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INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The Dynamic Nature of Dating,
Mating, And Coupling

Edited by Christina L. Scott
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INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF DATING, MATING, AND COUPLING

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“...AND HERE WE ARE...”: INFLUENCING FACTORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER PREFERENCE AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN NIGERIA

Olufemi Adeniyi Fawole and
Olasunkanmi Adebiyi Osho

ABSTRACT

Every society has unique factors that contribute to the selection of marriage partner among young adults. These factors have been found to equally determine marital satisfaction and marital stability. This study focuses on married couples in Nigeria and factors that determined how they transcended from their dating period to marriage.

A total of 19 married couples participated in this study, which involved the use of focus group discussions to elicit data from them. Snowball sampling technique was used to obtain respondents who had similar characteristics.

The respondents were aged between 38 and 50 years, had courted for at least 7 years before marriage, and marriage was not less than 10 years. Data was analyzed using content analysis. Themes bordered on factors determining choice of partner, how they met, length of their dating, and courtship periods. Physical attractiveness, as a determining factor, was clearly evident among

participants. Participants agreed that communication was vital to marriage stability.

The study brought to light that in spite of strong traditional values, Nigerians displayed romantic characteristics similar to Western societies such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The study was limited because of the method adopted for selecting participants. Also, some variables such as ethnic background and educational background were not included in the study. The study recommends future studies which may be longitudinal, involving couples' personality traits, families of origin, and so on, in order to yield more salient issues.

Keywords: Yoruba; dating; courtship; marital satisfaction; parental characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Selecting a mate is one of the most important decisions people make during their lifetime. Mate selection is a process through a series of steps. Bee (1994) suggests that when an individual meets someone new, the individual applies three filters, in the order listed: (a) External characteristics: Does this person match you in quality of appearance, apparent social class, or manners? (b) Attitudes and beliefs: Is there a match with your ideas in basic areas, such as sex, religion, or politics? (c) Role fit: Does this person's idea about relationships match your own? Do you have similar ideas about appropriate sex roles? Are you compatible sexually? For example, if one partner is eager for a high level of personal self-disclosure and the other is reticent about revealing his feelings, a poor match would exist on this filter.

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 & Newman, 1995). One of the major tasks of young people, particularly university students is to achieve a state of identity. Erickson (1987) referred to identity as a state toward which one strives if one were in a state of identity, the various aspects of one's self-image would be in agreement with another, 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 a deep emotional bond based on mutual trust, respect, and shared experiences.

All known societies have some form of socially approved sexually and economic union between man and woman, that is marriage (Ember & Ember, 1996). Marriage can be described as socially recognized and approved union between individuals, who commit to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting intimate relationship. Marriage is in fact the foundation of the basic unit of the society called family and therefore it is the basic building block of the society. It brings significant stability and meaning to human relationship. It remains the ideal for raising children; it plays an important role in transferring culture and civilization into future generations (Skolnick, 2005).

Marital satisfaction, responsible for marital stability to a large extent, refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the specific components within her or his marital relationship (Durodoye, 1997; Fatehizadeh & Ahmadi, 2006). Research (Asoodeh, Khalili, & Lavasani, 2010; Givertz, Segrin, & Hanzal, 2009) has also found satisfactory relationship as the most important and the most complex aspect of intimate relationships, whereas Wong and Goodwin (2009) found that a permanent relationship and cooperation with the spouse as well as financial stability in the family are the most important factors in marital satisfaction.

Choosing a marriage partner in Nigeria usually follows a long learning period of engaging in more informal and often multi-partner relationships (Owagbemi & Maduawuchi, 2015). Each culture has its methods of carrying out mate-selection processes. For instance, Ogunjuyigbe and Adeyemi (2003) had found that in South-western Nigeria, the tradition is that wives are sought for husbands, with parents of the male often playing significant roles by even negotiating for a wife who they believe would be compatible with their children. Among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria, the family is regarded as the most sacred and significant institution. The family is the basic agent of socialization, instilling tenets of morality, discipline, and commitment. Marriage, among the Yoruba, is regarded as a union not only of the two spouses, but the two extended families to which they belong. Marriage itself is the proof that both spouses are good products and ambassadors of their families. By successfully going through the demanding steps of the Yoruba marriage, the spouses become a good reflection of the quality of their families' character. Parker, Ortega, and VanLaningham (1995) were of the view that a successful marriage is a marriage in which the two individuals respect their own values and principles full-heartedly; have mutual interests; feel commitment toward each other; have made a decision to be together under any circumstances; and cooperate with one another. Satisfaction of the couples requires the endeavor of the couples to gain it. Researchers (Hall, 2006; McKenzie, 2003; Olson & Olson, 2000) have attempted to identify factors responsible for strong enduring marriages. They have emphasized categories including communication, personality, sexual relationships, leisure activities, spiritual beliefs, how the couples treat each

