

Mate Selection Issues and Youths in Ogun State

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine the factors considered in making choice of partners in marriage by final year students and elite youths in general in a Nigerian University. The study was specifically conducted to determine the factors given much consideration among elite youths so as to predict what could become the outcome of future marriages consummated by the youths. The total population of final year students was two thousand two hundred and 5% was taken as samples from the ten faculties to give a sample of one hundred and ten final year students from Olabisi Onabanjo University (2000/2001 session), comprising 55 males and 55 females. The data for the study was collected using stratified random sampling method. Questionnaire was administered to the respondents to solicit for necessary information. The questionnaire has two sections, the first section solicited for information on some relevant personal data while the second section examined such factors as physical factors, economic factors, sociological factors, health and cultural factors. Each of these factors had several questions relating to selection of mate. Sociological factors played the topmost part in influencing marriage choice, this was followed by physical factors which has virtually the same level of consideration. The least considered factor was cultural factors. Counselling Psychologist were to see the need for intervention during this period of critical decision for the youths to assist in ensuring they make decisions that would lead to the realization of their dreams.

Keywords: Mate, Marital, Choice, Marriage, Undergraduate.

Introduction

Love and relationships are of central importance in peoples' lives and intrinsically contains much magic, mystery, and potential for spiritual growth (Brown, 2000; Rowe, 2005).

Person (1998) wrote, "Romantic love remains one of the most worthwhile and transcendent human experiences, its inherent dilemmas and the fact that it serves as a magnet for psychopathology notwithstanding".

Moreover, participation in the institution of marriage is upheld as the ultimate achievement in one's early adult life (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Galician, 2004; Glebatis, 2007). Choosing a life partner is often considered one of the most challenging, life altering, and significant decisions one can make in life (Brickman, 1987; Lydick, 1994; Murray, 1999). Murray (1999) stated that the decision to marry is unique because fewer other contexts exist in which adults voluntarily intertwine the outcomes and satisfaction of their goals, hopes, and wishes with those of another. Larson (1992) reported that the magnitude of the decision and the expectations that people place on marriage cause many to struggle with finding the right mate, feeling confident in their abilities as future spouses, and being able to demonstrate the success of their relationship before marriage. A myriad of factors—social, cultural, biological, religious, political, and spiritual—inform and influence the decision to marry one's partner, and the field of psychology is abundant with research on mate selection. In Nigeria of today, the hope of the Nigerian youth seems to be dashed out while at the ages of 30 and 40, because they are still depending on their parents for livelihood. But in the developed countries, a youth at 18 and above stays on his or her own while at 35. Mate selection sets the tone for the early adult lifestyle. It determines one's daily routine, including the time one wakes up, one's daily activities,

expenditures of physical and mental energy; and conditions for both immediate and long-term rewards. Mate selection confers social status and provides varying opportunities for advancement. It also represents a direct or indirect expression of one's value system (Newman and Newman, 1995). One of the major tasks of young people, particularly university students is to achieve a state of identity. Erikson (1987) referred to identity as a state towards which one strives if one were in a state of identity, the various aspects of one's self-image would be in agreement with other, they would be identical, and ideally a person in the state of identity has no internal conflicts whatsoever. Youngsters, particularly university students, should develop intimacy with others at this stage; intimacy here is more than sexual intimacy, it is about the essential ability to relate one's deepest hopes and fears to another person, and to accept in turn another person's need for intimacy. Each individual is entirely alone in the sense that no one else can ever experience life exactly the way another does. Only if one becomes intimate with another is one able to understand and have confidence in oneself. During this time of life, peoples' identity may be fulfilled through the living validation of the person with whom one has dared to be intimate. Youngsters in the universities in their final year may not have a firm sense of identity; they are in the process of identity seeking and may experience identity crisis. Identity

confusion causes self-doubt. Youngsters make choices hastily and come to regret them. In the process of mate selection by university students various qualities attract an individual to a partner. As the relationship develops and progresses they come to realize that those qualities that formed the basis of attraction are not what they desire, resulting to a breakup of the relationship.

The phenomenon creates emotional instability among undergraduates characterized by inability to concentrate on their academic pursuit which is their primary reason for attending university; they lack confidence, they are confused and they develop low self-esteem and negative self-concept. In spite of these problems university students still engage in mate selection. O'Neil (2006) explained that education is an important factor in marriage partner choice in many societies. This is so because respondents are all undergraduates and they will necessarily want to marry someone with good educational qualification like themselves. Observations have shown that graduates who marry partners of lower educational qualification or no education at all find it difficult to introduce their spouses in public when they go out with them and in most cases they do not attend public functions together. This could thus result into problem in the marriage. This is supported by the studies carried out by Kalmijin (2001) and Levi-Strauss (2006). They revealed

that college graduates prefer to marry college graduates like themselves.

