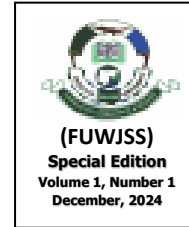


# **HUNGER AND PREVALENCE OF EXTRA-MARITAL AFFAIRS AMONG YOUNG MARRIED FEMALE COUPLES IN ILORIN, NIGERIA**



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## **Abstract**

Extra-marital affairs have become common in modern society. Extra-marital affair connotes an immoral act that has brought most families into sudden or prolong distrust, partial separation, and even divorce. With growing economic hardship manifesting in hunger, most married couples tend to justify extra-marital affair as a means of survival. Using the rational choice theory, this paper examines extra-marital affairs among young female couples in Ilorin, Nigeria. Data for the paper emerged through in-depth interviews (IDIs) with eighteen participants. Findings revealed that extra-marital affairs have become pronounced among married young female couples in Ilorin, Nigeria due to hunger and economic hardship in the country. The paper concludes that key determinants of extra-marital affairs among young female couples in Ilorin reside in hunger and economic hardship. The paper recommends that religious clerics, government agencies and policy makers should play critical roles in remodeling the family institution while government at all levels should create enabling environment to improve standards of living for citizens.

**Keywords:** Extra-marital affairs, family, hunger, marriage, rational choice

### **Introduction**

Marriage or marital affair is a culturally recognized union between two individual partners in a close relationship which historically and in some jurisdiction specifically involve a man and a woman. This most solemn, sacred and serious union into which people enter establishes rights and obligations between them as well as between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws. It is sacred because it is established by God the almighty. It is a bonded relationship that is knout together between a man and a woman and so close and intimate that their entire future will be profoundly influenced by it. Getting married is a life time experience that is often cherished and looked forward to with great enthusiasm, hope and expectations of eventual fruitful married life.

Okoie, Ukah and Nwoga (2016) asserted that when couples get married, they project establishing a happy and joyous home devoid of rancour, acrimony, violence, conflict or extramarital relationship. However, the institution of marriage has been subjected to numerous challenges in recent times considering the fact that the challenges of the twenty first century contemporary societal expectations have made some marriages to experience distress, frustrations and uncompromising experiences that have had negative implications on them and caused extramarital relationship. Entry into marriage is always an experience but it is often discovered that the journey through the marriage life is full of intricacies with unpleasant experiences that one cannot deny.

In Nigeria, studies have being conducted on family and marital problems. In view of these, there have been various research interests in the study of marriage problem so much that, there is no doubt that the country is beset with a rising incidence and prevalence of separation and divorce cases after marriage (Audu, 2016). There have been series of several marital problems but the issue of extramarital affairs cannot be over emphasize as an influencer to separation and divorce and in some cases, death of love ones. Ayannuga and Adenuji (2017) assert that marital compatibility is germane in the sphere of

marriages and it involves a lot of effort for its sustenance. Marital stability here is not only a value term but also a relative term which implies firmness and strength to endure under hard and as well, as easy circumstances. There is a strong alignment between healthy marriages and mental health. Successful marriage and married life will be able to meet many of mental and physical needs in a safe environment and with significant influence on individuals' mental health.

The marriage institution is in fact a reflection of the decadence and general disorder that is evident in the Nigerian society. Nigeria is a religious nation and vast majority of Nigerians, take issues of religion and religious practices as very important aspect of their lives. Also, marriage and religion influence various dimensions of life, including physical health and longevity of life, mental health and happiness, economic well-being and raising of children yet extramarital affairs amongst couples is a major threat to this belief system and poses a risk to marital happiness.

The problem of extramarital affair goes beyond bound due to the violation of marital vows and norms guiding married life. It could impact the intimacy level between couples and could as well create emotional distance by thwarting the dynamics of a balanced and happy marriage. The violation occasioned by extramarital affairs could take different dimensions. It could be sexual in nature, emotional or mental (Leeker & Carlozz 2012). Couples may be exposed to physiological, sociological and psychological trauma as a result of extramarital affair indulged in (Obi, 2003). There is also the health risk angle attached to these kinds of affairs. It predisposes married people to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections like gonorrhoea, syphilis, Human Immune Virus (HIV) that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and candidiasis among others which could lead to damaging illness such as infertility (Obi, 2003).