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While the term courtship in relationship generally refers to mate selection leading to long-term relationship, dating has a much more casual connotation. Dating behavior as studied by sociologists runs the gamut from the very casual "hanging out" that isn't "really dating" (Owens, 2005) to spending time with one or more potential partners, to having fun without any expectation of permanence. Dating can be difficult to distinguish from friendship at times, especially among young adults and teens who spend unstructured time hanging out with one another but who do not necessarily seek to define their relationships and who may deny that they have been on a "date." In some instances, young adults form committed sexual and emotional relationships that are durable, although they do not necessarily have an expectation of permanence while reporting that they have never dated or "never been on a date" (Owens, 2005).

The difference in goals present in dating and courtship gives a "two-tiered system of heterosexual interaction" to modern romance (Cate & Lloyd, 1992, p. 24). In fact, the goal and seriousness of the relationship is often the basis for marking whether the couple is "dating" or "courting," with dating evolving into courtship when the couple becomes both serious and sexually exclusive. Studies of the early stages of partner choice in dating tend to focus on initial attraction (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001) and the techniques that people use to draw partners to them. Frequently, this book deals with the ideal or goal relationship that a partner holds going into a potential relationship. Studies of the early stages of a dating-relationship, therefore, often gauge the predating expectations or desires of partners. An example would be Yancey's (2002) study of who interracially dates; factors such as religious background, political stance, residential region, and educational background influence whether a person will date outside their own racial or ethnic background.

However, the process of dating is different according to each society. Dating is a relatively recent phenomenon which has mainly emerged in the last few centuries. As far as Africa is concerned, dates are not casual because parents arrange for their sons' and daughters' marriages, and even if couples are allowed to date, they are well aware that their families have already chosen the partner for them and they cannot break out from the relationship to be even if they do not approve of their partner after a few dates. Dating in Nigeria is all about getting to know the other person. You learn things such as his likes and dislikes. You are acquaintances, not lovers. But in courtship, you have agreed to have a more serious relationship, with deeper commitments and with the hope of finalizing it in marriage. Differences in dating customs are highly influenced by religion and parental control, but in America, dating is rather conventional and movie-like. Dates, as seen with young people in America, are a way of testing a potential partner before making an actual commitment and to determine whether a particular person is compatible with them or not. Romantic relationships as well as friendships are characterized by frequent interaction and communication; based simply

on the amount of time adolescent romantic partners often spend together, then, it is reasonable to expect that partners could become a source of influence with regard to school matters and a host of other issues. However, these relationships also involve distinctive dynamics not found within friendship – feelings of heightened emotionality common within heterosexual relationships provide a distinctive contrast with the comfort and relative stability of same-gender friendships.

In light of modernity, dating relationships can be considered the foundation of gender difference in sexuality, although this area has not been fully explored. Patterns of dating are diverse, ranging from the traditional offline to modern online dating. Traditional dating usually begins with spatial proximity and physical attractiveness followed by an investigation of similarities and interest and then personal self-disclosure (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002) found support for a model showing that e-mailing or online chatting led to phone calls which finally led to offline dating. It was also discovered that those who better expressed their feelings were more likely to commence dating relationships and that self-disclosure led to an increase in intimacy and development of dating relationship after the establishment of liking and trust (McKenna et al., 2002). As posited by Johnson (2004), when chances of rejection increase, people choose to move from offline dating to online conversation. Essentially, the advent of the internet has promoted expansion of opportunities in dating relationships (Hong, Li, Mao, & Stanton, 2007). In light of the foregoing, it is noteworthy that dating has become a rite of passage for youths in Nigeria. Unfortunately, many youths create or encounter problems through their involvement in dating relationship.

