



The use of counselling as a tool for choosing a life partner

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Abstract

The study deemed it rational to counsel the youths early enough before they choose a marital partner. This is due to high rate of divorce in the society. The purpose of the study is to reduce the rate of divorce in the society through counselling. Two research questions were designed for the study. It is an empirical study where 150 students were randomly selected from 14 departments in the University of Port Harcourt. 20 factors were presented to the respondents as to determine the best factor to consider before marriage. From the research result faithfulness was ranked high for the sustainability of marriage, while traditional beliefs was rated lower. The researchers' belief in counselling the young adults before marriage especially on fertility test, genotype test, blood group test and sickle cell anemia test.

Keywords: Counselling, tool, choosing life partner

Introduction

Marriage is an institution, a partnership contract without an escape clause, Denga (2018) ^[6]. The implication here is that marriage (especially a successful one) connotes a life-long arrangement where the couple should permanently survive a multitudes of demanding situations such as illness, financial constraints; the attractiveness of each of other etc. According to Nwoye (2016) ^[10] marriage is a sacred and permanent contract between two heterosexual adults who engage in socially approved sexual relationship having children, engaging in economic co-operation and sharing a common residence. Echebe (2014) ^[7], postulated that marriage was the first institution on earth by God through Adam and Eve, where they were legally mandated to procreate and replenish the earth. The almighty God brought them together and blessed them to be fruitful, to multiply and replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28).

Marriage as an institution is oriented towards fostering the coming together of two individuals with their personality traits, as husband and wife to plan for their future and set up their own home. It was in light of this understanding that Olayinka (2010) ^[13], defined marriage as a social institution and a union of a man and his wife in body and soul. However, it is necessary to reinstate here that inherent in this perception is the implication that marriage is meant to enable a man and his wife raise a family. It therefore exists as an avenue for couple to meet the satisfaction of security and enduring affection and companionship. Marriage is the relationship between husband and wife, which defines the manner in which to establish family unit, and rights and obligations within it (CHibundu, 2012) ^[5].

Counsellors use their acquired skills and techniques to assist young couple to choose marriage partners. This is referred to as pre-marital counselling. According to Adeboye (2014) choosing who to marry is a fundamental choice that affects the future of an individual. A successful marriage can make spouses while an unsuccessful one can mar the persons and their relationship with God. Akinade (2014) ^[3] opined that marriage partners must make their choices with great prayerfulness, thoughtfulness, care and sincerity. They should not choose by mere sight. Having the relevant knowledge and God's guidance is the key to making the best choice.

According to Adegoke and Esere (2012) ^[1], marriage was defined as a social institution that fosters the coming together of two totally different individuals with different personality traits, psychological make ups and often socio-economic backgrounds, to form a family. Marriage is central in God's plan for man.

It is the ring which circumscribes every aspect of human life such as spiritual, social, psychology and physical life endeavour. It is one major factor that determines whether a person would live a happy or sorrowful life.

Marriage is the total commitment of two hearts man/woman to one, another, joined together in emotion, ambition desire. Akinade (2022), defined marriage as a socially, legally culturally or religiously standard close relationship between a matured male and female person which has existed for a long time.

Marriage is an elaborate and multi-dimensional this is possibly the reason why Okorodudu and Okorodudu (2017)^[12], observed that since marriage involved the coming together of a man and a woman to raise a family, the most important aim of this union is to meet the satisfaction of security of an enduring affection and companionship, sexual relationship and building the home and the family.

There is a religious dimension to the sacred position accorded marriage in our society in the opinion of Omojola (2016), marriage is a religious duty and is consequently a moral safeguard as well as a social necessity. It has been observed that marriage serves as a moral safeguard because it acts as an outlet for sexual needs and regulate man's sexual desire and expression so that man does not become a slave to his/her desire.

The assumption for its social necessity is vested on the premise that through it families are established and the fundamental unit of human society. Furthermore, marriage is the only legitimate way to indulge in intimacy between man and woman.

It has been postulated that marriage is a common institution to all human societies seriously advocated and supported by the major religions of today that is, African traditional, Christian and Islam religion. It has been specifically stated by Omojola (2010)^[14], that Islam, unlike other religions is a strong advocate of marriage. This is contrast to the dictate of some other religions like the Roman Catholic of priest and nuns, where celibacy is advocated for. Instead, it has been stated categorically clear that "there is no celibacy in Islam." According to Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was reported to have said marriage is my tradition whosoever keeps away there from it is not from amongst me" this prophetic declaration might be said to be propelling force behind Muslim desire to get married to a life partner of their choice. However, religion injunction in respect of marriage have been clearly entrenched in the Holy books of the two major religions currently in practice (at least more obviously) in Nigeria.

