

## **Demographic Factors and Evaluation of Marital Choice Among Students' of Public Universities in South West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study evaluated the demographic factors and marital choice among students of public Universities in Southwest Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The design of this study was correlational survey research design. The target population of this study consisted of twelve public universities in Southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria within the study area comprising 407,984 public university students. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the six universities from the twelve public universities. Students were stratified along male and female dichotomy before simple random sampling was employed to select 380 university students using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire titled *Questionnaire on Demographic Factors and Marital Choice (QDFMC)*. The QDFMC was validated by the experts using face validity and Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.89. Inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that educational level and level of income have significant correlation with marital choice among students of public universities in Southwest Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. It recommends among others that parents should guide and lead their children properly in recognizing their choices, preferences and should not negatively interfere in their marital choice which may lead to regrets and pains later in the life of their children and university management should also organize seminars, workshops and conferences to educate intending couples with regard to choosing partners based on the couples' educational attainment.*

**Keywords:** Educational levels, income levels, marital choice

### **Introduction**

It is very important for every man and women to get married because there is need to get rid of the much immorality in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both man and women should fulfill this duty as husband and wife and each should satisfy each other's needs at the right time and at

the right way. Marital choice is a fundamental life-time decision, choosing someone to spend the rest of one's life with is a major decision that will shape the rest of a person's life. It is also one of the most vital decisions one makes in life generally. The issue of coming together of man and woman as husband and wife is an old institution ordained by the creator himself (GOD) because of the necessity of companionship and pro-creation. While a right decision would bring a life time of joy and fulfillment, a wrong choice could lead to a life of misery and regret (Ogunkunle, 2020). Marital choice sometimes seems to be based on the assumption that most people who decide to marry have multiple opportunities when the choice is made that they can mentally line up a number of prospects, compare them, and choose one from the lineup. In fact, it is rare for a person to have more than one opportunity to marry at a time. Opportunities to marry always occur sequentially, not simultaneously; the choice typically faced is to take advantage of an opportunity to marry or not to do so, and the only comparison made is with opportunities the person thinks he or she may have in the future. Unless the person chosen perfectly fits the chooser's image of an ideal spouse, which is probably rare, the decision to marry reflects a pessimistic assessment of future opportunities. The more realistic this assessment is, the better the marital choice is likely to be. Ideally, the person making the decision will have sufficient knowledge, based in part on past experiences, to make a realistic assessment.

Marriage is the process of making the relationship between two lovers public, official and permanent, for the purpose of companionship and procreation that is culturally, socially and religiously accepted globally. Marriage is the term commonly used to refer to a formally-written, verbal, or traditional long-term agreement between a man and a woman for companionship, procreation, food and other commodities in a domestic context (Becker, 2010). Marriage is both a social contract and a spiritual relationship. It is the union in which religion and the state are equally concerned about. This shows the importance of marriage as one of the components of the family being the oldest institutions highly valued in Nigeria. Marriage is a covenant relationship between male and female spouses. The covenant nature of marriage provides a strong foundation and secure framework for spouses' commitment to each other. Covenant defines the marital responsibilities - of husband and wife toward nurturing and protecting their marriage. The couple is expected by their covenant to work hard to reach the level of relationship which protects the marriage from both internal and external negative forces (Zhekwo, 2009). With the arrival of children, the family keeps expanding this is factual true within the African context where marriage is seen basically as a process of procreation. A good marriage guarantees a peaceful and joyful atmosphere in the home, which is most suitable for bringing up healthy and happy children. Research has shown that children who grow up in such environments are more likely to excel in school and in all other aspects of life including their own marital life (Okon in Ogunkunle, 2020).