In line with the problems associated to this study, Schnieder, Irons and Corley (2018) posited that nearly 60% of the partners who cheated in marriages, suffered psychological problems and depression as a result of disclosure of the extramarital affair from their spouse. Other negative consequences attached include weak relationship with the children, parents, friends and this could have legal consequences

(Blow & Harnett, 2007). The end product of extramarital affairs is unstable homes and families.

In spite of all these problems encountered by married couples in Nigeria, the high rate of hunger and starvation in most homes in Ilorin metropolis cannot as well be over emphasized. This is because some husbands are irresponsible to their task while the wives on the other hand, wanted divorce as a means to free themselves from worries and marital bond in the face of poverty and food insecurity, and holding to the fact that human insecurity correlates with low levels of socio-economic development (Adah & Abasilim, 2015). In view of this, the security challenges bedevilling the entire northern part of Nigeria and with its attendant mass exodus of displaced people from the region into Ilorin metropolis has led to the rapid growth in the city's population and the attendant food shortage and increased vulnerability to food shock (Omotosho, Muhammad-Lawal & Ismaila, 2014). However, the evidence of this shows in the mass looting of Covid-19 palliative warehouse in Ilorin, Kwara State, where food items like rice, spaghetti, instant noodles, garri, and other food stuffs that was given by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development were carted away alongside the Nigeria Customs command that was also burgled as well as Palms Mall, Shoprite, and other prominent shops in year 2020 during the Covid-19 Pandemic era, (HumAngle, 2020). It is against this backdrop that this study tends to examine hunger and increasing prevalence of extramarital affairs among young married female couples in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state, Nigeria. As it will add to the gap of knowledge since this has not been accessed and discussed in available literature.

### **Incidence and Prevalence of Extra-Marital Affairs**

Extramarital affair destroys many marriages and relationships regardless of culture, gender, age and nationality (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014; Sharpe, Walters & Goren, 2013). Approximately 20-40% of men and 20-25% of women engage themselves in a minimum of one extramarital affair in their life time (Gemmer 2012). According to Milhausen, Janssen and Mark (2011), 25-50% of divorced cases in Western countries were as a result of extramarital affairs. Bahareh (2011) also posited that, based on research reports, 90% of all divorces

have their root cause in extramarital relationship. In the same vein, Idemudia and Mulaudzi (2019) asserts that having extramarital affairs among married couples is the main concern that affects most marriages, with its dreadful effects accounting for over 90% of divorces in South Africa. It has been identified that a limited number of marriages among young couples between the ages of 18 and 35 in South Africa last beyond five years, duly because divorce has become an accepted alternative to resolving their marital problems (Mohlalotle et al. 2018). Matshidze and Nemitandani (2017) posited that having an extramarital affair is not something an African wife is likely to contest.

Female extramarital affair is the new trend because extramarital sex by men is socially tolerated and in many respects, even socially rewarded (Addai, 2017). The incidence and prevalence of married men's participation in extramarital sex in Nigeria is well documented (Lawoyin and Larsen, 2002; Mitsunaga, Powell, Antonia, Heard, Nathan, & Larsen., 2005). However, married women these days venture into extramarital relationship as though morals have been decayed, no shame and no worries, it has become the other side of a coin, while children grow to perceive this in some homes. According to Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013), it is a very difficult issue for any marriage to continue to exist smoothly or for any family to continue to thrive peacefully in the face of a case of extramarital affair relationships, involving any member of the marriage or family.

Studies consistently prove that there is considerable variation in the practice of having extramarital affair not only across countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also by region within countries (Kimuna & Djamba 2005). At the national level, reported rates of extramarital affairs among married men within the last year range from as low as 4.7% in Rwanda to 28.6% in Tanzania (INSR and Marco 2006; National Bureau of Statistics and Macro 2005). Within countries, there is also marked variation. In Zambia, men living in the Southern and Western Provinces were significantly more likely to have extramarital sex than men living elsewhere (Kimuna & Djamba 2005). In Malawi, married men are more likely to report having extramarital affairs in the southern region than in the northern region (National Statistical Office & Macro 2001).

