

Today's Youth in Nigeria: How we are finding friends/spouses ...

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How do young people fall in love, starting partnership, dating a possible partner for marriage? What roles are the parents playing, and the churches, the tribes?

Introduction

Nigeria is a country situated in West-Africa, the largest country in Africa. Nigeria is also known as the "Giant of Africa". It has a population of about 148 million. Just as it is large it is also diverse having many tribes with different cultures and traditions. However there are three major tribes in Nigeria, these are the Yoruba found in the western part of Nigeria, The Igbo located in the eastern Nigeria and the Hausa in the northern part of the country. Because of the diversity, one can hardly give a picture of the typical situation of finding a life partner in Nigeria; however in this speech I will try to give a general overview of what is obtainable in each case.

1. How do young people fall in love – starting a partnership?

When we talk about partnership, it's a relationship that involves two or more people, but in this case it involves two people of opposite sex, coming together for a common goal which is in this case is: love. Falling in love can be a deliberate action where the individual involve plan or accept to do so, it can also be impulsive taking place suddenly without the individual planning for it. Falling in love begins with the two people involve meeting and this can come in various forms.

- a) It may involve a third party
- b) It may involve just the two parties

In the case where starting a relationship involves a third party: one of the partners is introduced to the other, with a suggestion that they will make a good pair, it could take the following forms:

- the parent of the two parties can come together based on mutual understanding or past relationship, to agree that their children should get married to each other, to strengthen the band of friendship that already exist between the two families. And where this decision is taken, the two partner are then made to comply to the decision by starting a relationship
- it might also be that one of the parent (mostly the parent of the male) may see a virtue in a young girl and decided to recommend the lady to there son for marriage. Sometimes also a man may be based far away from his hometown and when he is ready to marry, he can implore his parent to see out a good wife for him from his hometown and when the parent make a choice for him, he naturally accept and start a relationship with the girl of his parent choice.
- in other instances the pastors of the churches can suggest two members of there church of possible marriage partners, because of the respect he has from his members as a spiritual father, most of the time the individuals tend to comply. A friend or a family member can also serve as the catalyst in starting a relationship, by introducing or recommending a partner they deemed suitable.

Falling in love can also happen the other way round, where the two individual involved meet on neutral ground, in the course of their daily activities and take to each other, there by falling in love to each other in this case, the man usually makes the first move at expressing his love to the lady. It is considered a taboo for a girl to make the first move at expressing her love to a man. It is socially unacceptable.

2. Dating a possible partner for marriage!

After the two individuals have consented to start a relationship or partnership, dating may begin, although in some cases especially where the parents are the initiatory of the relationship, there may not be any form of dating at all, the wedding plans will be started right away where as in most cases the two partners got to know each other by spending time together mostly at the lady's house, the man is expected to bring gift to the girl when he comes visiting to indicate his seriousness, as the dating proceeds and the two parties felt that they should go ahead and get married, then they go for a formal introduction to both families.

The role of the parent

In Nigeria the role of the parent in finding a life partner is very paramount, in the sense that the parents play a major role in almost every step. In some cultures it is solely the responsibility of the parent to choose partners for their wards and arrange the marriage, with the two partners having little or no to say regarding the issues. As in other cultures the man may be involved while the girl may just have to consent to the decision of her parent. But some allow both the man and the girl to make decisions. This depends on the tribe. Usually after the partners have dated they go for a formal introduction to their parent, to inform them of their intention to be married and to seek their consent. The decision of their parents determines whether the two will get married or not. The parents try to get information about the partner and their background, they found out about the tribe, occupation, family and characters of the partner. If either parent of the parties involved is not satisfied with their findings, they may not consent to the union, the two parties will have to oblige to the decision of their parents.

The role of the tribe:

In the case where the parent consent to the marriage, certain procedures are followed depending on the tribe of the individuals involve. In some culture the man will be required to work in the girl's parent farm for a certain period of time, in others the man may be required to build a hut for the girl's parent. Where as some may require the man to present a token which may be wine, kolanut, salt, an animal etc. All this is done to indicate the man's interest in marrying their daughter. The family of the man usually come formerly to the girls parent to ask for the girls hand and in that meeting the pride price (dowry) is been settled, if they are accepted by the girls parent. Mostly the pride price will include money and food items which the man's family are required to pay before or on the day of the traditional marriage.

The traditional marriage is a ceremony, which is in some tribes serve as the wedding, while in others; it may be just a procedure that leads to the wedding. The essence of the traditional marriage is to create a forum for both families to interact with each other, and also it is a time for the payment of the bride's price by the man, as well as

other requirements for the marriage. It also involves eating, drinking and dancing. Special prayers are offered by both parents for the couples to bless them and wish them a happy married life. In some tribes, this is usually a big occasion that attracts both families, friends relations, where as in other cultures it's a very small gathering made up of just the two families.

The role of the church:

Usually after the couples have informed their parent and receive their consent, they also tend to inform the church, where they are made to go through some marriage counselling, in that forum the couples are been counselled on what to do and expect before, during and after the wedding. The church also send the couples to the hospital to conduct certain tests such as genotype test, HIV test, and pregnancy test and in situation where the lady is found to be pregnant, the church will not wed them and if one of them is found to be HIV positive the wedding will not take place, also if both of them are "AS" in genotype the church also advice them not to get married to prevent them from given birth to a child who is sickle-celled. However where the couples satisfied all the conditions, a wedding date is fixed and the pastor join the couples in wedlock.

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