*Virtually everyone concerned about marriage would agree that a "good match" of spouses is important, but the understanding of why it is important is often not very sophisticated. The reason given is often simply that husbands and wives need to be compatible, or that they need to have similar interests and values. Even academic discussions of the suitability of spouses to one another often seem to be based on the assumption that good matches could be made with such information as that yielded by personality tests, interest inventories, and assessments of values. Such information can at least to some small degree help predict which couples will marry, and among those who marry, which ones will have successful marriages. By itself, however, it can provide only limited insight into what constitutes a good marital match (Norval, 2020.p4).*

Married individual is perceived as more mature, stable, committed and responsible. This means that regardless of an individual's opinion or value of his/her marriage, there are broader implications of society's connotation; marital choice is one of the most serious decisions people face in life. In contemporary Nigeria, this decision usually follows a long learning period during which people engage in more informal and often multi-partner relationships. Humans also vary in their ability to translate such criteria into actual marital choice, as a result of some situational constraints that vary from one geographic setting to the other. But the criteria themselves seem to vary little among human populations. Different cultures have different desired aspects in a partner, but all of these different aspects fall into the same categories. For example, marital choice criteria seem to reflect individuals' personal concerns, such as personal and interpersonal qualities of the prospective choice and compatibility issues, while arranged-marital selection criteria, not surprisingly, reflect concerns of the total family unit. These family concerns include socioeconomic status, health, strength, fertility, temperament, and emotional stability of the prospective spouse. Yet, the similarity in characteristics between the two partners is consistent in both marriages.

People are drawn to someone with the similar lifestyle and standard of living. These people have a higher chance of common personal tastes, opinions and values with one another, making it easier to establish affinitive relations. These aspects can be assimilated through the different social networks. Contrary to some belief, the idea that having a common profession is not the strongest bond of compatibility; educational homophile has a trend that confirms cultural differences and similarities are stronger than occupational stratification. This is basically saying that even if working in proximity with someone in a similar work force it does not necessarily lead to a stronger bond than having educational similarities. Some of this leads back to the similarities between cultures and education; in education there is a separation of the larger peer group into smaller peer groups that share common economic status, subject of study, and/or backgrounds. This allows homogamy between these subgroups of peers and thus creating smaller groups that share two or more

similarities. This example of status and educational culture reflects how people meet in the world through social networks.

Income level is the money a person available to spend after paying taxes, pension contribution and others. It is very hard to see a lady going into marriage without an evidence of financial security through the prospects and potentials identified in the man she wants to marry. The potential of the spouse and skills is of paramount importance in marital choice. The financial stability may not be there as at present but everything around must point to the fact that the responsibilities in the home is not left for the woman to carry such as children school fees, house rent, feeding and other bills in the home. In marital choice, the two must have mutual agreement on how to build and manage their finances to them on satisfaction. University students do not put most of these into consideration as they just believe in love and jump into marriage. They need to know that there are more to love and love is not just enough in marital choice. In some home after marriage when the woman happens to be industrious wife that brings in money, the husband becomes relaxed and shows lackadaisical attitude towards his financial responsibilities at home. In other cases, the money may be there and surplus for the woman to spend but there is no joy or fulfillment in her marriage. In a situation where the presence of the man is never felt but believe that after all, there is enough money. All these normally lead to problems in marriage that if not well handled, it will increase the rate of marital instability and divorce in the society. Adequate information is required in helping and guiding university students in marital choice in order to have blissful and stable home.

O'Neil (2006) opined that educational level is an important factor in marriage partner choice in many societies. Buss and Schmitt (1993) opined that in marital partner choice, women consistently express a preference for marriage partners who are of high educational background and of the same educational qualification as themselves. Also Kalmijn and Flap (2001) revealed that college graduates prefer to marry college graduates like themselves. However, female graduates also like to marry men that are educationally advanced than them. Torr (2005) in his study of undergraduates' mate choice indicated that they prefer college graduates with good earning capacity. Similarly, Gage and Hancock (2002) posited that undergraduates prefer partners of similar educational qualification and background. Todosijevic, Ljubinkovic and Arancic (2003) revealed that respondents prefer potential partners that are educated and those with interesting professions. 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.

