

The Influence of Psychosocial Factors on the Choice of Marital Partners Among University Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT Marriage is a highly complex structure made up of a whole series of subjective and objective factors mostly of a very heterogeneous nature. This study investigates the psychosocial variables as correlated to university undergraduates' choice of marital partners. Descriptive survey sample design was adopted for this study. A total number of 200 undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan were randomly selected for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, which involved t-test statistical analysis, using t-test=0.05 level of significant. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference in the psychosocial factors in the choice of marital partners among undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan. It is therefore recommended that curriculum should be design in such a way that marriage education would be accorded a very high priority in general study courses in universities to ensure that right values about marriages are inculcated in youth.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is not an easy term to define because of the various ways in which it is performed throughout the world, but it can be regarded as an institution ordained by God as well as by culture of any society (Sethi and Steidlmeier 1993). It is a social motivation that is cherished and highly preserved in every culture, though it varies from one culture to another. In Nigeria, the choice of a marital partner is not only a social necessity but also a means of perpetuation of the human race. It is both a social contract and a spiritual relationship, it is a unit, which both the religious organization and the state are equally concerned about. Smith (2007) stated clearly that the importance of marital partner, as one of the component of family life and the family being the oldest institution, is highly valued in Nigeria. This is the reason some parents get worried when their children remained unmarried (Ochidi 2015). In addition, Ochidi (2015) also stressed

that some parents who are superstitious may even go to the extent of attributing the inability of their children of finding a suitable marital partner to some evil forces and they make sacrifices to appease gods.

The psychological involvement in the choice of marriage partner among Nigeria undergraduates may be said to represent a point of some conflict, which arises from any society (Abdulahman 2014), the psychosocial factors played prominent roles in choosing marriage partners and cannot be overemphasized due to each individual's psychosocial factors in choosing a marital partner.

Problem Statement

The basic objective and desire of every youth exception of celibates is to get entwined with one partner or more for the purpose of procreation. Procreation, which is the result of marriage, is the most important desire of everybody in Nigeria and Africa as a whole because children are one's heritage on earth and a solace for old age. Moreover, in obedience to God wish and command in the holy bible unto man, which says increase, multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Similarly, according to "Genesis chapter 1 verse 28", when God observed that man needs a

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companion, God said that, “it is not good for man to be alone”. In fact, God in His simplicity mercy also revealed, “He will make a companion who will help man (Genesis 2 verse 18)”. Marriage becomes inevitable in man’s mind and life. Despite the fact that it is written in the bible that woman will leave her parents and go to her husband house and the two of them shall become one flesh, psychosocial effects have been some of the influencing determinant of the choice of marriages in the most of African countries. Most importantly, this is true, as it has been observed from several occasions in most of the African countries that most of the parents dictate the choice of man they would like their children to engage with in marriage. In addition, most of the rich parents from rich families often instruct their children not to engage in any marital affairs with a poor family. Importantly, most of the rich parents always make it ‘a compulsory symptom’ once their children have attained the stage of introducing their partners to them for marriage. They often called these poor families “gold-diggers” believing that their children must marry from another rich family so that their wealth and riches would continue multiplying or spread within their family. Societal factors and economic state of the affairs of the country could also be seen as another influential factor to psychosocial effect on the choice of marital partners among university undergraduate in the most African countries.

Objective of the Study

- To examine the influence of psychosocial factors as it affects the choice of marital partners among university undergraduates in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Research Question

- What are the psychosocial influencing factors contributing to the choice of marital partners among university undergraduates in Ibadan, Nigeria?

An Overview of the Significance of Marriage in Africa

It was revealed that before industrialization and its early phase, economic consideration had been a determinant factor for choosing marriage

partners, giving less attention to romantic love. Marriage among the upper class, it has been documented to be contracted to integrate, through dowries, political power and landholding, patrimony and social entente and with the aim of preserving bloodiness (Matthijs 2002). Men from the lower class have been reported to mostly choose their marriage partners based on their prospective contribution in terms of productive and reproductive abilities (Tek 2004). It was reported by Gladwin et al. (2001) and Galiè (2013) that smallholder farmers needed strong women who could be of great help with labor, particularly during cultivation and harvest, running a household and selling farm products in the native market. Crafts workers needed marriage partners that could be of great support to their craft and on a regular basis choose wives from families of a similar occupation (Stone 1977; Davidoff and Hall 1987; Locklin 2016).

