

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MARRIED POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT UNZA  
REGARDING MARRIAGE MATE SELECTION**

**BY**

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**DECLARATION**

I, **LISTER BANDA** hereby do declare that this dissertation represents my work and it has not been submitted previously at UNZA or any other University.

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Name:.....

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late Father and Mother who although long gone but their goodness left a lasting impression and is still being appreciated by people even up now. To my father in particular, I say your academic legacy has been carried on through me.

To all single people contemplating marriage, I dedicate this to you as well and hopefully you will find information in this dissertation helpful as you make your decision on marriage mate selection so that you can have a successful marriage.

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## ABSTRACT

Marriage is a fundamental social institution that exists throughout the world. However, marriage mate selection is one of the most important decisions of people's social life as the possibility of happiness is low in marriage if people do not consider the related significant factors. This study sought to find out the lived experiences of married postgraduate students at UNZA regarding marriage mate selection.

This study was qualitative in nature which had 16 (8 males and 8 females) participants, all postgraduate students at UNZA. In terms of research design, this study adopted hermeneutic phenomenology. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Findings in this study revealed that people looked for attributes such as education because they believed that marrying a fellow educated person made it easy to relate as their thinking would be aligned. What emerged from the data was that financial stability of a potential marriage partner was also an important attribute that both males and females looked for in their prospective mate. This study further showed that a God-fearing partner was preferred to a non-believer because of the belief that Godly people were less likely to indulge in unholy conduct such as infidelity. On one hand, female participants preferred a man who was tall in height and dark in complexion, while on the other hand, men preferred partners who were beautiful with a small and curvy body structure. In terms of internal attributes, females preferred a mate with attributes such as loving, caring and with good leadership qualities while males preferred someone respectful, intelligent, trustworthy, understanding, one who refrained from taking alcohol. Findings of this study also revealed that not everything that participants expected to be fulfilled in marriage turned out to be exactly that way.

Therefore, from the data that emerged in this study, people looked for such attributes as education, God fearing, financial stability and physical appearance and they had reasons for their preferences. They also had marital expectations they wanted to see being fulfilled although not everything turned out as they had envisioned.

**Key Words:** *Marriage, Mate Selection, Lived Experiences, Marital Expectations.*

## **ACRONYMS**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immune-deficiency Virus
SET	Social Exchange Theory
UCZ	United Church of Zambia
UNZA	University of Zambia
USA	United States of America

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a fundamental social institution that exists throughout the world. Okwun and Sira (2010) opine that 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. As noted by Celik et al. (2012), it is natural to have different criteria and expectations when it comes to one's choice of a marriage mate because marriage involves sharing a life with another person. However, there is no agreed upon definition of the word marriage due to the variations of marriage arrangements in different societies (Okodudu, 2010). For example, Farley (1994) defines marriage as a socially approved arrangement, usually between a male and a female that involves economic and sexual relationship. Girgis et al. (2012) submits that marriage is a union of man and a woman who make a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other of the type that is naturally (inherently) fulfilled by bearing and rearing children together. Scholars such as Okodudu (2010) contend that marriage is a union between two consenting adults irrespective of their sexes with or without approval from their parents or family. Marriage can therefore, be either heterosexual or homosexual. Cardoso and Werner (2003) opine that homosexual marriage is a sexual relationship between people of the same sex. Heterosexual marriage on the other hand refers to a type of marriage that involves the intimate attraction of the opposite sex (Manning, 2009). Within the Zambian context, heterosexual marriage is the only legally approved type of marriage. For example, Zambian Constitution, Article 54 section 2 criminalises homosexual marriage (First Draft Constitution, 2012). Therefore, this study focused on heterosexual marriage because that is the type of marriage which is common and acceptable in the Zambian society.

Cultural psychologists such as Fiske and Fiske (2007) demonstrate that the need to belong is a major source of human motivation that drives mate selection. Mate selection however, as noted by Abdullah et al. (2011), is one of the most important decisions of people's social life hence they consider a number of factors in terms of what to look for in a lifelong partner. This is because; the possibility of happiness is low in marriage if people do not consider the related significant factors (Brown, 2009). Culture plays an important role in the selection of a lifelong partner. This view is buttressed by O'Neil (2006) who expounds that when people consider spouse selection, it is generally not only a personal matter but rather a cultural one as well. For

example, in some cultures in the Western societies, Batabyal (2002) notes that the person wishing to marry generally looks for a spouse for herself or himself. In African culture on the other hand, it is mainly the responsibility of a man to look for a woman and ask for her hand in marriage (Rotimi, 2015).

Despite the cultural influence in marriage mate selection, individuals also have preferences which influence their mate choice. They also have marital expectations prior to marriage and they hope to see those marital expectations fulfilled when they enter into marriage. This view was buttressed by Anyebe, (cited in Ogiri, 2013) that people mostly enter marriages for the reasons of inter alia survival, sexual gratification, religious obligation and progeniture and companionship among others. Weiss (1997) further stressed the importance of marriage by highlighting the five sources of gains from marriage namely, the production and rearing of children, the division of labor to exploit comparative advantage, extending credit when capital markets are imperfect, sharing collective goods and risk pooling.

Marriage also involves the allocation of rights and obligations between parties to the agreement. A number of scholars such as Hanon and White (1997, cited in George et al. 2014), Buss (1994) and George et al. (2014) outlined the rights and obligations which are allocated in marriage in different cultures. These include among others; a man's need for assurance concerning the paternity of his children, parenting style, chastity and house-keeping skills. Other scholars (Plomin and Daniels, 2011) argue that family and society are two important factors that can interfere with personal decisions and shape one's manners therefore, a combination of one's personality and socio-family factors play a role in influencing mate selection as well.

Regalia and Rios-Rull (2001) submit that as women become successful they can afford to be pickier with the mate they choose. Since women tend to be pickier in their choice of a marriage mate, the scholars (Mathur et al., 2012) contend that women tend to delay in getting married. For instance, Mathur et al. (2012) noted that economic opportunities delay marriage. The scholars (Mathur et al., 2012) cited examples of Taiwan and Bangladesh where parents and daughters show willingness to delay marriage because of the availability of jobs in these countries.

In terms of education, Gage and Hancock (2002) posited that undergraduates prefer partners of similar educational qualification and background. Acitelli et al (2001) buttressed this point by

explaining that education is an important factor in marriage partner choice because similar educational background resulted in similar attitudes, values and beliefs among spouses. Some studies reported that female college graduates tend to prefer potential male marriage partners who had higher education than them (Kalmijn, 2001; O'Neil, 2006). In contrast, McClendon et al. (2014) submit that even though both men and women are willing to marry someone who is better educated and has higher income, men are more willing to marry someone with less education. One of the explanations advanced by Ashraf et al. (2016) for this tendency by men was that the more educated the woman is, the higher the bride price.

However, it is important to note, as some commentators contend, that marriages especially in rural areas of countries such as Zambia, are also characterised by parents making decisions on behalf of their children for who to marry, and when to marry (Adembo, 2010). This means that parental influence also plays a role in marriage mate selection among people. As Kalmijn (1998) noted, people develop positive or negative thoughts which can affect their view of certain tribes when it comes to choice of marriage partner if the influence of third parties such as parents is greater on the child in terms of which tribe the parents prefer as potential marriage mates. Therefore, considering what people look for in a potential marriage mate and their experience when they marry or get married, it was vital to have this study conducted so as to understand the lived experiences of postgraduate students on whether what they envisaged prior to marrying or getting married was what turned out to be eventually.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

As people contemplate marriage, there are certain attributes they consider in a potential marriage mate and they had motives for wanting someone with those preferred attributes. When they entered marriage, they expected a fulfillment of those things they had earlier envisioned. As Noorani and Refahi (2015) put it, the foundation of a family and its optimal performance depends on many factors such as spouse selection. Thus, various studies undertaken indicated that when choosing a marriage mate, college students looked for such things as physical attractiveness, educational background, financial status, religion, intelligence among others (Abdullah et al. 2011; Badahdah and Tiemann, 2009; Maliki, 2009). Although these studies had been undertaken, reviewed literature showed that they did not go further to find out the specific

attributes and motives that made students to marry or get married to their spouse. Another gap was that these studies did not explain in detail the specific ways in which their marital expectations were fulfilled or unfulfilled when they entered marriage. Yet research suggests that couples are at increased risk for dissatisfaction and divorce when marital expectations are too high yet unmet (McNulty and Karney, 2004; Sharp and Ganong, 2000). Therefore, it was on the basis of these gaps that the researcher opted to embark on this study so as to enlighten those who are not yet married to develop realistic marital expectations and be ready to make adjustments in order to accommodate the unexpected occurrences in marriage that way, it may reduce the chances of divorce among the young men and women contemplating marriage.

## **AIM**

The overarching aim of this study was to find out the attributes that influenced marriage mate choice among married postgraduate students and the motives for marrying a partner with those attributes. It was also aimed at giving a description of the marital expectations that postgraduate students had prior to marriage and the ways in which those marital expectations were fulfilled or unfulfilled.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

#### ***1.3.1 Specific Objectives***

This study had the following as its objectives

- a) To find out the attributes that postgraduate students looked for in a potential marriage mate prior to their marrying or getting married
- b) To understand the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed their preferred attributes?
- c) To find out whether postgraduate students' marital expectations had been fulfilled in marriage based on their initial marital expectations.

### **1.3.2 Research Questions**

- a) What attributes were the postgraduate students looking for in a potential marriage mate before they got married?
- b) What were the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed their preferred attributes?
- c) After marrying or getting married, how were the postgraduate students' marital expectations fulfilled based on the initially preferred marital expectations?

### **1.4 Rationale**

Long-term relationships may affect a person's parental status, financial situation or class status, mental and physical health outcomes, work or career outcomes and even friendships and other relationships (Smock, 2004; Soons et al., 2009). Therefore, it was vital to study mate selection criteria so that single students contemplating marriage could be enlightened in terms of what attributes are more important to look out for in a potential marriage partner based on the lived experiences of others. This would in turn help them enter long-lasting and happy relationships that would impact positively on their mental and physical health, financial situation, children, work or career outcomes and friendships with others. Okwun and Sira (2010) also argued that unfulfilled expectations and hope in marriage often give rise to maladjustments, unless the couples concerned face the reality of any given situation, conflict might abound in such relationships. When conflict abounds and it is not solved amicably it can lead to divorce. Therefore, this study is vital in that, it gave an insight on the fact that people should not be overly expectant as they contemplate marriage instead, they should be ready to accept and embrace new conditions they might not have envisioned. This could help them to easily adjust when they enter marriage thereby avoiding potential divorce that comes with unrealistic marital expectations. Additionally, this study meant to contribute to the body of knowledge on marriage mate selection in Zambia particularly among students in Universities. However, it is vital to stress that the main reason for having carried out this study is that, it was part of the fulfillment for the award of a Master's Degree in Sociology.

## **1.5 Delimitation of the Study**

Delimitation refers to the boundaries of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Therefore, the inclusion criteria in this study were the postgraduate students who had been married for a year or more. The exclusion criteria were postgraduate students who had been married for less than a year and those who were unmarried despite being postgraduate students.

## **1.6 Definition of key terms**

### ***Marriage***

Marriage is a socially approved arrangement, usually between a male and a female that involves economic and sexual relationship (Farley, 1994).

### ***Lived experience***

Lived experience refers to a representation of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices and options and how those factors influence one's perceptions of knowledge (Boylorn, 2008).

### ***Mate selection***

Mate selection refers to the process of choosing a mate depending on the desirability of one's characteristics (Balthazart and Young, 2015).

### **Marital expectations**

Marital expectations are the beliefs an individual hold about what marital relationships should be like (Baucom et al. 1989; Vangelisti and Daly, 1997).

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 THEORETICAL MODEL

This chapter presents and situates the choice of marriage into theoretical perspectives. The Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been adopted for this study to provide a rich conceptual framework for exploring and understanding the factors that influence the choice of marriage mates among students. The chapter drew on a broader research context arising from the extensive literature on relationships among university graduates. This chapter helped frame the research questions for the study. The reason for using the social exchange theory was to enable the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the multi-faceted perspective on factors that influence the choice of marriage mate among graduate students. This theory had been employed in other studies (Zondi, 2016; Alavi et al. 2014) in this area.

The social exchange theory is mainly associated with the early writings of Homans (1961), Blau (1964) and Emmerson (1976). These social exchange theorists agreed that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations and these interactions are usually seen as interdependent and contingent on the actions of another person (Emmerson, 1976, Blau, 1964). SET posits that people are motivated to maintain relationships based on the good outcomes that they expected those relationships to bring (Blau, 1964; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). Nock (1992) highlights this view by stating that individuals make decisions based on the greatest offered benefit even as they interact. Humans therefore, being rational beings to a greater extent want to engage in relationships that yield maximum benefits with minimum costs incurred, hence this theory helped in understanding the factors that come into play in marriage mate selection. The exchange is based more on what an individual wants in a relationship and not what everyone may see to be ideal. For example, Rosenfeld (2005) suggested one form of exchange by stating that men with high status and good financial potential should be involved with women of physical attractiveness. In line with the reviewed literature in this study, when choosing a marriage mate, people also looked for such things as physical attractiveness, educational background, financial status, religion, intelligence among others (Abdullah et al., 2011; Badahdah and Tiemann, 2009; Maliki, 2009). These things or factors obviously have a particular benefit hence the more reason as to why individuals looked for partners with such attributes because they knew that being in a relationship with such a person, they would gain something in

exchange. Although relationships are influenced by the personality makeup of partners as well as by the social system in which they are embedded, the developmental course of particular relationship cannot fully be understood by recourse either to individual psychological or social system (Nakonezny and Denton, 2008).

Furthermore, when people enter marriage, they have marital expectations they would want to see being fulfilled. In line with the social exchange theory, commentators such as Homans (1974) opined that marital couples who receive favorable reward/cost outcomes from each other were more likely to be satisfied with their marriage. This view was buttressed by Levinger (1979) who stated that couples who are satisfied with their marriage are less likely to dissolve the marriage through divorce or separation. This means that when profits (rewards minus costs) from marital exchange are perceived as equitable, there tends to be a development of solidarity within the marital relationship (Nakonezny and Denton, 2008). However, Blau (1964) emphasised that while economic exchange embodies specified obligations, social exchange embodies unspecified obligations, meaning one actor (in this case a marriage partner) supplies benefits to another but the exact nature of the return is not specified hence, obligations are defined in diffuse terms in social exchange. In essence, Blau (1964) posited that partners in marriage have to trust each other that they will discharge their obligations but in diffuse terms.