However, not many studies have concentrated on investigating the roles that dating preferences, mate selection, courtship processes play on marital satisfaction in Nigeria. This study also attempts to examine the relationship between physical attractiveness, parental characteristics, exposure to formal education as well as cultural beliefs and enduring marriages.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Olson and Olson (2000) identified ten categories that can predict strong marriages: communication, flexibility, closeness, personality issues, conflict resolution, sexual relationship, leisure activities, family and friends, financial management, and spiritual beliefs.

Mate selection is the most important event in the life of a person and is the seed of future existence. It operates like a market and the rule of selection determines the form of exchange between the partner and their households. The society is changing very rapidly; it is the need of the time to realize the importance of the changing trend in marriage and to see the effects of these

trends (Rehman, 2002). Selecting a mate is very much a culturally defined process. The rules governing selections vary widely from one society to another and are often complex.

DETERMINING FACTORS OF MATE SELECTION

The factors affecting mate selection are predominantly determined by wide consensus prior to the decision of who dates who and who is chosen as mate in their decision for marriage. These factors include, but are not limited to, proximity, similarity, compatibility, complementary, and compensation.

Physical attractiveness: This is perhaps the most studied factor in mate selection. Physically attractive individuals are rated as more desirable potential mates than less attractive individuals by both male/female individuals. Physical attractiveness is a characteristic which is universally branded as depthless and superficial when discussed in the context of determining mate selection for human relationships. Koehler (2005) predicted that female undergraduates may have a stronger preference for partners who are college graduates to non-college graduates while male undergraduates indicated that it is not too important that their partners should be college graduates. Levi-Strauss (2006) posited that people are very particular about the demographic characteristics of their prospective spouses. College students surveyed indicated that they will not marry from a religious group that is not theirs. Demographic similarity, i.e. similarity in ethnicity, is a major factor in shaping interpersonal attraction and mate selection. This is not surprising, given that individuals tend to display an implicit preference toward people of their own ethnicity.

In a research survey conducted by Buss (1994), he observed that men and women seek different traits when looking for a mate but physical attractiveness is a common factor. Men value physical attraction as it is believed that women with such traits are sexually attractive. On the other hand, a female also tends to value physical characteristics in males such as height, muscularity, and broad shoulders. And he, therefore, concluded that the body size also has an influence on mate preferences among university students. Personality has no doubt been observed to play a role in mate selection, both practically and experimentally (Albada, Knapp, & Theune, 2002), but physical attractiveness is an often underrated characteristic, which is at times even denied to be a factor. Although Evolutionary Psychology is a relatively new field of research, physical attractiveness has been studied in a number of ways, in terms of both facial and bodily attractiveness. In an article written by Cornell University communication (2003), it is observed that physical attraction is not all that important except to people who rate themselves as physically attractive. Physical attractiveness is expected to be a major determining factor influencing choice of marriage partner among Nigerian youth.

Parental characteristics: In the traditional Yoruba society in Nigeria, most marriages are arranged by the parents on both sides (Bolaji, 1984). While parents of a girl would search for a suitable partner for their daughter, the parents of the boy would also attempt to find a suitable bride for their son, all in order for the children to have a happy and stable home. Basically, two forms of arranged marriages were common among the Yoruba's. One was the betrothal of a girl before she was born and the second, chosen by the families of the young ones concerned. The third category of marriage partner selection now prevalent among the Yoruba's is the one in which individuals concerned personally choose their own partners. This may not be unconnected with the increased pace of modernization whereby emphasis is shifting from extended family ties, which formally existed in most of the rural areas (Orubuloye, 1987). According to Latif (1993), parents are presumed to have the experience needed to help their children find a mate appropriate for them. Therefore, while the growing adults in Nigeria attempt on their own to look for suitable partner, they still take into consideration the personality characteristics of the parents of their intended partner.

Educational background: Education is another aspect which is considered in selecting a mate, especially by university students. O'Neil (2006) explained that education is an important factor in marriage partner choice in many societies. Buss and Schmitt (1993) posited that in marriage partner choice surveys women consistently express a preference for marriage partners who are of high educational background and of the same educational qualification as themselves. Melgosa and Melgosa (2006) believed that a relationship between two people includes important intellectual component involving conversations, objectives, and activities which become more difficult when there are large differences between partners in terms of education level. Individual must therefore consider the educational level of the future spouse in order to avoid a wide difference in communication and intellectual component. Kalmijn (2001) revealed that college graduates prefer to marry college graduates like themselves. However, female graduates also like to marry men who are educationally advanced than them. Similarly Gage and Hancock (2002) posited that undergraduates prefer partners of similar educational qualification and background. A study conducted by Todosijevic, Ljubinkovic, and Arancic (2003) revealed that respondents prefer potential partners who are educated and those with interesting professions. In Nigeria, importance is given to choosing a marriage partner who has high levels of education or the potential for it.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to investigate the factors that were responsible for the choice of marriage partner among Nigerian couples. The study was aimed at identifying those unique factors responsible for the transcending relationships of couples in Nigeria, from their dating period to marriage, and several years after marriage.

