

## Exploring Essence of Multi-Generational Households in the Effutu Municipality, Central Region of Ghana

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### Abstract

The study investigated the essence of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality. Specifically, it determined reasons for existence of multi-generational households, roles of individuals living in multi-generational households and socio-cultural practices of the households. Descriptive (cross-sectional) survey design was used. Area of the study was Effutu Municipality Central Region of Ghana. Population for the study was made up of all the households in the area of the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed quantitatively using means and standard deviations. Major findings reveal 17 reasons for the existence of multi-generational households ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.95 to 3.50). These include, high rate of unemployment ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.95), security for old age ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.87). Also 35 roles played by individual members in the family were indentified ( $\bar{X}$ =3.95 to 3.39). These include, protecting family interest ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.95), engaged in salaried jobs ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.95). There are also 18 socio-cultural practices of the households ( $\bar{X}$  =3.89 to 2.7). These include, running errands (help) for everyone especially elders ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.89), showing of love for everyone ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.87) There was a positive and significant( $r$  = 0.12,  $p$  = 0.003) relationship between reasons for the existence and socio-cultural activities multi-generational households. Based on the findings, four recommendations for sustaining multi-generational households in Effutu Municipality were made.

**Key words:** Multi-generational Households, Extended Family, Socio-cultural Practices-Essence, Reasons

### Introduction

It has been observed that most parts of African communities are made up of households usually comprising closely related family members of a common

genealogy who ensure the maintenance of a strong bond among families. According to Dzrmedo, Amoako & Amos (2018) traditionally, Africans mostly revere and arrange

their lives around the extended family line whose membership include, spouses and their children together with other relations of common descent such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and cousins and sometimes, other people who are not directly related to the family. This reflects the African culture of interdependency for care, support, protection and social interaction. This system of lifestyle does not only provide protection for members of the household, it also provides economic and socio-cultural benefits to the members and for that matter the community as a whole. Multi-generational households often consist each of three or more generations living together under the same roof. It further explains that these households include households with a householder, a parent or parent in-law of the householder, a child of the householder and a grandchild of the householder. Asamoah (2015) revealed that 78% of Ghanaians live in multi-generational households due to prolonged education, unemployment, housing shortages or high cost of accommodation, relatively high rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing, among others. He added that Africans uphold kinship ties and network in high esteem because they are used to define the individual's social status. This explains why the multi-generational family system is common in African (Ghanaian) societies. The traditional multi-generational family epitomised the society's values, norms, ideas, ideals, mores, beliefs etc. Perrino,

Gonzalez, Pantin and Szapocznik, (2000); Peterson, (2009) cited in Adinkra (2017) stated that multi-generational families have a cultural practice of nurturing and supporting its individual members includes promoting and safeguarding the health of children as well as instilling moral and social values in them, with the overall goal being to ensure that the next generation is productive and socially responsible. To execute this parents and other adult family members generally exert considerable influence as teachers and role models for children through skill building, limit setting or discipline, and as models of healthy and competent behavior. Omari (2018) indicated that over the decades and at various times, the Ghanaian society had come under different influences resulting in changes of one kind or the other. Some changes came following internal realignment of political; others in the wake of civil wars, famine, floods and other natural disasters. Again, Omari (2018) posited that multi-generational households' system has gone through dynamic and rigorous changes from colonial era by compression of genealogical ties in kinship behaviour is meant the tendency of people to virtually disregard their traditional reciprocal obligations, duties and responsibilities to relatives outside their nuclear families except the closest and the most immediate. Presently many Ghanaians especially, those most intensively exposed to the factors of change, would limit their responsibilities to their children and

spouses and people who go beyond these would not go further their own parents, siblings and their siblings' children Omari (2018). Cohn & Passel, (2018) argued that a range of demographic factors that likely contributed to this decline of multi-generational living, among them was the rapid growth of the nuclear-family-centered suburbs; the decline in the share of immigrants in the population; and the sharp rise in the health and economic well-being of adults aged 65 and older.

In addition, Kurankye (2017) cited in Dzramedo, Amoako & Amos (2018) posited that undoubtedly, before the coming of the Europeans, with mainly the introduction of formal education, the communities and by extension the Ghanaian (African) societies depended solely on the family; precisely, the extended family system for survival. Indubitably, the extended family in those days was the backbone of the family in society. The traditional extended family was an embodiment of the society's values, norms, ideals, morals, and beliefs. Dzramedo et al (2018), stated that notwithstanding the strong influence on its individual members coupled with the aforementioned roles and functions of the extended family system in the past, in modern Ghanaian civilization following colonialism with the introduction of industrialization, education, western religion, among others these influence, roles and functions have taken a nose dive.