Holy bible, for example Nwoye (2016)^[10], stated that; "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall the one will lift up his fellow" but woe to him that is alone when he falleth not another to lift him up. Ecclesiast 4:9-10.

Whereas Allah in His glorious Quran stated that "And of the signs is this, He created for you a help mate from your selves and that ye might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy, lo, here in deed are portent for folk who reflect (Quran 30:21).

Family Counselling

An umbrella term for a number of therapeutic approaches all of which treat the family as a whole rather than singling out specific individuals for independent treatment.

The family is one of the basic social institutions. Everybody

comes from a family. It is one of the most important social groups in the society within and by which human being achieves some of their crucial and essential objectives. It is a system that prevails over the world with each society embracing either the nuclear family type or the extended family type or a mixture of both. The family stands as the oldest and most basic social units; family is the first and primary agent of socialization. It has also been viewed as a system in which the action of each individual family member as a whole, hence the family is an interaction. A communication networks in which every member influence the nature of the family system and is, in turn, influenced by the system (Nwobi, 2011).

Statement of Problem

The rate of divorce in the society is alarming and should be a thing of concern to researchers. Divorce has become the order of the day and should be reduced to the bearest minimum.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the research is to expose young adults to the factors that can sustain marriage to reduce the rate of divorce in the society.

Research Methodology

It is an empirical research question is used to elicit responses from the respondents for analysis.

Population Sample

One hundred and fifty (150) students were randomly sampled from the fourteen departments of University of Port Harcourt.

Instrumentation

A self-designed questionnaire titled Questionnaire on counselling for choosing a life partner was used to obtain information for the study. The instrument contained two sections. Section A elicited information on the personal data of the respondent while section B consisted of twenty (20) items which elicited information on the factors to be considered before choosing a life partner.

Validation of Instruments

The instrument as sent to Guidance and Counselling Department of University of Port Harcourt.

Scoring Procedure

The items in section B designed on the five points, likert type of scale which is classified into excellent, very good, good, fair, poor.

Excellent	5 points
Very good	4 points
Good	3 points
Fair	2 points
Poor	1 point

If the "mean" is less than 2.5, the factor is negative (N), but if the "mean" is from 2.5 to 5.0 it is positive (P). The result of the research is tabulated in table 1.

Administration of Instrument and Data Collection

The instrument were administered by the researchers using the direct delivery techniques (DDT), this on the spot method enabled the researchers to collect back all the copies of the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Likert scale was used for data collection the “mean” of the responses were determined. The responses obtained under excellent (E), very good (VG), good (G), fair (F) and poor (P) were multiplied by 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively, and the sum of the products divided by the total number of respondents.

$$\text{That is } \frac{x}{N}$$

Where x = sum of the weighted frequency
N = total number of respondents

Counselling

Is an interpersonal relationship of helping a client to better understand him or herself? Counselling can also be defined as a process in which one person (the counsellor) assists (the counsellee) in person – to person or face to face encounter (Echebe, 2014) [7].

Counselling view is that individuals who understand themselves and their world will become more effective, more productive and happier human beings. Counselling as an instrument for positive change of individual, therefore, family counselling is helpful in choosing a life partner.

Marriage as the basis of the family is instituted by God to fill the missing essentials in man. A marriage breeds a family where the father and the mother and children (if any) dwell together in love, peace, unity and happiness and then can enjoy from their co-existence mutual and continuously

fellowship, protection, comfort, provision, productivity, progress, harmness and cordiality.

Religion Belief

A happy home is more than a roof over one’s head. It is a foundation under one’s feet (Adons, 2012). God made man to need woman and woman to need man. As Paul wrote “in the Lord woman is not independent of man” (1 Corinthians 11:11) one believes that this is another way of saying that God made couples for one not to be in isolation. He made them to be independent, within the family unit, not to take individual action but to learn from each other.

Among other factors predetermining marriage partner is “LOVE”. No matter your background, do not marry a man or woman you cannot love, respect, honour, obey, submit to, cherish and esteem highly with your entire heart. The Bible says “submit yourselves, one to another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21 RSV).

Research Question 1

What is the most important factor to be considered in choosing life partner?

What are the role of significant others of sibling consent, friends consent and ethnic affiliation in choosing a life partner?

