



# **Attitudes of Male Undergraduate Students towards Choosing the Female Under/Graduate Students as Marriage Partners within the Hausa-Folk**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author AUS designed the study and wrote the protocol. Author SY performed the statistical analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MMU managed the literature searches as well as language accuracy. All authors contributed during the analysis of the study as well as read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Marriage partner selection, though something very close to us, has not been as simple and straight forward as the name denotes. Rather, it involves a lot of specialty and competence to accomplish. In fact, it has been a very serious and contentious subject of discussion amongst scholars. Various factors determine the selection of marriage partners, which vary from a society to another. This study is set to investigate into the attitude of undergraduate male students towards selection of female graduate and or undergraduate students as marriage partners, with the view of ascertaining if level of females' education in Northern Nigeria (and especially within the Hausa-folk) is a determining variable for a female to be chosen in marriage. The population of the study consists of

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all the students of the Department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria, which equals to 560 students. Total number of 226 students are selected as the sampled population. Moreover, questionnaire is used as the research instrument. The instrument was submitted to experts in the departments of Science and Vocational Education, and Educational Foundations respectively for validity check. However, the findings of the study indicate among others that, male undergraduate students have positive attitudes towards the selection of female under/graduate students as marriage partners. Finally, the research upper some suggestions among which one is that, there should be further study on the attitudes of other Hausas of different socio-economic status towards females' education.

*Keywords: Marriage; marriage partner; attitudes; Hausa-Folk.*

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Entry upon the role of husband and wife in an institution like marriage depends on being chosen as a life partner [1]. Marriage is the coming together of a man and woman as husband and wife [2]. In African society, marriage is considered to be essential because it protects the morals of the people and discourages adultery and fornication. It makes couple live responsibly, promote peace and harmony among members of a society [3]. In Nigeria, and within the Hausa folk specifically, it is generally believed that the success of a family largely depends on the relationship between the man and the woman (marital relationship), which is highly dependent on choosing the right spouse. However, selection of marriage partner is one of the most important decision people make during their lifetime. Selection of marriage partner can be as the mental process of selecting amidst other individuals likeable partner in marriage or legal union. Education is an important factor in marriage partner choice in many societies [1]. It has been observed that, in a marriage partnery surveys, women consistently express a preference for marriage partners who are of high educational qualification as themselves. Also, Kalmijn revealed that, college graduates prefer to marry college graduates like themselves [4].

However, this research gets its background from the phenomenon that, marriage is an event of necessity, which the selection of its partner is determined by various factors. One of such factors is education, that brings about the need to study the relationship between education and selection of marriage partner within the Hausa folk. The study will focus on undergraduate students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The result of which could be generalized to other similar situations.

## 2. RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Marriage is considered a phenomenon next to necessity in many societies. It is necessary for the fact that, it is the only means by which a man and a woman come together legally as a husband and a wife. There and then, they form a family by the means of which they produce legal offspring(s), there by maintaining as well as promoting the population of the society in question. However, many factors are considered when selecting a marriage partner. This is for the fact that, marriage is a lifelong event. Within the Hausa-folk, character and personality of a girl is highly considered during the selection. Moreover, among such factors that determine the sharpens the personality of a girl, as held, by the Hausas, is formal education. This could be either positively or otherwise.

Educated females are sometimes considered too socialized to be easy going in marital homes. Sani and Tsaure have pointed some gender and marital controversies, which are mainly on the question of equality versus equity. In this regard, it could be noted that, feminist as well as African womanist are mostly graduates [5]. Moreover, family is the first school to a child where as mother is the first teacher [6]. In this regard, individuals tend to be very careful in partnery selection during marriage. With all these therefore, it is worthy to study the relationship between education and selection of marriage partner among the Hausas.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on *Cultural Theory* which examines people within a given culture as well as try to understand how or why they react to certain situations in certain ways. Culture is "the totality of a society's distinctive ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge. It exhibits the ways humans interpret their environment" [7].

Therefore, this paper is concerned with the stand of Hausa culture on female education especially when it comes to marriage partner selection. As noted by Sani and Umar: "Hausa society has strong division of labor according to age and sex" [8]. As such, and for the fact that the culture highly discouraged interaction or association between opposite sexes, western education becomes a phenomenon of question within the domain of the said culture (Hausa).

### 3.1 Research Questions

This research is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the attitude of the undergraduate male students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto towards choosing undergraduate female students as marriage partners?
- ii. What are the factors responsible for the positive or negative attitudes of male undergraduate students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto towards the selection of female undergraduate students as their marriage partners?