Holy Bible (1 Corinthians 7: 28 GNB), acknowledges that but if you do marry, you haven't committed a sin; and if an unmarried woman marries, she hasn't committed a sin. But I would rather spare you the everyday troubles that married people will have. Hence, no couple or marriage is immune to such inherent problems. What starts out as a relationship

of great joy and promise can become the most frustrating and painful endeavour in a person's life time. Eventually, all couples experience a significant crisis that can threaten their emotional safety and at times even the future of their marriages. So in marital choice partners should be well considerate enough in choosing someone that is not their mother tongue in order to avoid rejection and troubles in their life when they finally get married. Ojukwu, Woko and Onuoha (2016) who found out that there was a positive relationship between marital stability and married persons with low and high levels of educational attainment but there was no significant relationship between those with medium level of educational attainment and their marital stability. Maliki (2009) where the result revealed that university undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influences preferences in marriage partner's selection in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness and also students consider character as the most important factor in their mate selection choice.

Mamasan (2005) found out that female prefer males that are extroverts, who are socially dominant as a result of wealth and have respect of their peers. The findings of Mamasan also revealed that females on low socioeconomic status prefer to form relationship with extroverts, socially dominant and wealthy males in a high socio-economic status so that they can also raise their social status. The analysis of this hypothesis also reveals that undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influence preferences in marriage partner's selection in terms of socio-economic status. Gage and Hencok (2002) in their study of college students revealed that students of middle class as well as the higher classes, primarily choose those who are of their own socio-economic status also prefer those of either the same or lower socio-economic status. It was also found in their data that both males and females prefer those of relatively equal social classes. Townsend and Levy (1989) who found out that woman preferred a spouse to have a lower socio-economic status or income than she did, whereas men seek women for their outward appearances. This was partially supported by the results of research conducted by Idialu (2003), who investigated the causes of crises among couples in Edo State. Idialu emphasis was placed on family finances. Idialu argued that contemporary marriages experience more strain because of financial matters than any other factors. Okonedo, Sunday, Sunday and Olusola (2015) result showed that librarians' level of self-concept is high, so also their research productivity; there is a significant relationship between self-concept and research productivity and only job tenure was found significant with research productivity among the demographic factors tested and established that the joint effect of demographic factors and self-concept on research productivity was not significant. Okhakhume, Rotimi and Aroniyiaso (2016) investigated influence of socioeconomic variables and marital satisfaction on domestic violence among couples in Nigeria. The results of the finding revealed that income significantly predicts domestic violence among couples in Nigeria. Further analysis revealed that there is significant influence of marital satisfaction on domestic violence.

Lauer (1992) found that major reason why couples engage in verbal abuse was as a result of insufficient income. It was observed during the study that the relationship that exists between the husband and wife of rich home differ from those of middle or low socio-economic class. Paul-Francois, Muzinduts and Diana in Ogunkunle (2020) who found out that factor such as students' expenditure, race, mode of transport to and from campus, age, and level of study have a significant influence on leisure attitude and marital choice among students. Ali (2012) determined the factors associated with childbearing intentions and marital choice in female students and found out that factors that involved in childbearing intentions includes; personal factors, family factors, spouse's role, perceived social support, social support, beliefs, and financial factors.

Simegn, Belay, Asfaw and Daniel (2014) their findings showed that there was statistically significant marital adjustment difference among early, age-appropriate arranged and love-matched married individuals it also found out that there are statistically significant differences among the consensus, satisfaction, cohesion, affection expression and concerning sex difference in marital adjustment, early married males had significantly higher marital adjustment than their counter females. The issue of marital choice among the students of public universities cannot be over-emphasized considering the fact that the majority make marital choice for personal gain. Moreover, some of the university students have neglected the council of elders; they are too impatient to consult their parents, families or marriage counsellors to guide them in their marital choice. In view of this, they are not able to differentiate between love and desire which subsequently leads them to having a wrong marital choice that always lead to divorce and sometimes serious health challenge such as depression and terminal illness.