The Social Exchange Theory was relevant to this study as it helped in providing guidance on isolating various attributes the study participants were bringing out during an interview and this helped the researcher to probe further on the rewards the participants expected would accrue to them for having a partner with those preferred attributes. Additionally, the theoretical constructs of this theory were useful in grounding the findings of this study. Within the context of this study, postgraduate students looked out for such attributes as God-fearing, education, financial stability, intelligence among others. The expected rewards for their preferences were clearly brought out as evident in the presentation of findings of this study. To provide further understanding on mate selection and to help identify the gaps that warranted the need for this study, the next chapter focuses on the various studies that have been undertaken by other scholars on marriage mate selection.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Having set out the theoretical position in the previous chapter, this chapter reviewed the extant literature on the lived experiences of married people regarding mate selection. Many of the studies were undertaken in the developed countries particularly in the United States of America (USA). Studies were also undertaken in African countries such as Kenya and South Africa. This dissertation drew heavily from the above mentioned countries because of the political and socio-cultural similarities that Zambia has with these countries. In order to review this literature, this chapter is divided into three (3) sections. The first section focuses on how literature was searched in the data base. The next two sections reflect the dominant themes that emerged from the reviewed literature and these included, factors influencing choice of marriage mate whose focus was to bring out things that people looked for in a potential mate. While the third sub-section focuses on the expectations that people had prior to marriage and if at all those expectations had been fulfilled in marriage.

#### **3.1 Literature Search Strategy**

Reviewed literature covered materials from academic journal articles, peer reviewed articles, reports, theses, documents published by international organisations from various databases including the University of Zambia (UNZA) database. Databases that were utilised from UNZA include Science Direct, JSTOR and Macmillan Palgrave. Unpublished papers and meeting discussions were excluded. The rationale behind the utilisation of peer reviewed articles only, was because prior to any serious article publication, each article is critically reviewed. The purpose of this process is to filter the articles to ensure that only works of sufficient quality were sought. A combination of words was used during the search for materials for the study. Search terms such as “factors influencing choice of a marriage mate” “marriage mate selection among university students” “marital expectations and their fulfillment before and after marriage” were used in order to solicit information for this study.

### **3.2 Factors Influencing Choice of a Marriage Mate and the Motives**

In everyday life, people make decisions on various aspects of their lives. However, Abdullah et al. (2011) note that mate selection is one of the most important decisions of people's social life as it to a greater extent affects their life course trajectories. Researchers have explored how assortive mating occurs along various dimensions including kindness, physical attractiveness, character, financial standing, educational qualification and profession, among other things (Chang et al. 2011b; Lu et al. 2015; Bahdahdah and Tiemann, 2009; Maliki, 2009). Research also suggests that for educated segment of population in any society, people select spouses on the basis of similar class status (Courtiol, 2010). Orisaremi and Alubo (2012) further note that in African countries with less advanced economies, religion, race and ethnicity were influential factors in mate selection.

Schwarz and Hasserbrauck (2012) observe that when it comes to mate selection, women were found to be the more demanding sex as compared to the men who in most cases just place more value on the physical attractiveness of a potential partner. Hardie and Lucas (2010) further stated that although both men and women placed value on dependability and stability, it was more so for women because previous studies showed that unstable men could cause financial strain for their women. This shows that females indeed take into consideration a lot of factors when it comes to mate selection than their male counterpart.

As already brought out in literature, there is a general trend that men and women differ in their ratings of particular criteria in the selection of a marriage mate. For instance, Shackelford et al. (2005) carried out a quantitative study whose aim was to identify the universal dimensions of long-term mate preferences using an archival database of preference ratings provided by several thousand participants from several dozen samples. This study involved 4499 men and 5310 women from 37 cultures located on six continents and five islands in Oceania, Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America. Findings from the study revealed that women around the world valued dependability, stability, education and intelligence in a long term partner more than men. Conversely, men more than women valued in their potential mate their good looks, health and a desire for home and children. These findings align with what Prakash and Singh (2013) note that there is a growing evidence of valuing the economic potential,

intelligence, physical looks, trustworthiness and equal temperament of the prospective partner among men and women. Similarly, the current study endeavored to bring out the gender differences by taking note of what attributes were more preferred by each specific gender in marriage mate selection.

Similarly, in a quantitative study titled sex differences in mate selection preferences by Furnham (2009), using a sample size of 250 respondents was conducted in the United States of America. Findings indicated that females rated stability, intelligence, conscientiousness, height, education, social skills and political/religious compatibility more than males. While men focused highly on good looks. In this study, there was a clear indication that females tend to have a high level of preference for a mate who earned money and was stable regardless of the duration of the relationship.

From the studies conducted by Shackelford et al. (2005) and Furnham (2009), it is clear that women more than men value stability and dependability in a marriage mate as it reduces financial strain on the women while men placed more emphasis on physical attractiveness. However, Jonason et al. (2012) observed a contrast between men and women in that men become less interested in a mate who earned her money within a short period of time in a relationship. Thus, considering that more women are now joining the labour market which enhances their financial capacity to also provide for the family financially, the current study however, had a point of departure in that it did not suggest the attributes and subject them to rating. The current study instead explored the various attributes that both men and women looked out for in the potential marriage partner so as to allow diverse views to be brought out by the study participants themselves.

Although studies undertaken indicate that men place more emphasis on physical appearance, Recheck et al. (2009) presented a contrasted view by stating that relationship desires and partner preferences of young men and women generally change as they move through emerging adulthood. Young men and women become increasingly concerned with partners' internal attributes and less concerned with external attributes. This view was buttressed by Maliki (2009) who pointed to character as an important internal quality that people consider in mate selection. This is because from the study the author conducted, participants said that people with good and

pleasant characters could easily accept and attract other members of the family. So they easily adapted to new situation of life since people have different backgrounds.

As noted by Alavi et. al (2014), sociability which is about sharing friendliness, ideas, attitudes, interests and values, is one of the qualities that people look for in a potential marriage mate as it plays a significant role in social life and communication. To this effect, McGee and Shevlin (2009) undertook a quantitative study in the United States of America (USA) whose focus was on the effect of humor on interpersonal attraction and mate selection. The study consisted of 90 men and 90 women who were all undergraduate students. The authors used vignettes to predict that the targets who possessed a good sense of humor would receive a significantly higher rate in measures of attractiveness and suitability as a long-term partner than those who possessed an average or no sense of humor. Results showed that the targets with good sense of humor received significantly higher ratings of attractiveness and suitability than did those with an average or no sense of humor. While this study simply highlighted humor as being one of the factors considered in the selection of a long-term partner, the current study extended on this to focus not only on humor but to also explore other behavioral traits that were deemed to be important in social life and communication particularly in marriage.

Boxer et al. (2015) on the other hand, conducted a mixed method replicated and extension study whose aim was to examine mate preference trends over a period of twenty-five (25) years. Data was collected from 1, 108 undergraduate students at four universities in the United States of America and these were; University of Iowa, University of Virginia, Pennsylvania State University and University of Washington. To determine whether the 2008 sample was comparable to the earlier samples of 1985 and 1996, two demographic variables which are age and marital status were provided and there were no substantive differences between the samples on these characteristics. Findings from the study revealed that both men and women increasingly placed a higher value on a mate's financial prospects and desire for home and children. Owing to these findings, this study opted to take a purely qualitative approach as opposed to a mixed method approach so as to explore in detail on the reasons why the financial prospect was an important factor in marriage mate selection.

Proximity of potential romantic partners created by attending the same college or religion or living in close neighbourhood produces an unmediated structuring of marriage market outcomes, that is, individuals often marry not only spouses with similar educational attainment, but also from the same college, religion or neighbourhood. That is why Batool and Malik (2010) submitted that interpersonal attraction was influenced by many factors some of which include proximity. To validate the importance of proximity in marriage mate selection, Tamuti et al., (2012) conducted a quantitative study in Kenya with the aim of identifying sources of relationship guidance, young people's fears and reasons for marriage. Sixty-five (65) young Christians in Nairobi completed a self-report questionnaire. Results indicated that the respondents relied mainly on friends for relationship guidance. Social emotional benefits, especially companionship, were the major motivation for young people to marry. Infidelity and divorce were the main sources of fear of marriage. In like manner, the current study endeavored to explore religion and education to see if at all they had an influence on mate selection.

When it comes to the role of occupation in mate selection, Maliki (2009) argued that graduates prefer to marry someone with good educational background like themselves as it results in similar attitudes, values and beliefs among spouses. This observation aligns with a study undertaken by Abubakar (2002) in Kenya. The study was quantitative in nature and its aim was to investigate preferred occupations in mate selection among Kenyan university students and the reasons behind their preferences. A total of 385 first and fourth year students were sampled from Kenyatta and Nairobi universities using stratified sampling. Findings revealed that students had preferred occupations in mate selection and these occupations were computer science, pharmacy, medicine, and banking and finance.

Similar to Abubakar's study, Zondi (2016) carried out a quantitative study in South Africa whose aim was to explore the occupational preferences of South African Students from the University of KwaZulu Natal and Durban University of Technology in mate selection. A total of 200 undergraduate and postgraduate students participated in the study. The results showed that five occupations were the most preferred and these include engineering, bank accountant, chartered accountant, medical doctor and bank manager. Some of the occupations were under the category of "Can Consider" and these included marketing manager, farmer, lawyer and gynaecologist. While on the other hand, occupations such as taxi driver, gardener, cleaner and security guard

were rejected. From the two studies cited above, it is vital to note that educational homogamy is an important aspect in mate selection among students. Although these studies brought out these occupational preferences, they did not give a voice to the respondents to explain as to why they preferred mates with those occupations. Therefore, this study ensured that when occupational preferences emerged as one of the factors in mate selection, participants were asked to give reasons for choosing a mate with a particular occupation.

When it comes to mate selection, people tend to be on the look-out not only for good traits but also for bad traits that they feel they should avoid in a potential marriage mate. For example, Vaillant and Wolff (2010) note that men tend to reject vulgar and unfaithful women, meaning that they were likely to suffer serious fitness costs from infidelity. On the other hand, women dreaded meeting potential partners who were alcoholic, selfish or violent. These gender differences in marriage market behavior were elaborately theorized and explored by a classical scholar, Becker (1976, 1981). According to Becker, individuals enter and remain in marriages only when such unions serve to optimize individual well-being. One way to maximize individual wellbeing in a dyadic relationship is to choose to pair with another individual whose resources and/or abilities are complementary to one's own. To build on the findings of this study, the current study also explored the attributes that were deemed undesirable in a potential partner from the point of view of the study participants.

Zambia is one of the countries in Africa where marriages occur relatively early. According to statistics from the Zambia Statistical Agency, most women are married before age 18 (CSO, 2002). This view was buttressed by Bunonge (2015) who carried out a study whose aim was to determine factors associated with constant low age at first marriage among Zambian women. Results indicated that education and socio-economic status of women had a bearing on a constant low age at first marriage among Zambian women. However, reviewed studies in Zambia indicate that there is a dearth of literature on factors that influence marriage mate selection. The current study therefore, sought to contribute to the body knowledge on factors that influence marriage mate selection. However, this study focused on the views of married postgraduate students at the University of Zambia.

From the above cited studies, one striking thing was that most of them took a quantitative approach by bringing out the factors that influence the choice of a marriage partner such as dependability, intelligence, physical beauty, height, humor and character among others. Since they took a quantitative approach, they did not give a voice to the respondents to express their motives for choosing partners with such attributes. The point of departure for the current study was that, it took a qualitative approach so as to not only identify the factors that influenced choice of a marriage mate but also to give a voice to the participants to express their motives for opting to settle for a partner who possessed those qualities through verbal accounts.

### **3.3 Fulfillment of Marital Expectations**

Scholars (Wright et al., 2007) argue that setting very high standards for marital expectations prior to marriage can be very harmful to marital relationships because not only are the standards unrealistic but also impossible to maintain. In line with this assertion, Faubert (2008) conducted a study in 2008 whose aim was to explore marital expectations and coping among married women. The study utilised purposive sampling to recruit 10 married women from southwestern Ohio. In-depth interviews were used to explore participants' descriptions of marital expectations, what expectations they identified as harmful and helpful and the ways they handled unmet marital expectations. Findings from this study revealed that women held such marital expectations as everything happy, a companion for life, never expecting perfection but they expected to work through it, adjusting and accepting, and staying connected through communication. These findings demonstrate that initial marital expectations can be adapted to become more realistic through communication, acceptance, and willingness to adjust one's marital expectations. This study however, has its weak side in that it focused only on female participants. To fill this gap however, the current study had a point of departure in that it included both male and female participants so as to have a holistic understanding as marriage involves two people.

On the other hand, Braithwaite et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study in 2010 whose objective was to show how romantic relationships impact on the physical and mental health of college students at Southeastern public university in the United States of America. A sample of 1621 college students in committed romantic relationships was drawn. Findings revealed that

college students in committed relationships experienced greater well-being than single college students because individuals in committed relationships experienced fewer mental health problems and were less likely to be overweight/obese. The study further revealed that being in a committed romantic relationship decreases problematic outcomes largely through a reduction in sexual partners, which in turn decreases both risky behaviors and problematic outcomes. Thus, to build on these findings, the current study endeavored to explore if there were any benefits that had accrued as a result of the students' choice of a mate which they did not envision prior to their marriage.

Furthermore, McNulty and Karney (2004) conducted a quantitative study in the United States of America, Florida. The aim of the study was to examine whether the effects of positive expectations on changes in marital satisfaction over the first 4 years of marriage were moderated by the nature of spouses' interaction behaviors and relationship attribution. The sample consisted of 80 newlyweds who were assessed within the first 6 months of both partners' first marriage. Results indicated that when spouses' skills were most positive, positive expectations predicted more stable satisfaction overtime whereas less positive expectations predicted steeper declines. Thus, in contrast to the idea that expectations in the early years of marriage exert main effects on satisfaction, the findings of this study suggested that the effects of expectations interacted with the skills partners brought to their relationship. One thing to note however, is that the specific skills that determine marital satisfaction were not brought out hence, this study endeavored to explore the specific skills that partners brought into marriage that contributed positively to marital satisfaction.

