
CHOICE OF MARITAL PARTNERS: DO PARENTING STYLES AND PEER PRESSURE HAVE ANY ROLE?

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Abstract

Determining someone to marry could be one of the most important and difficult decisions a person can make in their life. This prompted the study to investigate the predictive role of parenting styles and peer pressure on the choice of marital partners. A sample of 257 ($M = 23.55$ years, $SD = 3.05$) National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members who were selected through purposive sampling technique responded to the Choice of Marital Partners Scale, Parenting Styles Scale and Peer Pressure scale. Results of the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that authoritative parenting style significantly and positively predicted the choice of marital partner. Authoritarian parenting style significantly and positively predicted the choice of marital partner. Permissive parenting style significantly predicted the choice of marital partner. Finally, peer pressure significantly predicted the choice of marital partner and contributed the highest. The study recommended that Psychologists should develop psycho-education programmes tailored toward infusing the three parenting styles together (authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) as well as positive peer relationships in a bid to actualise better marital partners among adolescents and young adults.

Keywords: parenting styles, peer pressure, marital partners, youths

Introduction

Marriage is an ordained institution established by God as well as the culture of any society in a bid to bring a long-lasting bond between a man and woman for pleasure, procreation, companionship and sustenance (Animasahun, 2011). Before marriage, choosing one's partner for intimacy and/or courtship is often a tough decision to make especially in the life of a youth or young adult. Choice of marital partners or mate selection as popularly called in the literature refers to the decisions that a mature male or female takes when selecting a marital partner. According to Adelabu (2017), choosing a marital partner is not necessarily a social need but also a way of increasing humanity through procreation. Smith (2007) also asserts that choosing one's marital partner is a compulsory and integral part of family life which is highly valued by parents, families, friends and well-wishers. This is why in a developing country such as Nigeria, many parents get worried when their mature children remained unmarried or did not bring any partners home for marriage (Ochidi, 2015).

Also, most parents who are financially buoyant often instruct their children not to engage in any marital affairs with a poor family. Importantly, most rich parents always emphasise that their children choose partners from financially buoyant families whenever

they are ready to choose a partner for marriage. They often called these poor families "gold-diggers" having the perception that children from poor backgrounds will maltreat their children. Hence, rich families must marry other rich families so that their wealth and riches would continue multiplying or spreading within their family. Adding to this fact, Ochidi (2015) also stressed that some superstitious parents may also attribute evil forces as the reason why their children were unable to find a suitable partner. In the real sense, there are questions that people need to resolve before selecting their marital partner. Yang (2013) also buttressed this fact, that there are a series of questions which often run in the mind of an individual before choosing a partner and these questions often include: "What if my parents do not like the person I think is right for me? How can I get more interested in an individual who is very strange to me? How can I be sure if that person is marriage material?" In a bid to answer some of these questions, many individuals are often pressed and in this process would not take their time before choosing their partners or in the worst scenario are forced into a relationship, date or marriage that they are not comfortable with. These wrong choices could be responsible for the breakups of marriages, poor marital understanding and poor satisfaction frequently experienced in marriage (Ojukwu, Woko & Onuoha, 2016).

Available studies (e.g., Badahdah & Tiemann, 2009; Maliki, 2011; Owagbemi & Maduawuchi, 2015; Ayankeye 2017; Smt.Sandhya 2013; Adelabu 2017; Sarir, *et al* 2018; Akpadago, 2020) have identified factors such as socioeconomic status, sociodemographic factors, personality, and physical attractiveness as predictors of choice of marital partners. However, a cursory observation of these studies, revealed that the aforementioned factors might not be the only important predictors of the choice of marital partners. Other important factors such as parenting styles and peer pressure may be relevant. Hence, a gap exists in the literature which this present study hopes to fill. Furthermore, most of the past studies (Maliki, 2011; Ayankeye, 2017) were on university students and Christian youths. The National youth service corps (NYSC) members have been largely neglected. Members of the NYSC are young graduates who just left the university between the ages of 18 and 30 years for a one-year compulsory service to their fatherland. The NYSC was established on February 22, 1973, by the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, after the Nigerian-Biafran war. The scheme is aimed at promoting development and fostering national unity among fresh young graduates in Nigerian tertiary institutions. A study on NYSC members in Nigeria is therefore timely, particularly as this set of individuals who have just left the university and are in the stage of self-identity could be prone to making wrong choices, especially on marital issues. The present study, therefore, examines parenting styles and peer pressure as possible predictors of the choice of marital partners among NYSC members.

