SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND PREFERENCES IN MARRIAGE PARTNER SELECTION AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN SOUTH-SOUTH OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
Selection the ideal spouse is the most confusing process in the life of most people. This paper sought to examine differences undergraduate's socio-economic status have on their preferences of marriage partner selection in terms of their personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness. A total of 1,419 participated in the study. Data was analyzed using, mean, standard deviation, one way analyses of variance and Fisher's Least Significance Difference. 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. It is recommended among others that undergraduates should not choose marriage partners that are committed to money and pleasure alone but to loving attitude which is the most basic characteristic that every individual should possess. Also that youngster should know their potential marriage partners well enough before they make the final decision, not just looking at the potential marriage partner's high socio-economic status.

Key Words: Marriage, Economic status, Undergraduates, Socio-economic Status, Nigeria.

Introduction
In preindustrial society socio-economic status was a crucial determinant of the living conditions of individuals and families. Most predominantly, socio-economic status determined the access to economic resources, thereby reflecting group-specific differences in the standard of living in terms of nutrition, housing and vulnerability to economic hardship. Thus individuals and families of higher socio-economic status generally had better living conditions than those of lower socio-economic status. In

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addition, a higher socio-economic status meant greater prestige in the local community and access to better socio-economic networks, which in turn could influence opportunities for accumulating resources. Although less important in reality than it is often assumed. Socio-economic status also had implications for demographic behaviour. For example there seem to have been considerable differences between different socio-economic groups in terms of fertility, marriage and migration.

Socio-economic status in pre-modern society was determined by a range of different factors. Socio-economic status attainment could in part be linked to individual achievement, through investments in education, training and network. These are the kinds of factors that we often assume to be dominant in contemporary societies. One means of accessing economic resources, networks, or social prestige in the absence of inherited assets could have been through marriage by finding a spouse from a higher socio-economic status. (Dribe & Lundh, 2006).

Partner selection is potentially one of the most important factors contributing to socio-economic status and mobility besides the individual's own socio-economic origin. The real transformation of modern love is that ranking mates for material and social assets is now incorporated into unconscious structures of desire. Lilouz (1997) posited that it was the entry of women into the labour force throughout the 20th century that shook the foundations of marriage. Basically, the 70s, economic and feminism equal higher divorce and lower birth rates; with new possibilities for economic independence from men, more women were free to leave unsatisfying marriages, which also meant they tended to make more demands on the ones they choose to stay in.

It is against this background that this study sought to examine the differences undergraduates' students' socio-economic status have on their preferences of marriage partner selection among universities undergraduates in South-South zone of Nigeria.

The research question guiding this study states that what influence does undergraduates' students' socio-economic status have on their preferences of marriage partners in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness. While the hypothesis states that influence on undergraduate students' socio-economic status will not significantly influence their preferences in marriage partner selection in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness.

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Review of Related Literature
People value socio-economic status as a means to predict one's ability to provide for their young ones. The ability and willingness to provide their resources are traits that have been correlated with high male value. Human males can and do provide a range of resources for the female before, during and after she has produced an offspring. This can include food, shelter, and protection from other males. Females would have evolve preferences for males who had good financial prospects, were older than themselves, had higher social status, and who displayed hardworking and industrious characters as these are clear signs of resources acquisition (Mamasan, 2005).

Also Hatfield and Rapson (1996) in their cross-cultural perspective of love and sex find that women value more than men, marriage partners who possess status, who had good financial prospects, and who are ambitious and industrious. Supporting this view Khallad (2005) found out that Jordian female college students show greater interest in potential marriage partners who exhibit economic ability and commitment. This finding further indicated that women's differential preferences for resources – and commitment- related attributes were mainly determined by socio-economic status.

Gage and Hancock (2002) in their study of college students revealed that students of middle class as well as the higher class primarily choose those who are of their own socio-economic status to date or marry. Also the study revealed that those of high socio-economic status have previously preferred 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 a relatively equal social class to themselves to those of lower or higher socio-economic classes. Feingold (1992) posited that women accord more weight than men to socio-economic status, as women prefer marriage partners that will be able to take care of them financially.

South (1991) examined data collected from over 2,000 respondents in the United States, data collected was used to examine socio-demographic differentials in the stated willingness of individuals to marry persons with various social, economic and demographic characteristics, it draws on exchange and marriage marked theories to develop hypotheses age, race, sex and socio-economic resources of respondents, respondents stated willingness to marry persons outside the normative age range, who have been previously married, who already

have children; who are of a different religion and race, who have relatively high or low earning and education, and who are not physically attractive.

In another study, Westman (1999) posited that financial success level was the most important variable sought by university student in potential marriage partner from the data gathered from university students using a questionnaire covering background information, the self-perceived mating success scale, and a materialism scale developed by Richins and Dawson and a computer survey indicating interest in a coffee date, partly date, and a dinner with target individuals who varied by attractiveness level.

