

Exploring the Relationship between Family Background and Marital Perceptions Among Upper Basic 2 Social Studies Students in Delta State"

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between family background and marital perceptions among Upper Basic 2 Social Studies students in Delta State, Nigeria. Guided by four research questions and three hypotheses, the study adopted a survey research design suitable for examining prevailing student attitudes toward marriage and the influence of familial variables. The population comprised 49,796 Upper Basic 2 students across public secondary schools in Delta State. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 450 students (250 females and 200 males) across Delta North, Delta South, and Delta Central senatorial districts. A structured questionnaire titled Family Background and Students' Attitudes Toward Marriage Questionnaire (FB-SATM-Q) was used for data collection. The instrument validated by experts in Social Studies Education and Measurement and Evaluation, yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using Cronbach Alpha. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that family structure and parental marital status significantly influenced students' marital perceptions, while gender and socio-economic background had no significant effect. Students generally held positive views about marriage, emphasizing love, emotional readiness, and mutual understanding. The study concludes that emotional and familial stability outweigh socio-economic factors in shaping marital attitudes. It recommends the integration of family life education into the Social Studies curriculum and strengthened guidance and counseling programmes in schools.

Keywords: Family background, Marital perceptions, Social Studies, Upper Basic students, Family life education

Introduction

Marriage remains a vital social institution that shapes the structure and continuity of society. It is significantly influenced by the values, beliefs, and experiences that individuals acquire from their immediate family environments. Among adolescents, especially those in secondary schools, attitudes toward marriage are largely formed through early socialization within the family. According to Oladipo (2017), adolescence is a critical stage where individuals begin to internalize social norms, including expectations and perceptions about marriage. These early perceptions are often shaped by various elements of the family background such as family size, parental marital status, and socio-economic conditions.

Family background, encompassing the structure, composition, and economic realities of the home, plays a critical role in influencing how young individuals perceive the institution of marriage.

Firdaus, Muhammad, Haerunnisa, Supriyadi and Kurniawan (2024) assert that a stable and harmonious family environment fosters positive attitudes toward marriage, as children often emulate the relational patterns observed between their parents. When parents serve as role models, demonstrating values such as mutual respect, cooperation, and commitment, children are more likely to adopt similar ideals in their own view of marriage.

Family size has been particularly noted to influence socialization patterns among adolescents. Nwafor (2019) argues that children from larger families often experience shared responsibilities and are more likely to develop communal values, which may translate into traditional marital expectations. Conversely, Edewor (2020) points out that children from smaller families often receive more individualized attention, which may promote personal autonomy and lead to a more modern or egalitarian view of marriage.

Similarly, parental marital status—whether parents are married, divorced, widowed, or single—can significantly impact students' attitudes. Adolescents who grow up in homes with intact parental relationships may view marriage as stable and desirable, while those exposed to marital conflict or instability may approach marriage with caution or skepticism. Furthermore, the socio-economic background of a family can influence how adolescents conceptualize marriage. Students from higher-income families may associate marriage with personal achievement and compatibility, while those from lower socio-economic backgrounds may view marriage as a means of economic support or social mobility (Issa, & Kalwani, 2024).

In Delta State, where socio-cultural values vary across urban and rural settings, understanding how family background shapes marital perceptions is crucial, particularly among Upper Basic 2 students who are at a formative stage in their development. As Omoruyi (2021) notes, regions with diverse family structures and economic conditions present a unique opportunity to explore the interaction between home life and adolescent worldview. Social Studies, as a subject, provides a platform for learners to critically reflect on family, relationships, and societal norms.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage continues to be a foundational institution in society, yet the values and perceptions adolescents hold toward it are increasingly shaped by dynamic family backgrounds. In Nigeria, and particularly in Delta State, changes in family structures—such as variations in family size, increasing rates of divorce and single-parent homes, and widening socio-economic disparities—have contributed to diverse and sometimes conflicting attitudes toward marriage among secondary school students.