According to Edobor and Ekechukwu (2015), parenting styles refer to the diverse methods used by parents to bring up their children. Inman, Howard, Beaumont and Walker (2007) also assert that parents are often faced with the multifaceted task of taking care of their children within a specific culture which is notably different from their culture of origin. Baumrind (1991) identified three types of parenting styles namely authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. The authoritarian style is a situation where parents act authoritatively without demanding any conversation or explanation from their

children. Such parents are often strict and they give orders and rules to their children without them being questioned. The authoritative style or democratic style is when children are allowed to also participate in or discuss any personal or family-related issues relating to them while the permissive style or indulgent style is a situation where children are given full autonomy to do anything they wish to do without any constraint or penalty from the parents. Ogunjuyigbe and Adeyemi (2003) opined that parents and family members in some cultures play a vital role by bargaining for a wife or husband for their children whom they have confidence the choice would be well-suited for their son/daughter. Also, parents have the impression that the young woman knows very few things regarding issues of life. Hence, parents do all that they can to get the best marital partners for their son/daughter. It, therefore, can be said that the kind of parenting styles a parent adopts could go a long way to determine the choice of marital partner.

Peer pressure has been proven to be a vital factor that influences adolescent behaviour as well as other social interactions (Ugoji & Ebebuwa-Okoh 2015). Hartney (2011) defines peer pressure as the influence that peers have on one another. Peer pressure is an emotional force from people who are in the same social group where this group could be in terms of age, grade or status and behave in a similar way to themselves (Weinfield 2010). Peer pressure could come in positive and negative forms but the negative form is the most common and disturbing among adolescents (Murugesan & Lazmey, 2019). For instance, negative peer pressure may influence individuals to engage in illicit behaviour in society. Peer pressure may be linked to incidents of adolescent risk-taking which may include but are not limited to sexual behaviours. This is because this behaviour commonly occurs in the company of peers. Often they inspire each other to miss classes, steal, cheat, use drugs, or become involved in other risky behaviours. Very scanty studies to the researchers' knowledge have investigated peer pressure as a possible predicting factor in the choice of marital partners. For instance, Owagbemi and Maduawuchi (2015) assert that peer pressure influences the choice of marital partner among young undergraduates. It is based on this premise that this research examined the role of parenting styles and peer pressure on the choice of marital partners among the National youth service corps (NYSC) youths in an emerging country like Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

This study was premised on the Social exchange theory developed by Blau (1964). The basic assumption of this theory is that social behaviour or interaction is mainly an exchange process that involves an individual maximising benefits/rewards and minimising costs/risks. According to the theory, individuals evaluate the likely benefit as well as risks of engaging in such social relationships. In a situation when the risks surpass the rewards, such an individual might likely reduce her/his commitment to such a relationship or not engage in it at all but when the rewards out-weight the risks, such an individual might commit to such relationship wholeheartedly. Blau (1964) viewed the theory from two angles namely cost and benefits. Costs are things that are negative to a person such as investing money, time and effort into a relationship. The benefits on the other hand are positive outcomes an individual derived from a relationship which may include but are not limited to fun, friendship, companionship and social support. The

theory, therefore, suggests that individuals rationally take the benefits and deduct from the costs to determine how committed such individuals will be in any relationship. Therefore a positive relationship is a situation when the benefits outweigh the costs while a negative relationship is when the cost is greater than the reward.

Relating the propositions of this theory to this study, individuals often make a rational choice of marital partners based on cost and benefit analysis. Matured individuals will consider the perceived benefit they will derive from a relationship before making an intimate choice. In a situation, where individuals perceive a higher benefit and lower cost, such a person might commit to choosing such a partner. But in a situation when an individual perceives a higher cost than gain in such a relationship, such an individual might not choose such partners. It, therefore, can be said that choosing a marital partner depends largely on the cost-benefit analysis individual do before making marital partner choices.

Hypotheses

The current study examined the predictive role of parenting styles and peer pressure on the choice of marital partners among NYSC members. Based on previous empirical studies, it was hypothesized that

- H0₁: Authoritative parenting style will significantly predict the choice of marital partner among NYSC members,
- H0₂: Authoritarian parenting style will significantly predict the choice of marital partner among NYSC members,
- H0₃: Permissive parenting style will significantly predict the choice of marital partner among NYSC members and
- H0₄: Peer pressure will significantly predict the choice of marital partner among NYSC members.

