabitation.

According to the informant, the church belongs to God; therefore, it cannot do anything that would go against his will. In order to maintain sanctity in the church, members must live holy lives, as far as sexual unions are concerned. Economic pressure, though a challenging issue facing the young adults, should not be an excuse for members to cohabit. This is because Christianity is not living in luxury; it involves a lot of sacrifice and suffering. She, however, agreed that some members of the church still cohabit for many reasons. According to her, cohabitation is a problematic situation in the church, because some members were cohabiters while got converted into Christianity and joined the church.

This female pastor disagreed that trial marriage, though possible, should be tolerated by the church. Also, though the majority of the women would not like to be on trial marriage, others may be compelled to involve in fornication and other forms of sexual practice. She indicated that even though some parents are the cause of their children's eloping and cohabiting because of high sums charged by them, the church cannot allow cohabiters to

¹⁹² Female Senior Pastor 'D,' Interview, Wednesday 7 January 2015, Ho.

assume leadership responsibilities. According to her, since leadership is by example, the church needs to set a pace for leaders to follow. Hence, it needs not to allow those who are not legitimately married to assume positions, such as pastors and elders. According to her, the church is not responsible for charging high sums of money, which prevents members from marrying. Nevertheless, the church keeps on educating parents who are members of the church to charge moderately.

She seized the opportunity to advice, especially, young women to live a life of chastity and look up to God to provide their needs. They should also try every means to get some work to do in order for God to bless them. According to this senior pastor, Christianity has its ‘ups and downs;’ therefore hard situations should not deter them from living holy lives, which would one day be rewarded by God.

After numerous ethical teachings are done by churches in order to inculcate morality in the life of their members, the members are free to choose either to live by the teaching, or not. This leads us to discuss the choice people make, since they have their freewill to do so, when they are faced with difficult situations, and the responsibility of the choice made.

3.4 Christian Ethics and the Reality of Cohabitation

Can people escape responsibility for the choice they have made in life, because they are faced with difficult situations? According to John Dewey’s pragmatic approach to situations, each individual problem must be viewed in the light of the actions necessary to solve it, with some understanding of the consequences that follow the action.¹⁹³ However, looking at situations from Christian perspective, Kunhiyop posited that for approach to real-life situations not to end in abstraction that are not related to real life, Christian ethics must grapple with real-life situations. According to him, Scripture has to say something about the problem and finally

¹⁹³ Britannica Student Library. *Ethics and Morality*. Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010).

addressing the issue of what action we are called to take.¹⁹⁴ Hence, Fedler noted that since we often cannot control the consequences of our actions; we can control our behaviours.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps, that will help avoid bad consequences. Yet, to be able to control one's behaviour is still a choice, especially, when it comes to what action the Christian is to take. This means that the Christian is expected to follow Christian ethical principles to live a life of chastity. This is because laws of living a chaste life do not practise themselves, but people do.

Unavoidably, in life one is often faced with the decision of making a choice. For this reason, the choice that one makes is dependent on a number of reasons. This could be a freewill choice depending on the circumstances surrounding the situation. Thus, normal adult human beings in normal circumstances are able to act and choose freely in order to meet their needs. However, according to Fedler, 'we must be willing and able to provide good, publicly justifiable reasons' for the choice we have made.¹⁹⁶ Whether someone engages himself or herself in an activity willingly or not has become a choice. For instance, you are free to go on reading this thesis, or stop now; it is a choice. Again, to apply the Christian ethical teachings to one's everyday life in order to develop virtue is a choice. Just then, according to Fedler, a lawyer stood up to test Jesus, 'Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'What is written in the Law?' The lawyer answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and with all your mind. And love your neighbour.' Jesus said to him, 'do this and you will live' (Luke 10: 25-28). Again, the lawyer wanted to justify his action so he asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbour?'¹⁹⁷ To obey is the lawyer's responsibility and the effect is his choice. According to Galen Strawson, human beings are

¹⁹⁴Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 72 – 3.

¹⁹⁵Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 19.

¹⁹⁶-----, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 25.

¹⁹⁷ Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 176.

therefore, wholly free to choose and act even if their whole physical and psychological make-up is entirely determined by things for which they are in no way ultimately responsible.¹⁹⁸

The questions that come to mind are: Can people be morally responsible for what they do, especially, when they cohabit? Should one be blamed for making a choice, as far as human needs are concerned, under the concept of freewill or individualism? The answer may be ‘yes,’ and ‘no.’ It means if the action is done under determinism, then, we have to be responsible. To delineate, freewill is the ability of agents to make choices unconstrained by certain factors. It is also a philosophical term of art, according to Strawson, for a particular sort of capacity of rational agents to choose. It means that where determinism comes in, then, it is the bigger circle in which freewill operates, which tries to keep freewill under control as one goes about how to make moral choice. Determinism is that all events, including moral choices, are completely determined by previously existing causes that preclude freewill.¹⁹⁹ It is where one’s life is determined, and yet, you have freewill to choose to go by what has been determined for you to do. For example, to commit a crime under the pretence of freewill is possible in determinism. Thus, according to Kunhiyop, since there is the belief that human beings are made in the image of God, it ‘means that we are rational and moral beings.’²⁰⁰ This moral instinct should guide people to make moral choices.

One significant instance is where Adam is said to deliberately choose to eat from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. God instructed him that he could freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The day he eats from it, he would surely die. God specifically gave orders to Adam not to eat from the tree.

¹⁹⁸ Strawson, Galen. ‘Free will.’ in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2011) from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/V014SECT1> [accessed on 20 April 2014].

¹⁹⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Determinism* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite, 2010).

²⁰⁰ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 55.

This command implies that ‘God has given human beings responsibility for making right decisions and acting ethically.’²⁰¹

There is one school of thought, which holds that freedom is compatible with determinism because freedom is essentially just a matter of not being constrained or hindered in certain ways when one acts or chooses. Nevertheless, Adam exercised his freewill in the extreme under determinism, which eventually brought about death. Though an action may be categorised as being deterministic, in African morality, one still has to make a choice as to how it may affect his own life or the community as a whole. Thus, the choice is within the prerogative of one’s freewill. This also is similar to a form of theological determinism based on the concept of divine foreknowledge; because ‘God’s omniscience is perfect, what God knows about the future will inevitably happen, which means that the future is already fixed.’²⁰² The fact that the future has already been fixed within this concept of determinism, people are held responsible for the choice they have made as they exercised their freewill.

According to Basinger, it is generally agreed by moral philosophers that in assessing moral blame for an action, one must consider whether the agent acted freely or not. The principle involved is: no one is morally guilty for failing to do what he could not do or for doing what he could not fail to do.²⁰³ This means that moral responsibility depends on something that is believed to exist or to be true freedom of action. For instance, if premarital sex is immoral, and I therefore refused to have sex because it is immoral, no one will blame me for not having sex before marriage, though I am sexually aroused and handicapped. However, if I have sex under a gun or death threat, I supposed not to be blamed for involving in premarital sex because I did it under compulsion. It was not done out of

²⁰¹Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 56.

²⁰²Wentzel Van Huyssteen. *Theological determinism*. Encyclopaedia of Science and Religion. (n.p: Macmillan Reference. 2003), 217. ISBN 978-0-02-865705-9. [accessed on 22 December 2012].

²⁰³David Basinger, (ed.), *Predestination and Free Will* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 4.

freewill.²⁰⁴ Nonetheless, to commit a crime under the pretence of either freewill, or determinism is possible. It means that if people cohabit as a pragmatic measure because they are in desperate need of what would enable them survive, they may either be blamed or not because of their relative preferences. However, according to Mackinnon, since the consequences of facing with difficult situations are not always in our control, and things do not always turn out as we want; ideally, our motives are in our control.²⁰⁵ This means that, it is not enough simply to follow a prescribe set of rules or even to do the right thing. One must also develop a certain set of character traits. To be a truly good person, it is enough that one simply does the right things. One must also feel the right way and do the right things with the right motives and intentions. In other words, one must possess a certain kind of character, which is chastity.²⁰⁶ One significant character trait for Christians is to love God and neighbour, and live a chaste life. To love God and neighbour, and live a chaste life in this context, according to the 'Family life teaching of the GEC is to avoid cohabitation and marry legitimately, because God detests fornication and any form of deviant sexual act. Though an action may be categorised as being one's rights or freewill, one still has to make a choice as to how it may not affect his or her own life or the community as a whole.

The GEC's position is that cohabitation is similar to fornication because sexual intercourse outside marriage is sinful. But someone would argue for cohabitation that, young adults are faced with situations which vary from one place to another under different circumstances, and with varying degrees of their intensity. Since the young adults have their right to life, their difficult situations can be pragmatically solved by cohabitation, or they will suffer and die. Nevertheless, there is a prima facie duty which is paramount in moral decision making in difficult situations. Christian ethicists, Stassen and Gushee cited Jefferson Davis' contextual absolutism that, though 'there can be a conflict between one's prima facie duty –

²⁰⁴ Basinger, (eds), *Predestination and Free Will*, 4.

²⁰⁵ Mackinnon, *Ethics*, 73.

²⁰⁶ Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 33.

first hand duty, and one's actual duty in a particular situation,' to love God and obey his commands should be the first resort (prima facie duty).²⁰⁷ It means, even though the young adult is desperately in need, such as accommodation, employment, and food, it does not encourage sexual relationship in that regard. Hence, according to Fedler, to be a Christian is not merely to act in certain ways. Nor is being a Christian merely means to believe certain abstract doctrines. While belief and action are vital to being a Christian, one must also allow oneself to be shaped and moulded into a particular kind of person, to develop a set of virtues that reflect what Christians claim to believe.²⁰⁸ This enables the Christian not to use sex as a means of solving a problem.

Stassen and Gushee noted that though rules for situations cause people to ignore what makes them different, the rules that Jesus taught are needed. It is because they are binding, and they are to be obeyed. It is the way of life set forth by Jesus Christ applied to the daily demands and decisions as one focuses on the nature of an action²⁰⁹

Since the concept of deterministic morality in the African society implies a continual moral imperative, it enables the individual to maintain a sense of sin and guilt.²¹⁰ This makes cohabiting under the pretence of human need morally unacceptable among indigenous Africans, as well as the GEC. To draw the inference, acceptable or unacceptable moral actions have to depend heavily on the agent's motive behind his or her action.

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the study indicated that, the Bible is the source of Christian teaching, particularly, sexual ethical teaching. Therefore, in matters of the morality of sex and the approach to marriage, the GEC encourages members to marry according to the teachings of

²⁰⁷ Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 2003), 110.

²⁰⁸ Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 41.

²⁰⁹ Stassen, et al., *Kingdom Ethics*, 111.

²¹⁰ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 167.

the Bible. It also shows that the morality of sex and the GEC's position on cohabitation, forms the basis of the church's teaching.

Since marriage is of crucial importance to the GEC, it encourages holiness to be taught and lived as a process of sanctification, which is an important core value of the GEC. Individuals and corporate bodies are encouraged to pursue holiness through the work of the Holy Spirit as the process of personal sanctification. Because the GEC discourages cohabitation, it prevents cohabiters who are in sexual relationship from assuming leadership responsibilities. To assume leadership responsibility in the GEC demands a very high moral standard. Finally, the reality of cohabitation and the moral choice that people make when they are faced with real-life situations are looked at.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation of data of GEC's leadership, resident pastors, presbyters, and the young adults.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The overarching purpose of this chapter is to examine why young adults of the GEC in Ghana cohabit. In order to collate and adequately analyse data, this chapter presents face-to-face interviews, group discussions, and the various degrees of responses to the questionnaires administered. The informants in this work comprise the GEC's leadership (senior pastors), resident pastors, presbyters (elders), and young adults.

Due to the ethical principle of anonymity, all the names of the informants are withheld. The responses of the four senior pastors of the GEC's leadership who have been pseudo-named 'senior pastors A, B, C, and D' (males and females), respectively, indicated earlier in chapter three have been interpreted. It also covers the responses of resident pastors, presbyters and young adults of local congregations. The special names given to the churches (local congregations) studied in the Greater Accra Region in this work are 'Asempa One' and 'Asempa Two.' 'Nyanyui' has been given to the church studied in the Volta Region.

4.2 Presentation of Responses

This section presents all the responses of the four categories of informants, which comprises the GEC's leadership, resident pastors, presbyters, and the young adults in this study. In order for the discussion to rest on some tenets, the study is culminated in five major areas, which determine the final result of this work. These five major areas are based on whether young adults cohabit or not; the factors of the phenomenon, the effects of the phenomenon on the individual and the church, the morality of the act, and the possible solution.

4.2.1 Response of GEC's Leadership

The data shows that the GEC's leadership 100% agreed that some members of the church cohabit. The leadership registered 100% that though the young adults were faced with difficult economic problems, it was not right for any member of the GEC to cohabit. This shows that the leadership is aware that members of the church cohabit; nevertheless, they disapproved of the practice.

Table 1

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Cohabitors in the church	4	0	Cohabitation acceptable behav.	0	4
Economic pressure for cohab	4	0	Cohabitat. undermines marriage	4	0
Cohab. for sexual pleasure	3	1	Cohabitors can lead	0	4
Trial marriage is practised	4	0	Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	4	0

Source: Field work, 2014.