Results of research question 1: The most important factor to be considered before choosing a life partner

Table 1

S/N	Items	E	VG	G	F	P	Mean	Rank	Remark
1	Love	100	40	-	10	-	4.5	6 th	P
2	Wealth	-	50	70	20	10	3.1	17 th	P
3	Religious faith	90	30	20	10	-	4.4	9 th	P
4	Beauty/handsomeness	30	30	70	10	10	3.4	15 th	P
5	Faithfulness	150	-	-	-	-	5.0	1 st	P
6	Character	130	20	-	-	-	4.9	2 nd	P
7	Education	50	90	10	-	-	4.3	10 th	P
8	Sexual gratification	40	50	40	10	10	3.7	13 th	P
9	Health	60	60	30	-	-	4.2	11 th	P
10	Fertility test	90	50	10	-	-	4.5	6 th	P
11	HIV/AIDS Test	100	50	-	-	-	4.7	3 rd	P
12	Blood/Rhesus factor test,	100	50	-	-	-	4.7	3 rd	P
13	Sickle cell anemia (Genotype) test	100	40	-	10	-	4.6	5 th	P
14	Parents’ consent	70	80	-	-	-	4.5	6 th	P
15	Ethnic affiliation	40	10	70	20	10	3.3	16 th	P
16	Friend consent	-	10	80	50	10	2.6	19 th	P
17	Siblings consent	10	-	90	40	50	2.7	18 th	P
18	Compatibility between both parents	20	40	10	30	50	3.7	13 th	P
19	Traditional beliefs	-	30	40	30	50	2.3	20 th	N
20	Family background	40	70	20	10	10	3.8	12 th	P

Discussion

The table above shows the responses of the respondents as regards the factors that were considered. The highest order of importance in choosing a life partner is faithfulness which ranked highest with a score of 5.0.

Character was ranked second by the respondents as the next to faithfulness with a score of 4.9. HIV/AIDS and blood rhesus factor comes third in rating as both score 4.7.

The position of sickle cell anemia in the table was rated 5th with a score of 4.6, if sickle cell anemia scored 4.6 and 5th position that shows that the awareness and implication of sickle cell disease has been created.

Parents’ consent scored a significant high mark of 4.5 and ranked 6th position. This is an indication that parent have greater role to play in the choice of a life partner especially African setting. Love is a vital ingredient that can sustain marriage still played a strong role in choosing a life partner, the study has confirmed it is an important factor as it ranks 6th, the same 6th position with parent consent with a score of 4.5.

Love is a rope for binding marriage, the partners should be in true love before coming together as husband and wife.

Fertility test equally have the same score as parent consent and love. To an average Nigerian believed that child bearing

is a must in a marriage of which without, there is likely to be a separation. The study agrees with the aforementioned factors with a score of 4.5 and ranked 6th position.

Nigerian as typical religiously inclined to either Christianity or Islam does not grievously affect cross marriages as this study shows that religion was the 9th position to their factors. Education as a factor in marriage relationship played an important role in determining right of choice of partner as seen in the research work with a score of 4.3 and ranked 10th position in consideration to other factors. The result agrees with Babatunde (2015) who opined that couples with higher education were more likely to be stable in marriage than those with less education.

As health is fundamental in life endeavour including the choice of a life partner as it is said "health is wealth." As seen in the study health indicated a score of 4.2 and ranked 11th position.

Family background; in view of the fact that individual comes from a family, invariably factors considered in the choice of life partner as it scored 3.8 ranked 11th position.

Following closely is the compatibility between both parents of to be life partner was not well favoured as strong part in the choice of life partner as it scores 3.7 and ranked 13th position.

Beauty/handsomeness; physical attraction has great influence in choice of partners. Beauty is a relative term as an adage says "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" but in this study it scored an average of 3.4 and ranked 15th position.

Wealth is very important in another word money answereth all things for one to marry must be wealthy enough to take care of a home. Finally, in this study however, it ranked 4th from below the table and scored 3.1 and ranked 17th position. Friends consent; friends consent played a role in the light of choosing a life partner because peers influence is greater this days because of our educational advancement. However, this study does not vividly show any significant effect on the choice of choosing a life partner. It scored 2.6 and ranked 19th position that is 2nd to the last in the study.

Lastly, traditional beliefs as the last variable. It scored the least in the research work though it is of importance because traditional value could be a pointer to ways of life, behaviour and morale. However, it scored 2.3 and ranked 20th position.

Counselling on Choice of a Life Partner

Marriage is a life-long relationship for which you cannot garbage in and garbage out, so you must look before you leap. Every human being is unique in the sight of God. You should do your homework very well, before you choose a life partner. It is the will of God for you, that you live together with your life partner till death part you. There are many things you consider before you say yes to a marriage proposal. Number one thing to consider before yielding to a marriage proposal is the issue of religion. It is advisable for a Christian to marry a Christian while a Muslim marries a Muslim.