Physical factors include consideration for appearance, age, health, height and weight. With regard to physical traits such as height, weight, physical attractiveness and health, findings from a number of studies indicate that a homogenous tendency is in evidence. There is a tendency for tall men and women and short men and women to become engaged more than would occur in any random mating, the same principle of like attracting likes holds with reference. Byrne (1994) has pointed out that physical attractiveness plays an important role in determining the marital choice among youths and as a physical factor age serves to delimit the choice of a marriage partner, most people in our society marry within their own age range, especially the first marriage while Women customarily neither dates nor marry men who are younger than themselves.

World Health Organisation defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmities. According to Broverman (1993) research has shown that people tend to seek for mates who have good hereditary background than those with one problematic hereditary or genetic background. An area of concern about health is more in the area of genotype and blood group which goes a long way to determine the success of marriage and the ability to live together. The issue of genotype

is a limiting factor especially to the disadvantaged blood group like 'SS'.

Cultural factor can be subdivided into ethnic sentiment, religion and race. The influence of culture on marital choice is pervasive. In marriage or in simple like and dislikes, there is tendency for people to like others who share the same culture with them. For example people always prefer those who have the same religion, language, similar custom and people from the same tribe with them. While some societies exert specific pressures on individuals to marry predetermined mates, other societies are more subtle. Countries like Nigeria have a system of free choice that is not exactly free. Social approval and disapproval restrict one's choices, so that we do not marry just anybody. Endogamous pressures encourage one to marry within your social group (economic, educational, ethnic, religious, and racial) and exogamous pressures encourage individual to marry outside their family group. The degrees of freedom among the undergraduate students have refused to give room for the full influence of culture in the choice of marital partners. Although, the effect of culture has narrowed down the choice of a mate from anybody to those 'inside' especially in the area of religion, race and social class today, many undergraduates do marry across racial, religion and class lines (Kausty, 1991).

Economic factor in mate selection for the female is a serious factor worthy of close consideration. For the

female, money is like a sixth sense without which you cannot make the most of other things in life. For some ladies, right partners can only be equated with financial achievement. They see money as love; these assumptions are often made when gifts are received. They tend to assume that the value of a gift symbolises the depth of emotion. 'He must love me more than I thought', this is the thought that continues to cross their mind. Similarly, restraint in spending is seen as absence of love, most female undergraduates have ended up making the wrong choice of mate based on this obnoxious idea.

The Sociological factor of mate selection could be sub divided into social class, marital status, home background, interpersonal relationship, love and sexual compatibility. Some college student tend to select dates who are members of a society or fraternity of equal prestige (Krain, 1997). Among the undergraduate student, studies have shown that men and women from high status homes were most likely to marry those who fall within their status. Student in prestigious clubs tended to select dates who are members of a club of equal prestige. This explains why many undergraduates rush into social clubs and society, it also explains why social parties are usually for members only, and at best a few contemporaries from equally prestigious clubs are invited. According to Byrne (1999), 'Sociologists have known for some time that marital status tends to act as

a circumscribing factor in mate selection', that is single persons are likely to marry other single individuals, widowed tend to marry widowed and divorces tend to marry divorces. In summary, marriages are most likely to occur between people of similar life age, physical appearance, education, social class and marital status.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study was to investigate the factors that influence mate selection as perceived by youths. Specifically the study determined:

- (1) The physical (age, health, physical appearance) factors that could influence mate selection among youths.
- (2) The socio-cultural factors that could influence mate selection among youths.
- (3) The economic factors that could influence mate selection among youths.

Methodology

Design and Area of Study: The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The survey design was chosen for the research to enable the researcher summarise a large body of data comprising of one or more variables. Olabisi Onabanjo University is an autonomous public and non-residential institution that provides higher education and encourage the advancement of learning in all spheres of human endeavours. There are two colleges and five faculties in the

University, namely; College of Agricultural Sciences and Obafemi Awolowo College of Health Sciences. The faculties are: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Social and management sciences. Olabisi Onabanjo University was chosen as a sample for convenience sake.

Population for the study: Male and female students in the final year of Olabisi Onabanjo University 2000/2001 session are the target group for this study. According to the findings of this study the highest of the age range of final year students falls between 21-30years. This is the youthful age and this justifies the reason why the final year students were chosen as the target group. Also, the selection of sample for the study cuts across all the faculty because getting married is a norm and a social rite for all youths.