Answer to questions relating to some factors that have contributed to cohabitation, three (3) of the senior pastors agreed that some young adults might be compelled to involve in cohabitation due to inability to control their sexual drive, which could affect the spiritual growth of the church. This data shows that the leadership is aware of uncontrolled sexual practice.

The data also shows that the leadership disallows trial marriage. According to them, trial marriage is similar to the sin of fornication, and therefore, undermines marriage institution. Hence, they indicated that those involved in the practice should not be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities, because leaders must set a pace for members to follow. Therefore those who are found culpable are reprimanded, and also openly disciplined when persuasions have failed.

With regard to the 'Family life' teaching, the data shows that though the GEC's leadership refers to the 'Family life teaching, there has not been enough material on the subject. Hence, one would argue that the young adults cohabit because the church has

inadequate material on the family life teaching. This is because one of the female informants indicated that women rely on their own study material at their meetings. Though the women ministry material is used in the church, it is not studied by the entire church.

4.3 Response of Resident Pastors

The position of the GEC with regard to cohabitation has also been expressed by the three resident pastors of the target churches. The three pastors were brought together to form one group of informants for convenience sake.

Table 2 below identifies ten areas which culminated in five major areas, which determine the final result of this work. These five major areas were based on whether young adults cohabit or not; the major factors, the effects of the phenomenon, and the morality of the phenomenon, which determine the possible solution. The informants (100%) indicated that cohabitation is unacceptable by the GEC.

Table 2.

Issues	Yes	No	Issues	Yes	No
Cohabitors in the church	3	0	Cohabitors can lead	0	3
Economic pressure for cohabitat.	3	0	GEC: desist from open-discipline	2	1
Lack of accommodation to cohab.	2	1	Cohabitors show remorse	3	0
Cohab. for sexual pleasure	2	1	Cohabitation poses challenge	2	1
Cohab. undermines marriage	3	0	Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	3	0

Source: Field work, 2015.

All the three informants (3) confirmed that there are some cohabiters in the church, and therefore, should be discouraged. Hence, there were divergent views about whether it was wrong to cohabit or not. However, all the informants (100%) agreed that some young adults cohabit for economic reasons. They were of the view that it was wrong to cohabit on economic grounds. By this a total of two informants (67%) agreed that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate cohabit, but one of them disagreed.

Also, two resident pastor informants noted that some cohabit because of uncontrolled sexual behaviour.

The informants indicated the immorality of cohabitation and were of the view that the church should not tolerate it on the grounds of economic difficulties. Again, they indicated that it would not be right to bend the rules of the Bible to suit oneself, because it would bring disrespect to the family of cohabiters. Answering the question whether cohabiters show remorse, or not. All the informants (100%) agreed that some of the cohabiters show remorse for involving in the act. They were of the view that the phenomenon most often involves teenagers who could barely do anything for a living. This means that they cohabit on economic grounds against their wish.

While one of the informants agreed that, in order to avoid impotency and infertility, which contributes to high rate of divorce, young adults choose to be on trial marriage, the other two disagreed. To them, cohabitation undermines the marriage institution as ordained by God. As a result, all the three informants agreed that the phenomenon undermines marriage institution. They asserted that trial marriage defies God's condition for lawful marriage.

According to the data, all the informants (100%) disagreed to the suggestion that those who performed 'knocking' rituals should be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities in the church, such as pastors and presbyters' duties. In that regard, they referred to the constitution and 'Family life' teaching of the GEC as a guide. To them, disallowing them would serve as a deterrent to others. They gave in evidence that knocking does not constitute marriage and also not in conformity to the Bible. According to them, anyone who aspires to be in the office of a pastor or presbyter (elder) has some basic requirements to meet. According to the 2008 constitution, they are not only to accept the church's statement of faith, they are also required to be committed Christians and of a high

moral character as in I Timothy 3: 1 – 13 and Titus 1: 6 – 9. To be of high moral life means one's character should be acceptable to the church using the Bible as the standard.²¹¹

With regard to extravagant and ostentatious nature of church wedding, which was attributed to factors to most divorce, one of the informants agreed that customary marriage should be accepted without wedding, but the other two (67%) disagreed. Those who disagreed however advised that extravagant wedding, which enables most young adults to be saddled with huge debts, should be discouraged. They indicated that cohabitation as a phenomenon has some effects on cohabiters, such as, guilty conscience and loss of respect. Some receive very bad treatment from their partners, no cordial relationship between the two families who had not been involved; lack of parental blessing and inability to participate in the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion).

Regarding church discipline, two of the informants (67%) agreed that the church should desist from open discipline because some members leave the church, but one of them disagreed. However, they all suggested that the church should teach on the topic and also encourage cohabiters in love to amend their ways.

While two of the informants (67%) agreed that cohabitation poses a challenge to the GEC, the other one disagreed. Those who agreed mentioned that the phenomenon had negative impact on prayer life and Bible studies of cohabiters, and also influenced the moral life of many of them. Against this evidence, those who disagreed posited that since teachings on the subject were ongoing, it was no longer a challenge because there were signs of transformation.

As to what role does the church play to assist those who are marrying? These resident pastors indicated that they were taken through counselling, encouraged them of simple marriage, and shared their experiences with them.

²¹¹Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 17 – 21.

They suggested that the church should continue to abhor cohabitation. However, they also suggested that intensive teaching had to be done, and to discourage extravagant expenses and also to provide financial assistance to those involved. As to whether the lessons on marriage are taught in the church, the informants (100%) agreed. They indicated that the lessons on family life are taught quarterly, others noted that they are taught as often as possible. When asked as to whether the teaching had been ineffective, for which reason the young adults still cohabit; all the informants indicated that it had been effective. However, they indicated that because of financial hardship, some turned deaf ears to the teaching; nevertheless, those who heeded repent of the practice.

Though all informants agreed that family life lessons were taught, there were not enough materials on the subject.

4.2.5 Response of Asempa One Presbyters (Elders)

All the presbyters and resident pastors of the three sample churches in this work were administered the same questionnaire, because these leaders play similar roles in their churches. This means that all the questions posed to these informants by the researcher are similar in this work.

The four (4) male presbyters of the Asempa One branch of the GEC indicated that the church disallowed cohabitation, and therefore unacceptable on all grounds.

Table 3.

Issues	Yes	No	Issues	Yes	No
Cohabitors in the church	4	0	Cohabitors can lead	1	3
Economic pressure for cohabitat.	2	2	GEC: desist from open-discipline	2	2
Lack of accommodation to cohab.	4	0	Cohabitors show remorse	2	2
Cohab. for sexual pleasure	2	2	Cohabitation poses challenge	4	0
Cohab. undermines marriage	3	1	Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	4	0

Source: Field work, 2015.

When asked of their awareness of cohabitation in the church, 100% confirmed that there were cohabiters in the church. Answers to questions posed on the morality of the act as to whether it was wrong to cohabit or not. While two informants (50%) agreed that the young adults cohabit because of economic pressure, two (50%) disagreed. Although all agreed that it was wrong to cohabit on economic grounds, it was possible because those who migrated and were unemployed might give in to cohabitation. By this they all agreed that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate cohabit. The data thus shows that economic pressure was a factor to cohabitation among the young adults since all informants agreed on lack of accommodation. While a total of two (50%) of the presbyters agreed that some of the cohabiters show remorse for involving in the act, the other two (50%) noted that some indeed show remorse, others do not. They also noted that some wish they could desist from the practice, but they did not have any place to live. On the other hand, 50% (2) expressed their individual opinions that some cohabit because of their sexual pleasure.

While two of the informants (50%) agreed that, in order to avoid impotency and infertility, which contributed to high rate of divorce, young adults chose to be on trial marriage, the other two disagreed. According to the informants, trial marriage undermines legitimate marriage, hence, three of the informants(75%) agreed that trial marriage undermines marriage institution, therefore, should not be practised, but one(25%) disagreed. Three of the informants (75%) disagreed that those who formed families with children involved, and also performed 'knocking' rituals should be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities in the church. They indicated that anyone who aspires to be in the office of a pastor or presbyter has some basic requirements to meet. In that regard, they referred to the constitution and 'Family life' teaching of the GEC as a guide. However, one of the informants (25%) disagreed with their view, and suggested that those who performed 'knocking' ritual should be allowed to lead.

With regard to extravagant and ostentatious nature of church wedding, one informant (25%) agreed that customary marriage should be accepted without wedding, but the other three (75%) disagreed. Those who disagreed however advised that extravagant wedding, which contributed to most young adults being saddled with huge debts, needed to be discouraged.

Regarding church discipline, two of the informants (50%) agreed that the church should desist from meting out discipline to cohabiters because they are leaving the church, but the other two disagreed. They all suggested that the church should teach on the subject and also encourage cohabiters in love to regularise their relationships. However, they all (100%) agreed that cohabitation poses challenge to the GEC. They mentioned that the phenomenon affects prayer life, and leadership roles in the church. Answer to what role does the church play to assist those who are marrying to encourage other members of the church? These informants indicated that they provided counselling, encourage them of simple marriage, and shared their experiences with them. They suggested that intensive teaching needed to be done, and to discourage extravagant expenses and also to give financial assistance to those who need help. Answer to the question whether lessons on marriage were done in the church. All the four informants (100%) agreed that lessons on marriage (Family life) were taught in the church. While three informants (75%) indicated that teachings on family life were done quarterly, one informant (25%) noted that they were not done as often. When suggested that the teachings were ineffective, because the young adults still cohabit, one informant agreed, but the other three (75%) disagreed.

4.2.6 Response of Asempa Two Presbyters (Elders)

The position of the GEC regarding cohabitation was expressed by four (4) presbyters made up of three (3) males and one (1) female of Asempa Two branch of the church. They expressed the unacceptability of cohabitation among Christians and advocated that it should be abhorred in the GEC. Yet, they all confirmed that there are cohabiters in the church.

Table 4.

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Cohabitors in the church	4	0	Cohabitors can lead	0	4
Economic pressure for cohabitat.	4	0	GEC: desist from open-discipline	3	1
Lack of accommodation to cohab.	4	0	Cohabitors show remorse	1	3
Cohab. for sexual pleasure	3	1	Cohabitation poses challenge	3	1
Cohab. undermines marriage	4	0	Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	3	1

Source: Field work, 2015.

On the question which suggested that young adults cohabit due to economic pressure, three informants (75%) agreed that the young adults cohabit because of economic pressure, but one (25%) disagreed. This data shows that three informants (75%) were of the view that cohabitation should not be practised on economic grounds. All four agreed that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate cohabit. One informant (25%) agreed that some of the cohabiters show remorse for involving in the act. However, the other three (75%) disagreed. They were of the view that the phenomenon most often involved teenagers who could barely make ends meet, and also came from poor families. It means that they cohabit against their wish.

On the other hand, three informants (75%) posited that some cohabit because of their sexual desire. They suggested that they should repent of the act and live chaste lives. Because when Christians believe that to receive Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit now come to live in them and convicts them of their wrong doings, they would live chaste lives.

One of the informants (25%) agreed that, in order to avoid divorce, young adults chose to be on trial marriage, but the other three (75%) disagreed, and noted that the phenomenon undermines marriage institution. They asserted that it defies God's condition for lawful marriage, and also the outside world would not regard the church as God's true church.

Answering the question of whether 'knocking' ritual should enable someone to assume leadership responsibility in the church, or not. All the informants (100%) disagreed that such people should be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities, such as pastors and presbyters' duties in the church. According to them, knocking ritual should not be accepted as part of the bride price, and disallowing them would serve as a deterrent to others. They referred to the church's constitution and the Bible that Scripture set a basic standard for anyone who aspires to be in the office of a pastor or presbyter. Again, they indicated that aspirants should not only be made to accept the church's statement of faith, they should also be committed Christians and of a high moral character. They also referred to 'Family life' teaching of the GEC as a guide.

Regarding church discipline, three informants (75%) agreed that the church should desist from open-discipline because some members are leaving the church, but one informant (25%) disagreed. All the four informants suggested that cohabiters should be invited, taught, and counselled in love to amend their ways.

While three of the informants (75%) agreed that cohabitation has posed a challenge to the GEC, one (25%) disagreed. Those who agreed mentioned that the phenomenon had negative impact on the church. It, particularly, affects the prayer life and Bible studies of cohabiters. Though some cohabiters patronise prayer programmes they do so, perhaps, to seek God's favour and blessing to enable them regularise their relationships. They thought this heavily depended on the individual's aim of participation of the prayer programme.

Against this evidence, those who disagreed posited that since teaching on the subject was ongoing, it was no longer a challenge because there were proofs of change.

As to what role the church plays to assist those who are marrying? These informants indicated that, besides teaching they supported them with free-will offering and encouraged them of simple marriage, and shared their experiences with them.

They suggested that the church should continue to abhor cohabitation. However, they also suggested that intensive teaching needed to be done, and to discourage extravagant expenses and give financial assistance to those involved. The data shows that three informants (75%) agreed that there were teachings done on ‘Family life’ in the church, but one (25%) disagreed. However, while some indicated that teachings on family life were done quarterly, others noted that they were not taught as expected. When asked as to whether the teachings were ineffective, for which reason the young adults still cohabit, three of the informants (75%) disagreed, but one agreed.