### 3.2 Objectives of the Study

The central objective of this research is to study the relationship between education and selection of marriage partner amongst the Hausas. Undergraduate students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto are chosen as experimental group. Hence, the study is specifically concerned with finding:

- i. The attitude of the undergraduate male students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto towards choosing undergraduate female students as marriage partners,
- ii. The factors responsible for the positive or negative attitude of male undergraduate students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto towards the selection of female undergraduate students as their marriage partners,

### 4. MARRIAGE AND MARRIAGE MARKET

Marriage can be as: "The act by which a man and a woman unite to discharge their duties towards one another and society. Thus duties, however, which result from the relation of the husband and the wife. The act of union having been once accomplished, the word comes

afterward to donate the relation itself" [4]. According to Reiss as quoted by Sani & Yahaya, marriage is "A socially acceptable union of individuals as husband and wife roles with the key function of legitimating of parenthood" [2].

By these definitions, it is obvious that marriage is a universal phenomenon, and as institution, it performs almost similar set of functions in different societies. It is the foundation of all social relations of human society. Man is social by nature and cannot live in isolation, but marriage is the only institution, which recognizes and certifies these relationships with legal authority. Therefore, in spite of varied cultural patterns, religious orientations and ethical considerations, significance of marriage is universally accepted.

There is also obvious evidence, which suggests that, marriage market considerations play an important role in students' educational choice. For instance, top universities in the U.S. explicitly advertise to prospective students. The increased probability of finding a high-quality spouse that comes with the admission to their institutions. Gregory refers to Harvard University as *the nation's most elite dating services*. Finally, there is an increasing number of dating websites designed exclusively for the purpose to help students from top universities to find partners from top universities.

### 5. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SELECTION OF SPOUSE

There has been the predication that Female undergraduates may have a stronger preference for partners who are college graduates to non-college graduates while male undergraduates indicated that it's not too important that their partners should be college graduates. However, the process of spouse selection encompasses not just the act of choosing a mate but what really motivates or pushes youngsters into the desire of selecting a spouse. Factors that make this possible were examined the most common among them is the desire to participate in a socially sanctioned, mutually rewarding, intimate relationship.

Mate selection is the most important event in the life of a person. Various factors influence this process globally. They include; educational background, parental influence, religion and occupation. Observations have shown those graduates who marry partners of lower educational level have difficulties in both

interpersonal and the public communications as well. This could thus result into problem in the marriage. This is supported by the studies carried out by Kalmijin [9] and that of Levi-strauss [10]. They revealed that the college graduates prepare to marry college graduates like themselves.

In addition, religion is one of the important factors to consider in selection of spouse. The studies carried out by Muhammad presents a popular Muslim dogma called "Bukhari & Muslim" in which prophet Muhammad S.A.W recommended Muslims to select those partners who are best in religion and character [2]: "A woman may be married for four reasons: for her property, her rank, for her beauty, and for her religion (and character). So, marry the one who is best in religion and character and you shall prosper." People are expected to marry an individual who shares the same faith with them. Meanwhile, religion is an essential part of a believer's life [3].

## 6. THE HAUSA-FOLK

Hausa language belongs to the Western branch of the Chadic language super family within the Afro-Asiatic language phylum. The home territories of the Hausa people lie on both sides of the border between Niger and Nigeria. About one-half of the population speaks Hausa as a first language in Niger, whereas about one-fifth of the Nigerian population speaks it as a first language. However, the language is carried and spread to almost all major cities in West, North, Central, and Northeast Africa. This is indeed, among others, the result of their tradition of long-distance commerce and pilgrimages to the Holy Cities of Islam [11,12].

The origin of Hausa language is largely unknown. Notwithstanding, some legendary accounts of its origin exist. The rise of the Hausa-speaking states occurred sometime between 500 and 700 A.D., but it was not until roughly 1200 A.D. that these states came to control the region of Northern Nigeria and Northwestern Niger. There are a number of views about the origin of the Hausa people. The famous of the views is the Bayajida legendry, though number of scholars rejects the theory. Another view holds that all Hausawa once lived by Lake Chad, but were forced to move westward when the water level in the lake dropped. However, a view also identifies the

Hausa people as desert nomads who lived in the Sahara. Some scholars believe that there is a link between the Hausa and the people of Ethiopia based on shared worship of the sun, practiced prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity. Many Hausa themselves believe that their ancestors were Arabs whose descendants founded the popular Hausa city-states.