Methodology

The research design used in this study was the descriptive design. Population of the study consists of all the university undergraduates in South-South zone of Nigeria, with a total number of one hundred and thirty-five thousand two hundred and thirty-one (135,231).

The stratified random sampling technique was used in this study. To achieve this, from the six states that make up the South-South zone of Nigeria, seven (7) universities were selected, the universities were stratified into federal, state and private. The universities selected for this study include: university of Uyo, federal university; University of Calabar federal University; Niger Delta University, State University; Ambrose Alli University, State University; Delta State University, State University; and Igbinedion University, private University.

The sample of the study consisted of one thousand four hundred and twenty (1,419) undergraduates from the seven universities selected for this study. That is 210 students from university of Uyo, 116 from students of Niger Delta University, 299 from students of university of Calabar, 204 students from Delta State university, 246 students from Ambrose Alli university, 245 students from university of Port Harcourt, 100 students from Igbinedion university. A total of 1,420 but 1 was returned without answering the related questions.

Instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire titled "Preferences in marriage Partner's selection" designed by the researcher for university undergraduates. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: Section A of the questionnaire was designed to elicit personal information about the respondents while Sections B, C, & D were used to achieve the objective of the study and answer the research question. It

was designed to obtain data on such variables as personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness.

To validate the instrument, copies were sent to professors in measurement and evaluation, Guidance & Counselling, Sociology and Psychology. These experts ensured content validity. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot testing was done using one hundred undergraduates from Benue state University, Makurdi. Cronbach co-efficient Alpha reliability method was used to determine the reliability estimates of the various sub-sales or the instrument. The reliability estimates of the sub scales are .79 for personality traits, .93 for socio-economic status and .78 for physical attractiveness.

The data for this study was obtained from the use of the questionnaire, which was administered in each of the universities by the researcher with the help of some lecturers, the questionnaire were collected the same day of administration in each universities of study.

Method of statistical tools used for this study is mean, standard deviation and one way analysis of variance.

Presentation of Results

Research question states that what does undergraduates' students' socio-economic status have on their preferences of marriage partners in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status, and physical attractiveness. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Group means and standard deviations of difference of undergraduates' socio-economic status of preferences of partners.

Preferences Personality traits`	Socio-economic Status	N	$\overline{X}$	SD
	Low	187	33.99	8.99
	Medium	729	37.58	8.14
	High	503	40.45	5.48
	Total	1419	38.12	7.72
Marriage Partner's Socio-economic status	Low	187	31.41	10.07
	Medium	729	39.45	13.12
	High	503	40.86	11.31
	Total	1419	38.89	12.49

Preferences Personality traits`	Socio-economic Status	N	$\overline{X}$	SD
Physical attractiveness	Low	187	35.10	8.55
	Medium	729	35.39	9.93
	High	503	35.85	7.65
	Total	1419	35.52	9.00

Table 1 shows group sizes means and standard deviations of three levels of socio-economic status of undergraduates and their marriage partners preferences in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness.

The hypothesis states that influence of undergraduate's socio-economic status will significantly influence their preferences in marriage partners selection in terms of personality traits, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness. The result is present in Table 2.

Table 2: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of difference of undergraduates' socio-economic status on preference of partners.

Variables	Sources of Variation	SS	df	Ms	F
Personality traits	Between Groups	6122.54	2	3061.27	3.37*
	Within Groups	78283.37	1416	55.29	
	Total	84405.91	1418		
Marriage Partner's Socio-economic Status	Between Groups	12645.15	2	6322.58	42.96*
	Within Groups	208395.35	1416	147.17	
	Total	221040.50	1418		
Physical Attractiveness	Between Groups	100.15	2	50.26	.620

Variables	Sources of Variation	SS	df	Ms	F
	Within Groups	114753.88	1416	81.04	
	Total	114854.39	1418		

* Significant at .05 level; critical F = 2.99,df = 2 & 1416

Result shown in Table 2 reveals a high F-value of 55.37 influence of undergraduates socio-economic status on undergraduates in terms of personality traits is higher than the critical value of 2.99 with df = 2 and 1416 at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in this instance. This implies that undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influences their marriage partners' selection in terms of personality traits.

Concerning the marriage partners' socio-economic status, result shows that the calculated F-value of 42.96 is higher than the critical F-value of 2.99 with df = 2 and 1416 at .05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected in this instance. This implies that undergraduate's socio-economic status significantly influence their marriage partner's selection in terms of marriage partner's socio-economic status.

Considering physical attractiveness, result indicated a calculated F-value of .620 lower than the critical F-value of 2.99 with df = 2 and 1416 at .05 level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis stating that undergraduate's socio-economic status does not significantly influence marriage partner's selection in terms of physical attractiveness is retained.