4.2.7 Response of Nyanyui Presbyters (Elders)

The position of the GEC regarding cohabitation had been expressed by four (4) presbyters made up of three (3) males and one (1) female of the Nyanyui branch of the church.

Table 5.

Issues	Yes	No	Issues	Yes	No
Cohabitors in the church	4	0	Cohabitors can lead	0	4
Economic pressure for cohabitat.	4	0	GEC: desist from open-discipline	2	2
Lack of accommodation to cohab.	2	2	Cohabitors show remorse	3	1
Cohab. for sexual pleasure	2	2	Cohabitation poses challenge	3	1
Cohab. undermines marriage	4	0	Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	4	0

Source: Field work, 2015.

The data shows that the four informants (100%) of the presbyters agreed that because of economic pressure young adults cohabit in the church. Hence, they all (100%) agreed that

despite the possibility, it was wrong to cohabit on economic grounds. There were also divergent views as to whether lack of accommodation could be a factor. A total of two informants (50%) agreed that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate cohabit, but the other two disagreed and rather indicated sexual desire. When asked whether cohabiters show remorse or not, a total of three informants (75%) agreed that some of the cohabiters show remorse and wish they could stop the practice, but one of the informants disagreed. This data shows that since three informants (75%) agreed, it implies cohabiters show remorse.

Answering the question whether it was right to be on trial marriage to avoid impotency and infertility, three of the informants (75%) agreed, but one (25%) disagreed. According to the data, impotency and infertility are contributory factors to cohabitation among the young adults since this indicated 75%. Hence, they indicated that cohabitation undermines the marriage institution as ordained by God. As a result, all four informants (100%) agreed that the phenomenon undermines marriage institution. They asserted that it defies God's condition for lawful marriage.

According to the data, all four informants (100%) disagreed that those who performed 'knocking' rituals should be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities in the church, such as pastors and presbyters' duties.

With regard to extravagant and ostentatious nature of church wedding, two of the informants (50%) agreed that customary marriage should be accepted without wedding, but the other two disagreed. Those who disagreed however advised that ostentatious and extravagant wedding should be discouraged. They indicated that after customary marriage rites were performed the marriage had to be blessed.

Regarding church discipline, two informants (50%) agreed that the church should desist from disciplining cohabiters because they are leaving the church, but the other two

disagreed. They all suggested that the church should teach on the topic and also encourage cohabiters in love to regularise their relationships.

When answering the question whether cohabitation poses challenge to the GEC, three of the informants (75%) agreed, but one informant (25%) disagreed. Those who agreed mentioned that the phenomenon negatively affects the prayer life and Bible studies of cohabiters, because some of them refuse to patronise those programmes. Against this evidence, those who disagreed were of the view that since teaching on the subject was ongoing, it was no longer a challenge because there were signs of transformation.

As to what role does the church play to assist those who are marrying? These informants indicated that they assisted them through counselling, encouraged them of simple marriage, and shared their experiences with them. They, however, suggested that intensive teaching needed to be done to discourage extravagant expenses. As to whether the teachings on cohabitation and marriage were done in the church, all the four informants (100%) agreed. Though all of the four informants (100%) agreed that 'Family life' lessons were taught, they indicated that there were insufficient teaching materials on the subject.

4.2.8 Response of Asempa One Young Adults

All the young adults in the three target churches were made to answer the same questionnaire. Fifteen (15) informants, who were made up of ten (10) males and five (5) females of the Asempa One, participated in this study. They were within the age range of 18 to 40 years who were Junior High School, Senior High School and Tertiary students and graduates. These informants were made up of a mixture of five unmarried, four cohabiters, three in relationship and three married members of this church. While some were students, others were pupil teachers. They were also met as a group to answer the questionnaire, and also made to express their views at group discussion.

Table 6.

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Cohabitors in the church	10	5	Customary marriage expensive	10	67
Awareness of GEC position	10	5	Church wedding expensive	13	87
Economic reasons	7	8	Cohabit. undermines marriage	14	93
Sexual pleasure	5	10	GEC: desist from open-discipline	3	20
Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	7	8	Cohabitation poses challenge	13	2
Lack of accommodation	8	7	-----	0	0

Source: Field work, 2015

The question of whether it was true that young adults of the GEC cohabit, irrespective of the church's position, ten of the informants (67%) agreed; however, five (33%) disagreed. While the position of the GEC on cohabitation was known to ten informants (67%) of the young adults, five informants (33%) were not aware. Those who were aware explained that cohabitation was inappropriate to be practised; it was sinful and not in accordance to the teachings of the Bible. While seven of the informants (47%) indicated that the message on sexual relationship and marriage was being preached very often; eight informants (53%) noted that the message was not preached as often as it should. Thirteen of the informants (87%) noted that the message was informative and helpful; however, two informants (13%) recorded that though the message was informative, it was unhelpful. This brought to the fore the question of why, then, young adults of the church cohabit. Divergent views were provided as their reasons for cohabitation. While eight of the informants (53%) agreed that because of lack of accommodation some young adults cohabit, the other seven disagreed. Also, while seven of the informants (47%) indicated economic reason as a factor, five informants (33%) indicated ignorance of the GEC's position on cohabitation.

As to whether it was right to cohabit in order to have one's needs met; two informants (13%) agreed, but thirteen of the informants (87%) disagreed. Those who agreed complained about the economic problems which compelled some to do the wrong thing. Others were of the view that cohabitation was not the only means of making a living. In the individual's

opinion, five informants (33%) indicated that the reason why some young adults cohabit was due to sexual pleasure. According to them, some might be aware of its sinfulness, but did not know the effect and the harm that the practice caused. They also expressed their own general opinion on the issue of cohabitation in the church that intensive education should be done. According to the thirteen informants, the practice should not be encouraged in the church because it was against God's institution of marriage.

Informants were asked whether church wedding was affordable or not. Thirteen of the informants (87%) noted that the items needed for church wedding were expensive, but two (13%) of the young adults disagreed. As a result, those complained about the expensive nature of wedding wished they could change the wearing of gowns and suits to normal church clothing. Others which they would change were the refreshment and invitation cards if given the opportunity. With regard to the type of marriage one would have preferred, seven of the informants (47%) advocated for customary marriage without church wedding, but six informants (40%) preferred customary marriage with church wedding. The reason of the six informants was that marriage should accord honour to the families and the church, therefore, marriage should be done both customarily and the Christian way.

Fourteen informants (93%) agreed that cohabitation undermines marriage institution; however, one cohabiter (7%) disagreed. Those who agreed that cohabitation undermines marriage established that marriage as a holy institution must involve God. As to what were some of the effects cohabitation used to have on those engaged in it, they noted that it affected some cohabiters' relationship with their families. Also, they faced disqualification from holding leadership positions in the church, and also disqualified from participating the Lord's Supper.

As far as church discipline is concerned, three informants (20%) agreed that the church should desist from open-discipline because some of the members are leaving the

church to join other churches, but twelve of the informants (80%) disagreed. They held the view that cohabitation was not a lay down practice of the church, and therefore, an immoral lifestyle. It also breaks down the spiritual life of the individual. However, one female cohabiter suggested that since the church preaches against the phenomenon, it should accommodate and assist those who indulge in the act to regularise their relationship, since they are willing to follow the will of God.²¹²

While thirteen informants (87%) agreed that cohabitation poses challenge to the GEC, two informants (13%) disagreed. Those agreed mentioned that the phenomenon was affecting Bible study and prayer life of the church. Consequently, they agreed that cohabitation poses challenge and suggested that the church should put some mechanism in place, such as regular teaching of the dangers associated with the act. The church should conduct intensive counselling programmes for cohabiters, after which they could be disciplined.

At group discussion, some of the young adults argue that as human beings they have sexual instinct, because human beings are vulnerable to sexual drive. They, therefore, wanted to know why God had to put restriction to the use of sex since he made humans sexual beings. They argued that the natural purpose of sexual relation is pleasure, because nature has so constructed the nerve components of the genital system to be utilised as such. Among answers was that God knew that sexual immorality had a strong power to destroy families and society, therefore, sex was allowed to be used only within marriage. Finally, all the informants suggested that financial assistance should be given to those who wanted to marry.

4.2.9 Response of Asempa Two Young Adults

The researcher took the Asempa Two young adults through group discussion, and also asked them to answer questionnaires. Fifteen (15) young adults comprised four (4) males and

²¹²One female cohabiter suggested that though the GEC disapproved of cohabitation, cohabiters should be accommodated and assisted to amend their ways, because some of them are willing to stop their relationships.

eleven (11) females of the above mentioned church participated in this study. They were within the age range of 18 to 40 years. These young adults are Junior High School, Senior High School and Tertiary graduates. These young adults were made up of a mixture of four who are in relationships, three singles, five cohabiters and three married members of this church. While some were students and unemployed, others were pupil teachers. They expressed their views at group discussion that, since cohabitation seemed to be a complex issue; there were many reasons to cohabit.

Table 7.

Issues	Yes	No	Issues	Yes	No
Cohabitors in the church	12	3	Customary marriage expensive	3	12
Awareness of GEC position	7	8	Church wedding expensive	10	5
Economic reasons	6	9	Cohabit. undermines marriage	11	4
Sexual pleasure	4	11	GEC: desist from open-discipline	5	10
Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	5	10	Cohabitation poses challenge	11	4
Lack of accommodation	9	6	-----	0	0

Source: Field work, 2015.

According to the data, twelve informants (80%) agreed that some young adults of the GEC cohabit, however, two of the informants disagreed, but one informant was not quite sure. It also shows that the position of the GEC on the unacceptability of cohabitation has been known to only seven of the informants (47%), while eight informants (53%) are unaware.

This brought to fore the question of why young adults of the church cohabit. While six of the informants (40%) indicated economic reasons as the cause to cohabit, the other informants (60%) disagreed and complained that it leads to fornication or sexual desire. Still, nine of the informants (60%) attributed cohabitation to lack of accommodation which some young adults are faced with. They noted some of the effects cohabitation has on those engaged in it. They noted that cohabiters lost respect; lost contact with God; bear children out of wedlock; experience domestic violence and separation. Four of the informants (27%)

indicated that the message on marriage was being preached very often. While eleven of the informants (73%) indicated that it was not preached often, one informant posited that it was not preached at all. When the message is preached the ten informants (73%) noted that it was informative and helpful, but four informants (27%) indicated that it was unhelpful.

As to how customary marriage was being done, thirteen informants (87%) indicated that they had been able to witness one, but never witnessed by two of the informants. While three informants (20%) indicated that it was expensive, eleven of the informants (73%) indicated that it was affordable. As far as marriage is concerned, twelve informants (80%) asserted that to marry without the consent of parents was painful, but the other three had no idea about the consent of parents.

As to how affordable church wedding has been, ten of the informants (67%) complained that church wedding has been expensive, but four informants (27%) disagreed. As a result, those who said wedding has been expensive wished they could change the glamorous refreshment, if given the opportunity. With regard to the type of marriage one would have preferred, nine of the informants (60%) advocated for both customary marriage and church wedding. Their reasons have been that customary marriage is traditional and where the family is honoured, while church wedding invites God and his blessing into the marriage.

While eleven of the informants (73%) agreed that cohabitation undermines marriage institution, two informants (13%) disagreed. Those who agreed established that cohabitation was against marriage institution as ordained by God, and was not recognised by Ghanaian society.

As far as church discipline is concerned, five (33%) agreed that the church should desist from open-discipline because some members were leaving the church, but nine informants (60%) disagreed. For the acceptability of cohabitation as a normal practice by the

GEC, eleven informants (73%) disagreed and said that the church should not accept cohabitation as a normal practice. Nevertheless, three informants advocated for cohabitation. A female cohabiter held the view in favour of cohabitation that it was a trial marriage to study the attitude of each other prior to marriage.²¹³

According to the data, eleven informants (73%) agreed that cohabitation poses challenge to the GEC, but two of the informants disagreed. These young adults expressed their own general opinion on the issue of cohabitation in the church that the church should discourage the act. They suggested that the GEC should appoint a committee to find means to arrest the situation. Also, the long bridal trains and other frivolous additions should be seriously discouraged.

At group discussion, the informants suggested that teaching on sexual relationships should be intensified in the church as well as intensive moral teachings at basic schools in order to educate the young ones on how to approach sex.

4.2.10 Response of Nyanyui Young Adults

The researcher took the Nyanyui young adults also through group discussion, and also led them to answer questionnaires. Fifteen (15) young adults participated in this study and were made up of nine (9) males and six (6) females of the above mentioned church. They were within the age range of 18 to 40 years and were Junior High School, Senior High School and Tertiary institution graduates. These young adults were made up of a mixture of one single, four in relationships, two cohabiters and eight married members of this church. While some were businessmen and women, others were artisans, teachers and a policeman. The total number who participated in the group discussion and completion of questionnaire was nine

²¹³A female cohabiter of the Asempa two church advocated that trial marriage should be allowed, because that is when those who want to marry study the attitude and compatibility of each other.

males and six females. According to the responses of Nyanyui young adults to the questions posed by the researcher, some members of the church cohabit.

