

**INFLUENCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL BELIEFS ON CHOICE OF
MARRIAGE PARTNER AMONG GRADUATING STUDENTS OF
ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY AKUNGBA-AKOKO, ONDO
STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partner among graduating students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. In the context of Nigeria's extensive cultural diversity, the research seeks to understand how cultural interactions shape students' marital decisions, and how exposure to different cultures during university life impacts their choices. The study is significant as it provides insights for university management, government, and stakeholders to better support students in navigating these complex decisions. A descriptive research design of the survey type was used and a sample of 100 students were randomly selected from the population, with data collected through a validated structured questionnaire titled Cross-Cultural Barriers to Choice of Marriage Partner Scale (CCBCMPS). The analysis involved descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as inferential statistics to test the research hypothesis. The findings reveal that cross-cultural beliefs significantly influence the choice of marriage partner, (\bar{x} = 3.60 and a SD = 0.643). These beliefs also contribute to a negative mindset towards cross-cultural marriages among students, highlighting the challenges of navigating cultural diversity in personal decisions. The study concludes that cross-cultural beliefs are a crucial factor in students' marriage choices, often leading to resistance against cross-cultural unions despite exposure to diverse cultural perspectives. To address this, the study recommends the implementation of cross-cultural sensitivity programs, engagement with families and communities, reorientation training, and strengthened counseling services. It also calls for further research on cross-cultural relationships and their impact on students, as well as initiatives to promote cultural diversity and support for cross-cultural marriages.

Keywords: Cross-cultural beliefs, marriage choice, graduating students, Cultural diversity.

Introduction

Globally, the challenge of cross-cultural marriages is a recurring theme, particularly in multicultural societies where individuals must navigate the tension between preserving cultural traditions and embracing the diversity that comes with globalization (Hewitt *et al.*, 2020). Nigeria is a microcosm of Africa's cultural variety, home to more than 250 different ethnic groups and languages. The diverse range of customs, convictions, and behaviours that characterise these communities impact many facets of existence, including the selection of life partners for marriage (Oluwadele *et al.*, 2023). The impact of cross-cultural ideas on marriage decisions is a topic of considerable interest, especially for young adults who are about to create their own families, in a country where cultural identity plays a vital role in social interactions.

Nigerian culture is diverse in many ways, ranging from cuisine and social mores to language and attire. Particularly, marriage conventions are firmly anchored in cultural practices; every ethnic group has its unique norms concerning marriage rituals, dowries, and family obligations (George *et al.*, 2014). These traditions are frequently handed down from one generation to the next, protecting each group's unique cultural identity. Students from all ethnic and religious origins join together on Nigerian university campuses to pursue higher education, creating melting pots of cultural variety. The setting offers a distinctive setting for fostering cross-cultural relationships, since students are exposed to values, beliefs, and practices that diverge from their own (Chao *et al.*, 2015). Although these exchanges can foster a deeper awareness and respect for many cultures, they can also provide difficulties, especially when it comes to making private choices like selecting a spouse.

Marriage in Nigeria is not merely a union between two individuals; it is a convergence of families, communities, and often, different cultural backgrounds

(Hewitt *et al.*, 2020). For graduating students at universities like Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA), this stage of life is marked by significant personal development, social interaction, and decision-making, including the critical choice of a life partner. The dynamics of cultural diversity in Nigeria present both opportunities and challenges for these students, as they navigate their personal beliefs and societal expectations in making marital decisions (Oluwadele *et al.*, 2023). Nigerian marriages include the coming together of families, communities, and frequently disparate cultural backgrounds in addition to the union of two people. At campuses like AAUA, graduate students experience a crucial period of personal growth, social engagement, and decision-making, which includes making the important decision to choose a life partner. These students must balance their own convictions and societal expectations while making decisions about marriage because of Nigeria's complex cultural variety.

