

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF PRE-MARITAL MEDICAL TEST IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

The foundation of an egalitarian society is rooted in the family system, and a healthy marital atmosphere is needed to achieve the objective of marriage. Pre-marital medical test plays a vital role that cannot be overemphasized, particularly in limiting the spread of some infectious diseases, such as sickle cell, HIV, thalassemia, etc. However, the fact that some resistance was relatively recorded on the pre-marital medical tests among people in the Sokoto metropolis does not mean it has no place in Islam. The study intends to assess the level and attitudes of Muslims of Sokoto State towards the pre-marital test. The paper specifically examines the extent to which the pre-marital medical test is observed in the metropolis and the societal perception of it from the Islamic perspective, bearing in mind that preserving human life is among the significant goals of *Shari'ah* in Islam. Hence, the paper discovers less patronage of pre-marital medical tests by people in the Sokoto metropolis, which many attributed to ignorance of their existence and poor perception of them. The paper underpins the importance of having these tests by would-be couples before marriage as well as the position of Islam on them so that people in the state can embrace them accordingly. The paper adopted a qualitative survey where interviews were conducted with individuals and the researchers purposively selected participants. In conclusion, the study highlighted some of the importance of pre-marital medical tests among the Muslim *Ummah*.

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INTRODUCTION

Islam is not just a religion but a total way of life that guides a Muslim from the cradle to the grave. According to the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and the *Hadith*, the variety of its sources distinguishes Islamic law, its vast areas, and the range of the religious, moral, and legal principles of action. It sets before man ends beyond his immediate sense. This sense is because of its comprehensive nature with the most far-

reaching, practical, and dynamic ingredients necessary for every Muslim, man and woman at all times.

Pre-marital medical tests are a crucial aspect of modern marriage preparation. However, in Muslim-majority communities like Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria, the practice raises essential questions about Islamic ethics, cultural norms, and social implications. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of health and well-being in marriage. Therefore, pre-marital medical tests can identify potential health issues, reducing the risk of infectious diseases and genetic disorders. However, Islamic scholars and communities have varying opinions on the permissibility and scope of such tests.

Marriage is the fundamental building block of society and the cornerstone in building emotional, healthy and family relationships. A healthy marriage prevents the couples from hereditary and infectious diseases, thus building a happy and stable family.

The word "Marriage" is popularly called *al Nikah* in Islam, which is an Arabic term that connotes "uniting"; "interlacing"; "fusion or intercourse (Zakariya, 2011). The term, as defined by the Jurists, technically stands for:

Legalizing cohabitation with a woman and enjoying her after satisfying the conditions of offer and acceptance in the presence of a lady's guardian and witnesses after paying dower, provided no obstacle prevents the marriage (Zakariya, 2011).

Marriage is regarded as an institution in Islam. The Glorious Qur'an speaks on the wisdom behind the creation of man and woman who come closer to each other through marriage, as explicit in the following verse:

And among His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion, most surely there are signs for people who reflect (Qur'an, 30:21).

In other words, marriage unites a man and a woman under Islamic law, thereby regulating their lives as an entity in society.

The strong emphasis Islam places on marriage can be observed from the purposes it serves. Marriage in Islam is a mechanism for tension reduction, emotional and sexual gratification, legitimate procreation, social placement, interfamily alliance, and group solidarity (Abd al Ati, 1982). Hence, Islam advises man to select for his would-be children a morally upright and religiously conscious mother (vice-versa) to safeguard individuals against marrying unbecoming personalities.

The Prophet (SAW) says: "Marry the loving and child-bearing, for I shall outstrip

the other nations with your numbers on the Day of Resurrection" (Isma'il, 1997). In this context, the *Hadith* is not merely about the quantity or a large number of children but of a qualitative product. In yet another *hadith*, the Prophet (SAW) was reported to have said: "You are all shepherds, and you should all be accountable for your stewardship" (Badi, n.d.).

However, nowadays, the objective of marriage towards having qualitative children seems to be one of the severe obstacles bedeviling the Muslim community. Having been the best individuals to take care of their children for a better tomorrow, parents should do everything humanly possible to safeguard them, including the confirmation of health status before marriage, so that the end will justify the means.