The economic downturn compelled most people to live in

nuclear families where they could meet their needs without much struggle and save enough for future use. However, Omari, (2018) argued that in spite of the economic benefits of the nuclear family, it is yet to be given acceptance in many African societies. Except the urban cosmopolitan societies, where the nuclear family system seems to be popular, the multi-generational systems operate among a larger segment of African societies. It is interesting to note that most of these households have now resulted in an increasing number of generations of families living together as multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality, perhaps due to the number of benefits members derived from multi-generational household system of living.

Available reports that there is a bounce back of multi-generational living in the Effutu Municipality. According to Sampe (2019), multi-generational households have bounced back and about 83.8 percent of Ghanaians are living these households for numerous benefits and the Effutu Municipality is not exempted. Population and Housing Census 2010 revealed that about 65.9 percent of the population in Effutu Municipality is living in the extended family. It is surprising to note that little has been done to document the issues relating to multi-generational households in the Municipality for public education. This gap informed the study.

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of the study was to explore the essence of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality, Central Region Ghana. Specifically, the study determined:

1. reasons for existence of multi-generational households in Effutu Municipality.
2. roles of family members living multi-generational households in Effutu Municipality.
3. socio-cultural practices of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the reasons for existence of multi-generational households in Effutu Municipality?
2. What are roles of family members living multi-generational households in Effutu Municipality?
3. What are socio-cultural practices of multi-generational households in Effutu Municipality?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between reasons for existence of multi-generational households and socio-cultural practices of multi-generational households.

### **Methodology**

*Design of the study:* The research design used for this study was a descriptive (cross-sectional) survey. I used this design because according to Jackson (2009) survey involves acquiring information about a group by asking questions, tabulating and

describing answers. The information is collected from a group of people in order to describe aspects or characteristics, (abilities, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, experiences or knowledge) of the population of which the group is part.

*Area of study:* The Effutu Municipality is the area of the study. It covers a total land area of 95 square kilometers and shares border with Gomoa East District to the west, north and east. On the Southern flank is the Gulf of Guinea. The Municipality is one of the 20 administrative districts in the Central Region of Ghana with its administrative capital being Winneba, which originated from the words "Windybay" traditionally known as "Simpa" a town renowned for its several specialized major institutions of higher learning, fishing and cultural displays. Most households are made up of from the 3rd to the sixth generation living together under one roof. Some of the buildings have been extended to accommodate the increasing number of family members. Their building structure is poorly designed, constructed and does not have basic facilities in the home (Population and Housing Census Report, 2010).

*Population for the study:* The Municipality has 1,873 multi-generational households (Population and Housing Census, 2010). In the context of this study age was a variable of interest to the research as a result the respondents were also categorized into three groups based on their age; elderly (65 and above), adults (40yrs-

64) and youths (18yrs-39yrs). This categorization was done to give every generation in the family the privilege to express their views and opinions on the questions asked.

**Sample for the study:** All multi-generational households were purposively selected for this study and data on multi-generational households was accessed from the Effutu Municipal Office. The 2010 Population Census, states that 75 percent of multi-generational households are found in rural Winneba and 25 percent in urban Winneba. Thus, 75% and 25% of multi-generational households were selected from rural and urban Winneba respectively. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select 4.66% of 1,873 multi-generational households in the Municipality. In all 87 households were selected for the study comprising 65 and 22 households from rural and urban respectively. According to Bryman (2004) a percentage of the total population can be used to achieve confidence level and minimize errors. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one (1) respondent from each age category. Three (3) respondents were selected from each household from 87 multi-generational households using the age category. In all 261 respondents were involved in the study.

**Instrument for the study:** Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The items on the questionnaire were close-ended, open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The close-ended questions were

mainly in the form of Likert scale type of question. This was measured on a four-point scale. To ensure high degree of validity of the research instrument the researcher sought for expertise in this area for content and construct validity. The scrutiny of the questionnaire helped to reshape the items to cover the objectives prior to data collection.

**Data collection method:** The questionnaire was administered by the researcher and two trained research assistants. The instrument was completed by respondents who could read and write while the instrument was used as interview guide for respondents who cannot read and write in English and their responses were recorded by the researcher. Data was collected within a period of three (3) months. The questionnaires were collected immediately upon finishing. The return rate of the instrument was 100%.