The question of whether it was true that young adults of the GEC cohabit, irrespective of the church's position. Nine of the informants (60%) agreed that young adults cohabit; however, the other six disagreed.

Table 8.

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Cohabitors in the church	9	6	Customary marriage expensive	6	9
Awareness of GEC position	5	10	Church wedding expensive	11	4
Economic reasons	6	9	Cohabit. undermines marriage	13	2
Sexual pleasure	6	9	GEC: desist from open-discipline	6	9
Frequency of teaching on sex rela.	7	8	Cohabitation poses challenge	13	2
Lack of accommodation	5	10	-----	0	0

Source: Field work, 2015.

The position of the GEC on cohabitation was known to five informants (33%); however, the other ten of the informants (67%) were not aware. Those aware explained that the church should discourage the practice. While three informants (20%) indicated economic reasons as the cause, six (40%) indicated ignorance. Consequently, six of the informants (40%) blended both sexual pleasure and ignorance as the cause. As to whether it was right to cohabit in order to have one's needs met; two informants (13%) agreed, but the other informants (87%) disagreed.

With regard to the GEC's teachings on sexual relationship, seven of the informants (47%) indicated that the message on cohabitation and marriage has not been preached very often, but the other eight informants (53%) noted that the message has not been preached at all. Notwithstanding the difference, all the informants (100%) indicated that if the message was preached, it would have been informative and helpful. The data shows that the seven informants agreed that the teaching has some influence on their lives. This brought to the fore the question of why, then, some young adults of the church still cohabit. Five of the

informants (33%) indicated that when some people are faced with accommodation problem in the urban areas, they choose to cohabit.

These young adults were asked to respond to whether they have witnessed customary married. All the informants (100%) indicated that they witnessed how customary marriage was done according to their tradition. While six of the informants (40%) mentioned that the items for customary marriage were expensive, the other nine (60%) indicated that they were affordable. As far as marriage is concerned, thirteen informants (87%) asserted that how painful it would be when young adults marry without the consent of their parents; but the other two have no idea about the consent of parents.

While eleven of the informants (73%) complained about the expensive items needed for church wedding, three informants disagreed. As a result, some of the informants wished they could have changed wearing of gowns to normal church clothing. Other things the informants wished to could change were the extravagant reception and bridal maids, if given the opportunity. With regard to the type of marriage one would have preferred; while six of the informants (40%) preferred customary marriage, the other nine (60%) preferred both customary marriage and church wedding. Their reasons were the honour that would be accorded the families and God.

The informants were asked whether cohabitation undermines marriage institution as ordained by God, or not. The data shows that a total of thirteen informants (87%) agreed that cohabitation undermines marriage institution; however, the other two disagreed. Those agreed established the fact of the holiness of marriage that it should involve God, because it was God who initiated the plan of marriage in the Bible. As to what were some of the effects cohabitation had on those engaged in it, they noted that it affected their qualification for leadership roles in the church, and prevented them from partaking the Lord's Supper.

As far as open-discipline is concerned, six of the informants (40%) agreed that the church should desist from open-discipline because those who are disciplined are leaving the church, but the other nine (60%) disagreed. All the informants (100%), however, disagreed to advocate for cohabitation as a normal practice by the church. Nonetheless, one cohabiter indicated that they understand cohabitation hinders the growth of the church; but how to stop the practice was her problem due to financial constraints; therefore, the church leadership should financially assist those who are in the act to stop it.²¹⁴

While thirteen of the informants (87%) agreed that cohabitation poses challenge to the GEC, the other two disagreed. Those agreed mentioned that the phenomenon was affecting leadership roles, Bible study and prayer life of the church. As a result, they suggested that the church should intensify teaching and counselling programmes. Finally, at group discussion, the informants suggested that those who are in the practice of cohabitation needed to be taken through intensive teaching and counselling.

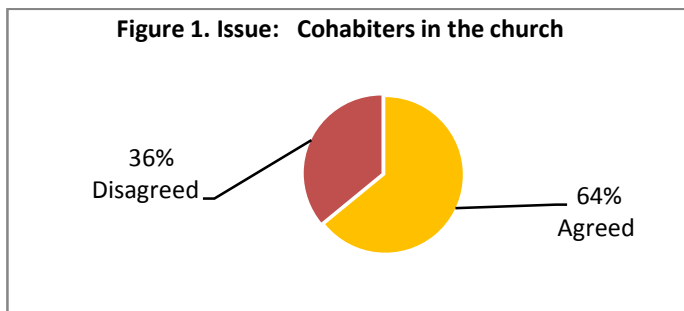
4.3 Findings

The objectives of this research are to examine the phenomenon of cohabitation among young adults of the GEC, and the position of the GEC on the practice. The findings below are based on the practice of cohabitation, and the factors motivated the act among the young adults of the GEC. In addition, the study identified some effects the phenomenon of cohabitation has on cohabiters and the church. Also, the morality of the act has been taken into consideration, which brought to the fore the possible solutions. Varied opinions were sampled from the leadership, resident pastors, presbyters and the young adults. As the overall objectives have been met, and also answered the questions posed, the following are the findings of the research.

²¹⁴One cohabiter in the Nyanyui church indicated that cohabitation hinders the spiritual growth of the church, and therefore appeal that the church leadership should assist those who are in the act to stop it.

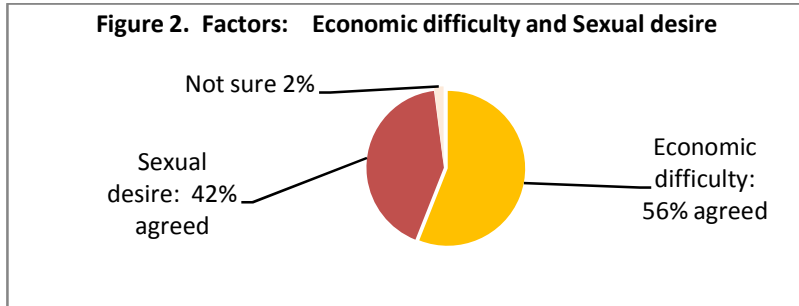
It was found that the entire resident pastors and presbyters (100%) agreed that there are cohabiters in the church. According to the study, twenty-two (49%) of the young adult participants are in sexual relationships. This means that while eleven are practising cohabitation, the other eleven are in sexual relationships. All the other twenty-three informants (51%) are unmarried and married young adults. This shows that while twenty-two of the young adults are in sexual relationships –including the eleven cohabiters; the other twenty-three are not. When the young adults alone were contacted, the data shows that thirty-six of the young adult informants (80%) agreed that some young adults of the GEC cohabit.

In figure 1, according to the analysis of all the responses, the study found that forty-one of the informants (64%) used in this work agreed that some members of the GEC cohabit. However, the other twenty-three informants (36%) disagreed.



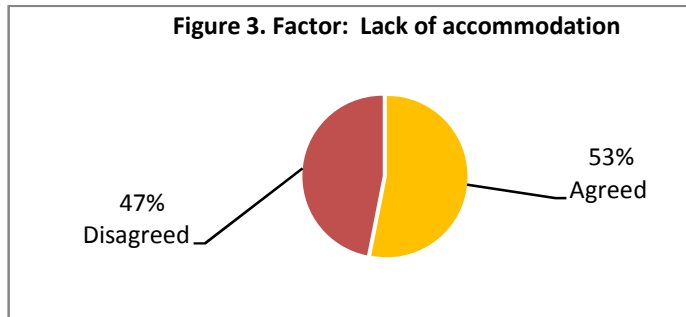
Source: Field work, 2015.

On the issue of the factors that underlie cohabitation among young adults of the GEC irrespective of the position of the GEC, thirty-six of the informants (56%) admit that due to economic difficulty some young adults cohabit, as shown in figure 2. The data shows that young adults cohabit when they are faced with economic difficulty since this alone accounted for 56%. But twenty-seven informants indicated sexual desire. This agrees with the response of three senior pastor informants that some are compelled to involve in cohabitation due to inability to control their sexual desire.



Source: Field work, 2015.

Lack of accommodation was identified as a factor by resident pastors and young adults. The data shows that two of the resident pastor informants (67%) agreed that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate cohabit. This response has been confirmed by ten presbyter informants (83%), and twenty-two young adults (49%). In figure 3, the data shows that out of the total informants who participated in this work, thirty-four of the informants (53%) indicated that young adults cohabit because of lack of accommodation, but the other thirty informants disagreed.



Source: Field work, 2015.

The leadership and all three resident pastor informants (100%) disagreed that those who have performed ‘knocking’ rituals and cohabit should be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities in the church, such as pastors and presbyters’ duties. Also, eleven of the presbyter informants (92%) disagreed that cohabiters who have performed ‘knocking’ rituals should be allowed to assume leadership positions in the church. This shows that 95%

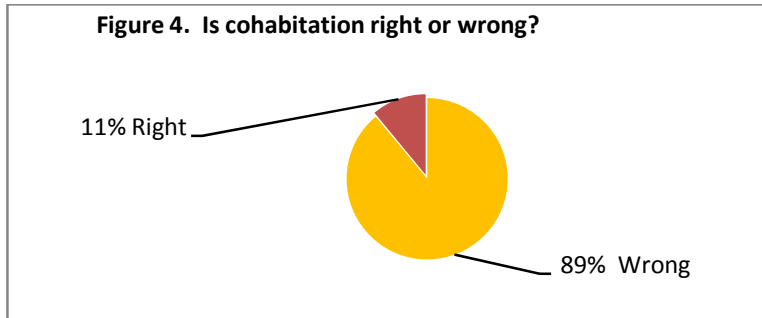
(leadership, resident pastors and presbyters) disagreed that cohabiters who have performed 'knocking' rituals should be allowed to assume leadership positions in the church.

When the young adults were contacted to know whether customary marriage was expensive, the data shows that customary marriage was affordable since this accounted for 58%. However, the young adult informants (76%) complained that the items needed for church wedding were expensive.

It has been found that some cohabiters use 'trial marriage' as a tool to study behaviour and compatibility. It has also been found that some young adults make sure the relationship is put on 'trial marriage' to ensure fertility. It implies that because of the expensive nature of church wedding, some young adults resort to trial marriage in order to be sure that they are compatible. The data shows that trial marriage is practised in the church because this alone accounted for 53%. It has also been found that some young adults make sure the relationship is put on 'trial marriage' to ensure fertility. This implies that because of the expensive nature of church wedding, some young adults resort to trial marriage in order to be sure the woman is fertile. This had been confirmed when three (3) cohabiters expressed their views and confirmed the fact that some of them are on trial marriage. Since normal adult human beings in normal circumstances are able to act and choose freely in order to meet their needs, whether someone engages himself or herself in an activity willingly or not has become a choice. According to the findings, trial marriage has negative effect on the church, such as inadequate leaders, slow spiritual growth of the church, less patronage of week-day programmes and the less manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the church.

They indicated that cohabitation as a phenomenon has some effects on cohabiters, such as, guilty conscience and loss of respect. Some receive very bad treatment from their partners, no cordial relationship between the two families who are not involved; lack of parental blessing and inability to participate in the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion).

In figure 4, the morality of cohabitation is determined by the informants used in this work. According to the study, 89% of the total informants indicated that cohabitation undermines marriage institution as ordained by God; therefore, sexual intercourse outside marriage is wrong. The conclusion of the informants falls within the framework of the



Source: Field work, 2015.

study that it is expected of Christians to live a life of chastity; therefore, the permissibility of sexual intercourse is only within marriage. According to Boss, chastity in Christianity as a moral virtue can be acquired from God's command, because no other justification is necessary for an action to be right among Christians other than God commanding it.²¹⁵ This means that it is not morally right for a Christian to live unchaste life, such as cohabitation, since he or she belongs to a particular religion, which is Christianity, with its moral principles.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

As mentioned earlier, the response of the GEC's leadership, the position of the GEC on the unacceptability of cohabitation as a sexual practice in the church, which has been confirmed by the three resident pastors of the target churches are in focus. Also, the entire presbyters in this work indicated that the members of the GEC should not be allowed to move into sexual

²¹⁵Judith A. Boss, *Perspectives on Ethics* (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998), 105.

relationship without being married; therefore cohabitation should be unacceptable in the GEC.

Although the practice of cohabitation is unacceptable, the data shows that all the senior pastor informants agreed that some young adults of the church cohabit. This shows that while twenty-two of the young adults are in sexual relationships, including the eleven cohabiters; the other twenty-three are not. Thirty-six of the young adult informants (80%) agreed that some young adults of the GEC cohabit. This means that an element of cohabitation can be found within the church, because a total of forty-one of the informants (64%) in this work agreed that some members of the GEC cohabit. This confirms that there are cohabiters in the church.

According to the responses of the informants in this study, there are some factors that invite the practice of cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC. These factors are named as ignorance, economic pressure, lack of accommodation, sexual pleasure, and expensive marriage rites. However, the GEC's leadership (100%) posited that though the young adults are faced with difficult economic problems, it is not right for any member of the GEC to cohabit. This shows that the leadership is aware that members of the church cohabit; nevertheless, they disapproved of the practice. When the young adults were contacted why they cohabit, fifteen of the informants (33%) indicated ignorance as a factor. This implies that there is some degree of ignorance in the church. Because while eighteen of the young adult informants indicated that the church teaches on 'Family life' very often, twenty-six of these informants (58%) noted that the message is not preached as often as expected.