The most accepted view of Hausa origin is that of Thurstan Shawi. Thurstand is of the view that since there is strong evidence showing the existence of creatures in the South and East Africa (Austthroploiteous) as far back as about two million and six hundred years (2,000,600 years), the situation might be similar in the West Africa, only that there exists no research-evidence to vindicate that. Therefore, it is right at this juncture to say that, Hausawa migrate to their current cities neither from Masar, nor from the East. Rather, they had lived for long with other peoples at the Lake Chad. Desertification, which caused drainage to the lake, resulted into their permanent migration to River Rima area. It is from there that they spread and formed cities such as Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Daura, Rano, Damagaram, and Agadas among others. However, many researches account for the origin of Hausa [13,14].

## 7. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the descriptive survey, as it deal with the investigation of the relationship between education and selection of marriage partner among undergraduate students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The population of this study is made up of all undergraduate students of the Department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. Therefore, the population of the study comprises of four levels (100L to 400L). Nevertheless, the total number of the students is five hundred and sixty-four (564). The population distribution according to levels and courses of the students is represented in Table 1.

However, a sample of two hundred and twenty-six (226) students, which represents percent (40%) of the target population, is used to represent the five hundred and sixty-four (564) undergraduate students of the Department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

**Table 1. Population of Undergraduate Students in the Department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2016/2017 Session**

Courses	Level	Males	Females	Total
B.A. Ed. Arabic	100	5	1	6
	200	5	0	5
	300	2	0	2
	400	8	2	10
B.A. Ed. English Lang.	100	16	14	31
	200	25	19	44
	300	38	15	52
	400	98	37	135
B.A. Ed. Hausa Lang.	100	16	3	19
	200	8	0	8
	300	9	1	10
	400	22	1	23
B.A. Ed History	100	1	0	1
	200	0	0	0
	300	0	0	0
	400	1	0	1
B.A. Ed. Islamic Studies	100	39	14	53
	200	52	14	66
	300	23	2	25
	400	54	19	73

Source: UDUS Web Team, (2014)

The instrument use for the study is questionnaire. On the questionnaire however, provisions were made to the respondents to choose from amongst yes, no or undecided by simply ticking on any. Thereafter, their opinions are expressed in form of data, which are relevant and subject to further manipulations. The questionnaire is designed in such a way that, items of information required from the respondents are minimal, to enable them appropriately fill and return them accordingly. The questionnaire contains 8 items, which are responded using yes, no or undecided.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was submitted to experts at the departments of Science and Vocational Education, and Educational Foundations respectively, for adequate scrutiny and corrections. Their comments were taken carefully into due consideration in areas relevant for success of the research work.

### 7.1 The First Research Question

**RQ1:** Attitude of undergraduate students towards choosing undergraduate as marriage partner?

Item 1 in Table 2 indicates that 78% of the participants agreed to choose undergraduate as marriage partner willingly. However, item 2 in

Table 2 shows that 78% of the participants will like to advice anyone to choose an undergraduate as marriage partner, furthermore item 3 in Table 2 indicates that 82% of the participants have plan of marrying a university undergraduate. Moreover, item 4 in Table 2, indicates that 77% of the participants will like their sisters or daughters to study in the university.

### 7.2 Second Research Question

**RQ2.** Factors Responsible for positive or negative attitude towards the selection of undergraduate student as a marriage partner?

The answer to this research question is presented below in tabular form (i.e. Table 3)

Item 1 in Table 3 shows that 65% of the participants believes that the university undergraduate fulfills marital responsibilities more than other selected as marriage partners. However, item 2 in Table 3 indicates that 62% of the participants believes that undergraduate partners are not arrogant compared to others who have not attended university. Moreover, item 3 in Table 3 indicates that 68% of the participants believes that the university graduate selected as marriage partners help their partners more than others who have not attended university.