**Data analysis technique:** Data were using frequency, percentage, means and standard deviations. Hypothesis was also tested using Pearson Products Moment Correlation analysis to establish a relationship.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 - 31years 24.6%, 32 - 45years 20.3%, 46 - 59 year 19.5% and 60 years and above 33.7%. Again, there were 60.5% females and 39.5% males. On marital status 44.4% were single, 20.3% were cohabiting, 19.2% were married,

11.9% divorced while 4.2% were separated. In addition, responses on their educational level revealed that 18.4% had no formal education, 44.8% had primary education, 9.2% had junior high education, 5.0% had secondary education, 10.3 had

technical and vocational education and 14.1 had tertiary education.

**Reasons for the existence of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality**

**Table 1: Mean responses on reasons for Existence of Multi-Generational Households n=261**

S/N	Reasons for existence of Multi-generational households	Mean $\bar{x}$	STD $\pm$	Remarks
1	High rate of unemployment	3.95	0.50	Very important
2	Security for old age	3.87	0.34	Very important
3	Socializing young ones	3.84	0.32	Very important
4	Children as a source of labor	3.85	0.36	Very important
5	High cost of accommodation	3.84	0.35	Very important
6	Teenage pregnancy	3.79	0.43	Very important
7	Managing family business	3.78	0.42	Very important
8	High rise of migration	3.78	0.42	Very important
9	Cultural beliefs of the family	3.74	0.47	Very important
10	High rise of single parenting	3.73	0.45	Very important
11	Early marriage	3.67	0.50	Very important
12	Family members help each other	3.64	0.52	Very important
13	High rate of divorce	3.61	0.50	Very important
14	Prolonged education	3.58	0.52	Very important
15	Prestige and status	3.57	0.45	Very important
16	Provision of basic needs	3.47	0.52	Important
17	High level of emotional bonding and closeness across generations	3.47	0.51	Important

Table 1 shows how respondents rated the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households from very important to not important. The mean scores ranging from M =3.47, STD = 0.51 to M = 3.95, STD = 0.50 depicts that all the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households were

ranked very important such as high rate of unemployment, security for old age, socializing of young ones among others.

**Roles of family members living multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality**

**Table 2: Mean Responses on roles of family members living in Multi-generational households n = 261**

S/N	Roles of family members	Mean $\bar{X}$	STD $\pm$	Remarks
<b>Fathers/Uncles</b>				
1.	Protecting family interest	3.95	0.54	Strongly agree
2.	Engaged in salaried jobs	3.95	0.54	Strongly agree
3.	Meeting basic necessities	3.95	0.50	Strongly agree
4.	Disciplining of children	3.86	0.57	Strongly agree
5.	Home administration	3.87	0.34	Strongly agree
6.	Take major decisions	3.85	0.36	Strongly agree
7.	Fulfil marital obligations	3.86	0.32	Strongly agree
8.	Pay utilities/bills	3.78	0.49	Strongly agree
9.	Settle dispute among family members	3.71	0.50	Strongly agree
<b>Mother/Aunties</b>				
10.	Imparting ethics to children	3.95	0.50	Strongly agree
11.	Children upbringing	3.95	0.50	Strongly agree
12.	Care for the aged and invalids in the family	3.84	0.32	Strongly agree
13.	Home administration	3.78	0.56	Strongly agree
14.	Supervise children's school assignment	3.71	0.70	Strongly agree
15.	Shop for the family	3.74	0.46	Strongly agree
16.	Discipline of children	3.74	0.46	Strongly agree
17.	Fending for the home	3.74	0.47	Strongly agree
18.	Sustain the finances of the home	3.71	0.50	Strongly agree
19.	Take major decisions	3.86	0.50	Strongly agree
20.	Household chores	3.86	0.50	Strongly agree
21.	Fulfil marital obligations	3.67	0.50	Strongly agree
22.	Selling of articles/farm produce	3.50	0.75	Strongly agree
23.	Counselor	3.61	0.55	Strongly agree
24.	Resolve conflict	3.61	0.51	Strongly agree
25.	Engaged in salaried jobs	3.53	0.52	Strongly agree
<b>Children</b>				
26.	Complement family's business	3.86	0.57	Strongly agree
27.	Household chores	3.78	0.49	Strongly agree
28.	Run errands	3.78	0.56	Strongly agree
29.	Assist parents	3.76	0.45	Strongly agree
30.	Selling of articles/farm produce	3.71	0.70	Strongly agree
<b>Grandparents</b>				
31.	Imparting ethics to children	3.87	0.34	Strongly agree
33.	Children upbringing/ education	3.84	0.32	Strongly agree
34.	Settle dispute among family members	3.71	0.70	Strongly agree
35.	Discipline of children	3.39	0.71	Agree

Table 2 shows how respondents rated the roles of family members on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. On the roles of fathers/uncles, a mean score from M= 3.71, STD = 0.50 to M = 3.95, STD = 0.54 revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that adult males in the family perform their roles. Again, the mean score from M = 3.95, STD = 0.50 to M = 3.53 to STD =0.52 implies that respondents strongly agreed to the roles played by mothers/aunties in the family. In

addition, respondents strongly agreed to the roles performed by children with mean score range of M= 3.71, STD = 0.70 to M = 3.87, STD = 0.57. Last but not the least the result depicts that majority of respondents agreed to the roles played by grandparents with mean score range from M = 3.39, STD= 0.34 to M= 3.87, STD = 0.71.