It has also been found that sixteen of the informants (pastors and presbyters) (84%) emphasised that the teachings on the morality of sex within marriage (Family Life) were taught within the church. Nevertheless, the data shows that the young adults need more teaching on sexual relationships in the church, since this accounted for 58%. According to

Fedler, what Christians believe about the character and the will of God shapes their character and actions.²¹⁶ This might have culminated in lack of teaching in some of the churches, because the young adults did not see the effectiveness of the 'Family life' teaching in the church. It also shows that there might have been a gap between the teaching method and the audience, which might be rendering the teaching ineffective. It was also found that, though the leadership thinks the 'Family life' programme had been yielding results, about 51% of the young adults were unaware of the position of the church. The young adults noticed that although the 'Family life' teaching was being taught, this teaching was heavily based on marriage and family life, and not on cohabitation. Thus, the teaching has very little to say about those who are already in sexual relationships without actually bringing them to the level of marriage. This shows that though the 'Family life' teaching is being taught, the teaching is not done as expected by the young adults. This also shows that the 'Family life' teaching is ineffective, since this accounted for 58%.

On the issue of the factors that underlie cohabitation among young adults of the GEC irrespective of the position of the GEC, fourteen young adult informants registered for economic reasons as a factor; the rest blended both ignorance and economic reasons. Answer to the question of whether economic pressure and human needs should allow a Christian to cohabit. The informants agreed that economic reason is a factor. Though economic reason is a factor, there is the possibility that as human beings, new needs are developed in the process of meeting ones needs. Hence, Sharp, Register and Grimes noted that 'as we look around, we see other people enjoying things that we do not have, and we think that our level of well-being would be higher if we had those things, too.'²¹⁷ Such influences could be what people see their peers have as the sole criterion for judging their needs, forgetting the fact that what

²¹⁶ Kyle D. Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2006), 205.

²¹⁷ Ansel L. Sharp, Charles A. Register & Paul W. Grimes, *Economics of Social Issues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 4.

is satisfactory to one may not be satisfactory to another.²¹⁸ Also, according to Paul Johnson, the range of economic pressure including human needs vary with the specific situations in which people find themselves, from the elemental physical needs for maintaining life to the more sophisticated needs.²¹⁹ This shows that most of the young adults of the church may cohabit under economic difficulty in varying degrees. When resident pastors and presbyters were contacted, ten of the presbyter informants (83%) indicated that due to economic pressure, people who migrate from the rural areas to the urban centres cohabit. Thirty-six of the informants (56%) admit that due to economic difficulty some young adults cohabit. This agrees with Steinberg who noted that economic necessity confronts some youth to cohabit.²²⁰ As mentioned earlier, the range of human needs vary and some Christians believe that to be saved amount to having good life that includes good health, good marriage, and so forth.²²¹ This means that when these needs are not met after offering few prayers to God, they try to resort to solutions which are against their belief. Some people believe that rather than going about telling people about their problems and be ridiculed, it is better to cohabit with someone who is able to meet their needs.

One significant factor which contributes to cohabitation as indicated by some of the informants in this work is lack of accommodation. Lack of accommodation was identified as a factor by resident pastors and young adults. The data shows that two of the resident pastor informants (67%) agreed that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate are cohabiting. This has been confirmed by ten presbyter informants (83%), and twenty-two young adults (49%). A total of thirty-four of the informants (53%) indicated that young adults cohabit because of lack of accommodation. This agrees with Daniel Smith who noted in a research conducted among Christians in Nigeria that due to poverty, many young

²¹⁸Weldon Viertel & Joyce Viertel, *Marriage and Family Life* (Makati City: Carib Baptist Publishing, 1978), 29.

²¹⁹Paul E. Johnson, *Psychology of Religion* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 2004), 114.

²²⁰Lawrence Steinberg, *Adolescence* (New York: The McGraw Hill, 1999), 328.

²²¹Johnson, *Psychology of Religion*, 114.

adults migrate from their rural communities of origin to urban areas in search of employment.²²² This shows that in order to have access to further education, to learn a vocation, and employment, some young adults migrate from their place of residence to urban centres in search of these facilities. As these young people migrate, the inevitable situation that they are faced with is lack of accommodation. Because some of them could not afford a room for themselves, the probability of meeting this need is to live with someone who has this facility.

Sexual pleasure is one of the contributory factors noted to be causing cohabitation among the young adults. Three of the senior pastor informants agreed that some are compelled to involve in cohabitation due to inability to control their sexual desire, which could affect the spiritual growth of the church. This calls for the introduction of the ‘Family life’ teaching. Also, two resident pastors, seven presbyters, and fifteen young adult informants noted that some cohabit because of uncontrolled sexual behaviour. This agrees with Santrock that what makes females sexually active are ‘giving in to male pressure, gambling that sex is a way to get a boyfriend, curiosity and sexual desire.’²²³ Gill Jones also indicated that the youth are easily influenced by media representations of romantic love. According to the scholar, ‘the youth form the most passionate love relations, only to break them off as abruptly as they began them.’²²⁴ As they continue to behave this way, the possibility is to cohabit with someone, because they are not ready to marry legitimately.

Data shows that 95% (leadership, resident pastors and presbyters) disagreed that cohabiters who have performed ‘knocking’ rituals should be allowed to assume leadership positions in the church. In that regard, they referred to the constitution and the ‘Family life’

²²² Daniel Jordan Smith. “Youth, Sin and Sex in Nigeria: Christianity and HIV/AIDS-Related Beliefs and Behaviour among Rural-Urban Migrants” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* Vol. 6, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct., 2004), pp. 425-437. Published by: [Taylor & Francis, Ltd.](http://www.tandf.co.uk) Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4005308>. [accessed 28 January 2014].

²²³ John W. Santrock, *Adolescent*, 12th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 205.

²²⁴ Gill Jones, *Youth* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 8.

teaching of the GEC as guides. According to these informants, disallowing them would serve as a deterrent to others, because customarily, 'knocking' does not constitute marriage and also not in conformity to the Bible. Mbiti posited that marriage is honourable among Africans and the bride price is paid in varying degrees among them. He indicated that among Africans, the uses of intermediaries are important whose duty is to arrange for the marriage. Most importantly, according Mbiti, 'the girl and boy are not allowed to meet until the marriage has taken place' within some traditions.²²⁵ When the young adults were asked whether customary marriage was expensive, the data shows the affordability of customary marriage since this alone accounted for 51%. But nineteen of the young adult informants (42%) indicated that it was expensive because items demanded by families to marry their daughters seemed to be very expensive, and therefore, not affordable. Nevertheless, the other twenty-six (58%) thought customary marriage was affordable because not all parents demand expensive dowry. This data shows that customary marriage is affordable since this accounted for 58%.

As Christians, issues of wedding were raised where thirty-four of the young adult informants (76%) complained that the items needed for church wedding were expensive. While young adults indicated that church wedding seemed to be very expensive, surprisingly, some of the young adults have not performed the customary rites, which they claimed to be affordable. This shows a paradigm shift from expensive customary marriage to wedding. This is because Haselbarth indicated that 'the high sums demanded by some parents prevent marriages for years thus invite fornication and eloping.'²²⁶ On the contrary, the young adults indicated that church wedding rather seemed to be expensive. However, eleven of the young adult informants (24%) registered that even though wedding seems to be expensive, marriage should be treated holy and brought to the altar, devoid of extravagant and ostentatious

²²⁵John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*(New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 1989), 134.

²²⁶Hans Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context*(Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1976), 81.

approach. Nevertheless, this data shows that wedding ceremony is expensive for the young adults to perform since this accounted for 76%.

Two of the resident pastor informants (67%) noted that though the GEC accepts customary marriage, however, the church encourages members to bring their marriages to the altar for God's blessing. They advised that extravagant and ostentatious wedding, which saddled most young adults with huge debts, should be discouraged in the church.

It has also been found that some young adults make sure the relationship is put on 'trial marriage' to ensure fertility. This implies that because of the expensive nature of church wedding, some young adults resort to trial marriage in order to be sure the woman is fertile. Three (3) cohabiters expressed their views and confirmed the fact that some young adults practice trial marriage. Though some informants disagreed on trial marriage, the data shows that trial marriage is practised in the church because this alone accounted for 53%. Since normal adult human beings in normal circumstances are able to act and choose freely in order to meet their needs, whether someone engages himself or herself in an activity willingly or not has become a choice. This, however, also indicates the weakness of the 'Family life' teaching of the GEC.

Nevertheless, with regard to remorse, all the resident pastors (100%) agreed that some of the cohabiters show remorse for involving in the practice of cohabitation. They were of the view that the phenomenon most often involves those from poor families who are financially handicapped. This means that they cohabit on economic grounds against their wish. However, others move into sexual relationship not because they are in financial difficulty.

It was found that six of the presbyter informants (50%) noted that some young adults cohabit to escape marrying an impotent or infertile woman, but the other six informants disagreed. Jay Teachman noted that similar situation occurred among the Americans, where 'investigators expressed surprise at the result' because cohabitation has not provided the

answer to successful marriage.²²⁷ Hence, Kunhiyop asserted that those who insisted that children were essential to a marriage needed to be reminded that a childless marriage could still be full of love, companionship and sexual fulfilment. According to him, the presence of children is no guarantee that the above important aspects of marriage are actually present.²²⁸

The effects of the phenomenon of cohabitation have been taken into consideration to find out what are the impacts upon the individual and the GEC. On the question of whether the phenomenon poses a challenge to the church, two of the resident pastor informants agreed that cohabitation poses a challenge to the GEC, but one disagreed. The informant who disagreed posited that since teachings on ‘Family life’ are ongoing, cohabitation is no longer a challenge.

Identifying the ways in which the spiritual growth of the GEC can be affected by cohabitation, thirty-seven of the informants (82%) agreed and indicated that cohabitation has negative effect on the church and those who are involved in it. The informants indicated that cohabiters do not always have interest in Bible studies and prayer, therefore, do not patronise these programmes regularly. They also indicated guilty conscience towards the spouse’s family. Some receive very bad treatment from their partners. The relationship between the two families is not always cordial, especially, when they disapproved of the relationship. This agrees with the observation of DeGenova and Rice among the Americans that, cohabiters in general report poorer relationship quality than their married counterparts.²²⁹ They are not allowed to take part in the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion). Though some cohabiters patronise prayer programmes they do so, perhaps, to seek God’s favour and blessing to enable them regularise their relationships. The informants think this heavily depends on the

²²⁷Jay Teachman, “Premarital Sex, Premarital Cohabitation, and the Risk of Subsequent Marital Dissolution among Women.” Source: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (May, 2003), pp. 444-455. Published by: National Council on Family Relations Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600089> [accessed on 29 November 2013].

²²⁸Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*(Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 198.

²²⁹Mary Kay DeGenova & F. Philip Rice. *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families*(New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 201.

individual's aim of participation of the prayer programme. The informants also noted that they become illegible for leadership roles in the church. As a result, thirty-eight of the young adult informants (84%) agreed that cohabitation undermines marriage institution, but the other seven disagreed. According to Lewis, the permissibility of sex is only within marriage and it demands that couples live a chaste life. Therefore, chastity is a moral principle in marriage with complete faithfulness to one's partner, or else total abstinence from sex.²³⁰ In order to live a chaste life, Boss also noted that chastity in Christianity as a moral virtue can be acquired from God's commands, because no other justification is necessary for an action to be right among Christians other than God commanding it.²³¹

The informants, also, indicated the negative effect cohabitation has on the church, such as unavailability of future leaders, and slow spiritual growth of the church. The church experiences less patronage of week-day programmes, and less manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the church.

Nevertheless, according to Genesis 2: 21-25, all the presbyter informants share a common view that cohabitation undermines the marriage institution as ordained by God. They indicated that marriage is God's own initiative; it should be properly contracted and brought before God for his blessing. It can be said also that as seen from the informants, majority (58%) disagreed that due to the expensive nature of wedding, which enable some young adults to be saddled with huge debts, customary marriage should be accepted as legitimate marriage without church wedding. While the other presbyter informants (42%) agreed that customary marriage should be accepted, they also indicated that church blessing is important for the Christian.

The morality of the practice of cohabitation among the young adults within the GEC is the church's major concern. Therefore, the research is totally depended on the data

²³⁰C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 89.