**Table 2. Students' interest in choosing undergraduate as marriage partner**

S/N	Item Statements	Yes	No	Undecided
1.	Will you willingly choose an undergraduate female student as a marriage partner?	78%	17%	5%
2.	Would you advice anyone to choose an undergraduate female student as a marriage partner?	78%	19%	3%
3.	Do you have the plan of marrying a university graduate?	82%	10%	8%
4.	Would you advice and/or support your sister(s) and/or daughter(s) to study in the university?	77%	13%	10%

**Table 3. Positive or negative attitude of undergraduate towards choosing a marriage partner**

S/N	Item Statements	Yes	No	Undecided
1.	Do female university graduate fulfill marital responsibilities more than other females selected as marriage partners?	65%	25%	11%
2.	Are female graduates selected as marriage partners arrogant compared to other females who have not attended university?	30%	62%	8%
3.	Do female graduates selected as marriage partners help their husbands more than other females who have not attended university?	68%	23%	9%
4.	Are female graduates selected as marriage partners easy going compared to other females who have not attended university?	77%	13%	10%

Furthermore, item 4 in table indicates that 60% of the participants believe that the undergraduates selected as marriage partners are not easy going compared to those who have not attended university.

especially universities usually face challenges regarding marriage. Hence, western education generally is not adequately supported among the Hausas. This has to do with the Hausas perception of the educational system as being contrary to their cultural norms and ethics.

## 8. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Majority of male undergraduate students of the Department of Educational Foundation, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto have positive attitudes towards choosing female undergraduate students as marriage partners.
2. There are factors responsible for positive attitudes of the male undergraduate students towards selection of female undergraduates as marriage partners, which among others include, fulfilment of marital responsibilities (thus, university graduates fulfil marital responsibilities more than wives who did not attend university education).

Contrarily, the data obtained from this study shows that, undergraduate students have positive attitudes towards choosing such females (who attended higher education) as marriage partners. This is as indicated in item 1 of Table 2, where 78% of the respondents are on this stand. More so, 82 of the respondents have the plan of marrying university graduates. As earlier noted by Levi-strauss [10] that graduates who marry partners of lower educational level have difficulties in both interpersonal and the public communications as well; this is likely the reason of the positive attitudes of the male undergraduate students in choosing female undergraduates as marriage partners. This is contrary to the findings of Koehler [16] who established that male undergraduates indicated that it is not too important that their partners should be graduates.

## 9. DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Among the Hausas, girls' formal education is not much encouraged. This may be due to the cultural bounded division of labor existing in the Hausa societies, as indicated by CCF [15]. For the fact that formal education is considered manly, girls that attended higher schools,

Similarly, the fact that 77% of the respondents supports females' education indicates their positive attitudes towards selection of females graduates as marriage partners. This is as indicated under item 4 of Table 2. However, noting that the population of the study consists of

undergraduate students, this result shall not be a conclusion regarding the topic. There should be further studies dealing with the respondents' educational as well as socio-economical influence (as variables) on the findings of the study. Therefore, further research should be carried out taking care of other factors such as influence of character, education, economic status, family background, parental influence, culture and ethnicity as it affects selection of spouse.

However, Table 3 takes us through the possible reasons of positive attitudes of undergraduate students towards choosing female undergraduates as marriage partners. Item 1 in the Table 3 shows that wife graduates fulfill marital responsibilities more than wives who did not attend higher schools. Similarly, such wives (graduates) support their husbands considerably, as affirmed by 68% of the respondents in item 3 of Table 3. Desire to participate in a socially sanctioned, mutually rewarding, intimate relationship is the most common factor that determined the selection of marriage partners. Hence, there is every reason for the respondents' preference of choosing female undergraduates as marriage partners [2].

Here, the researchers proffer suggestions that may prove to be instrumental in future research on choice of spouse. First and foremost, they advocate that research be carried out on this topic extensively and should include factors such as religious faith, cohabitation and self-esteem and their influence on choice of spouse. Also, the researchers suggest that the study be replicated using a larger of participants and involving students from several faculties.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Marriage has been a global phenomenon as the only means by which man and woman come together as legal partners, differences in the processes involved notwithstanding. Marriage partner selection is usually a careful and determined process. It is in fact a strive towards selection a partner with whose support, a better life is expected. Factors considered therefore for such choice includes personality and interest alongside other physical and social characteristics. Within the Hausa folk however, a girl's character is a highly regarded factor in the process of marriage. Consequently, western education is considered unfit for girls. Hence, Hausa girls who attended higher schools,

especially universities, are considered too exposed and generally feminist. Contrarily though, the result obtained from this study shows that, male undergraduate students have positive attitudes towards their (females') education. This study therefore suggests further studies to investigate into:

- i. The attitude of other Hausas of different socio-economic status towards females' education,
- ii. The effect, which such attitude could have on their academic achievements and
- iii. The future of females' education in days to come.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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