Religion places an important role in a marriage institution. To avoid divorce in marriage, people should marry within their religious belief. If couples are of the same faith, their children will not be placed in a state of confusion. For example, a Muslim father may not allow his wife to go to church with his children, Muslim should get marry to a people of their own religious belief.

Another aspect to consider before marriage is one's blood group and genotype. No matter how deep in love you are with

a man, make sure you check your genotype. In order not to give birth to children that will become problematic. Test and check your genotype, the different types of genotypes are AA, AS, SS.

If a woman has genotype AS or SS, should not get married to an AS or SS genotype in other not to give birth to children with sickle cell anemia. An AS is a carrier of the disease so he or she should not marry another carrier because when two carriers of sickle cell come together in marriages, they stand a very high risk of having sickle cell anemia. When AS marries a carrier their offspring produce one sickler of four (4) offspring.

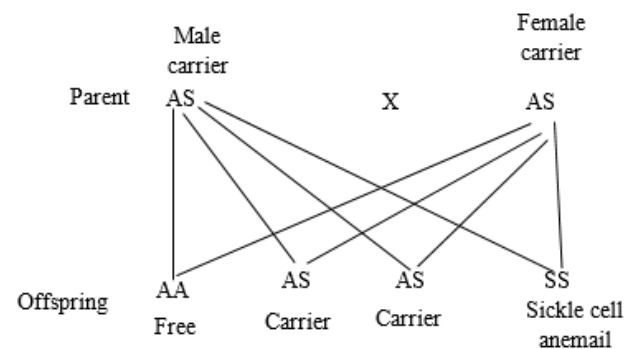
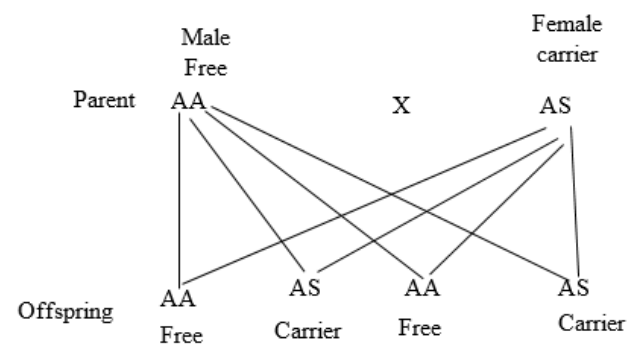
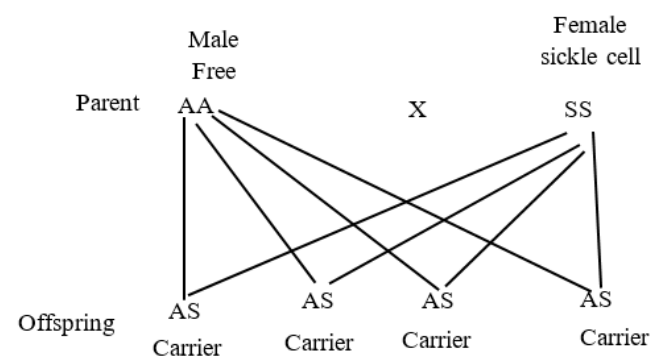


Fig 1



When a sickle free marries a sickle cell anemia produce carrier all in F1



Recommendation

1. There is the need to encourage male and female young adults to seek counselling service before choosing a life partner.
2. There is need to include family counselling curriculum in tertiary institution.
3. There should be counselling session for our youths generally especially before they marry either through group or individual counselling as factors to be

- considered before choosing a life partner.
4. The modern Nigerian schools should include in curriculum, a period for pre-marital counselling for SS 1 to SS3.
 5. Train marital counsellors and post them to social working offices and religious organizations.
 6. Counsellors should organize seminars and workshops for students.
 7. The problem of lack of counselling before choosing a life partner could be attended to if Government and association especially, Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) with qualified personnel to establish pre-marital counselling centre where our mature youth can be counsel.

Conclusion

The study has shown the relevant of counselling to youth before choosing a life partner.

The factors under consideration were of significant importance as a counselling guide except one factor i.e. traditional belief that scored less than 2.5.

The findings imply that counsellors should wake up to their responsibilities to see that youths are counselled towards choice of life partner.

Counsellors should as well guide the student to imbibe counselling in all their life endeavour since counselling is a process of helping an individual to understand himself/herself.

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