Similarly, Johnson (2015) undertook a quantitative study in USA whose aim was to understand the complex relationship between height of expectations and marital satisfaction by looking at how expectations were met in marriage. This study included a sample of 310 respondents who were above 18 years of age and were married, although the target population was not specified. Results revealed that high expectations were negatively correlated with marital satisfaction, unless they were fulfilled. Fulfillment of expectations was positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Having a combination of high expectations and high relationship self-efficacy was the best predictor of feeling that one's expectations were met in marriage. In this study however, no specific marital expectations were brought out so as to use those marital expectations as the

basis for determining marital satisfaction. To address this gap, the current study endeavored to bring out the specific marital expectations and find out if they were being fulfilled from the point of view of the participants.

Meltzer et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study whose focus was on examining sex differences in the implications of partner physical attractiveness for the trajectory of marital satisfaction. Data were drawn from four existing independent, four-year, multi-wave longitudinal studies of newlyweds from Northern Florida, Northern Ohio and East Tennessee. Results indicated that husbands were more satisfied at the beginning of the marriage and remained more satisfied over the next four years provided they had an attractive wife, while wives were no more or less satisfied initially or over the next four years to the extent that they had an attractive husband. Most importantly, a direct test indicated that partner physical attractiveness played a larger role in predicting husband's satisfaction than predicting wives' satisfaction. These findings strengthened the idea that physical attractiveness has a role to play in marital satisfaction especially on the part of men and this was more reason why this study aimed to explore so as to find out the various aspects and how they contribute to marital satisfaction among the married postgraduate students.

One of the striking findings from almost all of the above cited studies was that most of them did not explain in detail on how those specific expectations that people envisioned prior to marriage were fulfilled instead, they simply stated the degree to which the expectations were met and how they had a bearing on marital satisfaction. To address this gap therefore, the current study endeavored to explain in detail on how each specific marital expectation brought out was fulfilled in marriage.

### Summary on Literature Review

The literature review in both developed and developing countries indicated that there are a range of studies that consider the factors that influence one's choice of a marriage mate. Research shows that there are number of attributes that people look for in a potential marriage partner and these include financial stability, God-fearing, education, honesty, intelligence, physical beauty, humour, character among others. However, most of these studies took a quantitative approach hence, they did not give a voice to the respondents to express their motives for choosing partners

with such attributes. Therefore, the current study took a qualitative approach so as to give a voice to the participants to express their motives for opting to settle for a partner who possessed their preferred qualities through verbal accounts. While in terms of marital expectations, studies reviewed showed that people tend to have a lot of expectations when entering marriage and these include having fewer mental health problems, reduction in sexual partners, which in turn decreases risky behaviors and problematic outcomes, togetherness, connectedness and increased emotional intimacy. Most of the studies however did not explain in detail on how those specific expectations that people envisioned prior to marriage were fulfilled instead, they simply stated the degree to which the expectations were met and how they had a bearing on marital satisfaction. To address this gap therefore, the current study endeavored to explain in detail on how each specific marital expectation brought out was fulfilled in marriage.

This chapter and the previous chapter provide the rationale for the research questions. The overarching research question was to find out the attributes that influenced marriage mate choice among married postgraduate students and the motives for marrying a partner with those attributes. This study also sought to answer the following:

- 1) What attributes were the postgraduate students looking for in a potential marriage mate before they got married?
- 2) What were the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed their preferred attributes?
- 3) After marrying or getting married, how were the postgraduate students' marital expectations fulfilled based on the initially preferred marital expectations?

The next chapter however, focuses on the methodology by explaining in detail on how this study was conducted.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.0 Introduction

The research questions and theoretical perspectives of the study discussed in the previous chapters inform the research methodology within a qualitative research strategy. Therefore, this chapter outlines and describes the philosophical assumptions which inform the study, the adopted research design, data collection methods, participants' inclusion/ exclusion criteria, characteristics of the participants, entry point and gatekeeping issues, selection methods and sample size, ethical considerations, issues related to reflexivity and positionality, analysis of data and some of the encountered limitations during the study.

#### 4.1 Research Paradigm: Ontological and epistemological positioning

The methodological theory on which this study was based draws on a range of ideas from interpretivism and phenomenology with a view to according pre-eminence to the knowledge elicited from the participating married postgraduate students at UNZA. The philosophical assumptions presented in this methodology chapter were congruent with the theoretical perspectives outlined previously in chapter two. The philosophical and theoretical model that informed this study further helped in shaping the methods and the interpretation of research findings (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Crotty, 1998).

##### *Interpretive Paradigm*

This view emerged as a response to the positivist paradigm's view of social reality. Proponents of positivism advocated for the use of natural sciences methodologies, and assumed the possibility of objectivity in the social sciences (Hasan, 2016; Aliyu et al., 2014; Crotty, 1998). However, interpretivism focuses on understanding social reality from the standpoint of those experiencing it (Gimbel, 2016; Thanh and Thanh, 2015). In the worldview of interpretivism, people attach varied and multiple meanings to social reality; this has led to researchers seeking to obtain diverse views on the social phenomena (Packard, 2017, Creswell, 2007). The focus of

interpretivism on seeking people's accounts from their own perspectives, is often called an inside or emic perspective (Ritchie et al. 2014; Crotty, 1998).

Using interpretive perspective as a framework enabled married postgraduate students to construct their lived experiences of choosing a marriage partner. It also allowed them to construct their social worlds in different ways. For example, scholars (Rubin and Rubin, 1995) have argued that people attach subjective meanings to their social world and that these meanings are shaped by their knowledge, experience and their social-cultural and historical factors (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Crotty, 1998). Thus, this research explored individual narratives and experiences, but at the same time situates these married postgraduate students within the context of the prevailing Zambian sociocultural, historical, political and economic milieu not to mention their personal contexts that enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of their needs, views and opinions. This epistemological approach to research was consistent with the overarching theoretical imperatives stated in the research questions of the study.

#### **4.2 Research Design**

This study was underpinned by the qualitative research paradigm. The research aim and research questions guided the adoption of the qualitative perspective. This approach gave a voice to the participants to narrate their experiences of being in a marriage (Blaikie, 2009; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). According to Wu and Wu (2011), qualitative research focuses on context analysis, explores the deep-rooted cause of phenomenon and highlights the explanations of what happened. In this case, this study sought to explore postgraduate students' views on what influenced their marriage mate choice as well as the motives of their choice and what their experience had been ever since they entered marriage. To achieve this, there was need to get detailed explanations from the participants themselves hence a qualitative approach sufficed as it has the capacity to investigate, interpret and understand problematic issues from the point of view of the participants through verbal accounts (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative approach allowed for flexibility, for instance, questions within interviews could be developed and modified in the field (Silverman, 2010). This allowed the researcher to obtain clarification from the participants when interpreting their experiences within a specific context.

### *Phenomenological Study*

Phenomenological studies are based on the interpretive paradigm and they emphasise seeking individual experiences from within the participant's own perspective (Bryman, 2016). Creswell (2013; 2012) argued that a phenomenological approach is the most appropriate tradition to use in getting to the root-cause of the phenomenon as it describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. This study therefore, was undergirded in phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of lived experience or the life world and it is divided into two main branches which are descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 1997). This study adopted Gadamer and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology which is interpretive in nature and it adopts both an emic and etic position. The emic position allowed the researcher to capture and explore the meanings that married postgraduate students at UNZA assigned to their experiences. The etic position involved the researcher trying to make sense of the data by bringing in her own interpretations and theoretical ideas, but using verbatim quotes to ground those interpretations in the participant's actual experience (Reid et al, 2005). The weakness of using descriptive phenomenology was that it encourages the researcher to be totally passive in the research process of which it is not possible considering that researchers are living human beings who are active and they have values and beliefs. These values and beliefs are needed by the researcher in order to make sense of people's interpretations of the social world thereby being able to come up with a coherent explanation of the phenomenon being studied which in this case is mate selection among postgraduate students at UNZA.

### **4.3 Research Site**

This study was conducted at the University of Zambia, Great East Road Campus. The rationale for choosing UNZA is that, it is the highest institution of learning in Zambia where people attain higher education and with students from diverse socioeconomic, demographic and cultural backgrounds coming together from ten (10) different provinces, this enabled the researcher to gain diverse perspectives regarding the factors that influence students in choosing their marriage mates. Additionally, UNZA had been chosen because of its proximity hence easily accessible considering that the researcher had limited resources to undertake this study. In terms of

negotiating access to participants, since this study used purposive and snowball sampling, friends played an instrumental role in helping the researcher to recruit initial participants.

#### **4.4 Targeted Population**

Male and female postgraduate students at UNZA were chosen for this study based on Buss et al.'s (1990) suggestion that there is a common mate criterion among individuals which in this case are postgraduate students pursuing the same educational qualification. The selection of these students was based on such criteria as their marital status, that is, those married and were still in marriage at the time when this study was being conducted. Preferably, those who had been married for a year and above were better suited for this study for they were able to express views from their lived experience and also one (1) year and above was considered enough time for them to have settled in their marriage hence, knew the pros and cons of their partners. This in turn allowed the researcher to obtain more valid data.

It was also vital to give demographic characteristics of the study population so as to give a clear picture of the population being studied. Thus, in this study, sixteen (16) students (eight males and eight females) were interviewed. Out of the sixteen (16) participants, three (3) fell in the age range of 26-30, two (2) fell in the age range of 31-35, Five (5) fell in the age range of 36-40, while six (6) fell in the age range of 41-45.

Occupation was an important demographic feature as it had a bearing on this study. Therefore, out of the 16 participants five (5) were teachers, two (2) were lecturers, one (1) was a social worker, one (1) was a police officer, one (1) was a student, one (1) was a banker, one (1) was a benefits officer in a parastatal, one (1) was an inspector in a parastatal while the other two (2) were civil servants in which one was an agricultural assistant and the other one was an economist.

The total number of years in marriage was also an important demographic characteristic in this study as it helped in establishing whether the duration of marriage played a role in determining the level of marital satisfaction. Thus, of the sixteen (16) participants, the number of years spent in marriage varied from one (1) year to 22 years. A summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants with pseudo names is shown in Table 1 in the appendix.

#### **4.5 Sample Size**

The purpose of qualitative research is not to generate large quantities of data but to gather quality information for a deeper understanding of the participant's motives based on their experience hence, Smith and Osbon (2008) advocated for a small sample size. This is because qualitative research is not aimed at making generalizations but having a holistic picture of the perspectives of people experiencing a phenomenon. Smith (2008) posited that semi-structured qualitative studies commonly involve a sample of 10 to 20 participants who must be information rich cases. Similarly, Creswell (1998) recommended a sample size of 5 to 25 participants for phenomenological studies. Thus in this study, the researcher did in-depth interviews through the use of the interview guide with sixteen (16) participants because 16 still fell within the recommended range. Out of the 16 participants, eight (8) were males and eight (8) were females.

#### **4.6 Sampling Methods**

The goal of this study was not to recruit a representative sample, but rather to focus on participants who possessed certain attributes that were relevant to this study (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Ritchie et al., 2014). The researcher therefore, employed a combination of purposive and snowball sampling in recruiting the participants. Cohen (2011) submits that purposive sampling involves choosing people who have certain qualities or experience that would be essential for the research. During the entire two (2) years that the researcher was residing at campus she could observe how elderly married postgraduate students accommodated at campus could interact during their spare time and share experiences about their marriage. This served as an opportunity to purposively sample participants with more years in marriage as an initial sample. The researcher used purposive sampling to establish part of the sample. In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was also employed.

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique which involves the use of existing study participants already initially recruited through purposive sampling to recruit future participants from among their acquaintances (Palinkas et al, 2016). The participants that the researcher interviewed were asked to link the researcher to other participants. Then after interviewing the referred persons, they were asked whether they also knew other postgraduate students at UNZA who also met the study criteria (Etikan et al. 2016). This process continued

until no any variation was found in the data (Merriam, 2002). To ensure there was diversity in terms of marital experience, the researcher ensured that not all of the participants who were recruited through recommendation were given a chance to be on this study if they had almost the same duration in marriage.

Snowball sampling had the advantage of reducing time and cost associated with recruiting participants of sufficient diversity (Bryman, 2012). This sampling strategy was effective because someone familiar to the potential participants and whom they could trust linked them to the study. This helped in alleviating any concerns participants had, and it resulted in a high response rate.

## **4.7 Data Collection Methods**

### **4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Data collection in interpretive phenomenology must be done in a way that invites participants to offer a rich, detailed, first person account of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to explore the meaning participants attached to selecting a marriage mate. This interview type was used to create a space in which the researcher and participants constructed the knowledge together (Birks and Mills, 2011; Hand, 2003). An interview was therefore, an interaction between the researcher and interviewee to co-construct knowledge on a phenomenon (Mills et al., 2006). The researcher preferred the semi-structured interview because it enabled her to have some flexibility during the interview process, even though she had the same set of questions. The flexibility enabled her to ask follow-up questions based on the responses from the interviewees and, at the same time, the interviewees did not feel constrained in answering several lists of questions. Indirectly, the approach allowed interviewees to influence the direction of the interview which helped to uncover rich information and significant issues (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Bryman, 2016; Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Despite the advantages, there were some disadvantages of the semi-structured interview approach. Some scholars critique the notion of informants' trustworthiness, as there may be differences between people's words and actions (Deutscher, 1973; Atkinson et al. 2003). To mitigate the issue of trustworthiness, the researcher kept on comparing the consistency of the

information between different participants. Thus to enhance trustworthiness in this study, piloting was done in which it was discovered that some questions were repetitive which was irritating to the participant. Therefore, some of the questions which were repetitive were removed from the interview guide after the piloting of the tool. As opined by Doody and Doody (2015), a pilot study is often undertaken in order to test the feasibility of techniques, methods and interviews and to bring out the ethical issues that could hamper the main study.

#### **4.8 Quality and Integrity of Research**

The researcher maintained the quality of this research by using member checking, peer review and research diary throughout the research process. The member-checking approach was conducted by presenting some of the interview transcripts to the participants (Rolfe, 2006; Tobin and Begley, 2004). The participants were requested to check the transcript and confirm that the content represented what they really said. The participant validation helped to increase the accuracy of the information and establish credibility of the study (Rolfe, 2006). In addition, the researcher preserved academic rigor by having her work peer reviewed by her supervisors. They reviewed the emerging themes by reading through some of the anonymised quotes and the interview questions.