Method

Participants

The study involved a purposive sample of 237 corps members selected from two local government areas within Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. The sample included Corps members who are in Batch A stream I. Out of the 237 corps members, 99(41.8%) were males, while 138(58.2%) were females. The ages of the participants are between 18 to 30 years with a mean age of 23.55 years (SD = 3.05). In terms of religious affiliation, 208(87.9%) were Christians, 25(10.5%) were Muslim and 4(1.7%) were adherents of other religions. Lastly, 35(14.8%) reported high socioeconomic status, 170(71.7%) were of medium socioeconomic status while 32(13.5%) were of low socioeconomic status.

Validities and Reliabilities of Instruments

A paper and pencil questionnaire that consisted of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and scales measuring variables of interest in the study was used to gather data.

The choice of marital partners was measured using the 19-item choice of marital partners scale developed by the researchers. This scale was developed to measure the choice individual make when choosing marital partners. The scale has a five-point Likert response of strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The sample of the items reads "I cannot date someone who is not attractive to me" and "family background is key in choosing my marital partner". Factorial Validity was adopted in testing the validity in which the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test yielded a 0.61 while the Barlett Test of Sphericity yielded approximate Chi-Square (1579.39, $p < 0.05$). A higher score on the scale indicates a good choice of marital partners while a low score means a poor choice of marital partners. A Cronbach alpha of 0.84 was established in the study.

Peer pressure was measured using the 11-item Peer Pressure scale by Santor, Messervey and Kusumakar (2000). The scale was used to ascertain the level of peer pressure one has experienced. A sample of the item includes "My friends could push me into doing just about anything". The scoring of the scale is on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - not at all to 4 - a lot. A high score on the scale means high peer pressure while a low score on the scale means low pressure. The author reports a reliability of 0.84. The scale has also been used in Nigeria by Ifeagwazi, Chukwuorji, Egbodo and Nwoke (2019) and they got a Cronbach alpha of 0.80 among Nigerian undergraduates. In this study, a Cronbach alpha of 0.89 is reported.

Parenting style was assessed using the 24 items Parental Authority Questionnaire. The scale was developed by Baumrind (1968). The scale ranges from 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. A sample of the item on the scale for authoritarian parenting reads "My parents set rules with some degree of freedom and rarely punish me for breaking rules unless it is deserved" Sample of items on the authoritative parenting style reads "as I was growing up my parents did not question any decision that they made". A sample of items on permissive parenting includes "My parents allow me to form my point of view on family matters and they generally allow me to decide for myself what I am going to do". The author reports the reliability of $\alpha = 0.67$ for authoritarian, $\alpha = 0.65$ for authoritative, and $\alpha = 0.57$ for permissive. The Cronbach alpha reported in this study for authoritative is 0.59, authoritarian is 0.53 and permissive is 0.70. The overall Cronbach alpha in this study is 0.83.

Procedure

Before data collection, the researchers sought permission to conduct the study from the two local government coordinators. This request was then granted after one week of consideration. The researchers with the help of a research assistant, visited the NYSC corps members on their community development service (CDS) day which is every

Thursday of the week to inform the respondents of the objectives and importance of the study. The researchers further informed the participants that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants can withdraw from the study at any time he or she wishes to do so. Research ethics was strictly adhered to throughout the collection and gathering of the data in this study. In all, 250 copies of the instruments were distributed in the two local governments at different points in time but two hundred and thirty-seven (237) were retrieved as eight (8) of the questionnaires were not returned and five (5) had incomplete responses which were discarded from the final analysis. The remaining instruments were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis.

Design and statistical analysis

The study adopted a descriptive survey. This is because the study makes inferences from data collected through the use of validated instruments. The independent variables in the study are parenting styles and peer pressure while the dependent variable is the choice of marital partners. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the socio-demographic factors while inferential statistics such as the hierarchical multiple regression were used to test the hypotheses in the study all at 0.05 level of significance with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.