²³¹Boss, *Perspectives on Ethics*, 105.

collected from the informants to determine the morality of cohabitation as a phenomenon in this study. As mentioned earlier, the GEC's leadership (100%) posited that though the young adults were faced with difficult economic problems, it was not right for any member of the GEC to cohabit. Hence, the GEC teaches that the Bible is the major and only source of knowledge of what is right and wrong, as far as Christianity is concerned. Also, it is the arbiter in matters of morality. According to Gaynor Borade, morality refers to standards of behaviour within an environment and a set of agreed upon rules for what is right and wrong, hence, it is required that Christians should live a chaste life.²³² According to Judith Boss, chastity as a Christian moral virtue can be acquired from God's commands, as mentioned earlier, because no other justification is necessary for an action to be right among Christians, other than God commanding it.²³³ This means that it is not morally right for a Christian to live unchaste life, since he or she belongs to a particular religion, which is Christianity with its moral principles. The reason why Christians have to live a life of chastity is that, 'Jesus is the model for Christians, the one whom Christians are called to follow.'²³⁴

In order to transform people's behaviour, the GEC sees it as a responsibility to ensure that teachings on morality are done, in order to help members to live good moral life. This, if not done well, will inevitably affect the spiritual growth of the GEC. Those who suggested that it is right to have one's needs met complained about the economic problems which compel some to cohabit. But ten of the informants (presbyters) (83%) indicated that due to lack of accommodation, some church members who migrate cohabit, as mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, Haselbarth posited that though people who still cherish virginity, chastity and

²³²Gaynor Borade, 'Difference between Ethics and Morality,' <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/difference-between-ethics-and-morality.html> Last Updated on 22 March 2012. [accessed on 13 October 2014].

²³³Boss, *Perspectives on Ethics*, 105.

²³⁴Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 2003), xi.

self-control are regarded as old-fashioned moralists, it is required that Christians live a life of chastity.²³⁵

According to the GEC, the permissibility of sexual intercourse outside marriage is unacceptable, but sex within marriage is acceptable because marriage is God-ordained lifelong contract, and therefore, needs to be done properly. Sex outside marriage is forbidden in Christianity because it is against the teachings of the Bible.²³⁶ This agrees with Feinberg and Feinberg who argue that while chastity is recognised as having sex with only ones husband or wife, it is recognized that sex is both natural and enjoyable, but it should never be used merely for physical gratification. Rather, it should be the expression of deep love and affection, especially between husband and wife.²³⁷ Hence, the position of the GEC that cohabitation as a sexual practice should not be encouraged in the church because it is against God's institution of marriage.

The young adults thought that, perhaps, due to economic hardship, members turn deaf ear to the teachings that have to do with sexual immorality. However, we agree with Kunhiyop that though the young adults are faced with diverse problems, God has given human beings responsibility for making right decisions and acting ethically.²³⁸ To those who agreed, cohabitation is morally wrong, therefore the church should not tolerate it on the grounds of economic difficulties.

Though some of the young adults have not witnessed customary marriage in their life, the majority consented to its importance. Mbiti stood for the sanctity in marriage and held a communal position that marriage involves the family and paying the bride gift is very important in Africa, though in varying degrees.²³⁹ This shows that the young adults are aware

²³⁵Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context*, 82.

²³⁶Global Evangelical Press, *2008 Constitution of the Global Evangelical Church*, 124.

²³⁷John S. Feinberg & Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*. (Illinois: Crossway Books. A Division of Good News Publishers. 60187, 1993), 11.

²³⁸Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 56.

²³⁹Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 137.

of the immorality of the practice, and wished they could shun the wrong and do the right thing.

Regarding church discipline, two of the resident pastor informants agreed that the church should desist from open-discipline because some members were leaving the church. They indicated that some members recognised the commands of God, and show remorse when they sinned. All three resident pastor informants gave evidence that, perhaps some might have turned deaf ears to the teaching because of financial hardship; nevertheless, those who heeded repent of it. According to Fedler, in matters of morality, ‘anything that is internally inconsistent with whatever one does, that act is wrong and vice versa.’²⁴⁰ This is because when Christians believe that to receive Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit now come to live in them and convicts them of their wrong doings, they would live chaste lives and marry legitimately.²⁴¹ According to Stassen and Gushee, it is the way of life set forth by Jesus Christ applied to the daily demands and decisions as one focuses on the nature of an action.²⁴² When the rules that Jesus taught are obeyed and Christian virtues are cultivated, situation would not be based on an argument that in a time of difficult situations Jesus is no longer Lord, and his way is no longer relevant.²⁴³

According to the study, 89% of the total informants indicated that cohabitation undermines marriage institution as ordained by God. In order to maintain discipline in the church, the church leadership meted out discipline to those involve in immoral practices, including cohabitation. While 62% of the informants, excluding the GEC’s leadership – the four senior pastors – agreed that the church should continue to take disciplinary action against those involved in cohabitation, 38% indicated that the church should desist from open-discipline, because some people were leaving the church. In this regard, the young adults

²⁴⁰Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 64.

²⁴¹-----, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 64.

²⁴²Stassen et al., *Kingdom Ethics*, 111.

²⁴³-----, *Kingdom Ethics*, 165.

suggested that leadership should adopt a more flexible approach to discipline. The questions are whether open-discipline really brings transformation, and does function as a deterrent to others? Or it is applied equally across the church? If open-discipline is not yielding good result, then, a better means of dealing with the issue needs to be sought and applied. This poses a challenge to the church.

As to the question of what role does the church play to assist those who are marrying? The resident pastor informants indicated that they are taken through premarital counselling, encourage them of simple marriage, and share their experiences with them. They also suggested that the GEC should continue to discourage cohabitation and extravagant expenses, and give financial assistance to those who involve in cohabitation to enable them regularise their relationships.

Due to the unacceptability of the phenomenon of cohabitation within the GEC, the young adults expressed their own general opinion on the issue of cohabitation in the church that it should be discouraged. In order to come with a solution, the GEC should appoint a committee to find means to arrest the situation. Also, the long bridal trains and other frivolous additions should be seriously discouraged, because it saddled some couples with huge debt after marriage. Finally, teaching on sexual relationships should be intensified in order to educate the young ones in the church. This requires that there is the need for the GEC's leadership to come out with its own teaching material, which should come out clearly on cohabitation, marriage and family life.

According to Mbiti, marriage does not involve just the man and woman. It involves many people and a bride gift is paid to honour the woman's family. This is done in varying degrees among Africans. He argued that though West Africans marry primarily for procreation, the desire for children cannot be satisfied except in a legitimate marriage.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 141.

Nsamenang also argued that it is God who gives or denies fertility, a situation which should not attract trial marriage.²⁴⁵ Though the majority seemed to disagree, we think if it were a contributory factor to cohabitation in the church, it should be studied and dealt with appropriately.

It had been indicated earlier that in order to have access to further education, learn a vocation, and employment, some young adults migrate from their place of residence to urban centres in search of these facilities. Hence, some of them are faced with accommodation problems. Because they could not afford rooms for themselves, they live with someone who has this facility. In the cause of living together, some of them move into sexual relationships. In that regard, the informants suggested that, though migration sometimes becomes necessary, completing one level of education does not necessarily mean to migrate; they need to stay home and work. As Christians they are expected to live chaste lives and avoid every form of sexual relationship outside marriage.

They wish that intensive education is done in the church and basic schools because the practice of cohabitation is against God's institution of marriage. This agrees with Mullin who noted that experiments before marriage to see if the couple are both capable are common, but they are at variance with the Christian code of morality, a practice which needs to be forbidden.²⁴⁶ It requires that the youth be taught positively to accept certain standards as essential for their own spiritual development. Hence, they suggested that the church should put some mechanism in place, such as regular teaching of the dangers associated with the act, and also conduct intensive counselling programmes for cohabiters, after which they can be disciplined.

²⁴⁵A Bame Nsamenang, *Human Development in Cultural Context: A Third World Perspective* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992), 141.

²⁴⁶Joseph Mullin, *The Catholic Church in Modern Africa: A Pastoral Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Limited, 1965), 156.

At group discussions, the individual's opinions were shared where some attributed cohabitation to ignorance of the 'Family life' teaching of the GEC, and sexual pleasure of those who are not under any economic difficulty, and yet, they cohabit. Some of the young adults argue that as human beings they have sexual instinct, because humans as sexual beings are vulnerable to sexual drive. They, therefore, wanted to know why God had to put restriction to the use of sex since he made humans sexual beings. Again, they argued that the natural purpose of sexual relation is pleasure, because nature has so constructed the nerve components of the genital system to be utilised as such. They were made to understand that God knew that sexual immorality had a strong power to destroy families and society; therefore, sex should be used only within marriage. Therefore, where people move into sexual relationships without bringing it to the level of marriage is unacceptable and discouraged in the GEC.

The explanation was accepted and some of the young adults indicated that the teachings of Jesus have to be followed. Thus, though the young adult is a sexual being who has the right to express his or her sexuality, it can only be used in marriage because the young adult holds a religious belief and in a particular church, which is the GEC. Again, they understood that Jesus presents a goal for which all Christians are to strive; he sets us to work pursuing that goal, and Matthew 6: 33 is concerned about pursuing that good end, thus, seek first the kingdom and all things shall be added. Also, it is required from Christians to exhibit good moral character when faced with difficult situations and sexual urge.

In order to find solution to the issue of cohabitation, Stassen and Gushee share the view that Jesus Christ demonstrated selfless love so that all humanity may be saved, and in like manner Christians are to follow suit.²⁴⁷ In this sense if cohabiters can be assisted to regularise their relationships, as they also try to live morally; then we are demonstrating

²⁴⁷ Stassen et al., *Kingdom Ethics*, 45 and 333.

Christ-like love and justice as the Bible encourages Christians to do. Love to enemy as a strategy of the kingdom is much more than a general expression of goodwill towards humanity.²⁴⁸ Rather than a kind of affection, agape is an active concern for others, as well as cohabiters. It is the desire to see them flourish as God intended them to. It is to treat the cohabiter as precious in God's sight, and therefore to be as concerned about their well-being as our own.²⁴⁹ Since the findings show that the solution to the practice of cohabitation is a challenge to the GEC, there is the need to explore other means of facing this challenge.

Also, according to John Dewey, moral problems arise; however, the goal of moral deliberation is to find a course of action that would turn the moral problem into harmony.²⁵⁰ The suggested solution to the GEC's leadership is that, there is the need for the church's leadership to come up with packages for young adults who would like to marry in order to enhance proper marriage in the church. If this is done well, it will help the members of the GEC to transform in order to live good moral lives willingly, and not under fear and compulsion. As members are willingly living the Christian life, then, the cohabiter will also be able to demonstrate Christ-like life to show remorse willingly, as reciprocity of mutual love shown to them by the church. Perhaps, this would mean that the youth be taught positively to accept certain standards as essential for their own spiritual development. Also, since it is required from Christians to exhibit moral virtues when faced with difficult situations, then the Christian cohabiter would need to encourage himself or herself that it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Interestingly, financial assistance attracted a considerable amount of opinions from the young adults, which shows what they were looking for in the church. This opinion has been supported by evidence of the responses of both resident pastors and young adults. This

²⁴⁸Stassen et al., *Kingdom Ethics*, 21.

²⁴⁹Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics*, 178.

²⁵⁰Britannica Student Library. *Ethics and Morality*. Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010).

was because the high percentage of data (opinions) elicited for most of the responses indicated that a substantial number of the informants expected the church to have this facility. The high expectation may be attributed to the problems the young adults are faced with, especially, difficult economic issues. The data shows that if the church's leadership had come up with packages for young adults who wanted to marry, it would have enhanced proper marriage in the church. In this regard, the GEC needs to find some means of meeting this need of the members. Nonetheless, since the GEC may not be able to have a continuous means of financial assistance the young adults are looking for, there is the need for leaders of the individual churches to organise lessons on business for them. This will help them fulfil their creative potentials.

Since the young adults accepted their religious beliefs, the GEC also has to accept to encourage vital innovations in her disciplinary methods. According to Kwame Gyekye, innovation does not mean a total rejection of the entire heritage of a people.²⁵¹ Thus, adopting practices that would bring development to the people, as moral norms are considered, while discarding 'unhelpful' disciplinary methods.²⁵² Since teaching is one of the vital tools to instil morality, the researcher agrees with Paul Landis that the youth be taught positively to accept certain standards as essential to their own spiritual development and greatest happiness.²⁵³

Having indicated the findings of this research the researcher, however, agrees with Kunhiyop's assertion that the essence of the Christian life is really character or virtue, because God has given us certain definite and obligatory universal rules, such as you shall not give false testimony against your neighbour, you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not murder.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 67.

²⁵²Joshua K. Kudadjie, Rebecca Y. Ganasah and Adekunle Alalade, *Religion Morality and West African Society* (n.p. West African Association of Theological Institutions, 2002), 31.

²⁵³Paul H. Landis, *Adolescent and Youth: The Process of Maturing* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 183.

²⁵⁴Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 73.

Landis posited that the concern of the church should be ‘to emphasise the great moral teachings of Christ, their direct application to current social affairs, and the practice of these moral principles.’²⁵⁵ If Christians have been having sexual relations before marriage, they should be requested to stop, and referred to Scripture which condemns fornication, which is similar to cohabitation.²⁵⁶ Though three (3) cohabiters expressed their views that they were on ‘trial marriage,’ at group discussion all young adult informants realised the immorality of the practice of cohabitation, and agreed not to advocate for cohabitation as a normal practice.

Also, the study suggests that there is the need for education institutions to intensify, if not modify, their curriculum on moral education in order to instil sound morality in children, if this is done well, it would inform the children to make good moral decisions as future leaders of the church and Ghana.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data collected from the target informants for this study. Having discussed the views of the informants, the findings are divided into five categories. The study looked at the act of cohabitation; the contributory factors that led to the practice; the effect of the practice of cohabitation on cohabiters and the church; the morality of the practice; and possible solutions. The leadership of the GEC expressed a considerable number of opinions when they were interviewed, and also indicated that ‘Family life’ was being taught in the church. The resident pastors and the presbyters responded to the questions posed by the researcher, and also expressed their numerous views relating to the unacceptability of the phenomenon under study within the GEC. The young adults, who were the centre of the study, freely contributed to the study.