Furthermore, the researcher used a research diary to reduce bias and maintain consistency of the study. Clark (2009) suggested that a research diary provides transparency and clarifies thoughts and feelings which acknowledge factors that may influence the process of data collection and analysis of the study. The research diary was a space for the researcher to note and reflect on a daily research process, which helped her to gain insight into her research experience (McCormack, 2014). The researcher referred to suggestions by Burgess (1981) for the content of the research diary. Burgess (1981) proposed three main concerns to be documented in a research diary: substantive account refers to the events or activities by participants during the fieldwork; methodological account describes the role and involvement of a researcher; and analytic account includes insight and inquiries that are developed over time within the research process. The researcher used information in the research diary and compared it to the data collected from participants (Burgess, 1981). By doing so, she gained further insight into the context of the data.

#### **4.9 Positionality and Reflexivity**

Researchers are people who live and experience the same socio-cultural context as the people they are studying hence their beliefs, values, gender or even socioeconomic status can affect the research process and that is why issues of reflexivity and positionality arose. Bourke (2014) stated that positionality is about acknowledging who we are as individuals, and as members of groups, and as resting in and within social positions or in other words it is about power and social relations between the researcher and the participant. Given this, Van der Riet (2012) posited that total detachment is unrealistic and could hinder the research process. In this study therefore, the researcher was in a position of both the insider and outsider. She was an insider because she was also a postgraduate student at the University of Zambia. She was however, an outsider because she had never been married before hence, she was not aware of how marriages turned out to be. To accomplish positionality, the researcher used the recommendations made by Savin-Baden and Howell (2013) who said that there is need for researchers to acknowledge their personal positions that have the potential to influence the research. In this study, the researcher clearly highlighted her position as a postgraduate student as well as her outsider position as she had never had any marital experience. However, she endeavored to establish a good rapport which made the participants feel at ease to fully express their thoughts on mate selection.

Reflexivity suggests that there are implications of personal position, values, biases and decisions in constructing knowledge of the social world (Bryman, 2016; Koch and Harrington, 1998). Being a qualitative research, the researcher was aware that her background, values, beliefs and experiences could influence the research process (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). To overcome the problem of reflexivity, the researcher applied what Greenbanks (2003) recommended that reflexivity requires explicit self-consciousness and self-assessment about the researcher's own views and positions and how these might influence the design, execution and interpretation of research findings. Therefore, the researcher endeavored to put aside any preconceived ideas she had or what she may have personally observed about mate selection among students in universities.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data in this study and the process followed was based on the procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The audios were then transcribed and uploaded into the qualitative research software called NVIVO version 11. The researcher read through the transcripts identifying open codes using the qualitative research software NVIVO. Coding aided in identifying concepts, categories and sub-categories that were further broken down (Saldana, 2016; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Open coding involves reading the texts ‘word-by-word’, ‘line-by-line’, and repeatedly to identify phrases that interviewees were using to describe things and issues. The coded data was then categorized (grouped) according to different characteristics in order to better understand the data (Bryman, 2012; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The categories were then grouped to form sub-themes and then eventually, the sub-themes were grouped to come up with main themes.

### **4.11 Ethical Consideration**

Firstly, participants were provided with information sheet and consent form before taking part in the study. The participants were informed about the potential ethical issues of the research and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. This step was taken to ensure that the participants were fully informed of the nature of the research that they were engaged with and as well as issues of anonymity and confidentiality (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Creswell and Poth, 2017).

#### **4.11.1 Confidentiality and anonymity**

All the collected data was kept and used for scholarly purposes only. All the information given by participants was not shared with other people except my supervisors and examiners. The identities of the participants remained unknown throughout the whole research process (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The researcher erased all the identifiers such as names from the transcripts to ensure that identities of participants remained unknown. The researcher therefore adopted the use of pseudonyms during analysis and report writing. All data was stored in a password encrypted files in my personal laptop with restricted access. The researcher tried to make sure that the interviews were conducted in the absence of other people.

#### **4.11.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

As emphasized by various research scholars (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2013) concerning the importance of informed consent and voluntary participation in any research undertaking, the researcher provided both written (information sheet) and verbal information to the participants before conducting the interviews. This was done so that potential study participants could fully understand what this study was all about and to clearly describe their right to participate or not and their right to withdraw (Bhattercherjee, 2012). In turn, this helped them make an informed decision to either participate in the study or not. Thereafter, those who agreed to participate were given the consent form which they signed to affirm their participation. See appendix 2 and 3.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis of the perspectives of the research participants on the attributes that influenced their choice of a marriage mate as well as their motives for wanting to have a partner who possessed those preferred attributes. These participants also narrated the joys and challenges they derived from being with their current marriage partners and how they navigated the difficulties they experience following unfulfilled marital expectations. In accordance with the theoretical perspectives presented in chapters two and three, the findings chapter is grounded in the importance of giving a voice to study participants who were postgraduate students at the University of Zambia through their own accounts. This approach is in line with the epistemological standpoint of qualitative researchers and phenomenological methods of understanding the social worlds based on the lived experiences of research participants.

This chapter presents three (3) main themes that emerged from the data on marriage mate selection. The first theme relates to the attributes that study participants were looking for prior to marriage. While the second theme aimed at discussing the concept of what influenced the study participants to choose their current partner and the motives behind their choice. The third theme focused on the marital expectations that study participants had prior to marriage and how things turned out to be after marriage. The insights from this chapter provide a context for the subsequent chapter, which is the discussion chapter.

#### **5.1 Attributes looked for in a potential marriage partner prior to marriage**

One of the themes that emerged from this data were the different attributes that participants looked for in a potential marriage partner prior to marriage. Within this, a number of attributes came out and these were categorized into socioeconomic status, physical appearance, religiosity as well as internal qualities.

### **5.1.1 Socioeconomic status**

From the verbal accounts of the participants, socioeconomic status seemed to have played a significant role in the choice of a marriage partner and under this, various sub-themes emerged. Thus, the socioeconomic attributes that were brought out in this study included education, financial stability, type of profession of a potential marriage partner. For example, 9 (4 males, 5 females) participants out of 16 said that they needed a man who was educated hence they had this to say;

*I wanted an educated person preferably bachelor's degree or master's degree holder.*

**Natasha**

*I wanted a man as educated as I was that is, someone who would have completed his grade 12 and made it to university because by then I had completed my grade 12 and was about to enter university. **Ireen***

Similarly, Harry and Anold also felt that education mattered to them when it came to mate selection although in terms of the level of education their preference differed from those of their female counterparts thus, they said;

*I was looking for a lady who at least had some basic education such that with the passage of time she would advance. I also needed someone who could understand issues and be able to reason on them and resolve. **Harry***

*I wanted someone who was educated not necessarily up to my level but at least someone who could think because education opens up a person's mind. **Anold***

**Daniel** shared a similar view with Harry and Anold and said;

*I wanted someone who at least had acquired an education of at least up to a maximum of grade 12. **Daniel***

While on the other hand, 6 females out of the 16 study participants said financial stability had a greater influence in determining their choice of a marriage partner and this is evident from the verbatim below;

*Having been brought up by a single mother, I did not really have the father figure to emulate in my life [...] However, I needed a man who could provide and not only I being the one to provide because I saw how much my mum struggled to provide for us as a single parent. Not that I wanted a man with a lot of money no, but at least someone who could meet our daily needs. **Racheal***

*I needed a man who was financially stable and with good financial management habits so as to provide for the family. **Sarah***

Study participants were also asked as to whether they had any occupational preferences in their choice of a marriage partner and results indicated that 10 out of 16 did not have any occupational preferences while 6 said occupation mattered to them. The views of those who did not have any occupational preferences were noted in the following verbal accounts;

*No I did not have occupational preferences in that needs and desires change as people grow. So for me what is more important is does this person have a vision of doing something in future [...] So really, what matters is someone doing something at the end of the day. **Davis***

Other students had this to say on the reason as to why they did not have any occupational preferences;

*In my case I did not take that one seriously because my thinking is that life is just what you make out of it because mostly people choose to get married to people with certain occupations because they want some monetary benefits attached to certain occupations [...]. **Janet***

For other students, occupation mattered to them in mate selection and they had their reasons for having those occupational preferences and this is what they had to say;

*I preferred marrying a teacher who would work during day time hence less mischievous as opposed to a nurse who would work in the night hence I could not trust such a one. But also I didn't mind marrying a Social Worker because I believed people in such professions have a heart for people thus, she would make our home a warm place for visitors. **Roy***

*I wanted to marry a banker because their job demands for certain outlooks of people like dressing smartly all the time and not being in casual so just that smartness was a plus for me. **Racheal***

On the other hand, other study participants felt that they could not marry someone in certain occupations like the medical field, police officer or soldier but were okay with the rest of the other occupations. Their reasons for not wanting to marry partners in the mentioned occupations were given in the following verbatim;

*I did not want anyone in the medical field because of the issue of being on call at any time meaning that he would be leaving me in the middle of the night sometimes to go for work. Aside that, I do not like the smell of medicine [...]. But I was okay settling with a man in other professions aside the medical profession. **Naomi***

*I did not have issues with marrying someone from any occupation except a policewoman, nurse and a soldier because all these involve night shifts in their duties and as for soldiers and policewomen, when they go for operation elsewhere chances of being unfaithful are high. **Jack***

The above presentation alluded to the fact when looking for a marriage partner; socioeconomic status was not overlooked by the participants. Some of those socioeconomic factors included education where the overall experience of female participants was that they needed a man who was more educated than them while the male participants said they only needed a woman with some basic education. On financial stability, study participants said they needed a financially stable man who could meet the needs of the family. Additionally, some students did not have occupational preferences in their partner choice but others said occupation mattered to them thus, some said they preferred marrying a teacher, banker or social worker. For others, they said they could not marry someone in the medical field, a police officer or a soldier.

### **5.1.2 Religiosity**

Study participants highlighted religiosity as another important attribute they looked out for in a potential marriage mate prior to their marrying or getting married. Therefore, 11 participants out of 16 expressed their views on how religiosity mattered to them as echoed in the following verbal accounts;

*I needed a God-fearing man but I was not so strict that he should be of the same faith because in every church there are people who do bad and those who do good so what mattered to me was simply someone who was committed to God. **Naomi***

*I also needed a God-fearing man regardless of the religion for as long as he respected God's principles. **Diana***

*My focus was on having someone who had a Christian background as a firm believer regardless of the religious affiliation. **Daniel***

Other participants however preferred marrying a partner who was of the same religion hence, they had this to say;

*Prior to marriage, I was looking for someone who was God-fearing and of the same religion. **Roy***

*For me, I needed a God-fearing man and of the same faith as me, not a drunkard. **Natash***

*As for me, I needed someone who could respect my being as well as someone of the same religion as myself. **Davis***

Although God fearing was one of the attributes that study participants looked out for in a potential marriage partner, two varying views emerged in that for some participants, religious affiliation did not matter for so long someone was God-fearing but other participants felt that they needed someone of the same religion. But one central point that stood out was that, they looked out for someone who was God-fearing.

### ***5.1.3 Physical appearance***

Physical appearance also came out as one of the important factors that influenced choice of a marriage partner among participants in this study. The physical attributes that were brought out by participants included height, complexion, beauty, body size, HIV negative and a non-hairy body. For instance, height seemed to be of serious consideration on the part of the females in that 5 females out of 16 participants said height mattered to them and this is evident from their views below;

*I needed a man who was a bit taller than me. Naomi*

*Height was also an issue to me in that I needed a taller man. Diana*

*I preferred a man who was taller in terms of height. Ireen*

Still females seemed to take into consideration the aspect of complexion in mate choice. Thus, 4 females out of 16 pinpointed complexion as an important attribute they looked for in a potential marriage partner as echoed in the following verbatim;

*I did not want a man who was light in complexion. I wanted someone dark in complexion to torn down the skin colour of my children. Racheal*

**Naomi** shared a similar thought with Racheal regarding complexion preference by stating that;

*I needed a man who was dark in complexion to dilute my lightness as I am light-skinned, and also not a "wow" guy.*

On the other hand, beauty was not left out in that 4 males out of 16 participants said it mattered to them thus, they had this to say;

*I wanted a beautiful woman both physically as on the face and with curves. Jack*

**Ben** and **Davis** shared a similar view and pointed out that,

*Physical beauty like a beautiful face and curvy body and also I needed a lady with a small body size. Ben*

*Beauty also mattered but to a minimal degree because it was just an entry point to getting to know someone. Davis*

Interestingly, one (1) female out of the 16 said she did not want a partner who had a hairy body while the other said she did not want an HIV negative person as echoed in the following verbal accounts;

*I did not want to get married to a man with a hairy body because I found it disgusting. Racheal*

*I preferred an HIV negative man. Ireen*

When it came to physical appearance, female study participants seemed to have had their own demands while males had theirs too. Most females preferred a man who was tall in height and dark in complexion, HIV negative and not with a hairy body while the men mainly focused on having a partner who was beautiful on the face, with a curvy body structure and of course a small body size.