This study explores the intricate relationship between graduating students of AAUA's cross-cultural ideas and their choice of marriage partner. It aims to comprehend how cross-cultural ideas may affect students' marriage-related decisions and attitudes, as well as how cultural interactions impact these decisions. These cross-cultural exchanges are particularly important for AAUA graduating students. Their views on marriage may change as they are ready to graduate from college and enter the workforce, depending on the cultural norms and ideas they have been exposed to. The selection of a spouse is frequently influenced by cultural values, which might include factors like family history, religion, and ethnicity (George *et al.*, 2014). On the other hand, exposure to a variety of cultural traditions while attending college may cause students to reevaluate these assumptions, which may expand their dating pool of possibilities. Cross-cultural ideas have a variety of effects on marriage decisions. Interactions between people from other cultural backgrounds can, on the one hand, promote better tolerance and acceptance of other cultural customs, which could inspire students to think about dating people from other backgrounds

(Hewitt *et al.*, 2020). However, these exchanges can also draw attention to the disparities between the cultural groups, raising questions about compatibility, acceptability by families, and the difficulties of managing a cross-cultural marriage (Benko 2023).

The cultural background of a prospective spouse is an important factor to take into account in Nigeria, where marriage is frequently viewed as a union between two families as well as between two people. To maintain cultural continuity and prevent any disputes, many families have strong preferences for their children to marry within their own ethnic or religious community (Oluwadele *et al.*, 2023). Students may feel under pressure to select a spouse who shares their family's cultural views as a result of these biases, even if their contacts and experiences at school have given them a wider viewpoint.

The goal of this research project is to investigate these processes by looking at how graduating students' choices of marriage partners are influenced by cross-cultural views. It aims to determine whether or not university exposure to other cultures has caused students to reevaluate traditional ideas and how much it has affected their views about marriage. The capacity to see and appreciate cultural differences as well as have successful interactions with individuals from various cultural backgrounds is known as cross-cultural sensitivity. Building cross-cultural sensitivity in university students is crucial to their education because it equips them to interact with the varied culture they will be encountering (Lyu 2024). Cross-cultural awareness at AAUA can have a big impact on how students feel about marriage. High levels of cross-cultural sensitivity may make students more receptive to marrying someone from a different cultural background since they understand the benefits of variety in their personal life. On the other hand, students with strong cultural values or little exposure to other cultures can be more opposed to the concept of intercultural marriages (Benko 2023).

In order to determine if more culturally sensitive students are more inclined to think about cross-cultural marriages, the study aims to investigate the

association between students' cross-cultural sensitivity and marriage decisions. It also examines the difficulties that students could have in intercultural marriages, including cultural misunderstandings, parental disapproval, and the requirement to adjust to various cultural customs (Hewitt *et al.*, 2020). Although they enhance and enrich the lives of individuals involved, cross-cultural marriages can sometimes pose considerable problems. These difficulties might arise from disparities in language, religion, and social mores, as well as possible disputes with relatives who might not be as accepting of cultural variety (George *et al.*, 2014). When deciding to marry someone from a different culture, graduating students at AAUA may consider these difficulties in comparison to the advantages of getting married to someone who shares their goals and beliefs. The possibility of cultural misunderstandings in cross-cultural marriages is one of the main obstacles. Dissimilarities in communication methods, religious beliefs, and social conventions can cause arguments even amongst couples who really want to comprehend and honour one another's cultural origins (Fernández de Casadevante, M. 2023). The expectations of extended family members, who might have strong preferences for maintaining cultural continuity, can make these difficulties worse. The problem of identification presents another difficulty. Couples in cross-cultural marriages may find it difficult to define their cultural identities, especially if they are from minority ethnic groups (Hewitt *et al.*, 2020). The need to negotiate societal expectations and misconceptions regarding cross-cultural relationships might make this even more difficult. Students from ethnic groups that have traditionally interacted with one another less may be more pressured to adhere to cultural standards, which might make it challenging for them to think about getting married across cultural boundaries (Oluwadele *et al.*, 2023).

In Nigeria, community and family are major influences on marriage decisions. For a lot of students, selecting a spouse entails not just their own preferences but also their families' advice and consent (George *et al.*, 2014). This

can play a big role in cross-cultural marriages because families could worry about cultural compatibility and the difficulties of incorporating diverse cultural customs. Students are expected to marry within their cultural group, demonstrating the impact of community and family on marriage decisions. This expectation is frequently based on the want to uphold cultural customs and steer clear of possible problems that may occur in marriages between people from different ethnic backgrounds (Hewitt *et al.*, 2020). These assumptions might be questioned, though, as Nigeria grows more networked and students encounter many cultures in higher education.