Results

Table 1: Correlation Matrix Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation and the Relationship among parenting styles, peer pressure and choice of marital partners

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Authoritarian	22.92	8.01	-				
2. Authoritative	20.17	7.72	.64**	-			
3. Permissive	19.56	7.12	.46**	.45*	-		
4. Peer pressure	18.51	6.68	.32*	.31**	.47**	-	
5. Choice of marital partners	49.86	14.83	-.39**	.15	.53**	.57**	-

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 1 reveals that there was a significant negative association between authoritarian style and choice of marital partners ($r = -.39^{**}$, $p < .01$). This means that an increase in the adoption of authoritarian parenting styles tends to poor choice of marital partners. The result also revealed a positive relationship between permissive parenting style and choice of marital partners ($r = .53^{**}$, $p < .01$). This implies that an increase in the adoption of permissive parenting style tends to a good choice of marital partners. Finally, a significant positive relationship existed between peer pressure and choice of marital partners ($r = .57^{**}$, $p < .01$). This means that when respondents have high peer pressure tends to have high marital partners.

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression showing the predictive role of parenting styles and peer pressure on the choice of marital partners

Variable	Model I			Mode II			Model III			Model IV		
	β	t	Sig	β	t	sig	β	t	Sig	β	t	sig
(Constant)		16.51	.00		8.57	.00		7.81	.00		1.89	.60
Authoritative	.16	2.51**	.01	.17	3.28***	.00	.06	1.12	.26	-.14	-2.86*	.05
Authoritarian				.53	9.82**	.00	.51	9.73**	.00	.21	4.39**	.00
Permissive							.25	4.33**	.00	.17	3.77**	.00
Peer pressure										.62	11.81	.00
R	.16			.56			.60			.77		
R ²	.03			.31			.36			.60		
ΔR^2	.02			.30			.35			.60		
F	6.31*			52.73**			44.11**			87.67**		
Df	1,235			2,234			3,233			4,234		

Note: **p< .01, *p<.05 ***p< .001; ΔR^2 = Change in R²; F = Change in F; β = Standardised regression coefficient, sig= significance level

Table 2 reveals that when the first model was tested, the authoritative parenting style significantly positively predicts the choice of marital partner $\beta = .16$, $t(235) = 2.51$, $p < .01$. The contribution of authoritative parenting style in explaining the variance in choice of marital partner was 3% ($R^2 = .03$), and the model was significant, $F(1, 235) = 6.31$, $p < .05$. In model 2, authoritarian parenting style was added in the regression model and it revealed a significant and positive prediction of choice of marital partner $\beta = .53$, $t(235) = 9.82$, $p < .01$. The contribution of authoritarian parenting style in explaining the variance in choice of marital partner was 31% ($R^2 = .31$), and the model was significant, $F(2, 234) = 52.73$, $p < .01$. In model 3, permissive parenting style was included in the regression model. It also revealed a significantly positive prediction of choice of marital partner $\beta = .25$, $t(235) = 9.73$, $p < .01$. The contribution of permissive parenting style in explaining the variance in choice of marital partner was 36% ($R^2 = .36$), and the model was significant, $F(3, 233) = 44.11$, $p < .01$. In model 4, peer pressure was also included in the regression model and the result showed that there was a positive prediction of choice of marital partner $\beta = .62$, $t(235) = 11.81$, $p < .01$. The contribution of peer pressure in explaining the variance in choice of marital partner was 60% ($R^2 = .60$), and the model was significant, $F(4, 234) = 87.67$, $p < .01$. The strongest predictor of choice of marital partner in the present study was peer pressure ($\beta = .62$), and all the predictor variables in the study accounted for 60% of the variance in choice of marital partner ($R^2 = .60$).

Discussion

The present study investigated the role of parenting styles and peer pressure on the choice of marital partners among youth corps members. The first hypothesis which stated that authoritative parenting style will significantly predict the choice of marital partner among NYSC members was supported. The study found that an authoritative parenting style significantly and positively predicted the choice of marital partner. The study finding was not in line with Obiunu (2015) who found that there was no relationship between parents' interaction and parents/children's interaction on the quality of adolescent friendship. The reason for this finding may be connected with the fact that the majority of parents in Nigeria always want to serve as a good role models to their children, hence they advise them on the way of life including choosing a strategy to find the right marital partner. As predicted by the second hypothesis, the result revealed that the authoritarian parenting style significantly and positively predicted the choice of marital partners among NYSC members. This finding was not in line with Sevinça and Garipa (2010) who found that authoritarian parenting style did not have any role to play in partner marital harmony. The reason for this finding may be connected to the fact that in Nigeria, parents and guardians always place a high demand on their children especially the female ones by enforcing them to marry who they have in mind which could either be their friend's child or a person who comes from a wealthy home with no proper consent from the child.

