ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES ON *KHIṬBAH* AND COURTSHIP VERSUS THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MUSLIM MARRIAGES IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Khiṭbah and Courtship are part of the foundational stages for the formation of a matrimonial home which largely depend on the moral climate of a given society at a particular time. It is a volatile stage in which people make or mar their matrimonial lives. As marriage proposal and steps taken by prospective couples to understand one another better, are practices approved by the Shariah with prescribed ethical principles. However, these noble acts are observed to be bastardized by modern young prospective Muslim couples in northern Nigeria which in the short or long-run affect the socio-moral standing of the matrimonial home and in some ways, even the children to be born as well as the larger

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society. Perceptibly, gross abuse of the social media platforms and blind imitation of some ill-western traits in courtship coupled with unnecessarily longer courtship period are the identifiable factors that challenge the Shariah-based rule of courtship behavior in contemporary times. Therefore, the paper discussed Shariah provisions on khiṭbah and courtship while highlighting how some potential Muslim couples in Northern Nigeria are deviating from this guidance which ultimately affect the family institution as a social fabric of the society. Considering the theoretical and empirical nature of this study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used in data collection, analysis and presentation. The results of the research showed that there are abuses and malpractices in khiṭbah and courting behavior by to be couples and their families which adversely affect the moral standing of matrimonial homes and the larger society. It is recommended that, Muslim youth and their parent should adhere strictly to the Shariah rules on khiṭbah and courtship and formal pre-marital counseling centers should be established by Masajid and Muslim organizations to help address the situation.

Keywords: *khiṭbah, courtship, social media, Muslim youth, morality and globalization*

INTRODUCTION

Islam as a comprehensive way of life, has provided guidance for every aspect of human life to help mankind fulfill the purpose of his existence on earth, i.e. the worship of the Only Allah where He says:

$$وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾$$

"And I (Allāh) created not the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone)."

(Surah al-Dhāriyāt, 51: 56)

Shariah as a set of divine codes that regulate all facets of every Muslim's life leaves no stone unturned in the conduct of marriage as a socio-spiritual institution. Because of the nobility and sacrosanctity of the marriage institution, many of the esteemed Prophets of Allah (SWT) entered into it as confirmed in the following verse:

$$وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَٰجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ$$

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أَن يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

*"And indeed We sent Messengers before you (O Muhammad
SAW), and made for them wives and offspring. And it was not for
a Messenger to bring a sign except by Allāh's Leave. (For) each
and every matter there is a Decree (from Allāh)."*

(Surah al-Raʿd, 13: 38)

The last of the Prophets, Muhammad (SAW), whom the Muslims were
ordered to emulate and obey his commands has epitomized all the how(s) and
what(s) of marriage. Based on his Sunnah, Islam laid down principles to guide
all pre-marital, matrimonial and post-marital practices and sacraments. These
include the etiquettes and ethos of marriage proposal (*khiṭbah),* marriage
contract (*ʿaqd al-nikāḥ),* matrimonial life (*al-ʿishrah),* house maintenance (*al-
nafaqah),* divorce (*al-ṭalāq),* children-upbringing and custody (*al-ḥaḍānah*),
inheritance (*al-mīrāth*) and other overlapping rights and obligations of the
various family units. Courtship, is one of the focal elements of the preliminaries
of marriage which in most cases is preceded by *khiṭbah* (betrothal). It is an
interplay that gives a prospective couple, the chance to know and understand
one another better for the purpose of establishing a match-able marriage union
based on certain approved practices and modest standards.

The foundation for a morally upright family is built first by identifying
and choosing the right partner- "the better half" for oneself based on the
criteria set down by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) for both males and females
who intend to marry. This is followed by courting decently and contracting
the marriage according to the requisites and etiquettes of the Shariah. A
conglomeration of this type of families produces a model of morally upright
society enveloped by peace, social cohesion and economic prosperity. This
trend has been the case of most families since the first century of Islam and the
same nobility has characterized many traditional Muslim families in Nigeria
as well. However, with the dawn of modernity amidst globalization and to a
certain degree immodest westernization that permeated the fabrics of Muslim
societies; things begin to fall apart. In the recent past, with the invention of
mobile phones and internet services together with enabling social networking
platforms, the world became in more practical means a global village. Due
to this booming development, no amount of distance is considered a barrier
between individuals, societies and even governments at various tiers when it
comes to communication.

Conversations and conducts in courting among intending couples are
identified as part of the social traits that are influenced by globalization and

its agents across Muslim societies in Nigeria. Though, positive in some ways, but the negative effects are glaringly overwhelming. Through both print and electronic media, in form of novels, movies, online videos which are freely watchable and downloadable on YouTube, young prospective Muslim couples become lured to indecent relationships and practices facilitated by what could be termed as "social media courtship." This research therefore presents the normative provisions of the Shariah on *khiṭbah* and courtship as well as investigates how devastating neglecting them is to the couples concerned and ultimately the society.

The paper explained how Shariah-compliant conduct of courtship could be achieved based on the Quranic and Prophetic guidance. It appraises how courtship is conducted in the 21st century world mostly by young intending Muslim couples across some States in Nigeria against the Islamic and in some instances even cultural standards of courting. Finally, some propositions were made to help address or manage the challenges posed by modernity to the noble institution of marriage among Muslims.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the sake of clarity and domestication of terminologies used in this paper, the following key words are elucidated:

1. Social Media

The word media in this compound term signifies a means of communication. Social media therefore, denotes a social instrument of communication, though, with no single recognized definition as argued by Jacka and Scott.[4] However, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines social media as 'websites and applications used for social networking'. In turn, social networking is defined as 'the use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate with other users, or to find people with similar interests to one's own. Examples of popular social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, with the latter gaining patronage more than the rest having not less than 1.5 billion active users (mostly aged between 16 and 40) globally as at of 2018.[5] Emphasis in this research is placed on the most frequently used social platforms such as

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[4]   Peter R. Scott & J. Mike Jacka, *Auditing Social Media: A Governance and Risk Guide* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2011), 5.

[5]   Craig Smith, '65 Amazing WhatsApp Statistics and Facts.' *DRM*, https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/whatsapp-statistics/, assessed on 24 January 2018.

WhatsApp and Facebook due to their user-friendliness and instant messaging ability.

2. *Khiṭbah*

Khiṭbah is derived from the Arabic verb *khaṭaba, yakhṭubu, khiṭbatan,* meaning when a man seeks a lady's hand in marriage.[6] By this, there is no clear difference between the literal and technical definitions of *khiṭbah*. Sham defines it technically; as a promise of a man with the intention that he will marry a certain woman. It is a sort of agreement that serves as a preliminary to the contract of marriage.[7] While Bello, understands *khiṭbah* as the formal permission sought by a suitor from the parent or guardian of the lady in question.[8] The word *khiṭbah* is mentioned in the Glorious *al-Qur'ān*, as Allah (SWT) says:

$$ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُم بِهِۦ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ ٱلنِّسَآءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنتُمْ فِىٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ $$

"And there is no sin on you if you make a hint of betrothal (khiṭbah) to women or conceal it in yourselves."

(Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 235)

3. Courtship

Courtship is described by the *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* as an art or process of developing a close relationship with a person of the opposite sex with the idea/intent of marrying. Imam, defines courtship as a union between prospective Muslim male and female couple determined to end the

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6   S. Sābiq, *Fiqh al- Sunnah,* vol. 2 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1977), 24; T. AbdulKariem, 'Administration of Islamic Law of Marriage and Divorce in South Africa,' (Master Dissertation, Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Durban-Westville, 1993), 73.

7   S. Iqbal Shahzad, *Some Aspects of Marriage and Divorce in Muslim Family Law* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), 13.

8   I. Bello (Senior Researcher, Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna, Niger State), in interview with author via online on 12 December 2017.

relationship in *nikāḥ* devoid of any act of immoralities,[9] where Giwa, sees it as the period between acceptance of marriage proposal (*khiṭbah)* and the solemnization of marriage;[10] whereas, Lemu considers courtship as all the (*halal*) activities that a prospective couple are engaged in that assist them in deciding on whether or not to get married.[11] While trying to understand one another, the prospective couple may engage in some approved gestures and practices such as exchanging gifts, pleasantries and sharing letters or words of love within the confines of the Shariah. Therefore, this is different from dating which is romantic in nature and involves intimate relationship by the parties involved. The act of courting, in many instances is heralded by *khiṭbah.*

4. Modernity

Is a quality of being modern. As a phenomenon of historical periodization, it depicts ensemble of a certain socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that prevail in the post-medieval era.[12] As a period therefore, modernity, is characterized by contemporariness, currency, industrialization, globalization and technological advancement. Hence, the term modern as used in this paper, refers specifically, to the 21st century globalized contemporary world-the digital age.

5. Morality

This is an ethical standard that represents the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are good (or right) and those that are bad (or wrong). The term morality according to *Business Dictionary*, means, conformance to a recognized code, doctrine, or system of rules of what is right or wrong and to behave accordingly. Simply put, morality refers to discipline of mind, actions, dispositions, attitudes, virtues, and the ways of life that should be found in a good person.[13] It is also referred to an innate disposition,

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[9]   Y.O Imam (56) (Professor, Islamic Studies, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria), in interview with author via online on 3 December 2017.

[10]   A.O. Giwa (Masjid Imam, Ogun State), in interview with author via online on 6 December 2017.

[11]   M.N Lemu (Director, Research and Training Department, Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna, Niger State), in interview with author via online on 6 December 2017.

[12]   Wikipedia, 'Modernity,' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernity, accessed on 18 December 2017.

[13]   P.K. Olawale, 'The Moral Teachings of Suratu Luqman as Paradigms for Character,' *NATAIS Journal,* vol. 6/2 (2002): 14.

character, ethics, demeanor, conduct and behavior of a person in a given society.[14] Therefore, the moral standing referred to in this paper, encompasses the presence of these moral traits; decency, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, respect etc. in the course of courtship and in the matrimonial home of the target group under examination.

6. Youth

This is a term that has no unanimous definition due to varying yardsticks used by different individuals, groups and institutions to determine its meaning. Some use age brackets to determine the youthful age while others consider qualities that make up a youth. In the Nigerian context, the *National Youth Policy* views youth as "Young persons of ages between 18 and 35."[15] However, in many other countries, youthful age, is generally fixed within 14 and 24 age-brackets.[16] Observably, as rightly opined by Abubakar[17] and Rabiu,[18] some inherent inequalities exist in age-bracket definitions of youth; mainly of inclusion and exclusion of certain personalities who by virtue of either psychological or physiological composition are or not counted as youth. Therefore, this paper considers youth as persons who fall between childhood and adulthood stage of human development which is often described as the period of physical and psychological strength from onset of puberty and early adulthood; persons of this caliber are found within the age-range of 15 to 40 years. This is the period that *al-Qur'ān* describes as a stage between two weaknesses thus:

اللَّهُ الَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ ﴿٥٤﴾

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14 Z. I. Oseni, 'Islam and Morality,' *Nigeria Studies in Religious Tolerance,* vol. 2/26 (1988): 7.

15 N.a., 'Nigeria's Public Policy and the Youth,' http://www.thetidenewsonline.com, accessed on 6 July 2014.

16 O. Oloyede, 'An Islamic Perspective of Youth Development,' in *African Culture, Modern Science and Religious Thought,* ed. P. A. Dopamu (Ilorin: African Centre for Religions and the Sciences, University of Ilorin, 2003), 664.

17 A.L. Abubakar, 'Youth Unemployment, Poverty and Political Violence in Nigeria,' in *the Proceeding of the Conference on: Youth Unemployment, Poverty and Political Violence in Nigeria* (Gombe: Department of Sociology, Gombe State University, 2012).

18 A.A. Rabiu, 'Effects of Electronic Media on the Muslim Youth of Gombe Metropolis,' *Journal of Religion and Culture,* UniPort. vol. 17/1 (2017): 62.

> *"Allāh is He Who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave (you) weakness and grey hair. He creates what He wills. And it is He Who is the AllKnowing, the All Powerful (i.e. Able to do all things)."*

(Surah al-Rūm, 30: 54)

In the Qur'anic worldview also, the height of man's youthful age is placed at 40 years as in the following verse:

وَوَصَّيْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ بِوَٰلِدَيْهِ إِحْسَٰنًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَٰلُهُ ثَلَٰثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً

> *"And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty months, till when he attains full strength and reaches forty years."*

(Surah al-Aḥqāf, 46: 15)

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Considering the nature of this research being both empirical and theoretical, the duo-methodologies of qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied in data collection, where Stata 14 software was used for analysis and presentation of the data obtained from the questionnaire. Written and oral structured interviews were conducted alongside questionnaires designed on google form and administered in both print as well as online media to different target groups via which valuable information was retrieved from the respondents on the subject matter. The target groups to whom questionnaires were given included the Youth, both singles and newlywed. Parents, both fathers and mothers and Islamic scholars selected from different parts of Nigeria were interviewed. The study applied such descriptive techniques as bar chart, column and pie-chart, in the data analysis.

The population for this research is the population of Northern Nigerian Muslims within the age bracket of 15-40. However, there is no official statistical data on this target population. As a result, the study drew a moderate sample size of 241 using convenient sampling technique. Therefore, the researchers used the available network of friends and colleagues to reach out to most of the respondents who are digitally-oriented via administering a Google-based questionnaire.

