



**DOES WESTERN CULTURE NEGATIVELY AFFECT MARRIAGE INSTITUTION
AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE? - EXPLORING THE OPINIONS OF IGBESA
COMMUNITY PEOPLE IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

Ojo Matthias Olufemi Dada*

Abstract: *With 103 respondents selected from Igbesa community in Ogun state, Nigeria, this study sought to discover whether western culture has negatively affected the marriage institution among these community people. The study revealed that conflicts exist between Western marriage culture and the indigenous traditional marriage culture. Nonetheless, the western culture was believed, not to have affected, negatively, the indigenous marriage institution. The study recommended further studies to discover why the western culture has not negatively impacted on the traditional marriage culture among these people. It was also recommended that comparative studies be carried out on the effects of western culture on indigenous marriage institution between rural communities and urban communities in Yoruba land. This would discover things that are yet to be revealed on this issue.*

Keywords: *Marriage; Culture; Effects; Igbesa Community, Yoruba.*

*Department of Sociology, Crawford University of the Apostolic Faith Mission, IGBESA, Ogun State, Nigeria.



INTRODUCTION

Marriage rites and family lives formed part of the cherished Yoruba culture. Yoruba culture according to Alaba (2004:2) is “The aggregate of the ways of life of the Yoruba – speaking peoples of south –western Nigeria and their kiths and kins elsewhere in the world. It is a continuum beginning from their subsistence, communal, agrarian life of the pre-literate and pre-colonial times to the capitalist, individualistic free enterprise life of the literate, colonial and post –colonial, modern times. In other words; a continuum of the traditional and modern aspects of the Yoruba culture provides a true picture of this concept. It is a dynamic phenomenon”.

Omotosho (1998) argued that the colonization of Africa by the European impacted strongly on the African Culture. While some of these impacts are good and desirable, some are in conflict with African culture. Marriage is one of the institutions, through which contact that African had with Europeans had changed.

An attempt was made therefore, in this article to investigate whether western culture had negatively impacted on Yoruba marriage or not. The views of the rural dwellers living in Igbesa community which is a typical Yoruba community under Ado/Odo Ota local Government area of Ogun state, Nigeria was selected as a field of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marriage is an important and a fundamental institution throughout the world. Marriage is a social institution that is designed, among other things, to ensure the happiness and fulfillment of men and women who contract into it (Okwun and Sira, 2010). Among Yoruba people, the primary purpose of marriage, according to Fadipe (1970) as cited by Alaba (2004), is to sustain Yoruba race through legitimate and responsible procreation. However, Alaba (2004), citing Fadipe (1970), stated that the major effect of culture contact upon Yoruba marriage customs is that the marriage institution is in a state of flux as a result of the diffusion of foreign or western ideas and the quick process of economic growth. For instance, some modern Yoruba Christians are now imbibing the foreign idea of “one man, one wife” by contracting church or registry marriage.

Ugboajah (2008) argued in a similar way that the melting pot of cultures that emerged during the colonial period paved way for the emergency of social vices, prominent amongst which are juvenile delinquency, child labour and the forms of criminal behaviour which have



totally changed the child rearing patterns in marriage among the urban Yoruba dwellers in Lagos.

Ajiboye et al (2012) argued that many parents today have deviated from traditional ways of caring for their children in marriage as compared to what used to be obtainable in the traditional society. The traditional child rearing practice is seen as better than those of modern child rearing methods.

Okwun and Siraj, (2010) argued that unfulfilled expectations and hope in marriage often give rise to maladjustments, and unless the couples concerned face the reality of any given situation, conflicts might abound in such relationships. When conflicts abound and they are not solved amicably it can lead to divorce.

Adegoke (2010), citing Gerstel, observed that the most important factor in the increase in divorce is the social acceptance of divorce as a result of relaxation of negative attitudes toward divorce among various religious denominations. Divorce may be seen as unfortunate but it is no longer treated as sin.

Adegoke (2010) stated that immaturity (in age), increase in education, religion, ethnicity, childlessness within the first marriage and women autonomy would one way or the other encourage divorce among couples in this modern day.

Ugboajah (2008) argued that in the traditional culture divorce is very uncommon. Under the traditional marriage system, characterized by polygamy and the general extended family system, divorce was rare because whenever marital disagreements occurred, the elders were usually around to quickly intervene as marriage counselors and amicable settlements were consequently effected. Divorce was regarded as a challenge to the respect and dignity of the families of both partners; hence all efforts were made to prevent its occurrence.