Sample for the study: To ensure adequate representation, questionnaires was administered to both male and female final year students of the different faculties of the University. The total number of final year students in each faculty in 2000/2001 session is given below. The whole of two thousand and two hundred candidates cannot be studied for the sake of precision, therefore 5% was being sampled in each faculty using stratified random sampling method. Therefore, total sample size was one hundred and ten.

Estimates of final year students in all faculties of O.O.U.

S/No	Faculty	Total Number of Students in the Final Year	5% to be Sampled
1.	Education	500	25
2.	Arts	280	14
3.	Law	80	4
4.	Basic medical sciences	60	3
5.	Clinical Sciences	80	4
6.	Pharmacy	60	3
7.	Agricultural production and renewable resources	20	1
8.	Agricultural management and rural development	80	4
9.	Social and management sciences	760	38
10.	Science	280	14
	Total	2200	110

Instrument for data collection:

Questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections, the first section contained questions on personal data of the respondents. The second section was divided into four parts and the sections were designed to provide information on the subject matter, which was to elicit response on the factors considered in the choice of marriage partner and this was ascertained by the choice of twenty nine items or factors one may consider in marital choice. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained before use.

Data collection: A survey by questionnaire research method was used to study the responses of the undergraduate final year students as regards factors considered in the choice of marriage partners among

undergraduates of Olabisi Onabanjo University. One hundred and ten questionnaires were administered to the final year students of the ten faculties in the University, 55 questionnaires to males and the other 55 to females using stratified random sampling method (5% from each faculty).

Data analysis: Primary data was used for the study. The primary data was collected through the administration of questionnaires. One hundred and ten questionnaires were administered on final year students in Olabisi Onabanjo University. Descriptive statistics made use of in this study were frequency distribution tables, means or averages and percentage were employed in analysing the data of this study.

Results

Table 1: Summary of Personal data Information of Undergraduate Students

S/No	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age of respondent	15-20: 2 21-25: 53 26-30: 51 31-35: 4	1.8 48.1 46.4 3.7
	Total	110	100
2.	Sex of respondent	Male: 55 Female: 55	50 50
	Total	110	100
3.	Religion of respondent	Christianity: 64 Islam: 46	58.2 41.8
	Total	110	100
4.	Family background of respondent	Monogamous: 67 Polygamous: 43	60.9 39.1
	Total	110	100
5.	Marital status of respondent	Single: 109 Married: 1	99.1 0.9
	Total	110	100

Table 1, no 1 revealed that the age bracket of both 21-25 and 26-30years constitute the highest number this shows that 94-95% of the final year are of marriageable age and this justifies why they are used for this analysis. In no 2, 110 respondents were used in the study, to ensure equal representation of the two genders, the same number of questionnaires was distributed to both sexes.

No 3 revealed that out of one hundred and ten respondents, 64 were Christians, while 46 were Muslims, this shows that there is a fair representation of the two religions. Table 1, no 4 also revealed that 67 of the respondents were from the

monogamous family and 43 respondents were from the polygamous family, this shows a fair representation of the two family background and it implies that the study will be adequate in judging the responses of people who have been influenced by the so called difficulty that takes place in polygamous homes as well as people who have been fortunate to go through this experience.

Lastly in no 6, 109 of the respondents were single and only one is married, the study should therefore be seen more from the singles point of views.

Table 2: Respondents' view about considering Physical factors in Mate Selection

Physical factors	Percentage %
Partner must have good facial appearance	94
Partner must be of the same complexion	8
Partner must be of the same age	0
Spouse should be older	41
Spouse should be neat	100

Table 2 reveals that as far as physical factor is concerned, facial appearance plays a very important role in mate selection. Both the male and female respondents attach a lot of importance to good facial appearance, 94% of the undergraduate students want their spouse to be good looking. Another point that is of much importance is the fact that the partner should be neat, all

graduates gave consent to this and it was rated as 100%. That the partner should be of the same complexion was rated low by both sexes, it can thus be concluded that both sexes want to marry or considered good looking and neat people very important, this implies physical factor is of great importance to youths.

Table 3: Respondents view about considering Health factors in Mate Selection

Health Factors	Percentage %
Partner must be sexually compatible	88
Consideration for the spouse genotype	64
Partner must be of the same blood group	16
Consideration for fertility	75
Consideration for disability	55

Table 3 shows that as far as health factors are concerned, only the fact that the partner must be from the same blood group was rated low, the consideration for health factor was very high. Undergraduates want partner that is sexually compatible with them and who must have a

compatible genotype, who must be fertile, in terms of being able to bear children and who must not be disabled. It can be concluded that Nigerian Undergraduates give high consideration for health factors during mate selection.