Quantitative method, especially binary Probit regression model, was used to estimate the major causes of disapproved courtship practices and its impacts on the society. This model was chosen because the dependent variables are discrete or binary dummies where courtship practices were coded one if they are Islamically disapproved and otherwise zero. The effects of the courtship practices were also coded one if they are negative and otherwise zero. The model of factors causing disapproved courtship practices could be specified in econometric form as in equation (1):

$$\log\left[\frac{\Pr(disapprovedcourship)}{1 - \Pr(disapprovedcourship)}\right]_i = \beta_0 + \beta_n Factors_i + \mu_i --------------(1)$$

Where Pr(disapprovedcourtship) is the probability of engaging in disapproved courtship practices; 1- Pr(disapprovedcourtship) is the probability of not engaging in disapproved courtship practices; and Factors stand for the vector of variables determining disapproved courtship practices among the respondents. β_0 is the constant; β_n is the vector of parameters of all the independent variables in the model; μ is the error term capturing the effects of other factors not included in the model; and i is the cross-sectional unit of the data.

Equation (2) is the model for the effects of disapproved courtship practices:

$$\log\left[\frac{\Pr(Effofdisapprovedcourship)}{1 - \Pr(Effofdisapprovedcourship)}\right]_i = \beta_0 + \beta_n Factors_i + \mu_i --------------(2)$$

Where Pr(Effofdisapprovedcourtship) is the probability of recording negative outcomes of disapproved courtship practices; 1- Pr(Effofdisapprovedcourtship) is the probability of not recording negative outcomes of disapproved courtship practices; and Factors stand for the vector of variables determining negative outcomes of disapproved courtship practices among the respondents. The remaining variables remain as defined under equation (1).

From the qualitative approach, the study applied an exegetical and descriptive methodologies. This is in view of the necessity to analytically interpret the data obtained from library sources and researchers' observation on happenings in the modern context to solve the problem of the study area.

ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES ON *KHIṬBAH* AND COURTSHIP

The terms *khiṭbah* and courtship are often used interchangeably by some scholars,[19] while others use them differently. For a group, this is simply because the terms connote different things, though, may have some overlapping tendencies as clarified above. Whereas, for another group, *khiṭbah* is considered permissible while courtship is understood to be impermissible in Islam which is counted as one of the violations in *khiṭbah* that prospective couple should not go into.[20] However, considering the realities of the modern world, where Young Muslim intending couples court the 'western' way, this research deems it necessary to uncover those Shariah regulations that if heeded to, would sanitize courtship and make it permissible in the name of "Islamic/Shariah-compliant courtship"; but if contravened the provisions of the Shariah, would be labelled "un-Islamic courtship". This is because, the Shariah has allowed for healthy familiarization and conversation between intending couples as would be explained subsequently in this paper. Against this backdrop, the following Shariah guiding principles should be observed by the intending Muslims couple in *khiṭbah* and courtship.

According to the generality of the scholars, engagement (*khiṭbah*) is a permissible act (*mubāḥ*). But Dāwud of Dhāhiriyyah opines that it's *wājib*,[21] while Shaykh al-'Uthaymīn logically inclined to a view that it is a *shart* (condition), as he mentioned among the conditions of marriage, the consent of the spouses.[22] The reason behind these divergent views is whether the actions of the Prophet (SAW) will be considered as binding or not binding. As he has unfailingly conducted *khiṭbah* in all his marriages.[23] Likewise, he warned against multiple *khiṭbah* on a single lady that:

$$لا يخطب الرجل على خطبة أخيه ، وفي لفظ: حتى يترك الخاطب قبله أو يأذن له الخاطب$$

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19   M.M. al-Jibali, *The Quest for Love and Mercy: Regulations for Marriage and Wedding in Islam* (USA: Al-Kitaab and As-Sunnah Publishing, 2005), 35.

20   A.M. Bello, *Marriage and Wedding Philosophy in Islam* (N.P: Marqais Publishers, 2015), 90.

21   Abī Wālid Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd al-Qurṭubī, *Bidāyah al-Mujtahid wa al-Nihāyah al-Muqtaṣid*, vol. 3 (Qāhirah: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004), 31.

22   M.S. al-'Uthaymīn, *al-Zawāj wa Majmū'ah As'ilah fī Aḥkāmih* (Marriage and a Collection of Questions Regarding its Jurisdictions) (KSA, Onaizah: Madar al-Watan Publishers, 1432H), 15.

23   Abī Wālid Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd al-Qurṭubī, *Bidāyah al-Mujtahid wa al-Nihāyah al-Muqtaṣid*, vol. 3, 31.

*"A man should not propose after the proposal of his brother but
wait until the first one gives up or permits him to do so."* [24]

While explaining the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* for legalizing *khiṭbah,* Sham
submits that:

*"The legal wisdom behind the permissibility of engagement
(khiṭbah) is to make the other members of the society know that
such and such woman is attributed to such and such man. Hence,
sending message for asking her hand in marriage (nikāḥ) by
another man is not correct."* [25]

ETIQUETTES OF *KHIṬBAH* AND COURTSHIP

1. Looking at the Prospective Spouse

Looking at the prospective spouse as much as normally possible to a permissible
degree covering the privacy (*'awrah*) that would please and fascinate the other
side is allowed in Islam. This could be discerned from these *aḥādīth* of the
Prophet (SAW) that:

إذا خطب أحدكم المرأة، فإن استطاع أن ينظر منها إلى ما يدعوه إلى
نكاحها، فليفعل

*"If one of you proposes to a woman and if he is able to look at
a part of her that motivates him to marry her, let him do so"* [26]
*and "When it comes into a person's heart to court a woman, it
is permissible for him to look at her." (Recorded by Abu Dawud
and Imam Ahmad).*

عن المغيرة بن شعبة، قال: خطبت امرأة، فقال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه
وسلم: أنظرت إليها؟ قلت: لا قال: فانظر إليها، فإنه أحرى أن يؤدم
بينكما

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24   Muslim bin Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.),
book 10, no. *ḥādīth* 3618.

25   S. Iqbal Shahzad, *Some Aspects of Marriage and Divorce in Muslim Family Law,*
13.

26   Imām Abū Dāwud and Aḥmad, classed as *ṣaḥīḥ* by Shaykh Albanī in *Aḥādīth al-
Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 99.