#### **5.1.4 Internal attributes**

As they contemplated marriage, both male and female students admitted to the fact that they also looked out for internal attributes in a potential mate as it mattered as well. Therefore, they highlighted a number of internal attributes that they looked for and these were; loving, understanding, respectful, patient, well-disciplined in terms of behaviour, intelligence, good leadership qualities, caring, mature, honesty. For instance, 4 females and 1 male out of the 16 participants said they needed someone who loved them and this is what they said:

*I wanted a man who would love me and would not leave me because I saw how much my mother could be lonely at times. Racheal*

*I needed someone who could accept my being meaning, my family and my background, and someone who could love me for who I am. Davis*

On the other hand, 7 males and 1 female out of the 16 participants said that their focus was on woman who was patient, respectful and understanding hence, they echoed the following words;

*I needed someone who was respectful, someone who could understand me as a man and someone who was patient. John*

*As for me, I needed someone who could understand me and whom I could understand as well, someone who could respect my being. Davis*

*I preferred a man who was respectful and understanding. Natasha*

Other study participants however stressed on how much they looked out for someone who was well-disciplined in terms of behavior and hence they pinpointed specific attributes of what consisted disciplined behavior in the following verbatim;

*I also needed a well-disciplined lady meaning, a lady who was not into alcohol or clubbing because such makes one lose self-control hence becoming promiscuous. Ben*

**Natasha** shared a similar preference with Ben and said;

*I did not want a man who was a drunkard.*

**Roy** had his definition of disciplined behavior and uttered the following words;

*Someone who was disciplined in terms of behaviour like someone who was less of a talker and not too free with people.*

On the other hand, 5 participants out of the 16 brought out different attributes they looked for in a potential marriage partner as highlighted in the following verbal accounts;

*For me, I was looking for a lady who was intelligent. Jack*

While **Sarah** had this to say regarding her preferences;

*I needed somebody who had good leadership qualities.*

**Janet** on the other hand said;

*I wanted a caring man.*

As for **Davis**, maturity was his focus as evident from the following verbal account;

*I was also looking for someone mature.*

While **Daniel** expressed his preference on what he was looking for in the following verbatim;

*I was looking for a trustworthy person.*

From the results generated above, a number of internal attributes were brought out by the study participants as they felt like internal attributes mattered in the choice of a marriage partner as they affect marriage either in a positive or negative way. Internal attributes that came out included loving, understanding, respectful, patient, well-disciplined in terms of behaviour, intelligence, good leadership qualities, caring, mature and honesty.

## 5.2 Attributes that influenced current partner choice and the motives

### 5.2.0 Introduction

In marriage mate selection, people make a final decision of settling with the partner of their choice based on the attributes they see appealing in that particular person and they have motives for their preferences. Thus, the second theme that emerged from this study were the attributes that specifically influenced the postgraduate students' decision to marry their partner and the motives for choosing to settle with someone with those preferred attributes. Various attributes and their associated motives were brought out and these were divided into various sub-themes which included physical appearance, socioeconomic status, internal qualities and attributes they deemed vital for social life and communication as presented below;

### 5.2.1 Physical appearance

Physical appearance was found to play an important role in determining the choice of a marriage partner and study participants had reasons for preferring certain physical attributes in a potential marriage partner. Therefore, in this study, various physical attributes were brought out by the study participant. For instance, 3 female participants out of 16 study participants talked of height having a great impact on influencing their decision to marry their current marriage partner. This is evident from the verbal accounts below;

*I needed a taller man and my husband met that criterion because I did not want to bear short children but aside that also I feel like short people have a certain negative attitude that irritates me and I don't know maybe it is because they feel 'vertically challenged.*

**Naomi**

*On height, he was taller than me and that was a plus to me because I did not want to bear short children.* **Diana**

*I did not want my children to have a height disadvantage that's why I opted to go for my husband because he is taller than I.* **Ireen**

Still on the physical appearance, both male and female students highlighted complexion as a vital aspect they considered when choosing their marriage partner due to their personal experiences

regarding their own complexion. Thus, 3 (1 male, 2 females) study participants out of the 16 preferred dark-skinned complexion and the motives for this preference is brought out in the following verbal accounts;

*He's darker than I and I needed such a man because in my growing up as a light skinned person I faced challenges where people would shout out to me saying "Zayelo" and I never used to feel good about it hence I needed a dark skinned man so as to dilute the complexion of our children thereby saving them from the trouble that I went through for being light-skinned. Naomi*

Similarly, **Racheal** shared the same thought as Naomi and stated;

*I also did not want a man who was light in complexion because of the notion that they cheat too much and also because I have struggled with my being light-skinned in that people thought I was coloured and they would brand me to be a mischievous lady as coloureds are known to be like that generally. So I wanted someone dark in complexion to torn down the skin colour of my children so that they would not have to go through the discrimination I went through and this was one of the factors that drew me to my current husband.*

Although the male student below preferred a dark-skinned partner, when asked on the motive for his preference, he did not give any as shown in the verbatim below;

*She was dark in complexion so she met the characteristic I was looking for in a marriage partner. I just like dark-skin complexion. Daniel*

One of the other attributes that were brought out by the study participants was that of beauty as they attached a particular value to it and this was mainly brought out by 2 of the male participants out of the 16 participants as indicated in the verbatim below;

*I needed someone beautiful so that at least when we have formal gatherings for instance at work I can be able to introduce my wife to my friends with confidence because shortly after I started working and I had not married yet, I observed that some of the people*

*when invited for a function they normally used to leave their wives behind because they were not proud of them. **Anold***

Another participant seemed to share a similar motive on why his wife's beauty was a plus by saying that;

*In terms of physical beauty, I needed a beautiful woman because I knew that I would be proud to introduce her as my wife to the public be it my friends, workmates or even relatives. **Jack***

Interestingly however, one (1) male participant out of the 16 mentioned body size as one of the reasons for choosing his wife hence, he said;

*In terms of the body size, I wanted someone small for portability purposes and my wife was small in terms of body size which was a plus to me. **Ben***

From the verbal accounts given, it was deduced that study participants had their motives for choosing to marry someone who had their preferred attributes. Female participants also claimed that men who were short in terms of height have a certain negative attitude which they did not like. For those light skinned females they said they wanted a dark-skinned man so that he could torn down the skin-color of their children as they suffered discrimination for being light-skinned when they were young where people called them 'Zayelo" while others mistook them for being coloured hence considered them to be mischievous ladies as coloureds are known to be like that generally. So they did not want their children to go through the same discrimination. Men on the other hand mainly emphasised on beauty as a reason that drew them to their partner and the reason for this was because they wanted to be confident to introduce their wife with pride to their friends, family and relatives as well as to feel free to attend public events with their wives.

### **5.2.2 Socioeconomic**

Socioeconomic status was something that was not overlooked by participants in this study when making a final decision to settle with their partners. Several socioeconomic aspects were brought out by the study participants and these included education and financial stability, and reasons were given as to why study participants chose a partner with such attributes. For instance, 4 (1

male, 3 females) study participants out of the 16 participants said that education was one of the factors that motivated them to make a decision of settling for their current marriage mate and their motives were given as presented in the verbal accounts below;

*I accepted to settle with him because he was more educated than I was and education to me is a vital aspect because it is one of the factors that cause insecurity in marriage. For example, if a wife is more educated than a husband and tries to give her husband advise, there's normally that thing of a husband feeling inferior saying "you are saying this all because you more educated than me" so sometimes he can't even take your advice even when you mean well as a wife so I did not want to encounter such in my marriage. Therefore, I would recommend ladies to marry men who are more educated than them.*

**Ireen**

While **Natasha** and **Diana** shared a similar motive for deciding to settle with someone educated and echoed these words;

*On education, I personally cherish education hence I needed a man who was educated because he would have a vision and it would make it easier for me to relate with such hence the reason I chose my current husband. **Natasha***

*I knew that an educated person is easy to relate with as our thinking would be aligned.*

**Diana**

However, a different opinion was also expressed by a male student on the motive for settling with a partner who was educated and this was evidenced by the following verbatim;

*I needed a woman who was educated so that, that education could be transferred to the children as well for instance, as a mother she should be able to speak to the children even using basic English at least and even when we go out to formal gatherings she should be able to converse with people in English hence the reason I chose my wife. **Anold***

On socioeconomic status one other aspect which came out was that of financial stability. Tied to financial stability were other factors such as a responsible and hardworking partner and having a

partner with a vision. Thus, 5 (3 males, 2 females) study participants had this to say on financial stability;

*I looked at the potential she had to advance her career and be able to work and contribute financially to the family and that she could raise children in a good way.*

**Harry**

*I know that a man is supposed to be a breadwinner but it is not always that things will be okay [...] So I needed a woman who had aspirations, hardworking and independent and would fend for the children as well in an event that am not there due to things like death, loss of job or even divorce though we do not wish for it but it may happen and I saw that she did not only view herself as a housewife but she was also a dream chaser, hence independent and able to contribute to the family financially. **Davis***

**Sarah** on the other had this to say on the reason why she got drawn to her spouse;

*He was responsible toward his immediate family like helping with school fees for his siblings and also his parents which made me be convinced that he is financially stable and is responsible enough to take care of his own family.*

*I needed a man who could provide also and not only I being the one to provide because I saw how much my mum struggled to provide for us as a single parent. Not that I wanted a man with a lot of money no, but at least someone who could meet out daily needs.*

**Racheal**

On socioeconomic status, two main aspects were brought out and these included education and financial stability. On education, females said they wanted a man who was more educated than them to avoid making him feel insecure which would be the source of conflict in a home. Additionally, females said that it was basically easy to relate with someone who was educated as their thinking would be aligned and that with that education it would be easy to get a job and fend for the family financially. In contrast, male study participants said that they did not necessarily need a very educated lady rather someone with basic education was okay for them for so long she could speak basic English with the children at home. Financial stability on the other hand was deemed to be vital for both male and female participants as it would allow them

to be able to provide for their families even in an event that one spouse lost his job or was no more hence, they needed someone who was financially stable.

### **5.2.3 RELIGIOSITY**

Religiosity was not overlooked by the postgraduate students as a basis for making a final decision on marrying their current partner. Five (5) participants that is, 2 males and 3 females out of the 16 participants gave various reasons as to why the God-fearing aspect made them settle for their partner through their narratives below;

*I wanted someone who was committed to God regardless of religion because I know that such a person would be trustworthy hence she would live a life in line with bible principles such that she cannot commit adultery because she learns that such is condemned in the bible and more especially that we live in the world where HIV is widespread so I needed someone who could be faithful hence could not betray me.”*

**Daniel**

**Diana** on the other hand had a different motive for settling for a partner who was God-fearing and the following was her opinion;

*I needed a God-fearing man because with such a one, it is easy to agree on things where decision making is concerned and even if there is a disagreement you can resolve it amicably because you are both being guided by God, that way, the marriage would last.*

**Janet** shared a similar view with Diana and said;

*I needed a God-fearing man because without God it is difficult for a marriage to thrive and my husband is actually a God-fearing man so I was confident that our marriage would last.*

Yet **Harry** had his own reason for his preference on why the God-fearing attribute drew him to his current wife by stating that;

*She was from a Christian background which is something I liked because I knew that as a wife she would be respectful and submissive to me as her husband which is in line with our Christian values.*

As clearly brought out from the narratives of study participants, religiosity was seen to be an important aspect in mate selection for a number of reasons. For men, they said that marrying a God-fearing woman was good for them as she would be trustworthy hence could not commit adultery, and that a woman with a Christian background would easily respect and submit to her husband. Females on the other hand said it was easy to resolve differences amicably if both partners were being guided by Godly principles which they believed lead to a long lasting marriage.

#### **5.2.4 Internal qualities**

Although the physical appearance and achievements had a role to play in mate selection, study participants said that character was also a vital aspect to consider in a prospective partner. Owing to this, postgraduate students also brought out other internal attributes which they said influenced their partner choice and these were understanding, caring/heart for others, disciplined behavior (not talkative, not alcoholic), good leadership qualities, humility, honesty, small body size, intelligence. On the aspect of understanding, for example 3 (2 males, 1 female) participants out of the 16 participants voiced out on how it influenced their decision to marry their partner. This is highlighted in the following verbatim;

*I was once married, and then we divorced so this is my second marriage. Thus, in terms of understanding, I needed someone who could understand me because usually when a woman has had a history of divorce, there is that stigma that comes with it saying “why did she fail in her first marriage?” and even if we give excuses it is difficult for people to understand since they were not there but this was not the case with my current husband because he understood my situation and loved me for who I am. **Janet***

While **John** had this to say;

*On understanding, I feel like as a man I just have to be understood because I am someone’s child and older in age thus if we have to make marriage work we have to*

*understand each other because only if you understand someone will you be able to respect that person. **John***

Yet **Harry** held a different opinion on the reason why the aspect of understanding was a plus and said;

*I needed someone who was understanding because I knew that with such a wife, we would not easily face a divorce. **Harry***

For some of the participants, they said that their motivation for choosing to marry their partner was due to the fact that they saw how caring and good hearted their partner was. Therefore, 3 participants out of the 16 participants narrated;

*Just when were in the dating and courtship phase I saw how caring she was toward me and that gave me the confidence that if I marry her, she will be able to take very good care of my me and my children. **Ben***

*The main thing that drew me to him was his soft spot for others. He could be playful, a little agitated but when it came to helping he put others first, then these others like money came second. Marrying someone with a soft spot for others was a plus for me because I knew that such a person will make our home a warm home for others. **Racheal***

Other participants said disciplined behavior was vital in a partner thus; they were moved to marry their partner based on some positive attributes they observed. However, participants seemed to have varying views in terms of what they considered to be disciplined behavior as highlighted in the verbatim below;

*I married her because she was disciplined and could not unnecessarily pick fights and this was vital for me because I grew up in home where my father and father were always fighting so I did not want my own marriage to be like that. **Jack***

While **Roy** had this to say;

*My wife was well-disciplined and less of a talker so I knew that someone who does not talk much can protect my dignity by not embarrassing me in front of people and she will not go out there to tell my mistakes to others.*

**Ben** had his definition of disciplined behavior which drew him to his partner and shared the following;

*I also did not want a lady who could drink alcohol and clubbing because I knew that such a person can easily lose self-control when drunk and engage with other men.*

Other internal attributes that were highlighted by participants included good leadership qualities, humility, honesty and intelligence and this is evident from their echoed words. For instance;

**Sarah** uttered these words on why good leadership qualities won her heart;

*He had a vision for our relationship meaning he was serious about us hence was able to drive the relationship in a particular direction which was really impressive to me as I saw that with such an aspect he can lead his family as he had good leadership qualities.*

**Naomi** expressed how her partner's honesty and humility impressed her and uttered the following words;

*He was down to earth and did not come to me with a lot of promises that I would even start doubting because by then he only had a certificate and I was pursuing a degree but he openly told me his educational qualification, that was a plus to me because he was real and true to himself and did not want to make fake promises. Given this, I felt I would be secure with him. He was honest.*

Yet for **Jack**, his partner's intelligence was what caught his attention and he stated;

*Her intelligence which became evident in the way she could reason on and explain things so I knew that she will help to plan well for the needs of the family.*

In terms of internal attributes, a number of them were noted by the study participants and their associated motives. For instance, both the male and female participants said they needed an

understanding partner because marrying such a person would prevent them from facing a divorce. Secondly, both male and female participants also said that they saw a caring attitude in their partner which gave them the confidence that she would be able to take care of the children and to make a home a warm place for others be it relatives or friends. Additionally, disciplined behavior was also highlighted and under this internal quality, male participants noted that they married their woman because she was less talkative hence, such a one would protect their dignity by not yelling at him in front of others and that a less talkative woman could not pick fights unnecessarily. The men also said that they did not want a woman who was a drunkard or into clubbing because the chances of being unfaithful are high if a partner was into such as self-control is easily lost. Furthermore, female participants said they married their partner because he was humble, realistic and honest hence, did not come with a lot of fake promises which he would not fulfill. While one male said the intelligence of her partner moved him to marry her because he knew that she would help him to plan well for the needs of the family.