There have been instances of university students' relationship leading to marriage that in the long run face a lot of troubles and some eventually could not hold because the partner knew nothing about each other's background. Some have resulted into ritual killing, domestic violence that resulted into untimely death of most partners. In some other instances, university students who barely met for one year fell in love with each other just because most went into the exercise with must-get-a spouse mindset without taking time to put all or most of these necessary factors that guarantee a stable and happy home into consideration. In the light of the above problems including immaturity, the thrust of this study is to investigate the correlates of demographic factors in the evaluation of marital choice among the students of Public Universities in South-west Geo Political Zone, Nigeria in relation to educational and income levels.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. Does educational level correlate with marital choice among students of public university in South West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria?
2. Does income level correlate with marital choice among students of public university in South West Geo- Political Zone, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were generated from the research questions and tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

1. Educational level has no significant correlation with marital choice among students of public university in South West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.
2. Level of income has no significant correlation with marital choice among students of public university in South West Geo- Political Zone, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The design of this study was correlational survey research design. The target population of this study consisted twelve public universities in Southwest Geo-political zone of Nigeria. The total school population in twelve public universities within the study area comprises of 407,984 public university students in Southwest Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select the six public universities from twelve public universities in the study area. Students were stratified along male and female dichotomy before simple random sampling was employed to select 380 university students (190 males and 190 females) using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. Serial numbers of the elements in the sampling frame were recorded on pieces of papers folded and mixed thoroughly before researchers picked representative sample without replacement. This technique gave the respondents equal opportunity of being selected thereby, reducing the bias effect that may interfere with the validity and reliability of the study.

The instrument used for this study was a self-constructed questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Demographic Factors and Marital Choice (QDFMC). The instrument contains 20 items on demographic factors and marital choice among students of public universities in Southwest Geo Political Zone Nigeria. These 20 items are made up of educational level and level of income. The instrument was scored on four points rating scale of: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). The validity of the instrument was sought and obtained by subjecting the instrument to critical appraisal by two experts; one in Educational Guidance and Counselling, and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Copies of the questionnaire along with research hypotheses were given to enable experts check for ambiguity of the items, appropriateness of the items, and clarity of purpose, content validity and relevance to the issue under investigation.

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents outside the sample area. The data collected from the questionnaire were collated and analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. The rationale for the use of Cronbach's Alpha was informed by the fact that the items had no right or wrong answers since they were designed as dichotomous items. Again, it was considered appropriate as it could ensure the homogeneity of items on the questionnaire. Reliability coefficient obtained for

the questionnaire was 0.89. The researchers used descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The cut-off point for the response to each item to be accepted was 2.5. Any score from 2.5 and above was considered accepted, while any score below 2.5 was rejected under research questions. The results are presented in Tables 1-4.

### **Results**

**Research Questions:** In order to provide answer to the stated research questions, research questions were converted to hypothesis one and two while data collected from students through the instrument were computed. The results of the analysis of the data are presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

**Hypothesis One:** Education level has no significant correlation with marital choice among students of public university in South West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

**Table 1**

Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on Educational Level and Marital Choice

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>r-cal</b>	<b>P. value</b>
Education level	380	0.679.	000
Marital Choice	380		

The Table 1 shows that there is significant correlation between education and marital choice of public university students in South west Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria ( $r=0.679$ ,  $p.v.0.00$ ). This shows that the education level has a significant correlation with marital choice of public university students in Southwest Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that educational level has no significant correlation with marital choice of public university students in Southwest Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria is hereby rejected. By implication, there was high positive correlation between education and marital choice of public university students.

**Hypothesis Two:** Level of income has no significant correlation with marital choice of students of public university students in Southwest Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

**Table 2**

Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on Level of Income and Marital Choice

Variables	N	r-cal	P. value
Level of income	380	0.71	0.000
Marital Choice	380		

The Table 2 revealed the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis which shows that level of income correlate with marital choice among students of public university in South west Geo- Political Zone, Nigeria. ( $r=0.71$ ;  $p.v. 0.000$ ). This shows that the level of income has high positive correlation with marital choice among students of public university in study area. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