### Socio-cultural practices of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality

**Table 3: Mean Responses on Socio-Cultural Practices of multi-generational household n=261**

S/N	Socio-cultural practices	Mean $\bar{x}$	STD $\pm$	Remarks
1.	Run errands for everyone especially elders.	3.89	0.32	Always
2.	Show respects for everyone	3.89	0.32	Always
3.	Show love for everyone	3.87	0.34	Always
4.	Family members follow one pattern of profession.	3.84	0.35	Always
5.	Practicing of widowhood rite	3.64	0.52	Always
6.	Organise social ceremonies	3.50	0.75	Always
7.	Family contributions (“noboa”)	3.47	0.74	Often
8.	Strong religious beliefs	3.46	0.53	Often
9.	Low level of education	3.43	0.72	Often
10.	Adhering to taboos	3.43	0.67	Often
11.	Maintaining family status in the society	3.45	0.57	Often
12.	The opinion of the head of a household is always accepted when there is disagreement.	3.21	0.70	Often
13.	Conscious about gender composition of household	3.15	0.65	Often
14.	Every family member has an equal opportunity to take part in family decisions	3.15	0.63	Often
15.	Parents arrange marriage for children.	3.10	0.65	Often
16.	Female circumcision	3.10	0.65	Often
17.	Every family member is free to present his views on family issues	3.10	0.65	Often
18.	High level of education	2.77	0.80	Rarely

Table 3 depicts that, most respondents indicated that the socio-cultural practices of the family were either always or often practiced. A mean



score of  $M = 3.89$ ,  $STD = 0.32$  each revealed that respondents always ran errands for everyone especially elders and showed respects for everyone. Again, respondents indicated that

rarely ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $STD = 0.80$ ) did people living in multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality had high level of education

**Table 4: Result of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis**

Independent Variables	Type of correlation	Correlation Co-efficient (r)	p. value	Decision
Socio-cultural practices	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	0.12**	0.03	Significant

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 4 show ( $r = 0.12$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) that there is a positive and significant relationship between the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households and the socio-cultural practices of multi-generational households.

#### Discussion of Findings

Data on the demographic characteristics of respondents reveals that one-third (33.7%) aged 60 years and above and 19.5% aged between 46 - 59 years. This finding implies that more than half (53.2%) of respondents aged 46 years and above. In support, Easthope *et al* (2015) indicated that large proportions of multi-generational households are middle-aged couples (45-54 years old) living with their young adult children (18-24 years old). Also, Declining health, acts as catalysts for parents moving in with adult children for proper care.

Furthermore, more than half (60.5%) of respondents were females. This implies that majority of multi-

generational households were female dominated. This confirms studies by Wija and Holmerova (2012), Treas and Batalova (2011), and Kochhar and Cohn (2011) cited in Leach (2012) which state that males have a lower likelihood of being in a multi-generational household than females. They indicated that men have a high tendency to live in single person households earlier in their life course than women while women live in multi-generational households at later stages of the life course, when the probability of needing care is higher. This could be because men are more likely to be part of a married couple than women are, therefore they end up living with just a spouse and kids more often while women more often live with their children and parents, but without a spouse.

Also, respondents' responses on their marital status reveal that 44.4% were single while 20.3% were cohabiting. The results indicate that

64.7% of the respondents were single and some cohabiting.

Moreover, the data reveals that 44.8% were Primary School leavers. The findings implied that a bit less than half (44.8%) of the respondents were primary school leavers implying people living in multi-generational households had low educational level.

The first research question identified the reason for existence of multi-generational households. Hence, household members ranked the reasons from very important to not important. The results presented in Table 1 show that respondents ranked all the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households as very important or important. The mean values which range from 3.47 to 3.95 indicate that all their reasons for multi-generational households were almost very important. Boakye (2013) asserted that Ghanaian families especially those in the farming and fishing communities traditionally live in multi-generational households because life was routinely bounded to manual work and the more potential workers the better. It was simply advantageous for such families to have many people under one roof. Lynsar and Dupuis (2015) also revealed that care, especially care of the elderly and care for young children is one of the major reasons for opting to live in multi-generational households and associated with care was the strengthening of family bonds particularly across generations.