Animashun and Fatile (2011) argued that dissolution of marriage is a notable feature of the contemporary world and the separation as well as divorce is considered the only way out of marital crisis. This is the part of the growing divorce mentality which is the product of marriage instability. The genesis of such marriage instability originated from the contact with the other culture.

Salami (2005) argued that Yoruba of Western Nigeria today had, with Christianity and the Western World, produced changes in the traditional marriage practice. This contract has many changes in the weddings and marriages pattern of these people which are influenced



by the western culture. It is happening rapidly and the old traditions are constantly fading away (Animasahun and Fatile, 2011). It is not only Yoruba culture that has been affected by western culture, Anene (2010) also decried that the evolution of traditional Igbo culture was negatively affected by the intrusion of western scientific culture and of course, the whole of African society, as Animasahun and Fatile (2011) argued in their article. The only thing which the Western culture seems to have not destroyed in Yoruba marriage is the marriage among the close kins; this is a great taboo that cannot be broken (Emmanuel, 2009).

METHODOLOGY APPLIED

1. **Research Area:** Igbesa is a rural community in Ado/Ado local Government Area of Ogun State Nigeria. The community is located very close to Agbara Industrial Estate in the same Local Area. The Igbesa Community is an Awori speaking community an ethnic group under Yoruba tribe. The community is notable for many social activities. "Mole Day" is an important social activity celebrated yearly among these people. In 2005, a private University (Crawford University) was sited in the community and this has since changed the educational environment of this community.
2. **Research Design:** Survey research was made use of in this research. It entailed the gathering of information from individuals sampled, through their answers to the questions contained in the questionnaire (Schutt, 2004). Questionnaire was the only research tool used to gather information and data from the respondents. The questionnaire contained questions that were weaved together so that they flow smoothly for the respondents to answer (Neuman, 2003).
3. **Sampling Technique:** Non probability sampling techniques was utilized to select the 103 participants that took part in the study. Under this non-probability sampling technique, convenience sampling method was utilized. They formed the samples that were conveniently available for the researcher. They were subjects or group of people that were very accessible to the researcher (Adler and Clark, 1999). 103 people were sampled.
4. **Technique of Data Analysis:** For the technique of analysis, simple percentage was used. The cell frequencies were converted into percentages (Schutt,2004) Moreover, the hypothesis that was tested was Done using chi-square test.



5. Hypothesis : The hypotheses that were tested are:

i. H0: There is no conflict between Yoruba Marriage Culture and the Western Marriage Culture in Igbesa community.

ii H1: There is a conflict between Yoruba Marriage Culture and the Western Marriage Culture in Igbesa community.

H0: There is no significant negative effect of Western Culture on Traditional Marriage among Igbesa community people.

H1: There is a significant negative effect of Western Culture on Traditional Marriage among Igbesa Community people.

The above are tentative statements about empirical reality. (Schutt 2004). They may be proved right or wrong.

DATA PRESENTATIONS, ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATIONS

The data presentation, analyses and interpretations depended on the data and the information gathered from the 103 respondents who filled questionnaires administered.

Table: Socio-Bio Data of Respondents

	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Sex Male Female Total	35 68 103	34.0 66.0 100.00
2	Age Below 20years 20-30 years 31-40 years 41years above Total	8 54 32 9 103	7.8 52.4 31.1 8.7 100.00
3	Marital Status Married Single Divorced Other i.e. Separated Total	62 32 2 7 103	60.2 31.1 1.9 6.8 100.00
4	Education Qualification Primary School Cert Secondary School Cert Post – Secondary Cert Total	5 25 73 103	4.9 24.3 70.9 100.00

Source: Researcher's Survey 2013.



The first variable from the table above is sex. The table reflects that 35 respondents (34.00%) were male while 68 respondents (66%) were female. Hence, we had more females who participated in the study than males. Marriage is usually centered on women more than men. In the world over, marriage is considered a union between a man and a woman or a man's family and a woman's family (within African context). However, there is always more emphasis and focus on women when it comes to marriage. On the wedding days, female couples usually received more attention, honour and prestige than the male counterparts. Moreover, there are more expectations placed on women within the marriage institution than men.

The second variable is the age. The table shows that 8 respondents (7.8%) were below 20 years, 54 respondents (52.42%) were within the age range of 20-30 years, 32 respondents (31.1%) fell within the age range of 31-40 years while 9 respondents (8.7%) were above 40 years. A critical look at the table shows that the over whelming majority of our respondents were within and above marital age. Age is very important in the issue of marriage. Immaturity (as a result of chronological age) may lead to dissolution of marriage, as Adegoke (2010) argued.