However, the hypothesis stating that undergraduates socio-economic status does not significantly influence preferences in marriage partner's selection in terms of personality traits, marriage partner's socio-economic status and physical attractiveness was rejected in terms of personality traits and marriage partner's socio-economic status.

Since the hypothesis was rejected, Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test was run to determine which pairs of undergraduates socio-economic status was significantly different from the other. See Tables 3 and 4 for the results of the analyses.

Table 3: Fisher's Least Significance Difference (LSD) Multiple
        Comparison analysis of difference of student's socio-economic
        status on partner's preference in terms of personality traits.

S/N	Socio-Economic Status	Group 1 (n = 187)	2 (n = 729)	3 (n = 503)
1	Low	3.99a	3.59b	-6.46
2	Medium	-5.88*c	37.58	-2.87
3	High	-10.15*	-6.62	40.45

* Significant at P < .05; MSW = 55.29

a – Group means are on the diagonal

b – Differences between group means are above the diagonal

c – Fisher's LSD t-values are below the diagonal

Table 3 indicated that undergraduates who are of high socio-economic status differ significantly from all other groups with a higher mean preference value of 40.45. This value is greater than that of low socio-economic status (X = 33.99) and medium socio-economic status (X = 37.58) in terms of personality traits undergraduates significantly differ from all low socio-economic status undergraduates t=10.15 and medium socio-economic status undergraduates t=6.62 in terms of personality traits.

From the result in Table 3, one can say that undergraduates who are of high socio-economic status in terms of personality traits prefer to marry from that group, those from medium socio-economic group also in terms of personality traits prefer to marry from that group. This is also applicable to those of low socio-economic status.

Table 4: Fisher's Least Significance Difference (LSD) multiple
        Comparison analysis of students on preference in terms of
        marriage partner socio-economic status.

S/N	Socio-Economic Status	Group 1 (n = 187)	2 (n = 729)	3 (n = 503)
1	Low	31.41a	-8.04b	-9.45
2	Medium	-8.10c	39.45	-1.41
3	High	-9.12*	-1.99*	40.86

* Significant at P < .05; MSW = 147.17

a – Group means are on the diagonal

b – Differences between group means are above the diagonal

c – Fisher's LSD t-values are below the diagonal

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Table 4 indicated that undergraduates of high socio-economic status differ significantly from other groups with a higher mean preference value of 40.86. This value is greater than that of low socio-economic status (X = 31.41) and medium socio-economic status (X = 39.45).

One can say that undergraduates of high socio-economic status prefer to marry those of high socio-economic status, those of medium socio-economic status and those of low socio-economic status prefer to marry those of low socio-economic status.

Discussion

The hypothesis stated that undergraduates' socio-economic status will not significantly influence their preferences in marriage partner selection in terms of personality traits, marriage partner's socio-economic status and physical attractiveness. Research findings from the testing of this hypothesis show that there is a significant influence between undergraduates' socio-economic status and preferences in marriage partners' selection in terms of personality traits, marriage partner's socio-economic status and physical attractiveness.

The research finding that undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influence marriage partner's selection in terms of personality traits is supported by the study of Khallad (2005) revealed that Jordan female college students showed greater interest in potential marriage partners who exhibit personality traits such as intelligent, kindness, industriousness, emotional stability, honesty, trustworthiness, artistic and creative. The female students also showed greater interest in potential marriage partners who exhibit economic ability and commitment. The finding further indicated that women's differential preferences for personality traits were mainly determined by socio-economic status.

In the same vein, in support of this finding 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 (2005) also revealed that females of low socio-economic 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. This is supported by

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 statues. It was also found in their data that both males and females prefer those of relatively equal social classes.

Conclusion

Finding of this study reveal that university undergraduates' socio-economic status significantly influence preferences in marriage partners' selection in terms of personality traits and marriage partner's socio-economic status. The implication of this is that the more similar people are in their values, background and life goals, the more likely they are to have a successful marriage. Opposite may attract but they may not live together harmoniously as marriage couples. People who share common background and similar social networks are better suited as marriage partners than people who are very different in their background and network. The possibilities of marital satisfaction are greater if people marry within their own socio-economic status. Partners experience more stress in heterogamous unions. There is a tendency for couples to enter into homogenous marriages with respect to education. Most women who had university education marry university graduates or those with more education than they have. Educationally homogenous marriages tend to slightly more compatible than educationally heterogamous marriages.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that youngsters should not choose marriage partners that are committed to money and pleasure alone but to loving attitude which is the most basic characteristic that every youngster should possess.

Youngsters should know their potential marriage partners well enough before they make the final decision, not just looking at the potential marriage partners high socio-economic status.

Choosing a marriage partner, youngster should use wisdom since it is a decision that will affect youngsters for the rest of their lives.

Finally, youngsters should seek professional advice from marriage counsellors

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