Data in Table 2 reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to

all roles performed by family members with mean score range from  $\bar{X} = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 0.71$  to  $\bar{X} = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ . The findings imply every member of family have roles to play to ensure that the family system functions well to achieve its goals. This finding is in line with Adams, (2008) that adult males are the protector and the breadwinner of his family. He provides shelter, food, and clothing and protect the females and male children from external attacks. She added that adult females nurture young ones and care for the aged and sick, provide meals for the family, wash, keep the house and its surroundings clean and train young girls to be able to perform women's roles when they grow up. In view of this White and Klein (2002) stated that a family is a system with family members as sub-systems that have roles to perform to achieve the common goal of the system. Each and every one, young, adults or even the aged has a role to perform and failure on any one to perform his/her roles affects the total functioning of the family in achieving goals.

The results in Table 3 show that most of the socio-cultural practices in the family were either always or often practiced by the respondents with the mean scores ranging from  $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.32$  to  $\bar{X} = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ . According to White and Klein (2002) theory of family system, every system has internal rule that shape the behaviour and attitudes of its members and make every family system unique from each other. These internal rules are the socio-cultural practices such as values,

standards, norms, folkways among others of which some are general and others are peculiar to families. Therefore, these internal rules of a family give direction and mold individuals to fit in the society and wherever they find themselves. Sahene (2016) also believed that family norms set standards for how family members dress, talk and act. They also set limits on what is permissible or impermissible behaviour under different circumstances and conditions. More than just rules of etiquette, norms provide family members with a guide for living both within the home and outside.

However, interestingly, the responses on high level of education were low with a mean score of  $X = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 0.80$  which clearly indicates that there is a socio-cultural practice of low level of education among members in living multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality. Marsh (2015) in her study in the coastal areas found that it was very difficult engaging students and their families in education, notwithstanding sometimes parents' own poor understandings of school influenced their children. There is little belief in the worth of education in families in the coastal areas. Ofsted (2015) indicated that coastal areas with high levels of poverty and in which there are multi-generational households limit employment prospects and with poor experiences of education had developed in years into an 'anti-education' culture, as education was

perceived to have little positive impact on their own life chances.

The findings in Table 4 ( $r = 0.12$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) revealed that there was a significant relationship between the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households and socio-cultural practices implying that the socio-cultural practices of multi-generational households motivates/create the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households. The more favourable the socio-cultural practices are the more likely people will have reasons to live in multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality. According to Osako (2013) culture is identified as a vital factor determining multi-generational co-residence in several countries and can be viewed as an explanatory factor for differences in the number of multi-generational households between countries. Asamoah (2015) said the characteristic way of thinking, feeling, judging, and acting defines a culture. In direct and subtle ways, children are molded by the family culture into which they are born. Growing up, their assumptions about what is right and wrong, good and bad, reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of the family culture.

### Conclusions

From the findings, it can be concluded that there were varied reasons for the existence of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality, notable among the reasons, were high rate of unemployment, security for old age, socializing young ones, children

as a source of labour, high cost of accommodation among others. The findings indicated that majority of individuals living in multi-generational households performed most of their roles in the family to ensure smooth running and achieving of family goals. Members in MGH always experienced and engaged in diverse socio-cultural practices such as running errands for everyone especially elders, showing respects for everyone, showing love to everyone among others. However, low level of education predominated in multi-generational household in the Effutu Municipality which may deprive them of getting good careers that will fetch them good income. There was a positive significant relationship between the reasons for the existence of multi-generational households and socio-cultural practices.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made

1. Individuals, parents or guardians should encourage the youth to learn vocational/technical skills to enable them set up their own business to avoid unemployment in order to meet some of their basic needs and also support the family financially.
2. Members of the family should be encouraged to continuously play their roles in the family. Such responsibilities must assigned to every individual with strict supervision to ensure that the family functions well to achieve the

purpose of the existence of multi-generational households in the Effutu Municipality.

3. Young persons should also be encouraged by parents and opinion leaders to pursue education to a reasonable level to gain full employment. They should take advantage of the Government's Free Senior High School's Educational Policy to upgrade themselves.
4. Multi-generational households should be encouraged to establish more favorable socio-cultural practices to entice the youth in order to instill in them the norms, folkways, values, among others, to ensure proper transmission of family's culture from generation to generation.

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