> *When al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah got engaged to a woman, the*
> *Prophet (SAW) said to him: "Go look at her, for it is more likely*
> *to create affection and consent between you"* [27]

However, unlike men, a woman's looking should reflect a certain level of modesty and reservation that are characteristics of her femininity.[28]

2. Performing *Istikhārah*

The prophet (PBUH) recommends that whenever a Muslim sets to carry out a permissible thing whatever its nature is, he should perform two units of voluntary *ṣalat* (*nāfilah*) and supplicates with the *du'a* of *istikhārah*.[29] Therefore, after making all humanly possible efforts in decition making, it is recommended for those who want to marry as part of the etiquettes in choosing their partners to seek Allah's guidance to be able to make the right choice. On this, Allah (SWT) says:

$$ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ $$

"Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allāh,
certainly, Allāh loves those who put their trust (in Him)."

(Surah Āli-'Imrān, 3: 159)

3. Seeking Spouse's Consent

Islam gives a right of choice to a virgin woman; it is not valid for her *walī* to compel her to marry some body she does not like, she rather has the absolute right to choose her life partner, *walī* shall only guide her to make a right choice.[30] This is based on the *ḥadīth* reported by 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās RA that the Prophet (SAW) said:

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[27] M.I. Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī,* vol. 2, ed. Bashar 'Awwad Ma'rūf (Bayrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1998), 388. Al-Tirmidhī says it is *ḥadīth ḥassan*.

[28] S.A. Sha'ban al-Miṣrī, *Risālah ila al-Arusaynī wa Fatawā al-Zawāj wa Mu'āsharah al-Nisā'*, 1ˢᵗ ed. (Qāhirah: Dār al-Athār, 2010), 62; B.A. Badran, *Aḥkām al-Zawāj wa al-Ṭalāq fī al-Islām, Bahthun Tahlīlī wa Dirāsah Muqāranah*, 2ⁿᵈ ed. (Miṣr: Maṭba'ah Dār al-Ta'lif, 1961), 21; M.M. al-Jibali, *The Quest for Love and Mercy: Regulations for Marriage and Wedding in Islam,* 41.

[29] A. Hanbal, *Musnad*, ed. Shuayb al-Arna'ut, 'Adil Murshid 1st ed. vol. 23 (Lubnān: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001), 55.

[30] A.J. al-Jazā'irī, *Minhāj al-Muslim,* vol. 2 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Salām, 2001), 322; M.M. al-Jibali, *The Quest for Love and Mercy: Regulations for Marriage and Wedding in Islam,* 59.

الأيم أحق بنفسها من وليها واليتيمة تستأمر وإذنها صماتها

*"A woman who has been previously married has more right over
herself than her guardian, and a virgin must be asked for her
consent, and her silence is her consent."* [31]

4. Seeking Advice

In addition to *istikhārah*, it is recommended to consult with some knowledgeable
people before making an important decision in life such as marriage. Thus,
it is recommended for the man and woman or her *walī* to investigate about
his or her intended partner, making sure that she or he has the required good
attributes.[32] That is why a legal guardian to a lady is empowered to check
the would-be groom's righteousness and good manners.[33] Therefore, when the
khiṭbah of a man is approved, it should not be broken except with a valid and
cogent reason, al-Jibaly explained that:

> *"Even though an approved khiṭbah is not legally binding upon
> the two involved parties, it still constitutes a mutual pledge for
> marriage; and breaking it without a valid reason would be an
> immoral act of dishonesty.."* [34]

5. Reasonable *Khiṭbah* Period

In view of the fact that, *khiṭbah* is a preliminary step towards marriage, scholars
emphasize that it is not permitted for the parties to become engaged unless they
are free to marry immediately and without impediment.[35] However, in most
cases today, due to one reason or another, marriage contract used to take some
longer time after betrothal of the prospective couple, though, long period of

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[31] Mālik Ibn Ānas, *al-Muwaṭṭā'* (Norwich: Diwan Press Ltd., 2014), Book 28, *ḥadīth*
no. 2824.

[32] A. Najla'a bint Hamad bin 'Alī, 'al-Manhaj al-Nabawī fī Muqābalah al-Khāṭib,
Jam'ūn wa Dirāsah wa Takhrij,' *al-Adal Journal*, vol. 39 (1429H): 64.

[33] M.M. Al-Istanbuli, 'The Bride's Boon (Tuhfat Al-'Arous),' trans. AbdelHamid
Eliwa, http://www.islambasics.com, 10th May, 2019.

[34] M.M. al-Jibali, *The Quest for Love and Mercy: Regulations for Marriage and
Wedding in Islam,* 35.

[35] E.D. Sudqi, 'The Marriage Contract in the Shari'ah and in the Ahwal Shakhsiyyah
Laws of Egypt and Morocco: A Comparative Study,' (Ph.D Thesis, Department of
Arabic and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Glasgow, 1990), 38.

relationship between man and woman is usually discouraged by the Shariah.[36] Therefore, whether the period taken to familiarize and discover more about one another by the prospective couple is short or long, they should be mindful of the modern challenges posed by globalization that breach some Shariah regulations on courtship.

6. Interaction and Conversation between an Engaged Couple

The Shariah allows the potential couple to meet and converse on important issues that will guide their decisions to contract marriage. Yet, this is not without regulations. The venue of the meeting should not be a secluded area and a lady's *maḥram* (non-marriageable relative) or preferably her *walī* should be present to witness what is going on. The Prophet (SAW) said:

<div dir="rtl">

لا يخلون رجل بامرأة إلا ومعها ذو محرم

</div>

"No man should be in privacy with a woman except when there is a maḥram with her." [37]

<div dir="rtl">

لا يخلون أحدكم بامرأة، فإن الشيطان ثالثهما

</div>

"A man and a woman cannot be together alone except that shaytan is the third party." [38]

This would help to curtail any chance for vain talk, touching, hugging, kissing and other acts of intimacy that may lead to *zina* which Allah (SWT) has prohibited:

<div dir="rtl">

وَلَا تَقۡرَبُوا۟ ٱلزِّنَىٰٓ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فَٰحِشَةٗ وَسَآءَ سَبِيلٗا ﴿٣٢﴾

</div>

"And come not near to the unlawful sexual intercourse."

(Surah al-Isrā', 17: 32)

Moreover, the Prophet (SAW) said:

<div dir="rtl">

لأن يطعن في رأس أحدكم بمخيط من حديد خير له من أن يمس امرأة لا تحل له

</div>

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36 M.S. al-'Uthaymīn, *al-Zawāj wa Majmū'ah As'ilah fī Aḥkāmih,* 18.

37 Al-Bukhārī, Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī al-Ju'fī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 3 (Riyāḍ: Darussalam, 1997), book 29, ḥādīth 85; Muslim bin Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* Book 7, no. ḥādīth 3110.

38 Imam Aḥmad and Tirmidhī, classed as ṣaḥīḥ by Shaykh Albanī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi',* 2546; A. Hanbal, *Musnad,* vol. 23; M.I. Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī,* vol. 2, 465.