Marriage is a multifaceted institution made up of series of subjective and objective factors mostly of a very heterogeneous nature (Revilla et al. 2013; Gauvreau and Thornton 2015). The origin of marriage is lost in the dim past of making prehistory and most certain general patterns that came to be common to most part of the world developed around the marriage relationship. But according to the bible, marriage is central to God’s plan for man and so an ordained institution. Winch (1988) describes marriage as a process by which the role of a husband and wife are assumed in accordance to rural tenets recognized and accepted in the society to which the two parties belong.

Learners define marriage as a melting of true minds and bodies either in a one to one pair or more with a measure of continuity with or without legal and religious sanction, although both tend to give marriage more stability.

Choosing a Marital Partner

Yang (2013) revealed that before choosing a partner, it is often observed that the majority of couples worldwide always asked themselves some technical questions such as, “Will I get goose bumps when the right person comes along? How hard should I be looking for the right person? What if my parents or my friends do not like the person I think is right for me? Does it make much difference if we are not both believers? How can I get more interested in some-

one who is very strange to me? How can I be sure if that person is marriage material? Or should I marry without getting any attention?"

Nobody enjoys being forced into a relationship or being set up for a date or being repeatedly hounded about one's romantic life but overbearing family members and friends can be disturbing, to mention a few. Even though most people desire to get married, the awkward course of finding the right person can be more difficult than its worth (Parlett 2014).

According to Parlett (2014), in many geographical regions worldwide, a single individual does not have a choice about whom to marry. Marriages are arranged by the family (usually the father), and brides are often treated like family possessions. The popular musical fiddler on the roof portrayed three young Jewish girls who were afraid of becoming the unwilling marriage partners in arranged marriages to men in Anatevka, in a small Russian village. They sang of hope that the matchmaker would make them a 'perfect match'. Later on, the matchmaker was appealed to by these girls, not to rush them, as they tried to change their father's attitude to allow them to marry based on their choices.

Empirical Review

Societal Influence as a Correlate of Choice of Marital Partner

Lives are influenced by the way of life one adopts and accepts as normal. Each generation has seen its people scrutinized for not following the norms (Styhre and Tienari 2013). One is taught while growing up, to act in a particular way, to stand straight and look presentable. Slouching was not for the honorable. Keeping this image of being immaculate, even after one has grown up, appears simply dearly, it would seem only natural to strive to have a wonderful family of one's own just like they had. It is overwhelming sometimes to be in a relationship, though the marriage partner might not necessarily be the most attractive person. Expectations are placed by families on their children even if such a partner does not possess the desired qualities expected to be seen in such a partner, such as how successful such an individual is or how brilliant the person is when it comes to exposure.

Parental Influence as a Correlate of Choice of Marital Partner

Parents arrange marriage for their children by chosen primarily other than the partner themselves. At times, the marriage partner might be consulted or not, and this suggests a strong sense of parental loyalty (Grover 2016). An arranged marriage can be said to be a mate selection in which the individual involved has little or no choice in selecting a partner due to the parental influence in the whole process.

Parental involvement in selecting a marriage partner for their children is observed in different ways by different people. In the middle ages, the kinship unit was of great importance in the transition of property protection of the individual and the family (Gidson 2016). Parents, other kin, church and the community are considered to have a major roll played in the making of marriage, and hence, the bride and the groom's opinion are considered less important. Consequently, marriage can be contracted in other to enhance an alliance between battling families (Curran 2016), and this practice would also strengthen the value of the kinship group and the tradition of endogamy would be preserved (Shenk 2016).

Parental involvement in the arrangement of marital partners for the children also helps maintain and sustain social class, encourage and reinforce parental supremacy over children, preserve family belief and value system intact, amalgamate and outspread family possessions, augment the value of blood relationship, and conserve the tradition of endogamy (Goswani et al. 2014). In Chinese modern day society, it is observed the attempt of the communist government to get rid of such aspects to traditional society by making arranged marriages invalid in the 1950s. Selection of marital partners without parental influence was encouraged, thus creating greater loyalty to the state than to the family. However, Chinese policy was unacceptable to older generation. They maintained control over their children's marriages because they had the economic resources to do so (Croll and Croll 1981).