METHODS

Snowball sampling method was employed to obtain participants for the study. Potential participants were identified and the research objectives were introduced. Snowball sampling methodologies may be employed where it is the only feasible method available when attempting to study hidden populations for whom adequate lists and consequently sampling frames are not readily available. Five married couples were identified in a restaurant in the Ikeja shopping mall (Lagos State, Nigeria). The couples were informed about the research and asked to participate. However, two of the couples declined but they agreed to identify their friends or colleagues at work, who they knew had similar characteristics as they did, according to the specifics of the study.

PARTICIPANTS

Over a period of five weeks, a total of 23 couples had been identified, of which only 19 couples showed willingness to participate. All participants agreed to meet at the restaurant in the mall at different times over a period of five weeks, on Sundays, as this was the only day of the week which most of them were free to participate. Each participant, after reading and understanding the ethics guiding the research, signed informed consent forms. Demographic information was obtained with the use of questionnaire while focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out to elicit information relative to the study. Study participants were of Yoruba ethnicity of South-western Nigeria, each participant was married to someone they had been in a relationship with for over 5 years before they got married to each other, and had been happily married for 10 years or more. The inclusion of participants settled for up to 10 years of marriage, which allowed a longer term focus. The age of the couples at the time of the FGDs was between 36 and 50. Data was solely analyzed using content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the participants measured the length of courtship as well as marriage; where each couple had met their partner; and the number of children they had. The determining factors of choice of marriage partner included in the discussion were physical attractiveness; communication between both partners; level of understanding of each other; the extent to which traits of parents affected their choice; among others. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Data.

Variable		Percent (%)
Years in marriage	7–11 years	36.8
	12–16 years	31.6
	More than 16 years	31.6
Number of children	None	5.1
	1–3	57.9
	Above 3	36.8
Length of courtship	5–7 years	73.7
	Above 7 years	26.3
	Neighborhood	10.5
Where they met	School	15.8
	Through friends	21.1
	Social media	15.8
	Other	36.8

The average number of years in marriage, as reported by the participants, was 36.8% among those who had been married for 7 to 11 years. Those who had been married for 12 to 16 years were 31.6% while another 31.6% stated they had been married for over 16 years. Among these couples, 57.9% of them had 1 to 3 children, 36.8% had more than 3 children, and 5.1% did not have any child yet, though were expecting. When asked the length of their relationship from the day they met till the day they got married, 73.7% admitted having been in the relationship for a period of 5 to 7 years and 26.3% revealed they had been in the relationship for over 7 years, before they finally got married. The participants were also asked to describe how they met each other. A total of 10.5% revealed that they had met in their neighborhood, another 15.8% had met while in school, and 21.1% had been introduced to their partners through friends. Of the 19 couples, 15.8% stated they had met through social media such as Facebook while 36.8% met their partner through other avenues such as social events, at the shopping mall, and so on (Table 2).

Participants were asked to comment on what they considered to be the most important factor while they were dating their partner. Results showed variations between the men and the women, on what they held as the key factor. For instance, when asked about physical attractiveness, it was the commonest most important factor among the men (36.8%) whereas it was considered as a second factor among the women (26.3%). And among the women, the commonest most important factor was communication (42.1%), which was second most important among men (21.1%). All couples admitted that having an understanding and sensitive partner (men – 10.5% and women – 15.8%) as well as the parental characteristics (men – 10.5% and women – 15.8%) were

Table 2. Most Important Factor Considered for Selection of Mate.

Variable		Percent (%)
Male	Physical attractiveness	36.8
	Communication	21.1
	Understanding and sensitivity	10.5
	Parental characteristics	10.5
	Ethnic background	5.3
	Other	0
	Communication	42.1
Female	Physical attractiveness	26.3
	Understanding and sensitivity	15.8
	Parental characteristics	15.8
	Ethnic background	0
	Other	0

important at the same level, ranking third and fourth, respectively. While 5.1% of the males considered ethnic background of their spouse to be of some importance, none of the women attached any relevance to that factor.