The research aimed to comprehend how students' decisions regarding marriage are influenced by their community and family pressure, especially when it comes to intercultural unions. It looks at how much pressure there is on students to live up to cultural norms and how that pressure affects their decision about a spouse. In order to adequately prepare students for the challenges of navigating a heterogeneous society, educational diversity on a cultural basis is important. Engaging with and learning about many cultures is a priceless opportunity for colleges such as AAUA, where students come from all origins. Students' viewpoints are widened by this experience, which also helps them to comprehend and value cultural variety more. In the context of marriage decisions, cultural diversity in education can play a significant role in forming the opinions and attitudes of young people. Students who have had the chance to socialise with classmates from various cultural backgrounds could be more accepting of the concept of intercultural unions as they understand the importance of variety in their own lives (Kalu *et al.*, 2022). This candour, though, needs to be backed up with a deeper comprehension of the difficulties that intercultural unions may bring, as well as coping mechanisms. The report highlights how crucial it is to include ethnic diversity in extracurricular activities and the university curriculum. Universities may help students get ready for the possibilities and challenges of

living in a multicultural society by giving them the chance to interact with people from diverse cultures in a safe and supportive atmosphere (Hewitt *et al.*, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The impact of cross-cultural ideas on young people's marriage decisions is still poorly studied, despite Nigeria's great cultural variety, which unites many ethnic groups and customs. These beliefs have a big influence on the marriage partners that students choose at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA), where students from different origins come together. However, students thinking about cross-cultural weddings frequently face difficulties due to the demands of cultural expectations, family choices, and society standards.

It is important to comprehend how these cross-cultural exchanges affect students' views on marriage and how much they support opposition to cross-cultural relationships. It is challenging for university administration, government, and stakeholders to assist students in making well-informed and culturally appropriate marriage decisions without this knowledge. By examining the influence of cross-cultural attitudes on the marriage decisions made by AAUA graduating students, this study aims to close this gap.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to:

1. examine the influence of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partners among graduating students of Adekunle Ajasin University (AAUA).
2. determine whether exposure to diverse cultures in university fosters openness or resistance to marrying someone from a different ethnic/religious background.
3. suggest interventions (e.g., counselling, cultural programs, policy changes) to help students navigate cross-cultural marriage decisions.

Research Question

This research question was used to guide the conduct of the study:

- Would cross-cultural beliefs influence the choice of marriage partners among marriageable students of AAUA?

Research Hypothesis

This research hypothesis was used to guide the conduct of the study:

- Cross-cultural beliefs will not significantly build up negative mid-set among marriageable students of AAUA

Methods

The study employed a descriptive research design of the survey type to examine the influence of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partners among graduating students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA). A simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 graduating students from the university's diverse student body, ensuring a representative sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire named Cross-Cultural Barriers to Choice of Marriage Partner Scale (CCBCMPS) it was divided into two sections: Section A is socio-demographic information and B is Likert-scale items measuring attitudes toward cross-cultural beliefs and marital decisions. The questionnaire was pre-tested for reliability and validity, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to summarize responses and inferential statistics (ANOVA) to test the hypothesis that cross-cultural beliefs do not significantly build up a negative mindset among students. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly adhered to, and limitations such as potential response bias and the single-university focus were acknowledged. This methodology provided a systematic approach to understanding the complex relationship between cross-cultural beliefs and marital choices among university students.

Results

This aspect is based on the presentation, analysis, as well as interpretation of the data that were collected in the course of this study.

Table 1: Distribution of Student Respondents Bio-data (Socio-Demographic Information)

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage
Yoruba	77	77.0
Igbo	19	19.0
Hausa	4	4.0
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	54	54.0
Female	46	46.0
Total	100	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-22	32	32.0
23-26	44	44.0
27 years and above	24	24.0
Total	100	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The distribution of student respondents' bio-data presents a comprehensive overview of their demographic characteristics. In terms of ethnic group, the majority of respondents are Yoruba, with a frequency of 77, which translates to 77.0% of the sample. Igbo respondents follow with a frequency of 19, making up 19.0% of the sample, while Hausa respondents have a frequency of 4, representing 4.0%. The gender distribution among the respondents shows that males constitute 54.0% with a frequency of 54, whereas females make up 46.0% with a frequency of 46. This balanced gender representation ensures diverse insights from both male and female perspectives. Regarding the age distribution, respondents aged between 18-22 years have a frequency of 32, which accounts for 32.0% of the total. The 23-26 years age group is the largest, with a frequency of 44, representing 44.0% of the respondents. Those aged 27 years and above have a frequency of 24, making up 24.0% of the sample. The total number of respondents across all categories sums up to 100, ensuring a representative sample.