Young married couples especially men in Malawi are faced with different forms of extramarital relationship, such as physical, emotional, opportunistic, romantic and commemorative extramarital affairs either during any one wife's menses, pregnancy, or the post-partum abstinence (Reniers & Tfamily 2008). Idemudia and Mulaudzi (2019) indicated two types of cheating behaviours among which is emotional and sexual extramarital affair. In the former a married individual develops a deep emotional bond with someone other than their partner and cheats on their partner. In the latter, the married partner engages in sexual intercourse with someone other than their partner. One of the most recognised or experienced form of extramarital affair among young married couples is physical affair. These type of relationship may differ in meaning, levels of emotional pain caused, and consequences for each couple (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014), and often differ in nature from person to person (Pour, Ismail, Jafaar & Yusop, 2019).

In Nigeria, empirical studies on extramarital affairs cannot be undermined, although limited available evidence points to high levels of extramarital sexual relations in the country. Isiugo-Abanihe (1994) argued that preoccupation by researchers and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with adolescent reproductive health and sexuality has tended to give a false impression since time immemorial that all is well with men and women in marital unions. Indeed, the data demonstrated that men and women do engage in sex outside their marital union thus make them vulnerable to sexually transmitted infection (STI), including HIV/AIDS. About 54% of Nigerian men and 39% of women have had extramarital affairs (Isiugo-Abanihe 1994).

Orubuloye, Caldwell, and Caldwell (1990, 1991) confirmed a high incidence and prevalence of extramarital affairs among the Ekiti of southwestern Nigeria. They estimate that 55% of rural men in monogamous unions and 60% of their urban counterparts engaged in extramarital sexual affairs during the year preceding their study. The corresponding figures for men in polygynous marriage were 36% and 47%, respectively. They noted further that rural women in polygamous union have higher sexual networking than monogamously married ones. This is, in fact, in keeping both with

local testimony and with reports from across Africa (Orubuloye et al., 1990).

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Saliu (2014), using theories in social sciences research gives illumination to such inquiry. Rational Choice Theory (RCT) is used to guide this study. RCT origins date back centuries by philosopher Adam Smith. RCT in social interactions explains why people enter into or end individual and group relationships. It further explains why people make the choice they do, as people weigh risks, cost and benefits before making decisions. RCT was adapted in order to investigate the meaning behind extramarital relationship as it occurs between married couples because, even when a choice seems irrational, there are reason(s) behind it. Rational Choice Theory was adapted to examine the increasing rate of extramarital affairs in order to explain the social vice as a phenomenon because, all changes occur based on individual actions. RCT was adapted in this study to explore why people make the choice they do with/without consequences, and by understanding individual and collective behaviors. RCT helps to pinpoint partners who deliberately choose to go into extramarital relationship based on specific costs and rewards. Rational choice theory asserts that all behavior is rational, any type of action can be examined for underlying rational motivations. Hence, RCT can only be analytically “explained” When an event, action, social process or institution can best be explained in terms of the rational choices of individual actions (Boudon 1981).

### **Research Methodology**

The study was conducted in Ilorin metropolis, and Ilorin metropolis consists of three major local government areas (LGAs) which are: Ilorin West, East and South LGAs. Ilorin is the capital city of Kwara state that lies in the north central region of Nigeria. Kwara state has a land mass of about 36825km<sup>2</sup> and with population of 2.37 million (2006 census). It shares boundary to the North with Niger state, while to the South, with Osun and Ekiti states, and to the East, with Oyo state and to the West, with Kogi state respectively. Kwara state has 16 LGAs and Ilorin being the metropolis, is largely dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group with Baruba’s and Fulani’s as

the minority groups. This study was conducted in Ilorin Metropolis and within the three local government areas that made up the state capital. The study area was purposively chosen for being the most densely populated area of the state where both indigenous and aliens domicile irrespective of tribe or religion.