Table 4: Respondents view about considering Sociological factors in Mate Selection

Sociological factors	Percentage %
Partner must have good interpersonal relationship	99
Partner must show genuine love, trust and affection	100
Partner must have high social class	34
Partner must be of the same religion	96
Partner must be emotionally compatible	93
Partner must be morally upright	99
Partner must be independent of parent	80
Partner must have similar educational background	39
Partner must have higher level of education	56
Partner must show desire for home and children	98
Partner must be of the same social class	61

Table 4 shows that almost all the sociological factors were rated high, only in three instances did both sexes opinion rated low, this is as regards their partner being from a high social class or from the same social class and their partner being from the same educational background with them.

However, when factors like good interpersonal interaction, genuine love, trust and affection, moral uprightness and desire for home and children were considered, all respondents rated this high, in fact these factors were almost scoring 100% positive responses.

Table 5: Respondents view about considering Cultural factors in Mate Selection

Cultural Factors	Percentage %
Partner must be from the same ethnic group	25
Partner must be of the same tribe	19
Partner must be from the same race	31
Partner must have the same cultural background	52

Table 5, revealed cultural factors generally score below average among undergraduates when selecting a partner. All the factors considered have less than 50% of the undergraduate responding positively.

Except in the case of same cultural background where the positive response seems higher. It can be inferred that cultural factors is least considered among Nigerian youths.

Table 6: Respondents view about considering Economic factors in Mate Selection

Economic Factors	Percentage %
Partner must be financially well to do	68
Partner must be from wealthy family	62
Partner must have highly paying job	12
Partner must be economically independent of parent	74

Table 6 shows that one factor scored low, that the partner must have highly paying job, also, both of them unanimously scored it low. 74% of the respondents want partners that are economically independent of their parents, 68% want spouse who is financially balanced while 62% wants their spouse to come from wealthy family. Economic factor is of importance to Nigerian youths during the process of mate selection.

Discussion of Findings

Table 2 and 3 shows that amongst the physical factors (age, health and physical appearance) Elite youths did not give consent to the fact that their partner should be of the same age, this is a logical response from the youths as being of the same age does not necessarily mean they are the best match. This finding is not in support of Byrne (1994) that says individuals love to marry people within their own age range. Also, physical appearance was rated high, no one would want to associate with anyone that looks unkempt, because cleanliness is next to Godliness. On a final note about physical factors in the area of health, it is worthy to note that genotype was given a high consideration among youths because it could become a

critical issue in the nearest future. It could determine the level of peace, financial buoyancy and the extent of skewedness of the entire family.

Table 4 and 5 reveals that youths give a high consideration to social factors while cultural factors were rated low. Virtually, all the points considered on sociological factors did final year students' response scored above 90%, this implies youths considered 'good interpersonal interactions', genuine love, trust and affection amongst others to be of high importance in their relationships, while only in one point (partner must have same cultural background) did final year students response rated average but the remaining three instances were all below average, finalist might have seen that there is strength in diversity. This finding agrees with Kausty (1991) who posits that today many undergraduates do marry across racial, religion and class lines. It is also worthy of note that education that has been found to have a strong consideration in the mind of youths now has a second class position in the minds of youths, this finding disagrees with the finding of O'Neil (2006) who explained that education is an important factor in marriage partner choice in many

societies, this finding also disagrees with the position of Kalmijin (2001) and Levi-Strauss (2006). They revealed that college graduates prefer to marry college graduates like themselves.

Table 6 shows that youths' response in terms of economic factors was above average which was not consistent throughout. It could be deduced that although economic factors has an important inclination on a happy married life, it was not seen as main priority though it has an appreciable percentage of consideration that is a little above average. This may be because in relationship money is not everything.

Conclusion

Findings in the present study shows that final year students and the youths in general attach importance to physical and social factors most, while concerning economic factors youths were a little bit indifferent and in case of cultural factors, this was rated very low. It implies that youths of today have a right focus about selection of marriage partners and it implies there can be a better tomorrow for this nation because if families have good basis or foundation laid on trust, love and harmony, then there can be happy families and thereafter a happy nation because the home represents the fundamental, basic units of the society.

Recommendations

Counselling psychologists are to see the need for their intervention during this critical time of decision for the youths and assist them in order to

ensure the principles guiding and informing individual youths decision are the viable ones that could ensure they eventually achieve their dreams in life and also have a lovely family, this would assist them to remain a self-reliant and responsible citizen of the Country.

Graduating students; the youths should be encouraged to venture into mate selection as at when due instead of running away from it as a result of economic constraints within the country, that could be making them feel confused and afraid to face any financial embarrassment.

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