Research Question: Would cross-cultural beliefs influence the choice of marriage partners among marriageable students of AAUA?

Table 2: Analysis of the Respondents Responses Based on the cross-cultural beliefs that influence the choice of marriage partners among marriageable students of AAUA.

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	MEAN	Std. Deviation
1.	I would not welcome any advice or criticism from my in Law.	55 55.0	35 35.0	8 8.0	2 2.0	3.430 0	.72829
2.	I would not encourage my spouse to allow her mother to live with us.	55 55.0	25 25.0	15 15.0	5 5.0	3.300 0	.90453
3.	I believe cultural beliefs can influence my behaviours and decision making on who to choose as my life partner	60 60.0	30 30.0	8 8.0	2 2.0	3.480 0	.73140
4.	I can easily adapt my behaviour to fit in with a different culture	60 60.0	30 30.0	7 7.0	3 3.0	3.470 0	.75819
5.	I have experienced cultural shock and felt overwhelmed by a different culture	57 57.0	23 23.0	10 10.0	10 10.0	3.270 0	1.00358
GRAND MEAN						3.6000	
Std. Deviation						0.6426	

Field survey, 2024

The table above revealed the impact of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partners among marriageable students of AAUA. From Item 1, 90.0% of respondents agreed that they would not welcome any advice or criticism from their in-laws, with 55.0% strongly agreeing and 35.0% agreeing. Meanwhile, 8.0% disagreed, and 2.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score for this item was 3.43 with a standard deviation of 0.728. On Item 2, 80.0% of respondents agreed that they would not encourage their spouse to allow her mother to live with them, with 55.0% strongly agreeing and 25.0% agreeing. On the other hand, 15.0% disagreed, and 5.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.905. Regarding Item 3, 90.0% of respondents agreed that cultural beliefs can influence their behaviors and decision-making on who to choose as their life partner, with 60.0% strongly agreeing and 30.0% agreeing. Only 8.0% disagreed, and 2.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.48 with a standard deviation of 0.731. For Item 4, 90.0% of respondents agreed that they can easily adapt their behavior to fit in with a different culture, with 60.0% strongly agreeing

and 30.0% agreeing. In contrast, 7.0% disagreed, and 3.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score for this item was 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.758. In Item 5, 80.0% of respondents agreed that they have experienced cultural shock and felt overwhelmed by a different culture, with 57.0% strongly agreeing and 23.0% agreeing. However, 10.0% disagreed, and another 10.0% strongly disagreed. The mean score for this item was 3.27 with a standard deviation of 1.004. The cluster mean of 3.60, with a standard deviation of 0.643, reflects a significant influence of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partners among the respondents. Based on the interpretation above, it can be deduced that cross-cultural beliefs significantly influence the choice of marriage partners among marriageable students of AAUA.

Research Hypothesis: Cross-cultural beliefs will not significantly build up negative mid-set among marriageable students of AAUA.

Table 3: ANOVA table showing whether cross-cultural beliefs will or not significantly build up negative mid-set among marriageable students of AAUA.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F _{cal}	F _{tab}	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	987.711	13	75.978	635.038	1.880	.000	Rejected
Within Groups	10.289	86	.120				
Total	998.000	99					

The ANOVA analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that cross-cultural beliefs will not significantly build up a negative mindset among marriageable students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA). The results showed a significant effect of cross-cultural beliefs on the negative mindset of these students. The F_{cal} value of 635.038 was substantially higher than the F_{tab} value of 1.880, and the significance level was .000, which is well below the standard threshold of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that cross-cultural beliefs significantly contribute to a negative mindset among marriageable students at AAUA. This suggests that cross-cultural interactions and perceptions are influential in shaping students' attitudes and mindsets regarding marriage.

Discussion

The findings revealed that cross-cultural beliefs significantly shape marriage partner choices among graduating students at Adekunle Ajasin University. A strong majority (90%) of respondents acknowledged that cultural traditions influence their marital decisions, with 60% strongly agreeing that these beliefs directly impact their behavior. This demonstrates how deeply ingrained cultural norms remain, even among university students exposed to diverse perspectives. The high mean score of 3.60 (on a scale where higher numbers indicate stronger cultural influence) further confirms that ethnicity, family expectations, and traditional values continue to play a dominant role in relationship choices.