*"For one of you to have his head pierced with an iron needle is
better for him than to touch a woman who is not permissible for
him (to touch)."* [39]

It is equally important for the would-be couple to be truthful to one another
and shun any iota of deceit and to treat all issues discussed between them as
confidential as possible. Because, the seeds of trust and honesty sown during
courtship would be reaped during the matrimonial life, which would ultimately
lead them to Jannah as the Prophet (SAW) said:

<div dir="rtl">

عليكم بالصدق، فإن الصدق يهدي إلى البر، وإن البر يهدي إلى الجنة،
وما يزال الرجل يصدق حتى يكتب عند الله عز وجل صديقا، وإياكم
والكذب، فإن الكذب يهدي إلى الفجور، وإن الفجور يهدي إلى النار،
وما يزال الرجل يكذب، ويتحرى الكذب، حتى يكتب عند الله كذابا

</div>

*"Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to
Paradise. And a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes
a truthful person. Falsehood leads to al-Fujūr (i.e. wickedness,
evil-doing), and al-Fujūr (wickedness) leads to the (Hell) Fire,
and a man may keep on telling lies till he is written before Allah,
a liar."* [40]

7. Phone and Social Media Courtship

All Shariah restrictions to be respected by potential couple in physical
interaction during courtship are to be observed over phone calls or social
media chat. However, Young Muslim prospective couple grossly abuse these
blessings, all in the name of 'one another's discovery'. On this, Dogarawa
submits that:

*"It must always be remembered that until they are married,
they are like any other unrelated men and women to each other
and their actions must reflect that fact. Accordingly, the idea
of engaging in endless free phone calls, indecent telephone
conversations, horrible and immoral text messaging, internet*

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39 Imām al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr* (Qāhirah: Maktabah Ibn Taymiyyah,
   1994), no. *ḥādīth* 486 and was graded *Ṣaḥīḥ* by Shaykh Albanī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmiʿ*,
    5045.

40 Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿil al-Bukhārī al-Juʿfī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol.
    8, book 73, *ḥādīth* 116.

> *chats, exchange of phonographic messages between "fiancées" are not acceptable in Islam."* [41]

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The above sections provided impetus on the normative ethical standards for Shariah-compliant *khiṭbah* and courtship practices. This section therefore, showcases the level of compliance or otherwise by the targeted population to the provisions discussed *ubi supra*. The results retrieved from the questionnaires are hereunder graphically presented using charts and tables followed by analysis based on some specific variables of the research.

### Fig. 1: Graphical Presentation of Gender Distribution of the Respondents
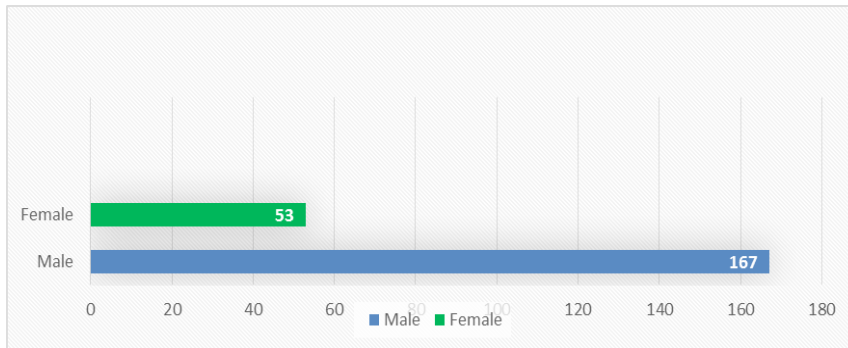
Source: Data generated by authors through questionnaire

As shown in the above chart, out of the 241 persons who responded to the questionnaire, a total of 220 indicated their gender. Males, who constitute the majority, form 76 %, where females represent 24 % of the respondents respectively.

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[41] A.B. Dogarawa, 'Marriage and Divorce in Islam,' https://mpra.ub.unimuenchen. de/23194/MPRA Paper No. 23194, accessed on 18 August 2018.

Fig. 2: Graphical Presentation of Age Distribution of the Respondents
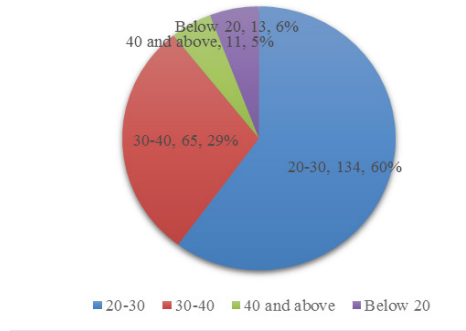
Source: Data generated by authors through questionnaire

This chart shows the age distribution of the respondents where, those below the age of 20 but not less than 15 constitute 6 %, those within the range of 20-30 years constitute 60 %, those between 30-40 years constitute 29 %, whereas, those above 40 years, though, not within the youthful age predefined by this research, constitute 5 %. Therefore, out of the 241 respondents, only 223 revealed their age, from which, 212 are significantly within the age group determined as youth in this study. Most significantly also, are those that fall within age brackets of 20-30 years, as the prime targets, who also represent the bulk of the respondents.

Fig. 3: Graphical Presentation of Some Un-Islamic Practices during
Courtship
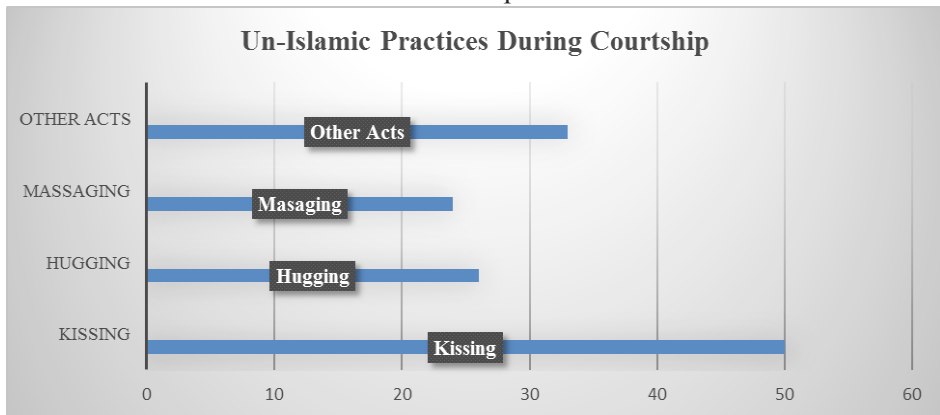
Source: Data generated by authors through questionnaire

The above chart, captured some of the un-Islamic practices engaged in during courtship as revealed by 133 of the respondents. 50 of them, making 38% acknowledged that they used to engage in kissing, where 24 respondents, constituting 18% revealed that they do massage one another, during their physical meetings. In addition, 26 respondents, representing 20% mentioned that they used to hug one another while 33 respondents equaling 25% confirmed to be practicing one form of intimacy or the other such as touching hands, sitting waist by waist or on one another's lap.