Despite the recognized importance of early socialization within the family, there is a growing concern that many adolescents are forming perceptions of marriage that are either misinformed, idealized, or disillusioned, depending on their family experiences. Adolescents from large families may learn traditional, communal marital expectations, while those from smaller or

wealthier families may internalize more individualistic and egalitarian views. Furthermore, children from broken or unstable homes may develop negative attitudes toward marriage, potentially undermining their future relationships and family stability.

Although previous studies have explored the role of family in general youth development, there remains a gap in empirical research specifically examining how the combination of family size, parental marital status, and socio-economic background influence marital perceptions among Upper Basic 2 students—a critical stage in adolescent development. These perceptions, once formed, can significantly influence future decisions on relationships, family life, and societal values.

Moreover, Social Studies, as a core subject at the basic education level, is designed to help students understand social institutions like the family and marriage. Yet, little is known about how the real-life family backgrounds of students in Delta State correlate with the marital values they internalize during this formative educational phase.

Objectives of the study

2 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study: 1

1. Assess the perception of marriage of Upper Basic 2 students' in Delta State
2. determine the relationship between family background and Upper Basic 2 students' perceptions of marriage in Delta State.
3. examine the correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students.
4. assess the relationship between family socio-economic background and attitude towards marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State based on gender.

2 Research Question

1. What is the perception of marriage of Upper Basic 2 students' in Delta State?

2. What is the relationship between family background and Upper Basic 2 students' perceptions of marriage in Delta State?
3. What is the correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students?
4. What is the relationship between family socio-economic background and attitude towards marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State based on gender?

Hypothesis

The hypotheses were stated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between family background and Upper Basic 2 students' perceptions of marriage in Delta State.

H₀₂: There is no significant correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between family socio-economic background and attitudes towards marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State based on gender.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design, which was considered suitable for collecting data on students' prevailing attitudes toward marriage and examining how their family background influences these attitudes. The design allowed for a systematic gathering and analysis of data from a large student population within their natural school environment. The target population consisted of all 49,796 Upper Basic 2 students enrolled in public secondary schools across Delta State, according to the Delta State Ministry of Education (2024). These students are distributed across the three senatorial districts of Delta North, Delta South, and Delta Central. A sample of 450 Upper Basic 2 students was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, one local government area was randomly selected from each of the three senatorial districts. In the second stage, one public secondary school offering Upper Basic education was randomly chosen from each of the selected local government areas. From each of the three selected schools, 150 students were randomly drawn, giving a total sample size of 450 students. The sample included 250 female students and 200 male students, ensuring gender representation alongside regional balance across Delta State.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, titled Family Background and Students' Attitudes Toward Marriage Questionnaire (FB-SATM-

Q). The instrument consisted of 20 items divided into two sections. Section A gathered demographic and family background data such as age, gender, family size, type of family (either nuclear or extended), parental marital status, and socio-economic background. Section B comprised statements aimed at assessing students' attitudes and perceptions toward marriage. Responses in Section B were measured using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) scored 4, Agree (A) scored 3, Disagree (D) scored 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) scored 1.

To ensure the content validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in Social Studies from the Department of Social Science Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation from Delta State University, Abraka. Suggestions from these experts were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and focus of the items in relation to the research objectives. A pilot test was carried out with 20 Upper Basic 2 students in a public school not included in the main sample but within Delta State. The pilot test was used to establish the reliability of the instrument, which yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.76, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Before administering the instrument, formal approval was obtained from the principals of the selected schools. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants. These assistants were thoroughly briefed on the objectives of the study and trained in proper data collection ethics and procedures. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to all participating students to ensure informed consent, voluntary participation, and truthful responses. All completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after administration to reduce the risk of data loss and to ensure that all responses were complete and suitable for analysis.