The study adopted multi-stage technique, comprising cluster, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Thus, three (3) LGAs (namely Ilorin West, East, and South local government areas) were selected through cluster sampling technique among the 16 existing LGAs in the State. In each of the selected local government areas, a community was purposively chosen. To reach the participants, a major street was purposely selected and a snowball sampling method was used to select the eligible participants, who were within the age range of 18 and 35 years old. A total number of six (6) female participants were selected from each street in each community, and the total sample size was eighteen (n=18). Ethically, the participants were told about the rationale for the study and gave their consents before the commencement of the interviews. The study also considered that a sample size of 18 is acceptable for a qualitative study to provide sufficient data for theoretical saturation (Nelson, 2017).

Qualitative method of data collection was adopted, and the in-depth interview (IDI) was used for the study, to collect data from the participants. And with the aid of an audio recorder which was as well used for adequate coverage and with the permission from the participants. The audio records were transcribed and categorized into themes to shade more light on the outcomes and non-verbal cues, and other important information were also written on a field note pad. Ethical approval was obtained to carry out this study, while the participants' consents were sought and proper explanations regarding to the study were made clearly to each of the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected for this study. Data were first transcribed.

### **Findings and Discussions**

The results are presented in themes. These themes are: reasons for the increasing prevalence of extramarital affairs among young



married female couples, and determinants of extramarital affairs among young married female couples

### **Reasons for the increasing prevalence of extramarital affairs among young female couples**

The participants were asked question on the increasing prevalence of extramarital affairs among them. And based on their responses, 12 out of the 18 participants noted the reasons why they chose to indulge in the act. They were of the view that the keeping extramarital relationship was not of their choice. One of the participants has this to say:

It isn't my fault, my husband has three other wives while am the third. We are four and he hardly can satisfy our needs adequately. Aside having sex with him, my children needs are pending, I have three kids and other wives have theirs too. Feeding, clothing, and schooling are serious burden that lies most on my neck and my tailoring business isn't moving well. Hardly will the children go to disturb him. He does the little he can and watches us do the rest. Although he has a means of livelihood but the hardship situation in the country has rendered him useless for some time now. I only do this to assist him/my children from suffering – (28 years-old, housewife).

In the same vein, another participant expressed her reason as thus:

I am a mother of five children, four boys and a girl, my husband weaves traditional clothes called 'Aso-Ofi/Oke' and I use to work as roadside sweeper for the state government and being paid eighteen thousand naira before downsized by the new regime. The demand for my husband weaved cloths dropped from usual and he had to switch to Okada motor bike riding for someone, and he later bought his own which was stolen few months after purchase. He didn't see to collect, ride and deliver from any one again and the hardship becomes fervently increasing, I sold all my marriage gifts/assets due to the fact that my children and I are suffering and hungry. He was pained and bitter when the children are sent home from

school. Just of recent, he asked me to go out and hustle perhaps there might be helper out there. I went out and met a man I attached myself on and he took me out, but on the way he asked me why I am out for this. I explained it's the hardship that had cut across the nation and he asked if my husband is aware. I confirmed he was and even wanted to put a call through to him but he stopped me and gave ten thousand naira free without any touch. This is to an extent, the reasons why extramarital affairs is on the run she says – (35 years-old, housewife).

According to another participant:

I love my husband dearly and he loves me too, he is a radio electrician while I sell petty provision store in front of his shop. We have four children with the most senior age 16 years in Senior Secondary School. Thus, with incessant power outage and coupled with the economic hardship, he hardly gets job doing. My petty trade got exhausted on feeding while he chose to go on labour jobs and he most time doesn't get any. To eat becomes a big problem and my children school fees is another issue on him. He was the one that even send me out to source for money since things becomes very hard for us. And since then, I have been on having extramarital affairs with men who will pay me money for family upkeep. Although is not his fault, the economic hardship in Nigeria today is about survival of the fittest – (35 years-old, housewife).

Also, a female participant aged 30, stressed that she got into extramarital affairs through the smart phone her husband bought for her. I am used to social media handle for instance, facebook, histogram, whatsapp and others. It is fun though. Thus, another participant equally has this to say:

I am a graduate and remained a full housewife, not until when the economic became worse that my husband couldn't provide the family needs adequately enough again and with just two kids. He is a civil servant and fortunately I got employed too as an administrator in one of the universities, my level changed and I start having a working class friends, not until I got fixed in a mess with one of my boss then I started keeping extramarital relationship outside my

marriage. It pains me though but there is nothing to do about it after all, men do cheat too – (28 years-old, wife).