The study adopted the same model as of Daneshpour, Asoodeh, Khalili, Lavasani, and Dadras (2011) by dividing the couples into three groups:

1. *Non-traditional* – where the relationship between the spouses was based on sharing both home and work responsibilities
2. *Traditional matriarchal* – where the husband stayed at home and the wife had the earning power and was the original decision maker for the family
3. *Non-traditional patriarchal* – where either the wife stayed at home, performing child raising and housekeeping responsibilities, while the husband worked to earn the family income, or the woman, though working or taking part in some form of economic activities to sustain the family, was still under the dominance of the husband as the original ruler of the family. However, none of the wives that participated in this study belonged to the traditional matriarchal category.

Interview with each focus group took an average of 55 minutes, and while the participants were not paid, they were presented with snacks and drinks purchased from the restaurant. The restaurant had some space secluded from the public, thus allowing for uninterrupted sessions. Questions asked ranged from how the couples met, what attracted one to the other, what was their reaction upon being approached by the other, what kept them going all through from dating period to courtship and then marriage, to how the quality of marriage, in terms of satisfaction and stability, had been since inception.

"...How It All Started..."

Non-traditional male:

We have been married 10 years. I met my wife at a wedding reception I had attended with friends. My first glance of her from across the hall, I just said to my friend sitting beside me "There goes my future wife!" It was love at first sight, and I simply knew she was the one... we dated for quite a while...I think it was for about three years, and then I walked up to her home one evening; knocked on her door and when she opened, all I said was: "I want us to become husband and wife"...She turned me down at first. But after several weeks of "wooing" her more, she accepted. But it took us another two and a half years to get married.

Non-traditional patriarchal female:

I met my husband at the Polytechnic in Lagos while I was doing my registration. He walked up to me as I waited on the long queue of students and asked if he could assist me. At first I thought he was making fun of me, but he insisted, saying I would be on the queue for quite a while. So I yielded to him. After then, we became friends. Our courtship was full of fun, breaking up, coming back together...a few days to my birthday 6 years later, we had a quarrel. On my birthday however, he came to pick me up from my home, and took me to different places until we got to Sunrise Chinese Restaurant. All the while, I thought he was doing all as his way of apologizing. Suddenly, he asked me if I would marry him and before I could respond, I began to hear 'Yes, yes, yes' from different angles, where his friends came out of their hiding corners...it was fun all through. We have been married now for 11 years.

Non-traditional patriarchal male:

I met her at a church meeting. The way she smiled was my first attraction. But it took me about 2 weeks before I could summon the boldness to walk up to her. When I did, I said to her: "I like the way you smile..." And she beamed the smile again! We chatted for a few more minutes then she had to leave with her aunt. We kept seeing each other from that time on. We had dated for a little over 4 years. I was with her that night, outside under the moonlight, it was the same day she was called to bar, as a lawyer, and which coincided with her birthday. I got on one knee, pulled from my pocket, a cheap ring I had gone to purchase during the day, and asked her to marry me... we got married 8 months later and now, have been together 11 years.

"....And This, Got to Me..."

Non-traditional female:

... his height (non-traditional female), that was what really attracted me to him at first. I had always wanted someone so much taller than I am, and then he was so handsome... as he walked up to me that day, I was literally weak at the knees....

Non-traditional male:

For me, my woman has to be beautiful. I have had beautiful girlfriends, but her own was just different, particularly her light skin complexion. The interesting thing was that the first day I saw her, she had no make-up on, and I found myself just staring at her ... my friend with whom I was walking had to pull me by the arm, saying to me that it was rude to stare....

Non-traditional patriarchal female:

Call me old-fashioned if you like, but I like my guy to have a good strong build, and this man actually had a "six pack!" I guess it gives me a kind of feeling of security... apart from the fact that I love to be the envy of other ladies....

"... So Good So Far ..."

Male matriarch:

She is so resourceful... I don't know what I would have been without her. We have been married for 11 years. I lost my job 7 years now, and for the past 6 years, she has been the one holding the fort. She does so well at her job that she recently got a promotion. The increase in salary really helps, particularly in the schooling of our two children. While we were courting, she would always encourage me on having some money kept aside, would argue with me when it comes to spending money, particularly on things she felt were not necessary. That was one of the qualities I saw in her that made me hold on to her.

