

**THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MATE SELECTION AMONG YOUTHS IN A.B.U.  
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**ABSTRACT**

*Mate selection is one of the most important events in the lives of persons worldwide. This is because the process may invariably culminate into marriage which is the beginning and foundation of all social relations in the entire society. In the light of above assertion, this study examines factors that influenced mate selection among youths in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, samaru campus. The study employs quantitative techniques and administered survey questionnaires to 120 students in the campus. The finding from the study reveals that love, age, religion, parental influence, character, physical attraction and educational background significantly influenced mate selection among youths in Nigeria. Thus, the study recommend that factor of character should generally be consider first in the selection of mate among youths along with other important factors disclosed in this study. And this will result in peaceful matrimonial home and the nation at large.*

**Key words:** Factors, Selection, Marriage, Youths, Mate

**Introduction**

Mate selection set the tone for early adulthood life resulting into the formation of the family institution and marital identity. And one of the major tasks of young people worldwide, and particularly among the Nigerian youths is to achieve or set to achieve a state of marital identity. It has been found globally, and in Nigeria in particular that young people make

choices hastily only to come to regret them later either because the relationship fails to succeed or is not working as expected (Maliki, 2009). These regrets result to dire consequences like shame, heart-break, trauma, confusion, divorce, suicide among others, and this is not only to the individuals involved directly but to friends, relations, children, community and the entire society at large, as the case may be.

According to Akpa E.C (2014); *“mate selection are those processes one goes through in an attempt to select marriage partner”*.

Mate selection among the youths in Nigeria has been influenced by the principles of homogamy, normative adherence, structural proximity opportunities, similarities in race, religion, social class, broad occupational groupings, age, income, location of residence, level of education, intelligence etc. These factors therefore plays very important role in mate selection process among youths (Kerkhoff, 1967).

Nijole (1993) also opined that propinquity, physical attractiveness, ethnicity and race, religion, age social class, and values play vital roles in mate selection.

In support of this, Maliki (2009) posited that “in the process of mate selection by university students various qualities attract an individual to a partner. As the relationship develops and progress, they come to realize that those qualities that form the basis of attraction are not what they desired resulting to the break-up of the relationship” (Maliki, 2009).

The break-up at whatever stage of the relationship have the repercussions of feeling of betrayal, development of hatred, frustration, emotional instability characterized by inability to concentrate on their academic pursuit, confusion, loss of confidence development of low self-esteem, trauma, negative self-concept, and even committing of suicide among other dire consequences in view of the devastating effects of making wrong choices.

It is to this effect that it has become necessary that the unmarried youths know the factors to prioritize in the process of mate selection to avoid the consequences of a wrong choice. The study therefore intend to identify and highlight those factors that are very important in guiding the youths in mate selection

### Conceptual Definition

**Factor:** The criteria, bases, characteristics etc that an individual or group of individual uses in selecting a mate for marriage. It can also be refers to things that leads one in selection of a marriage partner.

**Selection:** “When someone or something is chosen” (Cambridge University, 2008). It is also the act chosen from among several options or opportunities.

**Marriage:** “A legally recognized relationship between an adult male and female, that carries certain rights and obligations” (Scott, 2014). This also has to do with been joined together with a man or woman of one's choice legally

**Youths:** “The period of your life when you are young, or the state of being young” (Cambridge University, 2008). It is also a stage when someone is full of strength or energy

### Statement of Problem

Mate selection among Nigeria youths is been influenced by several factors. It has however

been observed that physical attractiveness is one of the common factor that pull young people into relationship that may or may not result into marriage. This have often bring dare consequences to the individual and the entire society especially if it fails or does not work as expected part of these consequences are emotional instability, loss of self, confidence, low self esteem, trauma, suicide, death etc.

The number of these factors and sometimes their contradictions are challenges that face the youths today in the processes of selecting marriage partner. This study therefore focuses on the problems and challenges these youths face in marriage partner selection.