From the results, it is proven that daily life experiences and common sense tend to confirm that when members of a given marriage or family lack enough financial resources for feeding, clothing and shelter, anger and frustration take the place of happiness and joy within the group while backbiting, nagging and grudges take the place of love and sharing. Under this condition, one can expect nothing less than extramarital relationship in such marriage. Higher incomes for husband have been acknowledged to increase marital stability and happiness. Mba (2015) pointed that earnings have direct impact on family relations and that an increase in earning elevates the standard of living for the couples. When a husband and wife love themselves, nothing will make them to cheat on each other. Getting into any marital obligation without the necessary tools and skills does not make one a good couple or a successful marriage. Extramarital affair among couples is one of the most wrenching experiences a couple can endure. Extramarital affairs erupts when either of the spouses find out that the way it was glittering when viewed from outside is not the same inside, or with individuals with less self-control and deeper dissatisfaction of sexual desire (Audu, 2016). Better still, when certain conditions or situations that go beyond feminine absorptions warrant. Women/wives are expected to be loved, cared for, and by extension showed love and care upon their children. Where this is absent, they themselves tend to look outward for alternative means rather than seeing their kids languishing in hunger and starvation. Therefore, social network, job opportunity excitement/peer influence, sexual dissatisfaction, lack of means of family livelihood (such as feeding, clothing, schooling, etc) are the reasons why young female married couples goes into extramarital affairs. Thus, extramarital affair among young female married couples is on the increase with little or no dignity for cultural values and societal norms.

### **Impact of Extramarital Affairs on the Family Institution**

In this theme, the participants were asked question on the determinant of extramarital affairs among young female couples. From the results, 11 out of 18 participants confirmed that extramarital affair is a phenomenon that adversely destabilizes the uniqueness of marriage and family institution but, that there are factors that determines their actions into it. As noted by a participant,

My name is Yetunde, I am 33 years old, and a housewife with 5 children. My husband was once a civil servant but now a politician. He is always out there with his colleagues on their political ambition. He either come home late at night or doesn't come at all. Although he tries with the family provisions but he is always unavoidable absent. I know he will be having fun out there but what about me? There isn't sexual intimacy and when I call on phone, he may or may not pick. In fact, I am missing him for he is far from us as I speak and for this, I need an alternative after all, my body isn't a wood – (33 years-old, wife).

Another young married couple, a mother of two and age 31 expressed that:

Our culture here is that we follow ourselves in marriage ceremonies and other ceremonies alike. It is a sign of love and concern to one another, as you will be pay back in due course whenever it is your turn. We save money to buy clothes, cook, dance, dine and wine with gorgeous jewelries, bags and shoes. And we even collectively contribute to give to the celebrant. My husband is a businessman, he trade in motor parts and promise to give me money for a business if I stop going to friends ceremonies. Although I gain from my monthly house keep fee to meet up with this task. However, I needed huge money to buy myself a gold jewelry among other needs. My husband isn't responding to this. My friends and I had once met an Alhaji who had promised taking care of our expenses if need be. I dated him and got all my wants without my husband awareness. He doesn't need to know? Does he? – (31 years-old, wife).

In the same vein, another female married couple had this to say:

Poverty is the major factor why I indulge in extramarital affairs relationship, what for..., if not poverty and hardship. My husband and I had two kids, age 12 and 8. We both work in a bakery factory as a mixer/baker while I clean the trays and containers after each day

sales activities. Suddenly he had an accident on the mixing machine and his right hand was amputated. He became helpless and not productive. I remain in the bakery until when some of the workers started disturbing me for friendship. I had to leave for another job as water supply labourer in a building construction site. I didn't stay long when the owner of the site took me to his wife shop as sales attendant. There I was until another rich man came my way for friendship. The trouble was much and being the only source of income I had to tell my husband who advice I quit for peace to reign. Sooner than later I got a school where I work as day care assistant although, it wasn't easy and not going well as suppose but I keep pushing and praying for God's intervention. And not until my first child gained admission into Junior Secondary School, I had to meet with the proprietor where I work for financial assistant but he placed me on conditions which I dare not tell my husband as much as the money is needed for my child's schooling aside all other needs. I have no choice than to let go at this junction because I wouldn't want my child to be left out amongst his peers – (30 years-old, house wife).