#### ***5.2.5 Attributes vital for social life and communication***

Social life and communication seemed to matter to the study participant too. In this study, participants were thus, asked if there were any attributes that were specifically vital for social life and communication that might have influenced their decision to marry their current marriage partner, and several attributes were brought out as evident from the following verbal accounts;

*She was good toward people in that she could help the needy for instance which is a good aspect of social life. Also, she was respectful, making communication easy even when differences arose. Roy*

While **Janet** echoed these words;

*He was respectful, was able to have health conversations with people during interaction in that even if he met someone for the first time he could manage to strike a conversation and respect that person regardless of who that person is. For example, I could at times observe when we meet people like a security guard and he is instructing him to park in a certain way, he would respectfully obey and do as told so that showed me how much he could respect people regardless of who they are and what job they do.*

For **Racheal**, open communication is what made her get drawn to her partner as evident in this verbatim;

*He's the kind of a man who calls a "spade a spade" in that if it means he has to be vulgar to explain or tell me something, he would do that because he is so open and I felt it was a positive trait because I knew this is the person who would frankly tell me if am wrong and correct me and in a marriage if there is open communication like this it is a good thing because you will not bundle mistakes.*

**Harry** on the other hand noted this about his partner;

*She was understanding and had the capacity to correct me whenever she saw it that I was saying or doing something wrongly which made me see that she was a reasonable person.*

There were also some aspects of social life that motivated the study participants to settle for their partners and among them was the fact that some felt their spouse was good-hearted which was shown through helping the needy. Additionally, open communication was another aspect that spouses discovered in their potential partner which made it easy to resolve differences and to correct each other when one partner did something wrong. Humility was also another aspect which was deemed good for social life as one participant said she was drawn to her partner because she saw how good and respectful her partner treated others. Thus, according to study participants all these attributes were good reasons to motivate them to marry their partner.

## **5.3 Marital expectations**

### **5.3.0 Introduction**

As study participants contemplated marriage, they had specific expectations they wanted to see being fulfilled and of course, many of the study participants clearly highlighted on how much they looked forward to having a happy married life. Despite the many positive marital expectations that study participants had prior to marrying or getting married, findings of this study revealed that some of those expectations were fulfilled while others were not. In terms of fulfilled marital expectations for instance, several sub-themes were generated and these included

having a united and happy family, partners supporting each other, less interference of marriage from other family members, sexual satisfaction as well as the discovery of new positive traits in a mate.

### **5.3.1 Fulfilled marital expectations**

From the many expectations that participants had prior to marriage, they said that some of those expectations were fulfilled. In terms of having a happy family and upbringing of children for instance, 12 (6 males, 6 females) participants out of the 16 participants said the following;

*I expected to receive care and support knowing am physically challenged and those things have indeed been fulfilled. Also I have a united family and my children are happy, this too is a fulfillment of my expectations. Anold*

**Charity** also had this to say;

*I am loved, and we have a good relationship with our children, which is something I expected as I entered marriage.*

While **Janet** expressed her happiness on how well her children had been raised and uttered the following words;

*I think we have happy a family; we have managed to raise our children in a Godly way at least for now unless they drift away on their own as they grow older*

**Harry** shared the same experience as Janet and said;

*My children including dependents are well disciplined because they have been brought up in a Christian way, which is something I expected, they have also excelled in education.*

*He is still the humble man that he was prior to marriage, he cares about me and my feelings and of course we are happy as a family even though it is not always that we are happy. Diana*

On the other hand, 3 (2 males, 1 female) out of the 16 study participants also expressed their appreciation for having found a partner who was supportive in their endeavors as expressed in the following verbal accounts;

*I needed a woman who would support me and indeed she is supportive because I was working with a very good salary but I decided to quit that job so that I could concentrate on my school and she has been supportive of my decision. **Ben***

*We spend quality time together, we encourage and support each other in our career pursuits which are the things I expected. **Sarah***

Yet **Jack** focused more on how his wife had been providing emotional support in times of hardships and said this;

*My wife has proved to be a good friend whom I confide in whenever things are not well at least she is there to support and encourage me and help me through advise on what can be done if am faced with a particular situation which is what I expected. **Jack***

Participants were also open enough to admit that they expected their marriage to face interference from other family members in various ways such as relatives visiting too much. However, 1 female participant out of the 16 study participants said it turned out well for her as evidenced by her utterance below;

*I got worried that his relatives would be visiting more often but at least what I had expected did not turn out that way in that after we got married, even though his relatives have been visiting but they do not overdo it which is a relief on my part. **Naomi***

Enjoying sex and fun time together was another fulfilled marital expectation that participants were open about and freely expressed their appreciation over this gift and said;

*I am enjoying sex and also at least we can afford to go for holidays which is what I had expected. **Racheal***

**Ireen** shared a similar experience with Racheal and narrated the following;

*Sexual satisfaction and care have really been fulfilled in my marriage.*

As partners were in the dating and courtship phase, they could not know everything about their potential mate thus; discovery of the new positive attributes in their partner after marriage was another interesting aspect that was highlighted by 2 male participants out of the 16 participants. For instance,

**John** made the following comment in appreciation of his partner;

*My expectations were fulfilled in that she respects me and she understands me. Additionally, I did not know that she was a good marketer and advertiser of goods something which I discovered while in marriage and it is a good thing.*

While **Roy** expressed his gratitude for his partner by saying that;

*She's not a talkative person, she's social and kind to people even in my absence she is able to welcome visitors and make them feel at home, she is clean and prepares good food for me which is something I fully discovered while in marriage.*

As noted from the verbal accounts, participants did acknowledge that there were some marital expectations that had been fulfilled when they entered marriage. They said that they had happy families and well-disciplined children, their sexual needs were satisfied, partners were supportive both emotionally and in career pursuits and that relatives did not visit so regularly as the participants thought would be the case when they entered marriage which could have been a burden. Additionally, study participants also said that it was interesting that they discovered new positive traits and talents in their partners which they did not know in the courtship phase and these were, kindness and good business skills such as advertising goods. Thus, all these came out as fulfilled marital expectations that brought happiness to the participants that were interviewed in this study, showing that indeed the marriage institution has its own positive side.

### 5.3.2 Unfulfilled marital expectations

As study participants contemplated marriage, they expected to have happy marriages and looked forward to the fulfillment of their marital expectations. However, although participants agreed to the fact that some of their marital expectations were fulfilled when they entered marriage, they also expressed their disappointment on how most of their marital expectations were not fulfilled. Therefore, a number of sub-themes emerged on the marital expectations that went unfulfilled when they entered marriage. The emerging sub-themes were; Failure by men to adapt to married life, discovery of negative traits in a partner, unmet financial expectations, differences emanating from partners' immediate families, diminishing transparency in marriage, not spending more time together as well as differences over religious affiliation. For example, female study participants expressed their disappointment regarding their husbands whom they expected to drastically reduce interaction with their friends after marriage but they did not do so. The following verbatim demonstrates how much the 2 women out of the 16 participants lamented over this aspect;

*Just as he told me to minimise my interactions with some friends but for him even after marriage he did not do that instead he continued and that sort of affected me as I expected him to minimise too so that we could spend much of the time together as a couple but he did not do that, however with time I came to terms with it. **Racheal***

Another participant had this to say;

*"I expected to have a friend who could confide in me and whom I could confide in too but then things have not turned out that way in that whenever there is an issue in our marriage, he would rather confide in his friends instead of me. And I think these problems are mainly due to the fact that he was not really well taught traditionally because prior to our marriage he went through those traditional teachings for only one day which was not enough. Alcohol also is a contributing factor to these problems in our marriage. **Natasha***

Some participants said that when they entered marriage, they discovered that their partner had certain negative traits which they only learnt after they had already entered marriage. This is

evidenced by the experiences narrated by 2 (1 male, 1 female) participants out of the 16 study participants;

*It is not always that we are happy as a couple reason being, he is moody and this is something which I never expected but that is how he is I cannot change him. The least I have done to deal with this is that I have learnt to be tolerant and when I observe that he is moody, I at times try to keep my mind busy by watching a movie, taking a walk or find something to do with the children. **Diana***

**Daniel** on the other hand had this to say about his wife

*One thing I discovered after marriage is that much as I thought she was not a talkative person only to learn that she is actually talkative and that she is ill-tempered which I did not know prior to marriage so really these aspects did not turn out according to my expectations.*

Being showered with a lot of money to spend on luxuries was one of the aspects that female students said they expected so much when they entered marriage as noted by 2 females out of the 16 participants, but then this expectation was not fulfilled according to their wishes and this is brought out in the following verbal accounts;

*With regards to money, I expected him to be giving me a lot of money but it did not turn out that way and it's not because he is mean but rather it's that thing where when he gets paid he shows me his pay slip and then together we make a budget and allocate funds depending on what is needed in the house and then eventually, the remaining money tends to be little to the point that I cannot start pressuring him to give me money to spend on personal luxuries. **Naomi***

**Charity** shared a similar thought with Naomi and said;

*We expected to have some kind of lots of more money in the family more especially by advancing our education which would result into promotions at work but it has not been fulfilled but still, we are hoping that it will happen in future.*

People who enter marriage come from their respective families hence, they expect to have a good relationship with their partner's relatives and as partners, they expect to support each other's families. Despite this being the case, 3 (1 male, 2 females) participants out of the 16 study participants brought out the following as the unfulfilled expectations regarding their spouse's family;

*Support to my extended family has not been fulfilled instead he just focuses on his side and when I ask all he tells me is that my parents are working and his are not working so it's only right that he focuses on his parents. This has negatively affected me in that, even me I have started developing that behaviour of not being willing to extend a helping hand to his relatives as well. Ireen*

The other participant complained about relatives' interference in their marriage and had this to say;

*They say "when you marry someone you marry the whole village" hence there are times when family tends to interfere in marriage leading to conflicts between me and my husband and this is something that I never really expected because my thinking is that a family should be there to support us and help us resolve issues when they arise. Janet*

While another participant expressed his disappointment over unfulfilled expectations by stating that;

*One of the things is that in my culture I am expected to make relatives who come to my home to feel welcomed but then you find that at times when we receive visitors from the village, there tends to be a bit of a problem because these people most often do not know how to use modern facilities such as the toilet so they would leave it in a bad state while at times we do not feed as we always do if there are lots of visitors home so you would find that my wife seems to be unhappy with these things hence not very accommodating of the visitors who come home and this is seen from her negative attitude. Anold*

There were other unfulfilled marital expectations that also emerged, as brought out by individual participants in this study and these included, diminishing transparency in marriage, not spending more time together as well as differences over religious affiliation. The verbatim below give

detailed explanations on how these expectations had not been fulfilled. On diminishing transparency for instance, one male participant said that he expected transparency to increase when he entered marriage but that was not the case hence he said this;

*When you are dating, there's that level of transparency that exists for example, you can leave your phone careless even if it does not have a password but with time you find that there is this thing when you start being insecure leaving your phone carelessly which is something I least expected yet I can no longer leave my phones carelessly and it's not like there is something secretive am doing but it's just that thing of wanting some level of privacy even when am married which is something I least expected. And this brings about unnecessary suspicions resulting in conflicts. **Ben***

Yet for **Ireen**, the issue of spending more time together with her husband is what seemed not to be fulfilled and she echoed the following words;

*I expected to be spending much time with him but it has not turned out to be that way because mostly he is busy.*

On the other hand, one male participant expressed his disappointment about the wife's resistance to change her religious affiliation and follow her husband as per agreed prior to marriage and thus he had this to say;

*The reason why I feel what I envisioned did not turn out as I expected is because, the first storm I faced in marriage was that of religion because prior to marriage my wife was UCZ and I am Catholic and she seemed to be fine with it because you just know in courtship there is some level of pretense but then when we married she used to say very bad things about Catholic such that even if at times she could join me in worship at Catholic I could clearly see that she was just being dragged. However, with the passage of time this problem was resolved and now she has joined me in Catholic. **Davis***

Although study participants expressed their happiness on the fulfillment of some of the marital expectation, they did not hold back from admitting that there were some things that went unfulfilled which was disheartening to them. A number of things were brought out as unfulfilled expectations and these included failure by men to adapt to married life such that they continued

spending more time and confiding in their friends instead of their wives and this complaint was lodged by the female participants. Participants also said they discovered some negative traits in their partner which they did not know while courting such as being moody, ill-tempered, and talkative but they said they devised mechanisms on how to cope with such. Unmet financial expectations more especially on the part of females was also highlighted in that the females expected to be showered with more money from their husbands after marriage but the reality of life turned out differently and they confessed that there was literally no enough money to spend owing to the financial demands of the family. Differences emanating from partners' immediate families were also highlighted as a problem. Furthermore, diminishing transparency in marriage was not left out and this came from the male participants who said that they could not feel comfortable leaving their mobile phone anyhow which they thought would not be the case when they married. Of course participants also lamented on the issue of partners not spending more time together due to demanding work schedules which they said is something they never wished for in marriage. Differences over religious affiliation was also mentioned as some partners were from different religious backgrounds prior to marriage of which the wife agreed to join the husband's religion but such became a source of conflict as the wife could not consent when she entered marriage but eventually such got to be resolved.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### **6.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the presentation of the findings for this study. This chapter however, presents the discussion of the findings of this study in a quest to answer the objectives which are; To find out the attributes that postgraduate students looked for in a potential marriage mate prior to their marrying or getting married, to understand the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed their preferred attributes and lastly to find out whether and how postgraduate students marital expectations had been fulfilled or not fulfilled in marriage based on their initial marital expectations. Implications of this study are also presented, after which a conclusion is made.