Non-traditional female:

There was something about my husband that I saw in the early weeks of our dating... He always apologized for anything he did to upset me... and that is not common at all among men here. It got me more inquisitive, so I decided to stick with for a while longer... and I must say, I discovered he is quite sensitive, understanding and kind. I could be quite emotional, but in him, I saw what I was going to be so comfortable with....

"...And Here We Are"

Non-traditional female:

What struck me was his way of always seeming to understand me... when I was stressed out, angry, upset, in need of words of encouragement, or even when all I needed was for him to be with me but just be quiet; he knew all. I knew right then that he was going to be my best friend. He still is. And truly, all these 12 years, I do not know how he has been able to be so consistent in all that. I couldn't have asked for a better man to be my husband....

Non-traditional patriarchal male:

She has this way of taking care of someone... she is so warm and kind. I am a workaholic, and I had always wondered how I was going to be with a woman who didn't understand my moods. We had it rough at first; always disagreeing over issues, at times giving each other the "silent treatment"... but after a while, I guess she got to understand me and learn to accept me, that this is who I am. We had been dating since we were both in the university, and she did complain a lot about my moods, but I enjoyed the way she would still talk softly to me, in spite of all... and I can't imagine loving any other person.

Non-traditional male:

Part of what I enjoyed about her was the way we communicated. We talked about everything. I loved the way she was so open and free and I so much wished she could just end up being my wife... I grew up in a home where we were taught to be expressive — say everything about everything. We still talk about everything... at times. I wondered if we get enough sleep at nights... This was because we keep talking far into the night. She talks about her day, I do same, we laugh a lot and we just enjoy being in each other's company... it just shows how much we are in love with each other.

Major findings of this study revealed that the couples in this sample were able to identify factors that contributed to the selection/choice of marriage partner. These include physical attractiveness, communication, understanding, and parental characteristics, among others.

DISCUSSION***Physical Attractiveness***

The study revealed physical attractiveness as a factor much more important to the Nigerian men than the women. Features such as beauty of the face, physical structure of the female, were considered essential values by the Nigerian men. The women indeed also valued the physical structure of the men, but not as highly placed as men did in terms of value. These go in line with Bereczkei, Voros, Gal, and Bernath (1997), who found relationships between physical attractiveness and choice of marriage partner. Nigerian females tend to prefer physical attractiveness more often for short term and males of high status often for long-term relationship. A major determinant factor of mate selection is the physical and mental fitness of such partner preferred; this is because it is revealed that the external characteristics such as personal appearance. There are certain traits that females would prefer in the potential mates, these are neatness, clean and well-groomed males and fellow who appreciated their beauty attractiveness. Buss (1994) was able to make an observation that men and women seek different traits when looking for a mate. Men value physical attraction as it's believed that women with such traits are sexually attractive. On the other hand, a female also tends to value physical characteristics in males such as height, muscularity, and broad shoulders. Physical appearance is perhaps the most studied factor in mate selection. Physically attractive individuals are rated as more desirable potential mates than are less attractive individuals by both male/female individuals. According to Buss and Schmitt (1993) in mate choice surveys women consistently express a preference for partners who have high-status profession. Women have high value for men who possess a promising career orientation, industriousness, and ambition. Women are significantly more likely to discontinue relationships with male who become unemployed, lack career motivation, or show laziness.

Communication

Good and effective communication was identified by both the Nigerian men and women, but the women rated it quite significantly higher than the men.

From the way the couples reacted to the questions asked, and the body language and the gestures made basically all through the discussions, it showed how their communication skills were at play and obviously how it had been sustaining their marriage. Bad or ineffective communication in marriage can be a common source of discord due to the inherent differences in the communication styles of the individuals. This made Gottman (1994) to be of the view that to improve marriage, one needs to learn how to argue. From his study, it was reported that happy couples would end an argument quickly and reach an agreement on the subject at hand. He also concluded that the secret of the success of a marriage lies in learning to discuss conflicts. By striving to communicate effectively with each other, couples help strengthen the bond of trust between them, generate a sense of mutual respect for each other, and to enrich the overall quality of their relationship. Although conflict is a natural and inevitable part of romantic relationships, effective communication allows couples to process those unforeseen challenges in constructive ways and this serves to enhance rather than hinder the relationship (Fawole & Fawole, 2011; Herold & Milhausen, 1999).