Despite the multicultural university environment, the research uncovered substantial resistance to cross-cultural marriages. Statistical analysis showed this resistance is statistically significant ($F = 635.038, p < 0.05$), with many students expressing reluctance to embrace intercultural unions. Key concerns included difficulties with in-law relationships (80% opposed living with a spouse's mother from another culture) and discomfort with cross-cultural family dynamics (90% resistant to advice from ethnically different in-laws). These findings suggest that while students interact daily with diverse peers, these interactions don't necessarily translate into acceptance of cross-cultural marriages, particularly when family expectations are involved.

The study also highlighted an interesting contradiction regarding cultural adaptation. While 90% of students believed they could adapt to different cultures, 80% simultaneously reported experiencing cultural shock. This paradox indicates that theoretical openness to other cultures doesn't always match real-world experiences, pointing to potential gaps between students' ideals and their practical readiness for intercultural relationships. The demographic breakdown, showing 77% Yoruba respondents, further suggests that ethnic homogeneity within the sample may reinforce cultural preferences for in-group marriage partners.

These findings have important implications for university administrators and policymakers. They reveal a need for targeted interventions that go beyond simple exposure to diversity, addressing deep-seated cultural biases and family pressures. The research underscores that supporting students in navigating cross-cultural relationships requires more than just multicultural campus environments - it demands structured programs that specifically tackle the psychological, social and familial barriers to intercultural marriage acceptance.

Conclusion

The influence of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partners among graduating students at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, is a complex and multifaceted issue. As Nigeria's cultural diversity continues to shape social interactions and personal decisions, it is crucial to understand how these dynamics play out in the lives of young adults who are on the brink of starting their own families. This study highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the influence of cross-cultural beliefs on students' marriage decisions. It underscores the need for universities, government, and stakeholders to support students in navigating these challenges by providing cross-cultural sensitivity programs, engaging with families and communities, and promoting cultural diversity in education.

By fostering a greater understanding of the impact of cross-cultural beliefs on marriage decisions, this study contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of cultural diversity in Nigerian society. It calls for continued research and action to support students in making informed and thoughtful decisions about marriage, while also promoting a more inclusive and culturally sensitive society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on the influence of cross-cultural beliefs on the choice of marriage partners among graduating students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA), the following recommendations are proposed:

Integration of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Programs: The university administration should introduce and integrate cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness programs into the curriculum. Such programs would educate students on the importance of cultural diversity and encourage open-mindedness towards cross-cultural relationships.

Strengthening Counselling Services: The university's counselling units should be empowered to provide targeted guidance on cross-cultural marriages. Counsellors should be trained to address cultural concerns that may arise when students are considering partners from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

Involvement of Parents and Community Leaders: Regular forums or workshops involving parents, community leaders, and students should be organized. These forums would facilitate dialogue on cross-cultural marriage, helping to alleviate biases or negative mindsets that may be culturally ingrained.

Promotion of Cultural Exchange Programs: AAUA should actively promote cultural exchange programs that expose students to diverse cultures, both locally and internationally. This exposure can lead to greater understanding and acceptance of different cultural practices and reduce the perceived barriers to cross-cultural marriages.

Reorientation Campaigns: Government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should launch reorientation campaigns to address cultural stereotypes and prejudices that affect marital choices. These campaigns can be conducted through media channels, social events, and educational outreach programs.

Policy Development and Support: The government and relevant stakeholders should develop supportive policies that promote the benefits of cultural diversity within marriages. Such policies can include incentives for couples in cross-cultural unions and the establishment of legal frameworks that protect and promote cross-cultural marriages.

Further Research: Researchers should conduct more in-depth studies on the long-term impact of cross-cultural marriages in Nigeria. Such studies could explore the social, economic, and psychological outcomes of cross-cultural unions and provide insights into how societal acceptance of such marriages can be enhanced.

By implementing these recommendations, AAUA and relevant stakeholders can create a more inclusive environment where cross-cultural relationships are supported, ultimately fostering greater cultural harmony and mutual respect among students.

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