Table 1: Probit Regression on Factors Determining Disapproved Courtship Practice in Nigeria

Variables	Coefficient	Marginal Effect	Standard Error	Z	P>|z|
Age-Range	-1.534107	-.0566625	.6618439	-2.32	0.020
Educational Level	.6651814	.032136	.3190565	2.08	0.037
Marital Status	1.253436	.0579289	.9452275	1.33	0.185
Having Idea on Islamic teachings	-.4936137	-.0276901	.5250608	-0.94	0.347
WhatsApp	1.088029	.1077836	.483795	2.25	0.025
Other Social Media	-.2300002	-.0000312	.6709844	-0.34	0.732
North-Central	-2.741992	-.9983256	.5356516	-5.12	0.000
North-East	-3.2347	-.900191	.4554138	-7.10	0.000
North-West	-2.340205	-.9959805	.7589691	-3.08	0.002
Constant	4.241942		1.077162	3.94	0.000
Prob > chi2	0.0000				
Pseudo R2	0.3447				

Source: Authors' Computation Using Stata 14.

Table 1 shows that as the age of people increases, the probability of committing disapproved courtship practices decreases by 5.6% point whereas, increase in modern educational level leads to rise in the chances of engaging in disapproved courtship practices by 3.2% point. Being married, makes it more likely to engage in disapproved courtship practices by 5.8% point than being single. Similarly, being aware of Islamic teachings on the conduct of courtship reduces the possibility of committing disapproved courtship practices by 2.8% point than otherwise. Using WhatsApp as the medium of

courtship conversation raises the tendency to commit disapproved courtship practices by 10.8% point than using Facebook. However, using other social media platforms makes it less likely for one to engage in disapproved courtship practices than Facebook by 0.003% point. Being from NC, NE and NW, makes it less probable to engage in disapproved courtship practices than being from other parts of Nigeria by 99.8, 90.0 and 99.5% points respectively.

Although, some of the explanatory variables are individually statistically insignificant at either 1, 5 or 10% levels of significance; the variables are collectively significant at all levels of significance because, the Pro>Chi2 (0.0000) is less than the levels of significance (0.01, 0.05 and 0.10). Again, Pseudo-R^2 shows that the independent variables explain only 34.5% changes in the dependent variable.

Table 2: Probit Model on the Link between Courtship Practice and its Consequences in Nigeria

Variables	Coef.	Marginal Effect	Robust Std. Err.	Z	P>|z|
Getting intimate during courtship	.0300489	.0108477	.2435828	0.12	0.902
Islamically approved courting	-.2693795	-.0960459	.2312289	-1.16	0.244
WhatsApp	.4974906	.1859542	.2393331	2.08	0.038
Constant	-.2127728		.2638349	-0.81	0.420
Prob > chi2	0.0073				

Source: Authors' Computation Using Stata 14

Table 2 reveals that, the probability of recording negative effects of disapproved courtship practices increases by 1.1% point as prospective couple get intimate during courtship. In the same token, it is also reported in the table that Islamically approved courting reduces the chances of negative effects of disapproved courtship practices by 9.6% point. However, using WhatsApp as a medium of courting increases the possibility of resulting in negative consequences of disapproved courtship practices by 18.6% point than using Facebook. The results also suggest that the independent variables are collectively statistically significant in determining the negative effects of disapproved courtship practices albeit some variables in the model are insignificant at individual level. They are collectively significant at all levels of significance given that Prob>Chi2 (0.0073) is less than the levels of significance (0.01, 0.05 and 0.1).

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DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Going by the above analysis, it is pertinent to cleanse the marriage institution from all unlawful and filthy practices at all levels. This is due to the fact that; it is one of the most viable socio-moral institutions through which legitimate human procreation is only possible. Therefore, any lapse in the establishment of such an institution will manifestly affect the whole society. Youth, who are the backbone of every earthly society are supposed to be the vanguards to champion the cause, instead, a considerable number of them turn to be knowingly or otherwise, agents of its destruction in the contemporary time.

Considering the result showing the decrease in probability to committing unlawful practices by the increase in age of the youth, insinuates the tendency of increase in high sense of morality due to maturity. The same result also signifies the fragility of the youthful stage of human development in which the sensual organs and their drives are fully ripen. In order to ensure the incorruptibility, modesty and chastity of the youth, the Prophet (SAW) encourages those who have *ba'ah* (i.e. ability) to get married.[42]

Likewise, the result shows that, the tendency to indulge in disapproved courtship behavior is tied up with increase in modern formal educational level. This could be explained by the fact that, since many of the formal institutions of learning in Nigeria are 'western-oriented' with little sense of morality and decency coupled with misapplied freedom of interaction between the opposite sexes. This unhealthy environment gives room for unwarranted exposure to some who passed through the system, though, it largely depends on an individual as may be influenced by a variety of factors. However, this problem could be checked by applying another outcome of this research that with knowledge and practice of the Islamic guidelines on courting, the chances for engaging in disapproved/unlawful courtship practices decrease significantly. As such, the Islamic regulations on marriage generally are effectual right from the choice of the other partner called the "better half". In this regard, Allah (SWT) says in *al-Qur'ān*:

$$فَٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتُ قَٰنِتَٰتٌ حَٰفِظَٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ ٱللَّهُ$$

"Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allāh and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allāh orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property, etc.)."

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[42] Al-Bukhārī, Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿil al-Bukhārī al-Juʿfī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 3, book 62, *ḥādīth* 4.

(Surah al-Nisā', 4: 34)

In the same vein, the Prophet (SAW) advice men to choose the righteous women for marriage (*al-mar'ah al-ṣāliḥah)* who may or may not have other merits considered by men such as wealth, family status and beauty as mentioned by the Prophet in a *ḥādīth*.[43]

تنكح المرأة لأربع: لدينها، وجمالها، ومالها، وحسبها، فعليك بذات الدين
تربت يداك

As for ladies, in addition to men having the *ba'ah,* they are equally admonished to prioritize for virtue when choosing for husbands, the Prophet (SAW) urged their parents/guardians thus:

إذا أتاكم من ترضون خلقه ودينه فزوجوه، إلا تفعلوا تكن فتنة في الأرض
وفساد عريض

*"If there comes to you one with whose religion and attitude you
are satisfied, then give your daughter to him in marriage, for if
you do not do so, fitnah and mischief will become widespread on
earth."* [44]

Another aspect of the Islamic regulations on the preliminaries of marriage which is usually neglected in modern time is *khiṭbah* (betrothal, proposal or affiancing). Observably, the Islamic ethics of marriage proposal is not normally respected by many families from both sides, resulting to serious violations during courtship such as multiple *khiṭbah* which is an order of the day, though, prohibited by the Prophet (SAW).[45] Contemporarily, it is observed that many young Muslim men in Northern Nigeria go into relationships with ladies without the knowledge or consent of their parents/guardians, a habit that leads to various problems such as unwanted pre or extra-marital affairs, some reported while many were not, especially in courts.[46] Therefore, based on the above divine recommendations, when considering marriage proposals offered to their wards, parents/guardians should consider all components of materialism as immaterial and monitor closely their children's behavioral

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[43] Al-Bukhārī, Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī al-Ju'fī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 3, book 62, *ḥādīth* 27.