#### **6.1 Attributes that Postgraduate Students Looked for in a Potential Marriage Mate Prior to their Marrying or Getting Married**

##### ***6.1.1 Socioeconomic Status***

As Refahi (2015) put it, the foundation of a family and its optimal performance depends on many factors such as spouse selection. Owing to this assertion, findings generated in this study provided a basis for knowledge on attributes that influenced the participants' marriage mate choice. These attributes were categorized into socioeconomic status, physical appearance and internal qualities. On socioeconomic status, study participants brought out a number of attributes and these included education, type of occupation of a potential marriage partner and financial stability where females emphasized that they needed a man who was financially stable so that such a one would be able to provide for the family, and these findings align with what other scholars found (Bahdahdah and Tiemann, 2009; Gage and Hancock, 2002; Prakash and Sing, 2013; Boxer et al. 201). When it came to education however, female students preferred a man who had a higher education qualification than them while male students preferred a partner who had lower education qualification than them. These results are similar to what some studies reported that female college graduates tend to prefer potential male marriage partners who had

higher education than them while males were found to be more willing to marry someone with less education (Kalmijn, 2001; O'Neil, 2006; McClendon et al, 2014).

In terms of occupation, the majority of the students said that it did not matter as people's desires change as they grow older hence, what was more important was having a partner who was financially stable, responsible, able to make money and with good expenditure habits. Despite this however, there were still a few of them that felt that occupation mattered. For those with occupational preferences, some said they could marry someone from any occupation except a soldier, policeman/policewoman or anyone from the medical field. The reasons they gave were that, they did not like the idea that such professions involved night shifts in their duties and as for soldiers and policewomen when they go for operation elsewhere, chances of being unfaithful would be high. Additionally, participants said they did not like the smell of medicine so having someone in the medical field meant that they would be subjected to that, which they did not want. Findings from this study show similarities with the studies done by Abubakar (2002) in Kenya and Zondi (2016) in South Africa whose results also showed that occupational preferences played a role in mate selection among graduates even though their studies did not give the participants a voice to explain why they preferred partners with certain occupations. In a nutshell however, the findings of this study proved that occupational preferences had an influence on mate selection.

Religion was another vital aspect that influenced mate choice however, there were two varying views in that some of the students preferred a partner of the same religion and these findings are similar to what Maliki (2009) found in his study that students preferred to marry within their religious group. On the other hand, others said religious affiliation did not matter as they said what was more important was simply a partner who applied God's word in their life. These findings confirmed indeed that religion had an influence on mate choice as buttressed by Orisaremi and Alubo (2012) who said that in African countries with less advanced economies, religion is one of the influential factors in mate selection.

### ***6.1.2 Physical Appearance***

Study participants also said that physical appearance mattered to them and in this study some of the physical attributes they brought out included height where females preferred a man who was

taller than them and darker in complexion and with a non-hairy body. Males on the other hand were more concerned about having a woman who was beautiful and with a small body size. These study findings align with those of other scholars (Maliki, 2009; Becker, 1976; Furnham, 2009) who also found that complexion, physical beauty and height played a significant role in determining the choice of a marriage partner.

### ***6.1.3 Internal Qualities***

As noted by other scholars, people take into consideration the internal qualities of the person they would want to marry (Recheck et al. 2009; Maliki, 2009) and this was found to be true in this study as participants brought out some internal qualities they looked out for in a potential a marriage partner prior to their entry into marriage. In this study, participants said that they looked out for such internal attributes as humility, honesty, understanding, not too talkative, a good heart, intelligence, mature, respectful, patient, caring and with good leadership qualities. These findings show similarities with what other scholars found in their studies for instance, a caring heart, intelligence and trustworthiness were found to be among important internal qualities that influenced people to marry their partners (Zhang and Kline, 2009; Shackelford et al. 2005; Prakash and Singh, 2013).

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there was a contrast between the findings of this study with those of others when it came to intelligence and good health as attributes looked for in a potential mate in that in this study, males were the ones who placed much emphasis on wanting to have an intelligent partner while in Furnham's (2009) study, women were the ones that valued intelligence in a long term partner more than men. On health, females in this study were the ones who preferred a partner in good health while findings from Shackelford et al. (2005) revealed that men more than women valued in their potential mate good health. The overall findings of this study indeed show close similarities with studies conducted elsewhere when it comes to mate selection among graduates as studies undertaken indicated that when choosing a marriage mate, college students looked for such things as physical attractiveness, educational background, financial status, religion, intelligence among others (Abdullah et al. 2011; Badahdah and Tiemann, 2009; Maliki, 2009).

Overall, gender differences were noted in terms of male and female preferences of mate choice in that, results indicated that when male students were looking for a marriage mate, they placed more emphasis on such attributes as physical beauty, understanding, respect, not too talkative, small in body size, mature and intelligence. On the other hand, the female students placed more emphasis on attributes such as financial stability, height, love, dark-skinned complexion, someone with good leadership qualities, not with a hairy body, emotionally supportive, hardworking and not very handsome. These findings are in line with what other studies found that men more than women focused highly on their mate's good looks as an entry point to getting to know a lady with a view to marriage while women focused more on internal qualities (Schwarz and Hasserbrauck, 2012; Shackelford et al. (2005; Furnham, 2009; Tamuti et al. 2012).

## **6.2 Understanding the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed their preferred attributes?**

### ***6.2.1 Socioeconomic Status***

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) that was used to guide this study posited that people are motivated to maintain relationships based on the good outcomes that they expected those relationships to bring (Blau, 1964; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). Nock (1992) buttressed this point by stating that individuals make decisions based on the greatest offered benefit even as they interact. Thus, participants in this study admitted to the fact that their decision to marry a mate with certain attributes was motivated by certain motives. For example, men said that marrying a God-fearing woman was good for them as she would be trustworthy hence could not commit adultery and bring shame upon him, and that a woman with a Christian background would easily respect and submit to her husband. Females on the other hand said it was easy to resolve differences amicably if both partners were being guided by Godly principles which they believed lead to a long lasting marriage. The findings of this study however show a slight contrast from those of Maliki (2009) whose findings indicated that students preferred to marry from within their religious group but in this study, the main focus of the participants was simply a God-fearing person who could either belong to the same religion or could be of different religious affiliation.

In terms of education, female study participants preferred a man who was more educated than them in order to avoid the problem of a man feeling insecure and that with that education it would be easy to get a job and fend for the family financially. Females also believed that it was easier to relate with someone who was educated as their thinking would be aligned and this was also highlighted by other scholars (Bourdieu, 1984; Maliki, 2008). Male students on the other hand said all they needed was a woman who had some basic level of education and was able to speak English well so that she could be able to communicate using good English with not only the children at home but also with his colleagues at formal gatherings. Similar to these study findings, other studies also reported that education was found to be an important factor in marriage partner choice because similar educational background resulted in similar attitudes, values and beliefs among spouses even though female college graduates preferred to get married to a partner who had higher educational qualification than them, while males preferred to marry a partner who was less educated than them (Acitelli et. al (2001; Kalmijn, 2001; O'Neil, 2006; McClendon et al., 2014).

Financial stability on the other hand was deemed to be vital by both male and female participants. However, the motive for the males for marrying a financially stable woman was because they wanted their wife to be able to provide for their family even in an event that he lost his job or was no more and simply for the wife to supplement to a few of the family financial needs. On the other however, the females emphasised that they needed a man to be the main provider and not them bearing the huge burden of being the main financial providers in marriage hence, the reason they got motivated to marry a financially stable man. This validates the comment made by other scholars (Hardie and Lucas, 2010; Boxer et al. 2015) who pointed out that although both men and women placed value on dependability and stability, it was more so for women because previous studies showed that unstable men could cause financial strain for their women.

### ***6.2.2 Physical Appearance***

On physical appearance, female study participants said that they got drawn to their partner because he was tall in height which would increase their chances of having tall children as they did not want to have short children for they believed that men who were short in terms of height

had a certain negative attitude which they did not like. Also, the female study participants said their partner was dark in complexion and that was a plus because he would tone down the skin-color of their children. They said their preference for a dark-skinned man was because they suffered discrimination for being light-skinned when they were young where people called them ‘Zayelo’ while others mistook them for being coloured hence considered them to be mischievous ladies as coloureds are known to be like that generally. Furthermore, other female study participants said light skinned men were known to be cheaters so they did not want to be faced with such. As commented on by Becker (1976), individuals choose spouses on the basis of ascriptive characteristics such as being beautiful and charming. Findings from this study thus, revealed that male participants chose their partner because she was beautiful on the face and had curves which made it easy for the men to introduce their wife with pride and confidence to their friends, family and relatives as well as to feel free to attend social gatherings with their wife. In line with the findings of this study, Meltzer et al. (2014) in his study also found that partner physical attractiveness played a larger role in predicting husband’s satisfaction than predicting wives’ satisfaction in marriage.

### ***6.2.3 Internal Qualities***

In terms of internal attributes, both the male and female participants said they needed an understanding partner because such a one would be respectful and it would reduce the chances of facing a divorce which is a bad experience such that even the study undertaken by Tamuti et al. (2012) found that divorce was one of the main sources of fear of marriage. Secondly, both male and female participants also said that they saw a caring attitude in their partner which gave them the confidence that such a one would be able to take care of the children and to make a home a warm place for others be it relatives or friends. Additionally, disciplined behavior was also highlighted and under this internal quality, male participants noted that they married their woman because she was less talkative hence, such a one would protect their dignity by not yelling at him in front of others or tell others about his mistakes, and that a less talkative woman could not pick fights unnecessarily. Men also said that they did not want a woman who was a drunkard or into clubbing because the chances of being unfaithful would be high if a partner was into such as self-control is easily lost. This finding ties in well with what Vaillant and Wolff (2010) noted that men tend to reject unfaithful women, meaning that they are likely to suffer serious fitness costs

from infidelity hence, the reason men shun marrying women who are into alcohol or clubbing. Furthermore, female participants said they married their partner because he was humble, realistic and honest hence, did not come with a lot of fake promises which he would not fulfill. While one male said the intelligence of her partner moved him to marry her because he knew that she would help him to plan well for the needs of the family. Studies undertaken by other scholars (Abdullah et al. 2011; Ford et al. 2005; Prakash and Singh, 2013) show a similarity with the findings of this study that indeed intelligence is a valued attribute that motivate people when it comes to marriage mate selection.

As echoed by Alavi et al (2014), sociability which is about sharing friendliness plays a significant role in social life and communication. Thus, in this study, findings revealed that participants were motivated to marry their spouse because of the good and kind heart which they observed in their partner. Additionally, respect and open communication were other aspects that spouses discovered in their potential partner which made it easy to resolve differences and to correct each other when one partner did something wrong. All these were taken to be important aspects of social life and communication. The findings of this study are similar to those of McGee and Shevlin (2009) who in his study in USA found that people who were social and had a good sense of humor received significantly higher ratings of attractiveness and suitability than did those with an average or no sense of humor

## **6.3 Marital expectations**

### ***6.3.1 Fulfilled marital expectations***

Although the marriage institution has its own challenges, this study noted that it did have its good side as brought out by the study participants. Participants acknowledged that they did experience some level of happiness following the fulfillment of some of their marital expectations. For instance, they boasted of being loved, having a caring spouse and well-disciplined children brought up in a Godly way, their sexual needs were satisfied, partners were supportive both emotionally and in career pursuits. These are indeed fulfilled expectations because scholars argued that people mostly enter marriages for the reasons of inter alia survival, sexual gratification and progeniture and companionship among others (Weiss, 1997; Anyebe, cited in Ogiri, 2013; Tamuti et al. 2012). Female study participants expressed their gratitude that

relatives did not visit so regularly as the participants thought would be the case when they entered marriage which could have been a burden. Additionally, study participants said that it was interesting that they discovered new positive traits and talents in their partners which they did not know in the courtship phase. These positive traits included kindness and good business skills such as advertising goods, and these findings tie in well with what McNulty and Karney (2004) said that the level of satisfaction in marriage was dependent upon the positive skills partners brought to their relationship. On the basis of this, that is why scholars like Becker (1976; 1981) argued that individuals enter and remain in marriages only when such unions serve to optimize individual well-being. It is no wonder then that most participants in this study had stayed in marriage for a good number of years as indicated in table 1 in the appendix.

### ***6.3.2 Unfulfilled marital expectations***

Although study participants expressed their happiness on the fulfillment of some of the marital expectation, they did not hold back from admitting that there were some things that went unfulfilled which was disheartening to them. These unfulfilled expectations included failure by men to adapt to married life such that they continued spending more time and confiding in their friends instead of their wives and this complaint was lodged by the female participants. Participants also said they discovered some negative traits in their partner which they did not know while courting such as being moody, ill-tempered, talkative but they said they devised mechanisms on how to cope with such and that is, accepting their partner for who they are.

In the study carried out by Johnson (2015), results revealed that high expectations were negatively correlated with marital satisfaction, unless they were fulfilled, meaning fulfillment of expectations was positively correlated with marital satisfaction. In line with Johnson's findings (2015), this study found that unmet financial expectations on the part of females were highlighted as a disappointment. Females expected to be showered with more money from their husbands after being married, which they could spend on luxuries but the reality of life turned out differently and they confessed that there was literally no enough money left to spend on luxuries owing to the financial demands of the family which was disappointing on their part as they never expected it to be that way.

Differences emanating from partners' immediate family members were also highlighted as a problem as it triggered conflicts between partners. Some of these included unwillingness by a spouse to render financial assistance to their partner's immediate family; wife having a negative attitude toward husband's visiting relatives while in other instances it had to do with immediate family members interfering in the participants' marital affairs. Furthermore, diminishing transparency in marriage was not left out and this came from the male participants who said that they could not feel comfortable leaving their mobile phone anyhow and this raised suspicions and conflicts which they thought would not be the case when they married. Azzopardi (2007) discovered that women generally expressed expectations concerning togetherness, connectedness and increased emotional intimacy while men generally expressed expectations regarding independence and separateness. Owing to this, it is therefore not surprising that in this study, female participants lamented on the issue of partners not spending more time together due to demanding work schedules which they said is something they never expected in marriage.