Personality Influence as a Correlate of Choice of Marital Partner

Promotion of mutual understanding between people has been based on the use of the Briggs

model of personality, where understanding is intended at refining interpersonal relationships and promoting positive attitude towards people who are different.

According to Van Kerckem et al. (2013), personality influences the choice of marital partner to the extent that individual takes it serious when considering a marital partner.

There are four personality types that individuals considered in choosing a marital partner, namely, interest, attraction, values and who you meet. The principle of personality is that individual with different personalities provides mutual skill in tackling issues, which makes them become a good team, hence complementing each other. Although personality, characteristic and body shape are noticeable in what people desire in a partner, little is known about which personality characteristic is important, whether men and women differ in their personality preferences, whether individual actually get what they want. In pursuit of these issues, two parallel studies were conducted by Eagly and Wood (2013), and it was shown that women expressed a superior preference than men for a wide range of socially anticipated personality traits. Individuals differed in characteristic of their choice, preferring partners who were comparable to themselves, and who personified their anticipate characteristics. Lastly, the personality traits of one's partner pointedly predicted marital and sexual dissatisfaction, most especially when the partner was lower on agreeableness, emotional stability and intellect openness and desired.

Physical Attractiveness and Good Genes Influence as a Correlate of Choice of Marital Partner

In classical literature and romance novels, the male protagonist is always considered socially dominant, handsome, and rich (Linton 2014). Truly, preference for a good-looking partner makes biological sense (Kreutzer and Aebischer 2015). The physical traits women find appealing in men are pointers of the man's physical and genetic health (West-Eberhard 2014).

Larger than average eyes, a large smile area and prominent cheekbones and chin are parts of the physical traits that ladies considered attractive (Hummert 2014). These features are considered good pointers of genetic variability (which is important for disease resistance).

Men with asymmetric faces and body features have higher basal metabolic rates, somewhat lower intelligence quotient (IQ), and fewer sexual partners than their symmetric peers (McCormick 2014).

Women have preference for men who are above average in height with fairly built bodies (Oda 2001). It is on record that women's choice of marriage is influenced by man's biological built up and body smell in addition to proportionate facial look. This suggests that the physical appearances of men indicate their quality, which greatly influences women's choice (Oda 2001; Geary et al. 2004).

It is evident in documents that women are always attracted by men's physical status, genetic health and body smell. This physical evaluation can however, be moderated by a colleague's assessment, most especially if it is contrary. Other studies opine that physical assessment of men is a product of social dominion that men have over women (Mafra et al. 2016).

Socio-economic Influence as a Correlates of Choice of Marital Partner

In pre-industrial society according to Osorio et al. (2015), Socio-Economic Status (SES) was a vital determinant of the living state of families and individual. Schaller (2014) revealed that access to economic resources is a function of SES, thereby reflecting group-specific differences in the standard of living in terms of nutrition, housing and susceptibility to economic hardship. Thus individuals and families of higher SES logically experienced a well and balanced living state of affairs compared to lower SES. Furthermore, a higher SES placed an individual on a higher status in the society and access to improved SES networks, which can provide better opportunities for accumulation of resources. To face the reality, SES has effects on the population of an area. Historically, there have some differences between socioeconomic groups in terms of fertility, marriage and migrations. However, there is no concrete evidence of large SES dichotomy mortality and life expectancy before the industrial age (Cullen et al. 2015).

Different factors determined socioeconomic status in the pre-modern society. Such factors include educational attainment, training and networks, which are still very crucial in the contemporary societies (Shaw 2013). Though some fac-

tors such as parental academic attainment played major role before, it is less important now. These factors play key roles in SES attainment, which is a key to land and property acquisition in rural communities.