### Objectives

1. To indentify the factors Nigeria youths consider in mate selection.
2. To suggest the factors to be consider in mate selection process to Nigeria youths to avoid the consequential effects of wrong choices.

### Theoretical Framework

This study used the social exchange theory to provide the explanation on factors that influence mate selection among the youths in Nigeria. This is because the social Exchange Theory focuses on what is given and what is received and this serves as the bases of marriage.

According to Ogunbameru (2008) "Social Exchange Theory posited that all human relationships are formed by the use of subjective cost-benefit analysis and comparison of alternatives". This theory therefore, shows the reason why people considered certain factors like ethnicity, socio-economic background, educational attainment etc. in mate selection and why there are variations in these factors' considerations between different individuals. This is because of what to get from the mate one choose for marriage in relation to the individual's valuation of these factors.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in Ahmadu Bello University, Main Campus Zaria, using the married and unmarried male and female students of faculties of social sciences and education. These faculties are situated within the main campus of the institution located in Samaru in Sabon-Gari Local Government of Kaduna state in the Northern part of Nigeria. "The University was established on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1962 and made up of two campuses located in Samaru and Kongo covering a land area of about 7000 hectares" (The five years of Mahadi Administration in Ahmadu Bello University- 1999-2004, 2004).

Both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (focus group discussion) methods were used. The sample size of 120 respondents were drawn from 586 of 6 departments of the two faculties i.e sociology, mass communication, political science, guidance and counseling, Christian religion studies and Islamic religious studies. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents and discussants based on faculty, department, marital status and religion. Base on the above, 4 groups of 6 discussants were constituted and used to obtain information in addition to those obtained from the questionnaire.

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### The Factors that Youths consider in Mate Selection:

The respondents identified several factors and Table 1 shows these factors.

**Table 1: Respondents Opinions on factors to consider in Mate Selection**

Factor(s) to consider in selecting a mate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No response	6	5.0
Physical attractiveness	4	3.4
Religious inclination	31	26.1
Socioeconomic background	1	.8
Educational attainment	12	10.1
All of the above	65	54.6
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1: indicates that 65 (54.6%) of the respondents identified the combination of the factors of physical attractiveness, religion inclination, socio-economic background and education attainment as factors for consideration in mate selection. However 31(26.1%) respondents saw religious inclination as the only factor to be considered in mate selection while only one (0.8%) respondents said the only factor to be considered is socio-economic background.

This is similar to the opinion given by one female unmarried 400 level discussant from the department of sociology who said "as a single lady, I will consider the person's religion that is his spiritual life, his tribe and his affection for me and to know if he can take good care of me". This was supported by a married female 400 level students discussant from the Department of Guidance and Counseling that said "in addition, the educational and social appearance are factors to consider in mate selection".

This agrees with Alan and Keth (1964) that said "Individuals who are similar to each other are most likely to choose each other as mate and are more likely to be successful in their relationship". These similarities are in areas such as residence, levels, religious affiliations, attitudes and values. The emphasis here is on the similarities between the two individuals that would affects their choice or acceptances as a mate for marriage.

**Table 2: Respondents views on Additional factor(s) to be Considered in Mate Selection**

Other factor(s)	Frequency	Percentage %
No response	5	4.2
Race/Ethnicity	2	1.7
Age	11	9.2
Parental influence	12	10.1
Character/Behavior	42	35.3
All of the above	47	39.5
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2: indicates that 47(39.5%) of respondents identify combined factors of race/ethnicity, age, parental influence and character/behavior as other important factors to consider. This was closely followed by character/behavior (35.3%) as another factor to be given consideration in mate selection. 2 (1.7%) respondents reported Race/Ethnicity as the least

factor to be considered in this process of mate selection. This goes along with what an unmarried female 300 level discussant from the department of sociology said “I like when you are picking a life partner, number one, check the age of the person because age has to do with maturity. Then secondly financial capability and then the persons background and behavior”. This was supported by another focus group discussion member- an unmarried 400 level female students of the department of sociology who says “ Good looking is also very important, tribe and character are also additions”.