[44] Ibn Mājah Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Yazid al-Qazwaynī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. 1 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Salām, 2007), 632.

[45] M.N. al-Albanī, *Irwa' al-Ghalīl* (Bayrūt: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1985), *ḥādīth* no. 1817.

[46] A.U Garba (40) (former Registrar, Doma Area Court, Gombe), in interview with author on 10 November 2017.

conducts during courtship. Equally, the courtship period should be made as brief as reasonably possible to eliminate chances of illicit relationship, even though, we have not come across any textual evidence specifying the length of courting period. Because, long period of courtship gives room for unnecessary familiarity which usually breaks the usual premarital barriers between the intending couple.

Previously, the commonest traditional conduct of courtship among prospective Muslim couples used to be by physical meeting at the lady's house, chatting in an open space and in the company of her relative. However, with the introduction of mobile phone technology and the recent boom in the telecommunication media, coupled with a blind-folded wholesome imitation of whatever is deemed 'western' in the name of civilization, many people are lured into euphoria of appearing as 'civilized' and act accordingly. With these, courtship becomes adulterated with unworthy behaviors and promiscuous practices in the guise of 'display of true love'. Despite Islam's approval of physical meeting to look up one's propose,[47] seclusion and any act of intimacy tempting to arouse lustful feelings are vehemently prohibited going by the provision of this verse:

$$وَلَا تَقْرَبُواْ الزِّنَىٰٓ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فَٰحِشَةً وَسَآءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾$$

"And come not near to the unlawful sexual intercourse. Verily, it is a Fāḥishah [i.e. anything that transgresses its limits (a great sin)], and an evil way (that leads one to Hell unless Allāh forgives him)."

(Surah al-Isrā', 17: 32)

Similarly, the persons concerned must lower their gaze at each other to block the means to lustful looking, Allah (SWT) says:

$$قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّواْ مِنْ أَبْصَٰرِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُواْ فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَٰرِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ$$

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allāh is All-Aware

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47   M.N. al-Albānī, *Irwa' al-Ghalīl, ḥadīth* no. 1791; M.N. al-Albānī, *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-Maʿārif, 1420), *ḥadīth* no. 97.

*of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze
(from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts
(from illegal sexual acts, etc.)…"*

(Surah al-Nūr, 24: 30-31)

Unfortunately, trespassing the aforementioned limits in the 21st century permissive moral climate, legalizes kissing, hugging, massaging and host of other supposed conjugal practices among many intending Muslim couples in the area under study. Factors such as satanic temptation, watching local and foreign movies, novels[48] and bad peer groups are the key identified inspirational mechanisms for disapproved courtship practices among Muslim Youth in northern Nigeria.

While applauding on one hand, the promising facilitation brought by mass media generally in the information and communication industry, health, education and banking sectors as well as in personal and interpersonal affairs, which qualify it to serve as a blessing to the *Ummah*; however, regrettably, it turns to be a curse to many. As shown by the result of this research, mobile phone and social media courtship beget facility in communication. Yet, based on our observation, unknown to most parents, their wards are lured into erotic conversations/relationships via phone call majorly, using the CUG (Close User Group) platform. This service was meant originally to facilitate communication among men of Nigeria Police Force popularly called "forcecom" introduced by Glo and later by other mobile network providers. This avenue is cheaply being abused by many young prospective Muslim couples because of the "talk-more-charge-less" friendliness of the service. More dangerously however, the risk of illicit relationship increases dramatically when courting through WhatsApp. Among all social networks, as indicated by the result above, WhatsApp appeared to be the most subscribed to by the people and patronized more by the youth. This could not be unconnected from the easy-going and user-friendly nature of the platform enabling chatters to privately converse and discretely share pictures/videos of any kind and make audio or video calls. Therefore, in most cases, we discern, the seeds of physical intimacy are sown through prolong night or secluded calls and chats between the courting parties. Unfortunately, these unethical practices force many youths to resort to masturbation, or at worst, homosexuality, despite their short- and long-term health implications in addition to been religiously reprehensible, blemish and prohibited as indicated in:

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[48]   M. Wabili and Khadijah (Lecturer, Gombe State University), in interview with author via online on 19 October 2017.

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَٰفِظُونَ ۝ إِلَّا عَلَىٰٓ أَزْوَٰجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَٰنُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ۝ فَمَنِ ٱبْتَغَىٰ وَرَآءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْعَادُونَ ۝

"And those who guard their chastity (i.e. private parts, from illegal sexual acts). Except from their wives or (the captives and slaves) that their right hands possess, for then, they are free from blame. Whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors."

(Surah al-Mu'minūn, 23: 5-7)

The analysis of results from the second table evidently discerned the marginal effects of ill-modern courtship on the socio-moral standing of Muslim homes and invariably the larger society. The negative effects such as mutual mistrust and incessant rancor are as a result of either ignorance, malpractice or non-practice of the Islamic teachings on what constitute marriage. In addition to the socio-moral consequences of bad courtship mentioned above, it may also serve as a causative factor for seizure of Allah's blessing on the marriage,[49] or source of Allah's punishment on the couple,[50] economic hardship and social insecurity are other sides of it. The perpetration of all sorts of atrocities (*fasaad)* in *khiṭbah,* courtship, wedding and ceremonies etc. in deliberate disobedience to Allah and His Messenger, could also be contributing factors to challenges that confront the society. This is an area that needs to be empirically studied. In His Majesty, Allah (SWT) promises to make culprits taste the evils of their handiworks in order for them to repent, a narrative that might also be applicable to the situation under study. This is made clear in the following verses:

ظَهَرَ ٱلْفَسَادُ فِي ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِى ٱلنَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُم بَعْضَ ٱلَّذِى عَمِلُواْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ۝

"Evil (sins and disobedience of Allāh, etc.) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds, etc.), that Allāh may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return (by repenting to Allāh, and begging His Pardon."