The marital statuses of our respondents were also taken into consideration. A cursory look at the table shows that 62 respondents (60.2%) were married, 32 respondents (31.1%) were single and 2 respondents (1.9%) were divorced, while 7 respondents (6.8%) were either widows /widowers or separated. More than half of the entire samples were married. Marriage carries a lot of marital experiences. Hence, majority of our respondents that were married shows that research work is enriched by their marital experiences.

Finally, we considered the educational qualifications of the respondents. The table shows that 5 respondents (4.9%) had primary school certificate, 25 respondents (24.3%) had secondary school certificate and finally, 73 respondents (70.9%) had post secondary school certificates i.e. university degrees, Higher National Diplomas, National Certificate in Education etc. It is very obvious from the data that majority of our respondents were well educated. Education has been discovered as an instrument of western culture which has been used to modify virtually all the spheres of life among the Colonized African People. Adegoke (2010) discovered that education is a factor which has been known to cause



marriage instability among the women of reproductive age. The higher the educational qualification of a woman the more likely she would experience marriage instability.

We asked our respondents to signify whether marriage is an important cultural heritage among the Yoruba people or not. All the respondents 103 respondents (100.0%) gave their agreement to this statement. Marriage is considered an important cultural heritage among the Yoruba people. It is a sustaining institution through which legitimate and responsible procreation can be purposely achieved. Alaba (2004), citing Fadipe (1970).

We proceeded to ask our respondents whether they were familiar with the Yoruba traditional marriage rites like: "itoro" (requesting the bride from her parents and family); "Ijohen" (parents 'consent to marriage); "Alarina" (the function of a chosen intermediary between the man and the woman); Ekun Iyawo (bride traditional crying) etc. When the data were collated, 16 respondents (15.5%) were very familiar with all those marriage rites. 66 respondents (64.1%) were familiar, while 21 respondents (20.4%) were not familiar. The majority of our respondents who were familiar one way or the other, show that there still remain, in memory of the people, those marriage rites, although most of them have been eroded by the wind and flood of western culture.

We requested our respondents to show whether western education has affected negatively the marriage institution in Yoruba. 36 respondents (35.0%) agreed that one way or the other, western education has affected the marriage institution. These respondents argued that the choice of bride and bridegroom, which was used to be the prerogative of the parents, was no longer so.

Non existence of Alarina (intermediary); an Ekun Iyawo (bride traditional "crying") were also cited. However, 67 respondents (65.0%) claimed that education has not negatively affected the institution of marriage among the Yoruba people. The respondents claimed that despite the effects of western education, yet, the institution of marriage among Yoruba still exists formidably. They claimed that divorce is yet very low when compared with western societies because family members still play prominent roles in ensuring that the marriages of their members are sustained and supported.

The survey also requested that the women who are married or had experienced marriage in the past to show whether in marriage their husbands had the overall final decision or say on the fundamental issues relating to marriage. 68 respondents (women who were married or



had experienced marriage) commented on this. 48 respondents (70.5%) among them affirmed that they submitted to the overall decision made by their husbands in marriage, recognizing them as the heads of the family. However, 20 women (29.6%) did not submit to the overall decisions made their husbands. However, the majority of the women (70.5%) who were submissive to the decisions of their husbands demonstrated that patriarchal tendencies are still in existence within Yoruba communities. In Yoruba land, marriage usually lasts when the husbands are allowed to assume and perform their roles as the heads of the family. Whenever women are contesting with the orders and decisions of the husbands in marriage, such marriages may end up in shambling divorce.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

- i. H₀: There is no conflict between Yoruba Marriage Culture and the Western Marriage Culture in Igbesa community.
H₁: There is a conflict between Yoruba Marriage Culture and the Western Marriage Culture in Igbesa community.

Table 2: Table on Conflict between Western Marriage and Traditional Yoruba Marriage

Conflicts exist Between Western Marriage System and Traditional Yoruba marriage System	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agreed	59	57.3
Agreed	28	27.2
Disagreed	3	2.9
Undecided	13	12.6
Total	103	100.00

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2013.

This chi-square formula was used to compute the table and at the end, the chi-square computed = 69.544 with degree of freedom = 3 and Asymp.sig.000. Hence the computed chi-square (χ^2) =69.544 is greater than the tabulated (χ^2) = 7.8². Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Therefore: there is a conflict between Yoruba traditional marriage culture and the western marriage culture. The available literatures have shown that the marriage culture of the western people is very different from the African marriage culture. For instance, monogamy is the marriage system of the western world, whereas, Africans practice polygamy. There are differences too in area of numbers of children, the parenting methods and the affiliations between parents



and their grown up children e.tc. Hence, these and others were the areas where conflicts exist.