Pre-marital Test (PMT) is an efficient strategy for the primary prevention of specific genetic disorders and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2013). The pre-marital test is a screening program offered to couples planning to get married to identify carriers of certain genetic diseases, e.g., sickle cell disease and thalassemia. These carriers are usually asymptomatic but can transmit such diseases to their future children if both couples are carriers. PMT is also used to test certain STDs, e.g., acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and hepatitis B and C, to reduce the incidence of genetic conditions and sexually transmitted diseases, hence minimizing the associated burden (Alhosain, 2018). Partners with incompatible PMS results are usually offered counseling sessions so they can make informed decisions about their marriage, which might include marriage cancellation (Lim *et al.*, 2009). The pre-marital test has been implemented in several countries worldwide as a precaution against either genetic diseases or sexually transmitted diseases (Alhosain, 2018).

In some places in Nigeria today, marriage arrangement is always accompanied by a pre-marital test. This pre-marital test is done to reduce the rate of transferable infections. There have been campaigns on the significance of the pre-marital test. However, the level of the pre-marital test has not increased significantly. The pre-marital test is due to the negative pre-conception about the pre-marital test. Spouses are usually discouraged from going for such tests for fear of incompatibility that might hinder their marriage arrangement. Thus, it is against this background that this study intends to assess the level and attitudes of Muslims of Sokoto State towards the pre-marital test.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methodological survey was utilized in the conduct of this research. There are various ways to collect data for survey-based research, the most popular of which are interviews and questionnaires. The method is adopted because it is more suitable for qualitative research. However, the primary data used for research is obtained through interviews. Finding and gathering reference materials relevant to this research is the first of three processes the researchers adopted when putting this piece together. Secondly, several interviews have been conducted, analyzed and elaborated to fully understand this essay's intersections. Thirdly, the researchers conclude the research by giving a highlight and the research outcome for further study. The data obtained through interviews are recorded, transcribed verbatim, and utilized for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The fact that this presentation focuses on a pre-marital medical test calls for answers to the following questions:

1. What is meant by a pre-marital medical test?
2. What is the societal perception of pre-marital medical tests in the Sokoto metropolis?
3. What informs pre-marital medical tests?
4. How does it affect the marriage afterward?
5. What is the position of Islam about the protection of human life and pre-marital medical tests?

In an attempt to answer the above questions, it will be paramount to explain the concept of a healthy marriage.

Healthy Marriage:

A healthy marriage is defined as a state of (lawful) agreement and harmony between the marriage partners regarding the health, psychological, sexual, social, and legislative aspects, aiming at making a sound family and begetting healthy children (Fatauya, 2013). A healthy marriage is therefore geared towards establishing and embellishing the above.

Pre-Marital Medical Test

Pre-marital medical test, otherwise known as pre-marital screening, is defined as

testing couples who are planning to get married soon for common genetic blood disorders (e.g., sickle cell anemia, and thalassemia) and infectious diseases (e.g., hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS) (Salman, 2014).

Pre-marital test is a test in which intending couples are tested for genetic, infectious, and blood-transmitted diseases to prevent any risk of transmitting the disease to their partners or children. It provides the baseline assessment of prospective marriage couples to reduce the unproductive genetic risk and the incidence of babies born with common hemoglobinopathies and infectious diseases (Sharaf, n.d).

Pre-marital screening consists of a comprehensive test group, especially for those planning to get married. According to the World Health Organization, 5% of the world population carries genes responsible for hemoglobinopathies. Sickle cell anemia is widespread among people whose ancestors come from sub-Saharan Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, and Mediterranean countries (El-Hazimi n.d).

The pre-marital medical test aims to give medical consultation on the odds of transmitting the diseases as mentioned earlier to the other partner/spouse or children and provide partners/spouses with options to help them plan for a healthy family.

Objectives of Pre-marital Medical Test

1. They limit the spread of some genetic blood diseases (e.g., sickle-cell anemia and thalassemia) and infectious diseases (e.g., hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS).
2. They are promoting awareness about the concept of a comprehensive, healthy marriage.
3. They are reducing pressure on health institutions and blood banks.
4. They were avoiding the social and psychological problems of families whose children suffer.
5. They are reducing the family and community's financial burdens of treating the injured persons.