²⁵⁵Landis, *Adolescence and Youth*, 184.

²⁵⁶Weldon Viertel & Joyce Viertel. *Marriage and Family Life*(Makati City: Carib Baptist Publishing, 1978), 67.

The next chapter focuses on the summary and the major findings of this work. This contributes to the given recommendations, contribution to knowledge, allowance for future research and conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw the position of the GEC on cohabitation. The resident pastors of the selected churches also shared their views, which were augmented by those of the respective churches' presbyters. In addition, in order to arrive at relevant major findings, the young adults were made to answer questionnaires and also shared their views.

The work discusses the extent to which the objectives of the thesis have reached. Cohabitation as a phenomenon discussed in this work is a global ethical issue. This is based on the fact that despite the cultural values of Ghana, cohabitation is practised among Ghanaians. This equally happens among Christians. In spite of the core values of the GEC, some young adults within the church still cohabit. This section is to summarise the study, give the major findings, recommendations and general conclusion.

5.2 Summary

The objectives of this research are to examine the phenomenon of cohabitation among young adults of the GEC, and the position of the GEC on the practice. Cohabitation as a phenomenon has received varied opinions from different people of the world in accordance with their own beliefs and moral values. It has been noticed that Africans pride themselves in their moral principle of permissibility of sexual intercourse only within marriage. Ethical requirements, such as chastity before marriage, and faithfulness in marriage are cherished among them. Although chastity is an ethical requirement, cohabitation has become a prevalent social phenomenon in Ghanaian society, of which the GEC is not an exception. Hence, the GEC introduced 'Family life' teaching to instil morality in its members, but it has been realised that some members still cohabit.

In the preceding chapters, we looked at the problem the researcher has, which motivated this research, and the methodology and methods applied to achieve the objectives of the study. The researcher used qualitative technique in data collection and analysis. The GEC leadership, resident pastors, presbyters and young adults were contacted as the primary source for data collection.

The relevant works of literature contacted in this work were used to guide the direction of the discussion. The concept of Legitimacy of Marriage based on African marriage and Christian theological principles had been conducive to the discussions and findings. This means that when people find themselves in difficult situations, what tradition and the Bible teaches are binding and should be followed. It is expected that when Christians are faced with difficult situations, they should be able to exhibit Christian moral virtues, such as chastity in sexual relationship, particularly in marriage, which conceptually grounds this research.

In chapter two, the study shows that cohabitation is an ethical phenomenon, which has been indicated in different forms. The chapter explains some human sexual behaviour in sexual ethics, and the nature of cohabitation that are pertinent for assessing the morality of cohabitation. The study indicates that there are varieties of types of cohabitation, as revealed by the literature contacted in this work, which are not different from the practice among Ghanaians. The study also shows that cohabitation and marriage are not the same. While cohabitation mostly involves only the two people in love, marriage is communal, which involves families of the man and the woman.

In chapter three the study shows some fundamental Christian sexual ethical teachings. It also leads us to the GEC's ethical teachings on sexual relationship. Since the GEC has no teaching on cohabitation; the morality of the phenomenon of cohabitation was discussed in the light of the responses of the GEC's leadership to the position of the church on

cohabitation. The data shows that the GEC has not documented its teachings on family and related subjects, therefore, transcribed face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher had been used in the work. Christian ethics and the reality of cohabitation had been discussed and based on the free choice people made when faced with difficult situations.

In chapter four, data shows that young adults cohabit in the GEC because this alone accounted for 64%. Factors, such as economic difficulties, lack of accommodation, expensive marriage, trial marriage, and sexual pleasure had been identified to have contributed to cohabitation among the young adults. The practice of cohabitation prevented cohabiters from assuming leadership responsibilities in the church.

After adequate data had been collected and analysed, indeed, the findings were consistent with the notion that cohabitation was being practised among the young adults. By virtue of the nature of the phenomenon, the informants indicated that, indeed, cohabitation undermines the marriage institution as ordained by God. The young adults agreed that cohabitation poses challenge to the GEC and also affecting the spiritual growth of the church. They mentioned some particular areas as being affected by the practice of cohabitation. Some of these areas were leadership positions, which the young adults were not able to assume in the church. They had not been patronising Bible studies and prayer sessions; a behaviour which had been affecting the individual's spiritual life, as well as the spiritual growth of the church.

The possible solutions identified were the need to intensify teaching on the subject matter, proper counselling, and attractive welfare packages for prospective marriage couples. In the case where discipline had to be meted out, it should be the last resort, and done in a lovely manner. Cohabiters should be taken through counselling to create awareness and also help them regularise their relationships.

The informants held the view that the church should preach against the phenomenon of cohabitation, and also help those involved to regularise their relationship. It had been found that though the GEC introduced 'Family life' teaching in the church, there was only scanty material on this lesson, therefore, the teaching was ineffective. This shows that teaching materials need to be made available to every pastor, if possible, it should be given them free-of-charge. Some should be made available for members to buy, if not to be given free. Twenty-three young adults (51%) preferred customary marriage without church wedding, and yet some of the young adults have not performed the customary rites, which they claimed to be affordable. The morality of the phenomenon of cohabitation had been discussed in the light of legitimacy of marriage as blended with African marriage and Christian deontological principles. Moral education needs to be intensified in education institutions in Ghana. This enables the discussion to conclude that cohabitation as an ethical phenomenon is unacceptable within the GEC and among Ghanaian cultural diversity.

5.3 Major Findings

According to Fedler, anything that is virtually inconsistent with whatever one does, then, that act is wrong and vice versa.²⁵⁷ The major findings below are based on the practice of cohabitation as an ethical phenomenon among the young adults of the GEC. The study considers the factors contributed to the practice, and the effects on cohabiters and the church. It also includes the morality of cohabitation and possible solution.

The study found that forty-one of the informants (64%) used in this work agreed that members of the GEC cohabit. On the issue of the factors that underlie cohabitation among young adults of the GEC irrespective of the position of the GEC, thirty-six of the informants (56%) admit that due to economic difficulty some young adults cohabit. Thirty-four of the

²⁵⁷Kyle D. Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality*(Westminster: John Knox Press, 2006), 64.

informants (53%) indicated that young adults cohabit because of lack of accommodation. It had been indicated that cohabitation had negative effect on the church, such as shortage of qualified leaders, slow spiritual growth of the church, and less patronage of week-day programmes. Also, the practice of cohabitation negatively had some effects on cohabiters, such as, bad treatment from their partners, no cordial relationship between the two families who were not involved to give their seal of approval, and lack of parental blessing.

It had also been found that some young adults put their relationships on 'trial marriage' to ensure fertility. This implies that because of the expensive nature of church wedding, some young adults resort to trial marriage in order to be sure the woman is fertile. This had been confirmed when three (3) cohabiters expressed their views and confirmed the fact that some of them involved in trial marriage. Though some informants disagreed on trial marriage, the data shows that trial marriage is practised in the church because this alone accounted for 53%. It was also indicated that, since normal adult human beings in normal circumstances are able to act and choose freely in order to meet their needs, whether someone engages himself or herself in an activity willingly or not has become a choice.

The morality of cohabitation had been determined by the informants used in this study. According to the study, 89% of the total informants indicated unacceptability of sex outside marriage that cohabitation undermines marriage institution as ordained by God.

5.4 Fulfilling the Objectives of the Study

The main individual objectives of this research are to examine the phenomenon of cohabitation among the young adults and the position of the GEC on the practice. The factors that underlie youth cohabitation in the GEC have been investigated. Also, the morality of the phenomenon has been discussed in light of the teaching of the church. The study achieves the main aim of the thesis. In order to unfold this main objective, the researcher used relevant

literatures and conducted face-to-face interviews, group discussions and administered questionnaires.

i. The factors that underlie the young adults' cohabitation in the GEC were investigated.

After the researcher has contacted the GEC's leadership, resident pastors, presbyters, and young adults, he found that young adults cohabit for economic reasons. Also, when young adults migrate from their place of residence to urban centres, they are faced with accommodation problems. Some face similar problem at their place of residence. Sexual pleasure has also been indicated as a contributory factor.

ii. The phenomenon of cohabitation in Ghana and the position of the GEC on the practice

of cohabitation were examined. It has been noticed that cohabitation as a sexual phenomenon is practised among Ghanaian in various degrees, such as trial marriage and for recipe from being single. Others practice cohabitation for sexual pleasure and human needs; nevertheless, the practice has been unacceptable within Ghanaian society. The GEC's position discourages cohabitation as a sexual practice among members of the church. The church encourages the morality of sex only within marriage, and also encourages members to either marry or live a life of chastity until one is ready to marry.

iii. The phenomenon of cohabitation has been analysed in the light of the teachings of the

church, and the factors motivating the practice of cohabitation among the young adults of the GEC. The teaching of the GEC acknowledges that marriage is a divine institution ordained by God and has to be observed as such. The ethical teaching of the GEC does not permit sexual relationships when people are faced with economic difficulty. Though Christians are confronted with economic, accommodation and human needs, such as food and clothing, which very often invite sex, the Christian needs to remember to seek the kingdom of heaven as a good end of the Christian life. All young adult

informants realised the immorality of the practice of cohabitation, and agreed not to advocate for cohabitation as a normal practice. This means that they all agree that it is not right for a Christian to live unchaste life. Therefore, the practice of cohabitation is not morally right among Ghanaian society and in the GEC.

5.5 Recommendations

For easy consideration of the recommendations of cohabitation among young adults, it has been categorised. This includes recommendations to the GEC leadership, resident pastors and presbyters, the young adults, GEC parents and Ghana Education Service.

5.5.1 Recommendations to the GEC's Leadership

After taking time to research into cohabitation as a phenomenon among young adults of the GEC, the researcher noticed that the church has a genuine position. Because to maintain the standard of morality, and to ensure intensive teachings on morality of sexual intercourse only within marriage and marriage life, is the GEC's responsibility. The researcher also noticed that the aim of the teachings of the GEC is to inculcate moral virtues in the life of its members, which should be exhibited in daily living.

However, the challenge this researcher encountered during data collection was the fact that, the GEC depends on materials from outside the church to teach members on family life. Also, the researcher noticed that although the 'Family life' teaching is ongoing, this teaching is heavily based on marriage and family life, and not on cohabitation, factors, and its effects. Thus, the teaching has very little to say about those who are already in sexual relationships without actually bringing them to the level of marriage. Furthermore, the researcher finds that although the leadership of the GEC tasked pastors with the teaching of 'Family life,' it seems there is no clear syllabus for such a teaching. If there is, perhaps, some

of the pastors and other leaders are not following the day reserved for the teaching. Hence, the researcher thinks the GEC leadership has very weak grounds to mete out open-discipline when members are found cohabiting.

When the researcher was administering his questionnaire, he met a considerable number of members who were afraid to be part of the sampled group, just because they could not write, therefore, were not included in the study. Hence, the researcher humbly recommends the following:

On the basis of the data collected, discussion and findings of this work, the researcher recommends that there is the need for the GEC to come up with proper teaching document on 'Family life,' because there seems to be no teaching material prepared by the GEC on the subject, 'Family life.' In order to achieve this goal, there is the need for the GEC leadership to make use of human resource of the GEC to prepare the teaching material. The methodology the GEC leadership needs to employ is to invite psychologists, ethicists, theologians, sociologists, and philosophers to come together in order to brainstorm ways the GEC could achieve the desired effects of the teaching on 'Family life' and other related subjects. These scholars should be assigned to re-examine the phenomenon under discussion, the factors that invite the practice, and effects it has on the cohabiter and the GEC, then, come out with documented feasible solutions, put together in a form of a teaching material for the use of the church. Some of the grounds they have to build their investigation on are, whether some members are on trial marriage just because they think the practice is a choice, and so forth. The result would serve as a teaching tool, and a new revolution in the GEC, which could help the young adults and other members of the GEC. This work is something new the researcher wants to introduce into the GEC.

The fact that the GEC is a part of the Christian community whose duty is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it should not encourage cohabitation; however, instead of open-

discipline those involved in the practice should be helped to regularise their relationships. Because the church cannot abandon cohabiters, they should be allowed to remain in the church. However, in order to recognise chastity and the morality of sex, the church could continue to deny them of leadership roles. The couple should not be refused marriage solely on the basis of cohabitation, especially when children are involved. Marriage preparation may continue even if the couple refused to separate. Pastors can be assured that to assist couples in regularising their situation is not to approve of cohabitation.

We realise that since the 'Family life' and other related sexual ethical lessons are very technical subject areas, there is the need that trained ministers handle this type of lessons. These ministers, which may involve both clergy and laity, need to be properly trained in order to deliver the teachings effectively. Teaching materials need to be made available to every pastor free-of-charge. This will empower them and also serve as a working tool as they approach the subject matter. Some of the material should be made available for members to buy, if not to be given free-of-charge.