One way of upward social mobility is by getting married to someone from a high SES. With this, one will be able to have the chance of increasing one's social status. However, getting married to a partner from a low SES reduces the chance of one's upward SES movement. Hence, the choice of spouse during the preindustrial age was a factor of SES (Starbuck and Lundy 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey sample design was adopted for this study in order to investigate the influence of psychosocial factors on the choice of marital partners among the university undergraduates in Ibadan. A total number of 200 undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan were randomly selected for the study. The students were of different sexes, ages, department/faculty as well as from different socioeconomic backgrounds. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A covered the personal data of the respondents such as age, sex and religion while B aimed at eliciting

information about the respondents. The questionnaire technique is designed and used by the researcher to facilitate easy answering of some questions in order to know the view of the respondents. The questionnaire was personally given out to the unmarried University of Ibadan undergraduate students. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, which involved t-test statistical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result from Table 1, using t-test=0.05 showed that $t=0.57$, $df=187$ and $p=0.57$. Since $p=0.57 > 0.05$ it showed that there is no significant difference between those who agree and those that disagree in the parental influence on the choice of marital partner among undergraduate in Ibadan. The results finally indicate that there is no significant difference in the societal influence on the choice of marital partners among undergraduates in Ibadan.

The result from Table 2 showed that $t = 0.21$, $df = 187$ and $p = 0.84$. Since $p = 0.84 > 0.05$ it showed that there is no significant difference between those who agree and those that disagree in the societal influence on the choice of marital partners among undergraduate in Ibadan.

The result from Table 3 showed that $t = 0.21$, $df = 186$, and $p = 0.83$. Since $p = 0.83 > 0.05$ it showed that there is no significance difference between

Table 1: t-test showing the difference between those who agreed and those who disagree on parental influence on the choice of marital partners among undergraduate

Variable	N	X	SD	T	df	p	Remark
Parental choice	117	49.62	36.40	0.57	187	0.57	NS
Not parental choice	72	52.10	7.38				

Table 2: Test showing the difference between those who agreed and disagreed in societal influence on the choice of marital partner among undergraduate

Variable	N	X	SD	T	df	p	Remark
Agreed societal choice	164	50.38	31.03	0.21	189	0.84	NS
Disagreed societal choice	25	51.68	6.00				

Table 3: t-test showing the difference between those who agreed and disagreed in personality trait on the choice of marital partner among undergraduate

Variable	N	X	SD	T	df	p	Remark
Agreed personality trait	105	50.10	38.27	0.21	186	0.83	NS
Not agreed on personality trait	83	51.01	8.08				

those who agreed and those that disagreed in the personality trait of individuals in Ibadan.

There is no significant difference in the parental influence on the choice of marital partner among university undergraduate in Ibadan. The findings of the study show that parents have a greater influence on the choice of their children's marital partner among the undergraduate students in Ibadan. This is because parents want the best for their children and decide mostly on the type of partner their children must associate with in terms of the partner's family, background, educational status and town. Also, parental influence on their choice of marital partner is to help their son or daughter maintained social stratification to affirm and strengthen power over children to keep family traditions and values system intact to consolidate and extent family property.

The findings also show that there is no significant difference in the societal influence on the choice of marital partner among undergraduate students. The analysis and findings also show that society has a greater influence on the choice of marital partner.

The individuals level/class determine their marital partners thereby reflecting group specific difference in the standard of living, achievement, background, educational level and the caliber of people one is associated with are also parts of societal factors influencing the choice of marital partner.

The results also reveal that there is no significance difference in the personality trait of individual on the choice of marital partner among undergraduate students in Ibadan. From the study, personality trait brings about a mutual understanding thereby improving interpersonal relationship that every individual takes into consideration when considering a marital partner such as interest, attraction, who one meet and one's value.

CONCLUSION

The present study shows that psychosocial factors have a greater influence on the choice of marital partners among undergraduates at the University of Ibadan. These factors should therefore be considered by individuals before embarking on choosing a marital partner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Efforts should be made to establish counseling units or clinics in reasonable locations so

that undergraduates and other individuals contemplating marriage can have access to pre-marital counseling. Religious bodies should also wake up to their responsibility and organize programs to spread more awareness on the implications of choosing a marital partner, to minimize the idea of 'just jumping' at any available individual among youths to be their marital partner.

The curriculum planners should design curriculum in such a way that marriage education would be accorded a very high priority in general study courses at universities to ensure that right values about marriages are inculcated in youth.

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