(Surah al-Rūm, 30: 41)

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[49]   M.M. al-Jibali, *The Quest for Love and Mercy: Regulations for Marriage and Wedding in Islam,* 95.

[50]   A.O Kilani (Professor, Islamic Studies, University of Port Harcourt), in interview with author via online on 1 December 2017.

In another verse, Allah (SWT) mentions some repercussions that will befall those who disobey the commands of the Prophet (SAW) that:

لَّا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ ٱلرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُم بَعْضًا قَدْ يَعْلَمُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَسَلَّلُونَ مِنكُمْ لِوَاذًا فَلْيَحْذَرِ ٱلَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

"And let those who oppose the Messenger's (Muhammad SAW) commandment (i.e. his Sunnah legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements, etc.) beware, lest some fitnah (disbelief, trials, afflictions, earthquakes, killing, overpowered by a tyrant, etc.) befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them."

(Surah al-Nūr, 24: 63)

Therefore, the *fitnah* mentioned in this verse, explicates the one referred to in the Prophetic warning cited earlier.

The ultimate way out of all sorts of recessions in Nigeria and elsewhere, be they social, economic, moral or religious, lies in unquestionable compliance to the rules of Shariah by Muslims. To err is human, therefore, in cases of omission or commission against the dictates of the Shariah, people could redress by frequenting *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness) intending sincere repentance (*tawbatan nasuhah)* to Allah (SWT) from the evil acts perpetuated. Surely, with Allah (SWT), the door of forgiveness is open to erring servants as explicated in the following verses:

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ ٱللَّهَ يَجِدِ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

"And whoever does evil or wrongs himself but afterwards seeks Allāh's Forgiveness, he will find Allāh Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful."

(Surah al-Nisā', 4: 110)

قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٣﴾

Say: "O 'Ibādī (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of

the Mercy of Allāh, verily Allāh forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

(Surah al-Zumar, 39: 53)

As reported by Abū Dharr (RA) through Prophet Muhammad (SAW), that Allah (SWT) promised forgiveness to whoever seeks for it in a *ḥadīth al-Qudsī* where He says:

يا عبادي إنكم تخطئون بالليل والنهار فاستغفروني فإني أغفر لكم الذنوب جميعا ولا أبالي

"O My servants, you commit sins by day and by night, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you." [51]

Some of the fruits of *istighfar* could be discerned from the following Quranic verse in relation to Prophet Nuh (SAW) and his people which is also applicable to the present generation thus:

فَقُلْتُ ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ۝ يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا ۝ وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَٰلٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَٰرًا ۝

"I said (to them): 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord; Verily, He is Oft-Forgiving; 'He will send rain to you in abundance; 'And give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers."

(Surah Nūḥ, 71: 10-12)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, it is understood that marriage is the legal union through which human communities are produced. Therefore, what make up marriages in terms of practices given to cultural and religious provisions alongside the moral climate of a certain people, influence greatly, the quality of the institution and the society as a whole. It was established from the results of this study that; a great deal of immodesty saturates the conduct of courtship among young prospective Muslim couples in Nigeria influenced by various agents of globalization such as social media and materialism. The presence of the identified un-Islamic and uncultured practices among youth are linked to many factors such as ignorance of or eschewing Shariah rulings on courtship,

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[51]   Muslim bin Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* book 32, no. *ḥadīth* 6246.

abuse of agents of globalization and westernization as a result of which varying calamities abound. Based on our findings, the resultant consequences of ill-modern courtship, affect not only the couples, but the entirety of the socio-moral and the economic constituents of the matrimonial home and the larger society. Some of these effects include among others, spousal mutual suspicion, mistrust, discord which turns bloody sometimes, and ends in divorce.[52] Moreover, the upshots do not stop there, but in some instances, impinge on the upbringing of children born out of such type of marriage.[53] Consequently, the society also becomes affected in many ways. In fact, when a society is so accustomed to immoralities, calamities of varying gravities will ensue ranging from social disorders to economic downturns and insecurity.

Interestingly, when such calamities occur, they depict and signal Allah's reprimands to such a people as divine call to order wherewith sincere repentance and reversion to acts of righteousness, the unpalatable condition will be restored to normalcy. Some Islamic guidelines on courtship were highlighted as steps to help in establishing Shariah-compliant matrimonial homes and societies in the ever challenging 21st century Nigeria in addition to the following recommendations:

a) Youth should fear Allah and guard their utterances and practices while courting and conduct *istikhārah* before going deep into relationships.

b) Parents should attach premium importance to the noble qualities of virtue and religiosity in addition to possession of *ba'ah* while considering marriage proposals of their wards against materialism. They ought to also come to terms with the realities of the 21st century world to be able to fast-track the conduct of their wards during courtship and ensure compliance to the Islamic rules of *khiṭbah* and courtship.

c) Scholars, Muslim organizations and *Masajid* should restructure and intensify efforts in organizing pre-marital counseling to Muslim youth in secondary schools and tertiary institutions to educate them on making right choices in building families or at best establish formal marriage counseling centers to provide answers to pertinent questions/issues bordering marriage and family to the surrounding Muslim *Ummah*.

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[52] M.N. Lemu (Director, Research and Training Department, Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna, Niger State), in interview with author via online on 6 December 2017.

[53] A.A. Sulaiman (Head of Department, Department of Islamic Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi), in interview with author via online on 1 December 2017.

d) The leadership of the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria should liaise with appropriate government authorities to set up mechanisms for institutionalizing the marriage institution. Judges of Shariah courts should also be empowered and sensitized on the *fiqh* of marriage and its legal applications and implications to be able to adjudicate on any reported marital issue. A working document ought to also be produced containing rules and regulations on all facets of marriage based on the sources of Shariah. The type initiated by the leadership of the Muslim *Ummah* in Kano in collaboration with the state government.

e) In order to minimize or curb the menace of immoralities over the cyber space, censorship mechanism ought to be put in place by the Nigerian government to regulate the activities of social networking sites and other internet-based video and picture sharing domains.

Going by the above recommendations, amidst globalization, courtship would be conducted decently, resulting to a modest marriage contract, establishing a morally upright and peaceful matrimony. It is posited that, out of such homes, righteous children will be procreated to make a better modern Muslim society characterized by spiritual commitment, economic prosperity and social cohesion as echoed in the following verse:

مَنۡ عَمِلَ صَٰلِحٗا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوۡ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤۡمِنٞ فَلَنُحۡيِيَنَّهُۥ حَيَوٰةٗ طَيِّبَةٗۖ وَلَنَجۡزِيَنَّهُمۡ أَجۡرَهُم بِأَحۡسَنِ مَا كَانُواْ يَعۡمَلُونَ ٩٧

"Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)."

(Surah al-Naḥl, 16: 97)

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