From the results, it is evident that poverty and economic hardship had turned many homes and married couples into shattered families due to extramarital affairs. Considering the fact that a lot of reviewed factors had determined the causes of extramarital affairs among married couples, among which are: Peer pressure, materialism, childlessness, communication issues, lack of sexual intimacy, distance, loss of attraction, imposition of marriage partners, and *poverty* (Anyanwu & Ofordile, 2012). In some marriage relationship, peer influence and materialism stands as priority as in the case of the second participant and this to a large extent, contributes to extramarital affairs based on the type of friends either of the partners keeps. Thus, materialism is a situation where material acquisition and wealth take precedence in a marriage that it hampers the success of such a relationship. Furthermore, some people make their choice of a partner on the basis of how much he or she has acquired. The absence of these things might affect a relationship and make a partner unfaithful. On the other hand, communication issue happens when a man and woman who are married are meant to be free and open with each other especially in

the area of mutual feelings and understanding. If the walls of communication collapse, it breeds distrust and that might force one of the parties to look elsewhere for affection as in the case of first participant, hence creating room for extramarital affairs. However, Poverty is yet another factor that mostly causes extramarital affairs relationship among women, because love/marriage with or without children needs financial implication for daily upkeep of the home which is expected of the man to provide. Where this lacks, the marriage is prone to seamless outside forces which can result into extramarital affairs among female couples that cannot bear the suffering. So for a marriage to be firm, however, the barriers to economic hardship/poverty need to be broken.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It can be deduced from the previous sections that extramarital affair has become a prevailing phenomenon in modern day society, and this immoral act has eluded the minds of many young married couples and bringing families into prolong distrust, sadness, solemnity, partial separation, divorce, broken homes and even at worse scenarios, sudden death of beloved ones (Jahan et al., 2017; Fincham & May, 2017; Bahareh 2011). Extramarital affairs among young female married couples in Ilorin metropolis is a shady and ungodly act that cannot be affirm as a legitimate relationship. It is against cultural values and societal norms even as its incidence and prevalence spread across all bounds. No true and faithful existing religion accepts the act of extramarital affairs, especially within the female realm. The havocs render by this silly act range from psychological trauma, to social, economic, religion, and other forms of deteriorations that necessitate intervention. This is because of increasing volume this social menace tends to spread within the ray of light if proper attention is not drawn to limit its speed. In some homes, 1 out of 5 children will be susceptible to DNA test as time goes by, resulting from extramarital relationship committed by young house wives. Aside this, unforeseen death and other health challenges such as depression and HIV – AIDS are also risky behaviours attached to it. The key determinants of extramarital affairs among young female married couples in Ilorin metropolis are classified into communication

issues, lack of sexual intimacy, distance, Peer influence, materialism, national/economic hardship, and Poverty. Above all these, it can be depict that sufferings, pains, national/economic hardship, hunger and starvation and bad economic policies/lack of women empowerment had warranted most household couples to leave aside shame, morals, and cultural values as against constitutional means of daily livelihood.

The study recommends that the three tiers of government in Nigeria should formulate policies as a matter of urgency that differs from poverty driven policies, which will address issues relating to national/economic hardship that lingers within the system/society and in a bid to easy and cushion families from marital instability, distrust, immoral act and indulgence in extramarital affairs relationship. Government and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) at all levels should pay more attention to marital crisis of this magnitude, in order to limit if not put an end to the increasing trend of this social vices, through necessary unit such as the social services department.

Government at all level should provide job for her citizens and empower them to make ends meet in an enabling environment. This will help to reduce much of the extramarital practices in the society especially on the part of women. Religious centers' at all levels should periodically organize seminars and workshops for married couples and prospective couples. This will help to create greater awareness and consciousness on the challenges of extramarital affairs. Social work educators and practitioners to this end should take systemic and intimate intervention steps into marriage counseling and marital challenges. Further research should be taken by social workers to determine and explore the best evidence-based approaches or practices that will assist young married couples to better manage the issue of extramarital affairs in marriages.

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