Nesteruk and Gramescu (2002) supported this when they identified family acculturation, cultural retention, ethnic identity, religion, language and biculturalism as factors that play important roles in mate selection preferences.

### **Suggested Factors to consider in Mate Selection by the Unmarried Youths.**

Base on experiences of the married respondents, certain factors were suggested to be considered in mate selection.

**Table 3: Suggested Factors for consideration in Mate Selection**

Important suggested factors to the unmarried	Frequency	Percentage %
Physical attractiveness	0	0
Family socioeconomic background	0	0
Religious inclination	14	29.8
Educational attainment	1	2.1
All Of the above	32	68.1
Total	47	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3: shows that 32 (68.1%) constituting the majority of the respondents suggested most importantly the combined consideration of factors of physical attractiveness, religious inclination, family socio-economic background and educational attainment while 14 (29.8%) of the respondents suggested the consideration of only religious inclination. And no respondent choose only either physical attractiveness or family socio-economic background, while 1 (2.1%) chose educational attainment. This table therefore reveals that majority of the respondents suggested that it is important to consider more factors such as physical attractiveness, religious inclination, family socioeconomic background and educational attainment in the process of mate selection. In support of the above assertion, a married 300 level female students of mass communication said “I will advise they consider religion and education”. However, looking at the individual factor consideration, the table shows that the respondent attached much importance to the factor of religious inclination in comparison to the others.

**Table 4: Married Respondent's views on additional Factors they will Advise the Unmarried Youths to consider more importantly in the choice of Mate for Marriage**

Additional important factors for consideration	Frequency	Percentage %
Character	23	48.9
Family socio-economic	14	29.8
No ideal/Nil	5	10.6
Love/affection	5	10.6
Intelligence	0	0
Total	47	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4: reveals that 23 (48.9%) of the respondents choose character while 14(29.8%) reported the family socio-economic background as a consideration for mate selection. Only 5 (10.6%) choose affection as an additional important factor to put into consideration while non-choose intelligence. This means that character is an important factor to consider in mate selection. This is followed by the consideration of the family socio-economic background of the would-be mate. This is in line with the shared experience of a 400 level married male IRK discussant who said “ *I also consider the socio-economic background of the lady because even the Islamic religion says that you should marry because of her wealth*”. The choice of the respondents on character and family socio-economic background can be traced to the fact that individual’s character is a result of the family socialization and that could be the reason these two factors are chosen without surprise.

In a study, Maliki (2009) reported the following order of factors’ as considerations in mate selection- “character, closely followed by fertility, then, educational qualification, intelligence, religion, physical health, body structure, profession, dentition, financial standing, height, age similarity, weight, state of origin and complexion”.

#### Conclusion

This study identified physical attractiveness, religious inclination, family socioeconomic background, education attainment, race/ethnicity, culture, age, parental influence, characters/behavior, proximity, knowledge of the would-be mate and profession as those factors to be considered in mate selection by the unmarried undergraduate youths in Nigeria. However, the factors of religion and character were most prescribed to be considered importantly. Also to be considered importantly are the factors of physical attractiveness, and family socio-economic background. Worth noting from the findings is the fact that even the married youths prioritized the factors of character and religion above physical attractiveness which implies that these are very influential factors in mate selection among the youths.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper/research, the following are recommendations made so as to help the youths in mate selection process:

The factor of character should generally and most importantly be consider first. This is because the functionality of all other factors depends on the character of those that are involve in marriage.

They should consider more than one factor in the choice of a mate for marriage with particular preference to the factors of character/attitude, religious inclination and family socio-economic background among others.

The individual youth should from onset know what they want/desire in selection of mate. This is to avoid regret or problem in future.

The followings are the limitations of the study: time factor, financial constrain, and quick response of the respondents.

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