### Discussion

The discussion of findings in this study is done in accordance to the hypotheses. The finding on hypothesis one indicated that education level has significant correlation with marital choice among students of public university in South west Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. This finding agreed with the work of *Ojukwu, Woko and Onuoha (2016)* who found out that there was a positive relationship between married persons with low and high levels of educational attainment and marital stability while there was no significant relationship between those with medium level of educational attainment and their marital stability. This finding also agreed with the work of *Maliki (2011)* where the result revealed that university undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influence preferences in marriage partner's selection in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness. In the same vein, in support of this finding of *Mamasan (2005)* who found out that female prefer males that are extroverts, who are socially dominant as a result of wealth and have respect of their peers. The findings of *Mamasan* also revealed that females of low socioeconomic status prefer to form relationship with extroverts, socially dominant and wealthy males in a high socio-economic status so that they can also raise their social status. The finding also related to the research work of *Okonedo, Sunday, Sunday and Olusola (2015)* who found out that librarians' level of self-concept is high, so also their research productivity; there is a significant relationship between self-concept and research productivity and only job tenure was found significant with research productivity among the demographic factors tested and established that the joint effect of demographic factors and self-concept on research productivity was not significant. The analysis of this hypothesis also reveals that undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influence preferences in marriage partner's selection in terms of socio-economic status. This is supported by *Socio-economic status and preferences in marriage partner selection among university undergraduates in south-south of Nigeria. Maliki in the*

study of Gage and Hencok (2002) in their study of college students revealed that students of middle class as well as the higher classes, primarily choose those who are of their own socio-economic status also prefer those of either the same or lower socio-economic status. It was also found in their data that both males and females prefer those of relatively equal social classes.

The second finding from the present study revealed that level of income has significant correlation with marital choice among students of public university in South West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. This find supports the work of Townsend and Levy (1989) who found out that woman preferred a spouse to have a lower socio-economic status or income than she did, whereas men seek women for their outward appearances. This was partially supported by the results of research conducted by Idialu (2003), who investigated the causes of crises among couples in Edo State. Idialu emphasis was placed on family finances. Idialu argued that contemporary marriages experience more strain because of financial matters than any other factors. They also agreed with that of Lauer (1992) who found that major reason why couples engage in verbal abuse was as a result of insufficient income. it was observed during the study that the relationship that exist between the husband and wife of rich home is differ from those of middle or low socio-economic class. This find agrees with the work of Okhakhume, Rotimi and Aroniyasio (2016) who found that income significantly predicts domestic violence among couples in Nigeria. Further analysis revealed that there is significant influence of marital satisfaction on domestic violence. This finding also supported the work of Ali (2012) on childbearing intentions and marital choice in female students.

### **Conclusion**

The study aimed to evaluate demographic factors of marital choice among the students of public universities in Southwest Geo- Political Zone of Nigeria. Many Nigerians wonder why marriage no longer works, it is an established fact that all do not go well in the family without a time of conflict even in the happiest homes. However, the way resolutions are either separated due to work or job, un-agreeable, incompatible and grossly unmatchable, perhaps these are due to frivolous marital choices and some other reasons such as where couples failed to meet their marriage obligations in the area of sex, children upbringing and education, having leisure times, occupation, level of income, parental choice and education which affect marital choice among students. Thus it has been noted that success or failure in marriage is positively related to the adjustment of the couples to problems arising in their relationship.

Marital conflict includes constant disagreement between parents and broken family caused by divorce, separation, illegitimacy, unfaithfulness and sibling structure. When there is domestic conflict in the family it directly affects the children negatively, which in turn has a reverberating effect on the academic development of the children. The results show that marital demographic factors lead to poor socio-emotional development which affects marital choice where the respondents agreed with the statement. Finally, it is noted

that demographic factors lead to students' depression and stress which affects marital choice. Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should guide and lead their children properly in recognizing their choices, preferences and should not negatively interfere in their marital choice which may lead to regrets and pains later in the life of their children and university management should also organize seminars, workshops and conferences to educate intending couples with regard to choosing partners based on the couples' educational attainment
2. Both the spouses should not consider level of income as barrier for marital choice rather they should try as much as possible to find alternative of improving their level of income and government and non-governmental organisation should endeavour to implement or boost effective poverty alleviation programmes that will alleviate poverty in the society.

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