The third hypothesis found that permissive parenting style significantly predicted the choice of marital partners among NYSC members. This study finding was not following Sevinça and Garipa (2010) whose outcome found a negative link between authoritarian and permissive upbringing and marital harmony. The reason for this finding may be because parents who have only one child in the family often time permit that child

freedom to make any choice of his or her marital partners with nobody asking questions about why he or she makes a such marital choice in a bid to make a such child happy. The fourth hypothesis found that peer pressure significantly predicted the choice of marital partners among NYSC members. The study finding was following that of Micgloskey and Stuewing (2001) who found that parenting influences choosing close friends. The reason for this finding may be linked to the over-reliance youths and adolescents often have on their peers, because they often go out and do things in common, they are often afraid to lose such social bound if they opt not to do what their peers/mates do. Hence they often follow the patterns of what their peers do about the choice of marital partners. The implication of this finding clearly shows that parenting styles and peer pressure are two very important variables that an individual must consider before determining their choice of marital partner. It is therefore recommended that Psychologists should develop psycho-education programmes tailored toward infusing the three parenting styles together (authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) in a bid to actualise better marital partners. The study also recommends that marriage counsellors should encourage excellent peer relationships which can serve as a good buffer to good marital partners. This can be done by encouraging adolescents or young adults intending to choose their marital partners to follow suit with positive attributes that their friends set as a standard that has helped them to the successful selection of their marital partner. Also, parents and guardians should be good role models for their children as this can be used by youths as a yardstick to select their choice of marital partners. Theoretically, this study supported the social exchange theory developed by Blau (1964) which submitted that social behaviour or interaction is mainly an exchange process that involves an individual maximising benefits/rewards and minimising costs/risks. As shown in the results of the present study, when NYSC youths perceive a higher benefit in choosing a partner they tend to be attracted to such individuals but in a situation when the cost outweighs the benefit they tend not to make such a choice.

Conclusion

It is based on the finding of this present study that authoritarian, authoritative and permissive styles have positive predictive roles on the choice of marital partners. Furthermore, peer pressure significantly (independently and jointly) contributed to explaining the level of choice of marital partners among NYSC members with peer pressure contributing more than the other variables.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies

Firstly, the study only uses one state out of the thirty-six states including the FCT in Nigeria. Hence, generalising the result to other states of the federation and outside Nigeria could be faulty. Although the finding is very relevant within the study setting. Secondly, because of the sensitive nature of the study, respondents could respond to the question in a socially desirable way which often tends to be biased which could have affected the result of these findings. Thirdly, the method of data gathering might not be adequate to capture the true feelings of the respondents. Also, the lack of literature on this subject matter is another limitation of the study. Therefore future studies can improve on

the study of this nature by increasing the setting and the sample size. Also, an improved method of data collection in the form of qualitative techniques such as interviews and FGD could enrich the findings of a similar study. Finally, more psychosocial factors should be explored on the choice of marital partners to enrich the scanty literature on this subject matter.

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APPENDIX

CHOICE OF MARITAL PARTNER SCALE

Instruction: Please read each question as it assesses your feelings, and circle the number on the scale for each question that gives the best response to you (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree).

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	My choice of marital partner is based on what others around me think				
2.	I have to follow the standards set by my family and friends when choosing a partner				
3.	I don't have a choice when choosing a marital partner				
4	My religion dictates my choice of marital partner				
5.	I have to seek the counsel of my religious leader when choosing my partner				
6.	In making my choice, my partner and I must have the same value and belief system				
7.	Socio-economic status is key in my choice of marital partner				
8.	There are laid down rules in my family as regards the choice of marital partners which I must follow				
9.	I am indifferent about my partner's tribe or country				
10.	I have a list of what I want in my choice of marital partner				
11.	I do not mind matchmaking in my choice of marital partner				
12.	I do not know what I want so any kind of partner is fine by me				
13.	I am concerned about what people will say about my choice of marital partner				
14.	Educational status is important in my choice of marital partner				
15.	I do not want a partner whose line of work would require travel				
16.	Physical appearance is very important in my choice of marital partner				
17.	I do not want a white-collar job partner				
18.	Age does not matter to me in my choice of marital partner				
19.	My family can influence my choice of marital partner				