Parental Characteristics

Couples who took part in this study all agreed that in Nigeria, the traits or characteristics of the parents of the spouse matter a lot in determining what marriage partner to choose. In some instances, parents would push or direct their children, particularly the male child, to a family where they have observed the way the parents of the girl within that family relate. The general view is that if the mother of a girl has been regarded as a good wife, then the tendency for the daughter of such a woman to be a good wife is high. One of the male respondents told us how his father always encouraged him to "look at the ways of the mother" of a particular family from which he (the father) wanted his son to marry from. Thompson (1999) and Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, and Carlson (1999) had observed that parents and other primary caregivers are theoretically responsible for the initial shaping of attachment representations, and this influence has been examined in scores of empirical studies with young children. Simpson, Collins, Tran, and Haydon (2007) found that one's attachment orientation in infancy predicted the emotional quality of romantic relationships in early adulthood, and that this association was mediated by social competency in elementary school and secure or insecure friendships in adolescence. Especially important, the Simpson et al. longitudinal study suggests that the influence of parent-child attachment on subsequent romantic relationship functioning is indirect and dependent on important personal relationships out-

Length of Courtship

All the couples admitted how the long period of courtship contributed to their lasting marriage. They all agreed that it actually afforded the time needed to get to know more about each other and their behaviors and habits. They were of the view that the longer the courtship period, the more solidified the relationship, hence the marriage, would be. Their responses were supported by the studies of Hansen (2006), who had reported that there was positive correlation between courtship period and marital satisfaction. He found that those who dated longer before marriage reported a higher level of satisfaction. Also, Teichner and Farnden-Lyster (1997) found that among married couples studied, courtship length was a variable correlated with marital satisfaction.

LIMITATIONS

The present study does present limitations. The main limitation is that of the sample. The sample size did not serve as representative of the population of couples happily married. Particular fault also lies with the choice of sampling technique, which did not include couples that were not happily married, whose views would also have been relevant to the study. Further, the participants, knowing the types of themes they were going to discuss, might not have been truthful, as they were with their spouse. In some instances, some relevant information might have been left out because their spouses were also present. Also, other areas, such as the background of the participants' families, educational background of the partners, their religious and cultural beliefs and values about marriage, the full detailed processes involved in their dating and courtship years, among others, were not considered in this study.

CONCLUSION

Marital satisfaction is quite important for the stability of a marriage. The processes of choosing marriage partners, the factors that determine these processes, as well as the relationships involved in courtship processes add value to the quality and stability of a marriage. Responses from this study reveal that Nigerian couples consider communication and physical attractiveness as salient factors determining the strengths of a marriage. Other factors such as parental traits and educational background of the partner, though not significantly considered in this study, are also relevant, particularly within the Nigerian society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study suggest that further studies can be carried out to examine the factors influencing partner selection. It is suggested that a longitudinal study be carried out, to bring out more salient information. Also, future studies could explore the roles of personality traits, family of origin, age difference between couples, age at marriage, and several others. Lastly, a wider sample size, as well as other sampling techniques can be considered.

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INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICTS AND RESISTANCE OF DAUGHTERS IN SUBURBAN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws in part from data of a larger study on marital lives and divorce of women of various ages and backgrounds residing in metropolitan Turkey. The aim of the overall study has been to understand various factors which have paved the ways leading to divorce and the research method used for the study is based on narrative analysis. An important finding of the study is the control of women's sexuality which is discussed in this paper with the help of the narratives of three women who are raised by dominant fathers and by subordinated mothers. I argue that gender and generation hierarchies are hidden in the idealized image of family life in low- to middle-income families residing in suburban Turkey. Intergenerational conflicts arise due to three women's oppression in their young ages by their fathers who have decided upon their marriages to control their sexuality. Yet, as young adults, the three women try to find ways to cope with the control of their sexuality. The analysis of the three women's narratives reveal their endeavors either to challenge the idealized "virgin bride" norm or to get rid of their unwanted marriages through divorce or separation which can be considered as instances of women's resistance to patriarchal domination and their search for individuation. How much resistance the three women are able to endeavor is dependent on the aspects of gendered interactions and on the embeddedness of