2 Results

Research Question 1:

What is the perception of marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean Score of Students' Perception of Marriage

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Marriage is an important institution in our society.	3.20	0.61	Agreed
2	I believe marriage should last a lifetime.	3.10	0.66	Agreed
3	I look forward to getting married in the future.	3.05	0.70	Agreed
4	Marriage is necessary for raising children properly.	3.18	0.64	Agreed
5	I see many unhappy marriages around me.	2.60	0.75	Disagreed
6	I believe love is more important than money in marriage.	3.15	0.60	Agreed
7	Young people are not being prepared for marriage properly.	2.95	0.71	Disagreed

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Decision
8	I believe couples should stay married even if they have problems.	2.88	0.77	Disagreed
9	Marriage is becoming less important among young people today.	2.75	0.73	Disagreed
10	I think I need to learn about what makes a good marriage.	3.30	0.58	Agreed
Cumulative Mean:		3.02		
Agreed				

Table 1 presents the responses of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State regarding their perception of marriage. The results indicate that students generally have a positive view of marriage, as they agreed with six out of the ten statements presented. Specifically, the students agreed that “Marriage is an important institution in our society” (Mean = 3.20, SD = 0.61), “I believe marriage should last a lifetime” (Mean = 3.10, SD = 0.66), “I look forward to getting married in the future” (Mean = 3.05, SD = 0.70), and “Marriage is necessary for raising children properly” (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.64). They also agreed with the statements “I believe love is more important than money in marriage” (Mean = 3.15, SD = 0.60) and “I think I need to learn about what makes a good marriage” (Mean = 3.30, SD = 0.58), reflecting a healthy appreciation for emotional connection and personal readiness. However, students disagreed with four statements: “I see many unhappy marriages around me” (Mean = 2.60, SD = 0.75), “Young people are not being prepared for marriage properly” (Mean = 2.95, SD = 0.71), “I believe couples should stay married even if they have problems” (Mean = 2.88, SD = 0.77), and “Marriage is becoming less important among young people today” (Mean = 2.75, SD = 0.73). These responses suggest a recognition of changing marriage dynamics but also a reluctance to generalize negative views of marriage. With a cumulative mean of 3.02, which is above the benchmark mean of 3.00, the findings suggest that Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State generally hold positive perceptions of marriage. The responses reflect a blend of traditional values and modern awareness, showing that while students value the institution of marriage, they are also aware of challenges and evolving societal attitudes.

Research Question 1:

What is the relationship between family background and Upper Basic 2 students' perceptions of marriage in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean score of family background and students' perceptions of marriage

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	My family background influences my view on marriage.	3.12	0.65	Agreed
2	I admire the kind of marriage my parents have.	3.25	0.62	Agreed

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Decision
3	Students from stable homes value marriage more.	3.10	0.68	Agreed
4	Discussions about marriage are common in my family.	2.85	0.70	Disagreed
5	My family encourages open conversations about relationships and marriage.	3.05	0.66	Agreed
8	Cumulative Mean	3.07		Agreed

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of students' responses regarding how their family background influences their perception of marriage. The result shows that students agreed with the statements "My family background influences my view on marriage" (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.65), "I admire the kind of marriage my parents have" (Mean = 3.25, SD = 0.62), and "Students from stable homes value marriage more" (Mean = 3.10, SD = 0.68). However, they disagreed with the statement that "Discussions about marriage are common in my family" (Mean = 2.85, SD = 0.70). They also agreed that "My family encourages open conversations about relationships and marriage" (Mean = 3.05, SD = 0.66). With a cumulative mean of 3.07, which is above the criterion mean of 3.00, the findings indicate that students generally agree that family background plays a significant role in shaping their perceptions of marriage.

10 Research Question 2:

What is the correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students?

Table 2: mean score of parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Children from divorced homes are more cautious about marriage.	3.18	0.67	Agreed
2	My parents' marital status affects how I feel about marriage.	3.10	0.65	Agreed
3	Students from single-parent homes fear marriage may fail.	3.05	0.69	Agreed
4	My parents' relationship is a model for how I see marriage.	2.92	0.71	Disagreed
5	I would like to have a marriage similar to my parents'.	3.02	0.64	Agreed
	Cumulative Mean	3.05		Agreed