Hypothesis II

H0: There is no significant negative effect of Western Culture on Traditional Marriage among Igbesa community people.

H1: There is a significant negative effect of Western Culture on Traditional Marriage among Igbesa Community people.

Table 3 : Table on Western Culture negatively affects Yoruba marriage

Western Culture negatively affects Yoruba marriage among Igbesa community people	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	32.0
No	28	27.2
Undecided	42	40.8
Total	103	100

Source: Researcher's survey, 2013.

The same chi-square formula was utilized to compute the table and at the end of the computation, the chi-square computed = 2.932 with the degree of freedom = 2 and Asymp: sig. 231

The chi-square computed = 2.932 is less than the chi-square tabulated= 5.99. The decision therefore is to reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis. Therefore there are no significant negative effects of Western Culture on traditional marriage among Igbesa community people.

From this result, it does not appear that western culture has not so much affected, negatively, the marriage institution among the Igbesa community people. It is suggested that the reasons behind this may be:

1. Igbesa community is a rural community. The modern variables which exist in the urban areas like urbanization, high socio-economic status, working conditions and the request for women emancipation that can weaken marriage system did not probably exist in this community.
2. It may be that men are still exacting social control over their wives and did not allow any foreign ideas or thinking that would probably affect the marriage system among them. It is discovered that men in this community are still exercising a lot of marital influences over their wives



SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It has been discovered in this study that education does not affect marriage negatively. It was discovered also that women still allow their husbands to take decisions and perform their prominent roles as the heads of the family. This of course, has created an environment for stable marriage among them. The study also discovered that these community people realized that differences exist between the western marriage system and Yoruba traditional marriage system. However, the result showed that the western culture has not negatively affected as such, the traditional marriage system.

We can conclude, therefore, that Western culture has not negatively affected the marriage institution among these people. However, the social factors that is responsible for this are yet to be identified. The study recommended therefore that further studies should be conducted by researchers to identify the factors which have been preventing the traditional marriage institution from being negatively affected by the Western Culture.

Finally, comparative studies of the effects of Western Culture on traditional marriage system between rural communities and urban communities in Yoruba Society should be conducted. Perhaps, doing this would discover things that are yet to be discovered on this issue.

REFERENCES

1. Adler, Emily Stier and Clark, Roger (1999) *How it is Done: An Invitation to Social Research* Canada : Wadworth Publishing Company.
2. Ajiboye, Olarewaju Emmanuel, Atere, Adewole Akinyemi and Olufunmi, Afolashade Nimotalai (2012) *Changing Patterns of Child Rearing Practice in Badagry Area of Lagos state. An Implication for Delinquent Behaviour* . *European Scientific Journal*, 8 (5) : 28-54
3. Alaba, Olugboyega (2004) *Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture*. Lagos : African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre.
4. Adegoke, T.G (2010) *Socio-Cultural Factors as Determinants of Divorce Rates among Women Reproductive Age in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria*. *Studies on Tribes and Tribals*, 8(2): 107-114



5. Anele, Douglas I.O (2010) Western Technical Civilization and Regional Cultures in Nigeria: The Igbo Experience. *Cultural : International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* VII (2): 38 -5.
6. Animashaun, R.A. and Fatile, E.A. Femi (2011) Patterns of Marital Instability among Married Couples in Lagos, Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 3(10): 192-199
7. Emmanuel, Adedayo A.F.E (2009) Chieftaincy Institution and Traditional Taboo in South –Western Nigeria: Review Article. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 1 (1): 6-9.
8. Neuman, W. Lawrence (2003) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches /5th edition*. USA: A and B
9. Omotoso, A. O (1998) The Impact of Colonial Education and Culture on the Muslims of Nigeria. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. April /|May: 52-61
10. Okwun, Christopher Kalu and Siraj, Saedah (2010) Family and Marriage Counseling and HIV Aids Pandemic in Nigeria. *International Journal for Cross – Disciplinary Subject in Education*, 1 (4): 237- 241.
11. Schutt, Rusell (2004) *Investigating the Social World – The Process and Practice of Research /4th Edition*. USA: Pine Forge Press.
12. Salami, L. Oladipo (2005) Pragmatic Inferencing in a Social Action; An Ethnography of a Marriage Proposal Among the Yoruba of Nigeria. *Anthropologist*, 7 (1): 19-24.
13. Ugboajah, Paul K.N (2008) *Culture –Conflict and Delinquency: A Case Study of Colonial Lagos*. Eras Edition 10, November. Retrieved from [www.arts .monash .edu. all /publication /eras](http://www.arts.monash.edu.all/publication/eras) on 23/03/2014.