There is the need for leadership to see to it that extravagant and ostentatious weddings are discouraged in the church, in order to avoid couples being saddled with huge debts.

The researcher recommends that the GEC embark upon literacy class to help those who could not read the Bible, and digest the word for themselves.

5.5.2 Recommendations to Resident Pastors and Presbyters (Elders)

The researcher humbly recommends the following:

The researcher recommends that there is the need for pastors and presbyters to play a decisive role in moulding the life of young believers, by seriously paying attention to teachings on morality in order to inculcate moral values, which will help promote abstinence or postponement of sexual debut among young adults. Seminars should be embarked upon to

create awareness about the negative impacts of cohabitation on marital homes and the church. The position of the GEC on cohabitation and the effects should stand out and made clear in sermons and teachings for members to understand.

The day reserved for 'Family life' needs to be observed by all leaders as much time is given to teaching on sexual relationships within the GEC.

Regarding the problem of fertility, couples are to be taught that it is God who gives or denies fertility, a situation which should not attract trial marriage.

Since the members saw the need for the church to embark on teaching them how to work, teachings on business need to be organised for them. Counselling sessions should be encouraged to enable members seek advice in order to find means of regularising their relationships. Also, if possible, mass blessing of marriages should be encouraged.

Again, the researcher thinks welfare facilities should also include attractive marriage supports to encourage the youth to marry properly.

5.5.3 Recommendations to the Young Adults

The researcher recommends that there is the need for the young adults to accept religious teachings and practices, since that is what gives them unique identification as Christians. Young adults need to patronise and involve themselves in religious practices, such as daily prayer, and Bible study. This would help their spiritual development if they are able to patronise such church programmes, which the church organises for their spiritual development.

The young adults would have to desist from organising extravagant and ostentatious marriage ceremonies, which eventually saddled some with huge debt.

Though migration from one geographical area to another sometimes becomes necessary; completing education does not necessarily mean to migrate. Unless it has become

necessary, the young adults are encouraged to try to stay at home or their place of origin and find some work to do. Because many young adults migrate from their rural communities of origin to urban areas in search of non-existing employment, and become stranded in the cities. This situation usually invites the practice of cohabitation.

There is the need for the young adults to be willing to work, or find a true vocation and be content with what they get from their work in order to avoid cohabitation.

Also, young adults who are involved in the practice of cohabitation have to seek counsel in order to find means of regularising their relationships. They should eschew sexual immorality, practise abstinence from sex until they are ready for marriage, and try to exhibit moral virtues as future leaders of the GEC and Ghana.

5.5.4 Recommendation to GEC Parents

According to the literature contacted and included in this work, it has been identified that marriage is cherished and honoured among Ghanaians, and families wish to see their children marry according to Ghanaian custom. Though cohabitation is very similar to marriage, it is unacceptable among them. The researcher recommends that there is the need for parents and families to educate their children and all young people that, though cohabitation is very similar to marriage, it is unacceptable within indigenous Ghanaian culture.

5.5.5 Recommendation to Ghana Education Service

Ministry of Education also needs to make moral education attractive as well as functional. The morality of sex needs to stand out clear for students to understand. When this is done, it will inform students that parents are to give their seal of approval to marriages, which build family relationships because marriage within Ghanaian culture is communal.

5.5.6 Recommendations on Areas for Future Research Work

The researcher thinks that since cohabitation is a broad and complex subject, which is not limited to only the GEC, future researchers are to do further research on the subject. Some of the areas that need to be researched into are:

Other church denominations in Ghana can also look into the practice of cohabitation, in order to find out the opinion of other young adults toward the practice, and its effect on the churches and Ghana as a whole.

Finally, there is also the need for future research in some Ghanaian communities, if not the entire country, in order to know the rate at which cohabitation is growing in Ghana.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

What this work contributes to knowledge is that while numerous literatures dealt with cohabitation as a phenomenon from sociological, cultural, and religious perspectives, they were not done within any church denomination. Therefore, this work fills the gap as it has been done from the Christian religious perspective, but specifically within a church denomination, which is the GEC.

5.7 Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of cohabitation among young adults of the GEC. Making reference to sexual ethical views, what cohabitation really means, the distinction between marriage and cohabitation, and the phenomenon of cohabitation among Ghanaians, cohabitation is used in this context to mean living together in sexual relationship without being marriage. The main objective of this study is to find out why the young adults of the GEC cohabit.

The GEC strongly disallows cohabitation and prevents those involve and other deviant behaviour from assuming leadership responsibilities in the church. The church has introduced teachings on sexual relationships to help young adults desist from the practice. Notwithstanding the numerous teachings, it has been observed that some members still cohabit. After contacting a considerable number of scholars, conducting face-to-face interviews, group discussions and administering questionnaires, the predominant grounds for the practice of cohabitation are economic difficulties, lack of accommodation, trial marriage and sexual desire. These factors are ethical subject matters, which require an in-depth study.

The researcher thinks the GEC's leadership is doing her best to promote sanctity in the church for spiritual growth. This is apparent when the leadership introduced teachings on morality of sexual intercourse only within marriage and 'Family life' lesson in the church to educate members on marriage. Though the GEC acknowledges customary marriage, the church appreciates that marriages are brought to the altar for God's blessing. However, some members are in sexual relationships which are not customarily brought to the level of marriage. This requires intensive teaching of the GEC, regarding the morality of sexual intercourse and family life. Though there is a lesson on family life, the researcher however, notices that there has not been any mechanism in place to ensure that the 'Family life' lesson is taught effectively. Again, the researcher realises that since the 'Family life' lessons are very technical subject areas, there is the need that trained ministers handle this type of lessons.

Though some of those who are found practising cohabitation are helped to regularise their relationships, the young adults call for a flexible way of effecting discipline. It has also been noticed that the position of the GEC and the effect of the phenomenon are not made clear to the members to understand. Since the members are oblivious of the position of the GEC on cohabitation, the researcher thinks the GEC's leadership has very weak grounds to

mete out open-discipline when members are found cohabiting. Hence, the researcher suggests that study materials are to be made available to the entire membership of the GEC on sexual relationships, especially, on cohabitation and marriage.

Finally, financial assistance has highly been taken into consideration by the young adults. If the GEC has some financial support unions, then, it shows that those facilities are not attractive. If they were made attractive, the young adults would not have lamented about financial difficulties among them. The researcher believes that the above recommendations, when considered will go a long way to help Christians live morally and marry legitimately in the GEC, and also in other churches in Ghana.

6. 0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORS AND PRESBYTERS

Name:

Congregation:

Date:

Write your own answer in the spaces provided. Where alternatives have been provided **tick the right answers only.**

1. What is the position of the Global Evangelical Church (GEC) on cohabitation?
.....
.....
2. Members of the GEC are not made to understand the position of the church on cohabitation?
True False
3. Some young adults in the GEC are cohabiting.
True False
4. Do you agree that due to economic pressure young adults cohabit?
Yes No
5. Can you give reasons for your response above?
.....
.....
6. Is it wrong for someone to cohabit because of economic pressure?
Yes No
7. Kindly state your reason?
.....
.....
8. Due to sexual pleasure some young adults cohabit.
Agree Disagree
9. Some church members who migrate to the urban centres for employment cohabit.
Agree Disagree
10. Why?.....
.....

11. In order to escape marrying an “infertile woman” young adults choose to be on trial marriage.
True False
12. Cohabitors who have performed “knocking” rituals should be allowed to assume leadership responsibilities in the church. Agree
Disagree
13. Why?.....
14. In your own opinion, why is cohabitation practised by some young adults in your church?
.....
.....
15. In your view, do you think some of the cohabiters show remorse for cohabiting?
Yes No
16. Kindly state why they show or do not show remorse.....
.....
17. In your view what are some of the effects of cohabitation on those engaged in it?
a.
b.
c.
18. According to Gen. 2: 21 – 25, do you think cohabitation undermines the marriage institution as ordained by God?
Yes No
19. Provide reasons for your answer in 18 above.
.....
.....
Due to expensive nature of wedding, which enable most young adults to be saddled with huge debts; customary marriage should be accepted as legitimate marriage without church wedding.
Agree Disagree
20. Do you agree that the church should desist from open-discipline, because some of the cohabiters leave the church, when disciplined?
Agree Disagree
Provide your reason.....
.....

21. Cohabitation poses challenges to the Global Evangelical Church because it is affecting the spiritual growth of the church.
Agree Disagree
22. If you agreed, can you mention any affected area?
.....
23. Do you preach/teach about “Family life” and sexual relations in your church?
Yes No
24. If yes, how often and if no, why?
.....
25. Does it mean the church’s teaching on Family life and sexual relations are ineffective?
Yes No
26. Provide reasons for your answer above.
.....
27. What role do you play as a church to assist a cohabiter?.....
.....
28. What role do you play as a church to assist those who are marrying?.....
.....
29. If possible the church should tolerate cohabitation on economic grounds.
Agree Disagree
30. What is your general opinion on the issue of cohabitation in the church?
.....
.....
.....
31. What measures should the church put in place to prevent this type of behaviour?
.....
.....

APPENDIX B:QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Name:

Congregation (Church).....

Date:

Where alternatives have been provided **tick the right answers only**.

For other questions, **write your own answer** in the space provided.

1. May you indicate your sex, please: Male Female
2. May you tick your age range: 18 – 25; 26 – 30; 31 – 35; 36 – 40.
3. Educational level: Primary JHS SHS Tertiary
4. Have you completed? Yes No Not yet
5. Current occupation?
6. May you indicate the role that you play in your church?
7. Some young adults in the Global Evangelical Church cohabit.
Agree Disagree
8. Why is cohabitation practised by some young adults in your church?
.....
.....
9. It is right to cohabit on economic grounds to have ones needs met.
Agree Disagree
10. Can you provide reasons for answer in 9 above.
.....
.....
11. Due to sexual pleasure some young adults cohabit.
Agree Disagree
12. Due to lack of accommodation some young adults cohabit.
Agree Disagree
13. Are you aware of the position of the Global Evangelical church on cohabitation?
Yes No
14. If yes, can you explain what the GEC teaches about cohabitation?
.....
.....

15. How often do you hear the message on the GEC's "Family life" preached?
Very often Not often Not at all
16. Do you always understand the messages preached?
Yes No
17. Which of these words that I am about to mention can describe your perception on cohabitation as you hear teachings on sexual unions and family life?
a. Informative and helpful
b. Informative but unhelpful
18. Does the teaching of the GEC influence your life?
Yes No
19. Have you ever witnessed a customary marriage?
Yes No
20. Which part did you enjoy witnessing?
21. Is customary marriage expensive or affordable?
Expensive Affordable
22. Are the items needed for church wedding or blessing expensive?
Yes No
23. What will you change in the church marriage or blessing if given the chance?
.....
24. Which type of marriage will you prefer?
Customary marriage without wedding Customary marriage with wedding
25. Can you give your reason?
.....
.....
.....
26. Are there any similarities between customary marriage and Christian/church marriage?
Yes No
27. Can you identify some of them?
.....
.....
.....

28. Cohabitation poses challenges to the GEC because it is affecting the spiritual growth of the church.

Agree

Disagree

29. If you agreed, can you mention the areas?

.....

30. In your view, what are some of the effects of cohabitation on those engaged in it?

a.

b.

c.

31. Do you think cohabitation undermines the marriage institution as ordained by God, according to Gen. 2: 21 – 25?

Yes

No

32. Provide reasons for your answer above.

.....

.....

33. Do you agree that the church should desist from open-discipline, because some members leave the church when disciplined?

Agree

Disagree

34. Would you advocate for cohabitation to be accepted as normal practice by the church?

Yes

No

35. What is your reason?

.....

.....

.....

36. In your own opinion, why do you think some young adults cohabit?

.....

.....

.....

37. What is your general own opinion on the issue of cohabitation in the church?

.....

.....

38. What measures should the church put in place to prevent this type of behaviour?

.....
.....
.....

39. Can you indicate if you are married, cohabiting, single, or in any type of relationship?

.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX C: PRIMARY SOURCES (INTERVIEWS)

GEC’s Leadership, Male Senior Pastor ‘A,’ Interview, Thursday 6 December 2014, from 11. 00 a. m. to 12. 10 p. m., GEC Head Office, Accra.

GEC’s Leadership, Male Senior Pastor ‘B,’ Interview, Thursday 6 December 2014, from 12. 25 p. m. to 1. 30 p. m., GEC Head Office, Accra.

GEC’s Leadership, Female Senior Pastor ‘C,’ Interview, Tuesday 16 December 2014, from 7. 25 p. m. to 8. 30 p. m., Ashaiman.

GEC’s Leadership, Female Senior Pastor ‘D,’ Interview, Wednesday 7 January 2015, from 1. 40 p. m. to 2. 30 p. m., Ho.

Residence Pastors (3), answered questionnaires.

Asempa One Presbyters (4), answered questionnaires.

Asempa Two Presbyters (4), answered questionnaires.

Nyanyui Presbyters (4), answered questionnaires.

Asempa One Young Adults (15), group discussion and answered questionnaires, 18 January 2015.

Asempa Two Young Adults (15), group discussion and answered questionnaires, 25 January 2015.

Nyanyui Young Adults (15), group discussion and answered questionnaires, 15 February 2015.

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