Table 2 shows the responses of Upper Basic 2 students regarding the relationship between parental marital status and their attitudes toward marriage. The results show that students generally agreed with four out of five items. Specifically, students agreed that "Children from divorced homes are more cautious about marriage" (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.67), and "My parents'

marital status affects how I feel about marriage” (Mean = 3.10, SD = 0.65). Similarly, they agreed with the items “Students from single-parent homes fear marriage may fail” (Mean = 3.05, SD = 0.69) and “I would like to have a marriage similar to my parents” (Mean = 3.02, SD = 0.64). However, they disagreed with the statement that “My parents’ relationship is a model for how I see marriage” (Mean = 2.92, SD = 0.71). With a cumulative mean of 3.05, which is above the criterion mean of 3.00, the findings indicate that there is a positive correlation between parental marital status and students’ attitudes toward marriage. This suggests that students’ perceptions and expectations about marriage are notably shaped by the nature of their parents’ marital relationships.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between family socio-economic background and attitude towards marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State based on gender?

Table 3: Relationship between family socio-economic background and attitude towards marriage based on gender

Variables	Male (N=200)	SD	Female (N=250)	SD	Combined Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² (%)	Remark
Family Socio-Economic Background	2.88	0.58	2.91	0.61	2.90	0.60	0.082	0.007	0.7	Weak Positive Relationship
Attitude Towards Marriage	2.94	0.65	2.89	0.63	2.92	0.64				

Table 3 shows the relationship between family socio-economic background and attitude towards marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State when gender is considered. The result shows that male students had a mean score of 2.88, SD 0.58 on family socio-economic background and 2.94, SD = 0.65 on attitude towards marriage. Female students had a mean score of 2.91, SD = 0.61 on family socio-economic background and 2.89, SD = 0.63 on attitude towards marriage. When both genders were combined, the overall mean score was 2.90, SD = 0.60 for family socio-economic background and 2.92, SD = 0.64 for attitude towards marriage. The correlation coefficient was $r = 0.082$, indicating a weak positive relationship. The coefficient of determination $r^2 = 0.007$ shows that family socio-economic background accounts for only 0.7% of the variation in students’ attitude towards marriage when gender is considered. Thus, there is a low but positive relationship between family socio-economic background and students’ attitude towards marriage, suggesting that socio-economic status plays a minimal role in shaping marital attitudes among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State, regardless of gender.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between family background and Upper Basic 2 students’ perceptions of marriage in Delta State

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Family Background and Students' Perceptions of Marriage

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$ (Mean)	SD	r	df	p-value
Family Background	450	13.10	1.43			
Students' Perceptions of Marriage	450	26.04	2.78	0.519*	327	0.000

*Significant at 0.05 level, df = 327.

Table 4 shows the results of a Pearson correlation analysis between family background and students' perceptions of marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between these two variables is 0.519. This positive value indicates a moderate positive correlation between family background and students' perceptions of marriage. The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which means that the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, there is a significant relationship between family background and students' perceptions of marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Parental Marital Status and Students' Attitudes toward Marriage

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$ (Mean)	SD	r	df	p-value
Parental Marital Status	450	12.40	1.49			
Students' Attitudes Toward Marriage	450	26.04	2.78	0.522*	327	0.000

*Significant at 0.05 level, df = 327.

Table 5 shows the results of a Pearson correlation analysis between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between these two variables is 0.522. This positive value indicates a moderate positive correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage. The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which means that the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, there is a significant relationship between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant relationship between family socio-economic background and attitudes towards marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State based on gender

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis of Family Socio-Economic Background and Attitudes Toward Marriage Based on Gender

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	0.432	0.519		0.832	0.406
Family Socio-Economic Background	0.043	0.037	0.073	1.162	0.246
Gender	-0.052	0.089	-0.029	-0.584	0.560