Differences over religious affiliation was also mentioned as some partners were from different religious backgrounds prior to marriage of which the wife agreed to join the husband's religion but such became a source of conflict as the wife could not consent when she entered marriage but eventually such got to be resolved. Such experiences are not surprising as studies carried out by other scholars elsewhere reported that religion was an influential factor in the institution of marriage in African countries as it had a bearing on the marriage outcomes hence, most people preferred that their spouse should be of the same religion so as to have the same belief system (Orisaremi and Alubo; 2012; Maliki, 2009; Zhang and Kline, 2009).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE STUDY

#### 7.1 Conclusion

Marriage mate selection is indeed a serious matter as it is a lifetime decision. Owing to this, people did not pick on just anyone as a lifetime partner rather, they came up with attributes which they used as a yardstick to determine the kind of person they wanted to spend the rest of their life with. Findings from this study brought out a number of attributes that study participants looked out for in a potential marriage mate among which included education because they believed that marrying a fellow educated person made it easy to relate as their thinking would be aligned. Financial stability was important also so as to make it easy to provide for the family and also a God-fearing partner either of the same religion or different religious affiliation to avoid infidelity and conflicts as both would be guided by Godly-principles. Yet others said they could marry someone from any occupation except a soldier, police officer or anyone in the medical field because chances of cheating were high. On physical appearance, most females preferred a man who was tall in height for the sake of children's height advantage and dark in complexion so that children would not be very light. While the men mainly focused on having a partner who was beautiful on the face, with a small and curvy body structure so that they would feel confident to be seen in public with her and freely introduce her to their friends, workmates and relatives. Internal attributes that came out included loving, understanding, respectful, patient, well-disciplined in terms of behaviour meaning someone who was not into alcohol or clubbing, intelligence, good leadership qualities, caring, mature and honesty.

As for marital expectations, findings of this study showed that not everything that people expected to be fulfilled in marriage turned out to be exactly that way. Some of the marital expectations that were fulfilled included having happy families and well-disciplined children, satisfaction of sexual needs, partners being supportive both emotionally and in career pursuits and relatives not visiting regularly as the participants thought would be the case when they entered marriage which could have been a burden. Despite this however, a number of unfulfilled marital expectations were brought out and these were, failure by men to adapt to married life such that they continued spending more time and confiding in their friends instead of their wives

and this complaint was lodged by the female participants. Discovery of negative traits in a partner such as being moody, ill-tempered and talkative was another aspect that emerged in this study. Unmet financial expectations where females expected to be showered with lots of money which they would spend on personal luxuries but it did not turn out that way. Additionally, differences emanating from partners' immediate family members could not be avoided as participants lamented. Of course for the males, they confessed that that they thought they would no longer feel like they would want to maintain privacy in marriage but things did not turn out in that manner and such created unnecessary suspicions and conflicts in their marriage. Female participants on the other hand complained of not spending more time with their husbands as they had wished so prior to marriage. Differences over religious affiliation was also pinpointed in that wives agreed to join their husband's religion prior to marriage but such became a source of conflict as the wives were resistant to fulfill that promise after marriage.

In summary therefore, it was noted that not everything that people were initially looking for in a mate were what made them marry their partner, some of the traits that drew them to their partner were discovered while courting. However, study participants acknowledged that the institution of marriage is an enjoyable one but that did not mean that it did not have problems rather it was about mates making adjustments because not all marital expectations get to be fulfilled according to people's wishes. Therefore, they recommended that if one is to enter a successful marriage, it would be better not to exaggerate marital expectations in their thoughts instead people ought to be realistic and they should be ready to make adjustments in order to accommodate the unexpected occurrences in marriage that way, it may reduce chances of divorce among the young men and women contemplating marriage.

## **7.2 Implications of the study**

1. Most participants seemed to be overly expectant before entering the institution of marriage overlooking the fact that it is two humans with different backgrounds hence, marriage would not always be rosy.
2. Although in the past only women needed a financially stable man for a marriage partner, this study revealed that it is no longer the case now in that men also prefer a financially stable woman

for a mate hence, the need for women to work hard and be financially stable as well if they are to attract men on the marriage market.

3. What some participants initially looked for in a potential mate did not exactly end up being the reason for deciding to settle with that particular one but they discovered more interesting and positive traits thus, as people date or court they should endeavor to learn more about their partner instead of just focusing on having fun all the time.

4. Parental influence seemed to have had no much influence on the participants' choice of a marriage mate which used to be a common practice in the past but not anymore.

### **7.3 Future Prospects**

- There is need for a study to be conducted on how people adjust to unfulfilled marital expectations so as to make marriage work. This will in turn enlighten single people to adjust their thinking where marital expectations are concerned and to prepare their minds psychologically that unexpected occurrences in marriage are inevitable. This may in turn help them develop realistic marital expectations and to better cope with few unmet marital expectations, thereby making marriage a happy institution.

### **7.4 Study Limitations**

- Some participants (only one) felt like it was culturally inappropriate for the researcher to ask him questions about marriage owing to the fact that the researcher was not married at the time of conducting this study hence, refused to participate.
- Owing to the small sample size in this study, though appropriate for a qualitative study but the findings cannot be used for generalization.
- For some of the participants who had been married for many years, it was difficult to recall certain things in terms of what they looked for in a potential marriage partner prior to marrying or getting married.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Summary of the demographic characteristics of the study participants (all married)

Participant	Sex	Age	Occupation	Number of years in marriage	
1	<b>Janet</b>	Female	41- 45	Lecturer	18
2	<b>Roy</b>	Male	36 – 40	Teacher	7
3	<b>Anold</b>	Male	41- 45	Teacher (Headteacher)	22
4	<b>Daniel</b>	Male	41 – 45	Teacher	12
5	<b>Charity</b>	Female	41 – 45	Teacher	4
6	<b>Ben</b>	Male	41 – 45	Social Worker	14
7	<b>Harry</b>	Male	41- 45	Police Officer	21
8	<b>Davis</b>	Male	36 – 40	Lecturer	9
9	<b>Jack</b>	Male	31-35	Agricultural Assistant (Civil Servant)	1 year 3 months
10	<b>John</b>	Male	36 – 40	Teacher	15
11	<b>Sarah</b>	Female	26 – 30	Student	1 year 11 months
12	<b>Racheal</b>	Female	36 – 40	Inspector (Parastatal)	6
13	<b>Ireen</b>	Female	26 – 30	Tutor	2
14	<b>Natasha</b>	Female	31 – 35	Benefits Officer (Parastatal)	7
15	<b>Diana</b>	Female	36 – 40	Economist (Civil Servant)	11
16	<b>Naomi</b>	Female	26 – 30	Banker	3

## Appendix 2: Information Sheet

### Who Am I?

My name is Lister Banda. I am a Master of Sociology student at the University of Zambia. In order to be awarded a Master's Degree, I am required to undertake a research.

**Research Title:** *Lived Experiences of Married Postgraduate Students at UNZA Regarding Marriage Mate Selection.*

You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as one of the married people. However, it is important to understand the rationale for doing this research before making a decision. Kindly, read through the information provided below. Whatever decision you will make will be respected.

### Purpose of the study

This research is about the Lived Experiences of Married Postgraduate Students at UNZA Regarding Marriage Mate Selection. I believe that as people contemplate marriage, there are certain attributes they consider in a potential marriage mate and they have motives for wanting someone with those preferred attributes. When they enter marriage, they expect a fulfilment of those things they envisioned. This study seeks to contribute to an understanding on whether what people envisage to benefit from a person who **possesses** their preferred attributes often get to be fulfilled when people enter marriage or not. The study's aim is therefore, to get your views with regard to among other things:

- What qualities people often look for in a prospective marriage mate
- The motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed those preferred attributes
- The joys and challenges associated with being married to a person who possess the qualities you were looking for in a mate
- Whether the marital expectations have been fulfilled based on the initially preferred attributes

### Do I have to participate?

Participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, I will give you the information sheet which you will keep. I will also request you to consent by way of signing a form. Kindly note, that you have the right to withdraw from the study anytime without even giving reasons. You are also free not to answer certain questions and can stop the interview any time you feel like.

### Interview Process

If you decide to participate in this study, I will have a one-on-one interview with you where I will ask questions. With your permission, I intend to audio-record and transcribe the interview. The interview will take about 30 to 45 minutes and you will decide where and when you would like us to have the interview.

### Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the questions I will ask you.

However, I do not wish for this to happen. If you feel some of the questions in the interview are too personal or if talking about them makes you feel uncomfortable, you are free not to answer.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefits to you, but your participation is likely to help students who are contemplating marriage to have an understanding on whether what people envisage to benefit from a person who possesses their preferred attributes oftenly get to be fulfilled or not when people enter marriage. In turn, it may help those students who are not yet married but are contemplating marriage to avoid potential divorce that comes with unrealistic expectations of marriage.

### **Reimbursements**

Please note that no incentives will be given to you for participating in this study. However, your willingness to spare some time so as to participate in this study will be highly appreciated.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Everything that will be discussed during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. You are not obliged to provide your name. All your identifiers will be sufficiently removed from the transcripts. This will ensure that you are protected from being identified. The interview will not be discussed with other people, except my supervisors are the only ones who will see the anonymised transcripts. The reason for them seeing the transcripts will be to ensure quality of data being collected.

### **Findings**

The findings of this study will form part of the dissertation and it is hoped that it will contribute to an understanding on whether what people envisage to benefit from a person who possess their preferred attributes oftenly get to be fulfilled or not when people enter marriage. In turn, it may help those students who are not yet married but are contemplating marriage to avoid potential divorce that comes with unrealistic expectations of marriage.

For any further information, you may contact my supervisors:

Dr. Masauso Chirwa  
Mobile: +260960633642/+260966875590  
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**Thank you!**

**Appendix 3: Consent Form**

Research Topic: **Lived Experiences of Married Postgraduate Students at UNZA Regarding Mate Selection**

**Research Supervisors:** Dr. Harriet Ntalasha/ Dr. Masauso Chirwa

**Kindly tick the appropriate one**

I hereby agree to voluntarily take part in the study. **Yes/No**

The researcher has given me the information sheet. **Yes/No**

The researcher has explained to me in writing the purpose of the study. **Yes/No**

I agree that she can audio-record the interview. **Yes/No**

I understand that the information will be confidential and that all personal information will be removed to protect my identity. **Yes/No**

The researcher has explained that I have the right to withdraw from the study anytime I want to and I am not obliged to give reasons. **Yes/No**

.....  
Signature

Date:.....

## **Appendix 4: Interview Guide**

### **AIMS**

This dissertation has its main aim to find out the factors that influence marriage mate choice among married postgraduate students and whether what they expected in a potential marriage mate prior to marriage have been fulfilled based on the initially preferred attributes and their expected benefits. The following will be the objectives:

- d) To find out the attributes that postgraduate students looked for in a potential marriage mate prior to their marrying or getting married
- e) To understand the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed those preferred attributes?
- f) To find out whether and how postgraduate students marital expectations have been fulfilled in marriage based on the initially preferred attributes

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- a) What attributes were the postgraduate students looking for in a potential marriage mate before they got marriage?
- b) What were the motives for opting to have a marriage mate who possessed those preferred attributes?
- c) After marrying or getting married, how have the postgraduate students' marital expectations been fulfilled based on the initially preferred attributes?

### **Demographic Data**

- 1. What is your sex?
- 2. Taking a range of ages 15-19, 20-25, 26-30, 31-35 and so on and so forth, which age brackets do you fall under?

### **Tell me a little about yourself and your family?**

- 3. What is your occupation?
- 4. Who is the breadwinner in your family? Do you live with your spouse?
- 5. a) Do you have children?
  - b) How old are your children?
  - c) What are the children doing? Are they at school?

d) How many are at school? What grades are they doing?

e) In total, how many people live in your household? How many of these help in providing for the family?

### **Joys and Challenges of being in Marriage**

6. How long have you been married?
7. Prior to your marriage, what attributes were you looking for in a potential marriage mate?
8. What factors influenced the choice of your current marriage partner?
9. What were the motives for selecting a partner with the attributes you have mentioned?
10. What are some of the behavioural traits that you observed in your current mate that are vital in social life and communication?
11. What are some of the occupational preferences you had in a potential marriage mate and why?
12. Prior to marriage, what are some of the marital expectations you had?
13. If your marital expectations were fulfilled, in what ways were they fulfilled?
14. If your marital expectations were not fulfilled, what were the reasons as to why?
15. Based on the years you have been married, would you say that what you envisioned in marriage is what it turned out to be? Please explain.
16. What was life like before you were married?
17. What in your opinion is the most important thing to know about a marriage partner before one marries and why?
18. What tips would you give unmarried students? Other married people like yourself?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add relating to our discussion?

**Thank You!**

**Appendix 5: Work Plan/Project Time Scale**

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY	TIME SCALE												
	Jan. 2019	Feb. 2019	Mar. 2019	April. 2019	May. 2019	June. 2019	July. 2019	Aug. 2019	Sept. 2019	Oct. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar to October 2020
Literature Review	■												
Preparation of draft proposal writing		■	■	■									
Presentation of proposal at departmental level					■								
Preparation of data collection tools						■							
Revising the data collection tools by supervisors							■						
Submission of proposal for ethical clearance								■					
Data Collection									■	■			
Data Transcription and Analysis											■	■	
Report Writing													■

## Appendix 6: Budget

Description of Items	Quantity	Unit Cost (Average)	Total Cost
<b>1. Stationary</b>			
Reams of Paper (A4)	2 Reams	K70	K280
Blue Pens	5	K3	K15
Ink for Printer	2	K450	K900
Stapler	2	K15	K30
Staples	4	K15	K60
Note book	2	K8	K16
Tape Recorder	1	K800	K800
Flash Disk	1	K80	K80
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>K2, 181</b>
<b>2. Literature Review</b>			
Internet	15 Gb bundles	K100 x 3	K300
<b>Sub-total</b>			<b>K300</b>
<b>3. Secretarial Services</b>			
Interview Guides Photocopying	5	K1	K5
Information sheets	18	K1	K18
Report printing	100 pages (3 copies)	K300	K300
Binding of final copies of proposal	3 copies	K20	K60
<b>Sub-total</b>			<b>K383</b>
<b>4. Professional fees</b>			
Bus fare to and from sources of data	10 days	K50	K500
Lunch allowance	10 days	K20	K200
Talk time for communication	From start to the end	K180	K180
<b>Sub-total</b>			<b>K880</b>
<b>Total Cost for all items</b>			<b>K3,744.00</b>
<b>Contingency at 10%</b>			<b>K374.4</b>
<b>Grand total</b>			<b>K4,118.4</b>