Table 6 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between family socio-economic background and attitudes toward marriage among Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State, based on gender. The unstandardized coefficient for family socio-economic background is 0.043 with a standard error of 0.037, and a standardized beta coefficient of 0.073. The t-value is 1.162, and the significance value (p-value) is 0.246. For gender, the unstandardized coefficient is -0.052 with a standard error of 0.089, a standardized beta coefficient of -0.029, a t-value of -0.584, and a p-value of 0.560. Both p-values are greater than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that neither family socio-economic background nor gender has a statistically significant effect on students' attitudes toward marriage. Thus, there is no significant relationship between family socio-economic background and attitudes toward marriage of Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State based on gender.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that Upper Basic 2 students in Delta State generally hold a positive perception of marriage, valuing it as a vital social institution rooted in traditional beliefs, while also acknowledging modern realities. They emphasize emotional maturity, love, and readiness over material concerns. These views align with Lo-oh (2023), who links positive marital perceptions to cultural and familial influence, and Park and Harris (2023), who argues that marriage retains symbolic significance despite evolving norms. Overall, students appreciate the importance of marriage and show a willingness to learn about it, highlighting the need for marriage education and family life orientation in schools.

The findings of this study revealed that family background significantly influences students' perceptions of marriage. This suggests that the environment in which a child is raised plays an important role in shaping their views about marital relationships. This aligns with the view of Bazuaye and Aghahowa (2025) who emphasized that family structure and parental influence are critical in forming children's social and emotional expectations, including those about marriage. Similarly, Omoruyi (2021) noted that children raised in stable and value-oriented homes tend to adopt positive perceptions about lifelong relationships, as family serves as the first model for interpersonal behavior.

Another finding showed a significant correlation between parental marital status and students' attitudes toward marriage. This implies that the marital experiences of parents—whether stable, separated, or divorced—have a meaningful impact on how students view the institution of marriage. This supports the assertion by Lo-oh (2023), who argued that students from homes with intact marital relationships often develop favorable attitudes toward marriage due to consistent role modeling and emotional security. In agreement, Mahmudulhassan and Abuzar (2024) found that students who witness frequent conflict or instability in their parents' marriage are more likely to develop skepticism or indifference toward marital commitment.

The final finding indicated that there is no significant relationship between family socio-economic background and attitudes toward marriage when gender is considered. This means that socio-economic status and gender do not significantly determine how students feel about marriage. This concurs with the perspective of Olayinka (2020), who posited that while socio-economic factors shape many life opportunities, their influence on values and attitudes such as those related to marriage may be minimal among adolescents, who are more affected by emotional and relational experiences. In a contrary view by Thelma (2024) early marriage by young girls which is more deeply rooted in traditional beliefs and practices within the family unit encourages gender differences and attitudes towards marriage.

Conclusion

This study has shown that family background and parental marital status play crucial roles in shaping Upper Basic 2 students' perceptions and attitudes toward marriage in Delta State. The findings highlight the importance of the family environment as a foundational influence on young adolescents' understanding and expectations of marital life. In particular, students expressed strong agreement with the value of marriage as a societal institution and emphasized the importance of love, emotional readiness, and the desire to learn what makes a good marriage. These responses reflect a blend of traditional values and modern awareness, showing that students maintain a generally positive outlook on marriage while recognizing its evolving dynamics.

However, socio-economic status and gender did not significantly impact students' attitudes toward marriage, suggesting that emotional stability and familial interactions are more influential than material or gender-based factors in this context. The implications of these findings underscore the need for a holistic approach in both home and school environments to support students in forming healthy, realistic, and positive perceptions of marriage. Integrating marriage education and family life orientation into the school curriculum would further enhance students' preparedness for future family roles and relationships.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents and guardians should be encouraged to model healthy marital relationships, as children often internalize and reflect these dynamics in their own attitudes and expectations.
2. Schools should incorporate family life and relationship education into the Social Studies curriculum to help students critically understand marriage beyond their immediate family experiences.
3. Counselling services should be strengthened in schools to provide emotional and psychological support for students from unstable or conflict-ridden homes, helping them form balanced perspectives on marriage.
4. Religious and community leaders should organize family enrichment programs to promote stability and positive family values within households.
5. Teachers and school administrators should be trained to recognize and respond to signs of emotional distress in students related to family issues, providing appropriate interventions or referrals when necessary.
6. Policy makers should prioritize family support initiatives and community-based programs that foster functional family systems, recognizing the role of a stable home environment in the moral and social development of young people.

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