The pre-marital medical test is classified as follows (Maryam, 2023):

1. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs): This test has to do with medical tests to ascertain infections like gonorrhoea in addition to HIV.
2. Fertility test: This is to know the condition or the degree of fertility. Fertility tests include seminal analysis, hormonal assay, pelvic ultrasound scans to ascertain the state of the internal reproductive organs, and so on.
3. Genotype: This is done to ascertain the genotype class of the would-be- couple to avoid having a child with sickle cell disease. Sickle cell disease is associated with a lifelong defect in the red blood cells, often resulting in severe ailments. In case one is of the "AA" genotype, there's nothing to worry about. However, if it is ascertained that one is an "AS" carrier of the sickle cell gene then care must be taken to know if the partner is not an "AS" too. If they are both AS carriers, there is a 50% chance of having a child of the "SS" genotype.
4. Blood group: It is also essential to ascertain the blood group of a potential spouse to avoid issues relating to blood group or rhesus incompatibility. One's blood group can be A, B, O, or AB, but another component is the Rhesus factor. The Rhesus factor is either positive or negative. If a Rhesus-negative woman marries a Rhesus-positive husband, there is a 50% chance of having rhesus Rhesus-positive baby. In this case, if precautions are not taken during pregnancy, it could lead to hemolytic disease in the newborn (Maryam, 2023).

However, according to some medical personnel, in addition, a potential spouse is required to have a thorough investigation of chronic medical conditions before marriage. These conditions include early testing for diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease, etc., which allows couples to seek medical assistance early enough and make the necessary lifestyle changes, having known their health status early. These conditions would make them prepare for each other accordingly.

Pre-Marital Medical Test in Sokoto Metropolis:

Pre-marital medical tests, whether in Sokoto or any other geographical location, are of paramount significance and cannot be overemphasized. The tradition is once a person finds someone to take in as a life partner, he is always congratulated by the community, as having a lovely and kind hearted prospective spouse is the dream of every man and woman. However, not much attention is given to pre-marital medical tests,

except in rare cases. Of course, there is a need for the potential couple, as an architect of their future marital life, to take the health of each other seriously. However, this is not always the case, as the euphoria of starting a new life might get one's head straight without considering some sexual and reproductive health factors that one needs to know before starting a family. Hence, couples planning to get married soon are advised to conduct the pre-marital screening at least three months before the marriage date to plan their lives better, as the pre-marital compatibility certificate is valid for only six months (Maryam, 2023). The screening for infectious diseases can also be re-conducted when needed.

Despite the pre-marital medical test facilities in different health centers of the Sokoto metropolis, going by societal perception, it has not been accorded priority within the metropolis. This research has confirmed the above assertion in the following findings:

a) Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Test in Sokoto Metropolis:

As earlier stated, this is one of the essential medical examinations expected by a couple before marriage. However, the result reveals that the tests, as mentioned earlier, are rarely carried out by couples in the Sokoto metropolis. The rare cases recorded were on couples of youthful ages (below thirty) that were not so long solemnized (Interview, 2022). Fewer respondents out of those interviewed from a polygamous family reveal that they have carried out the pre-marital test in their attempts to remarry (second, third, or fourth wives), but this was not done in their earlier marriages (Aliyu, 2022). It maintained that they were unaware of it at the first marriage and that it traditionally comes from the parent side. But the subsequent ones usually are out of one's free will. In this sense, the parents or guardians should be cautioned against this. Therefore, parents or guardians are advised to subject their wards to a pre-marital investigation to guarantee a healthy marriage.

Similarly, the study proves that the bulk of the respondents were either unaware of the program and or its implications or mere perception (of knowing the spouse, family background, character, and so on) that it does not warrant any medical screening, which is evident from their different responses. In contrast, others believe such in-depth investigation is not encouraged in Islam (Balkisu, 2022).

b) Fertility Test in Sokoto Metropolis:

Having kids or children is among the objectives of marriage. Therefore, spouses are expected to conduct fertility tests to avoid surprises and other emotional stress associated with it. Notwithstanding the existing facilities within the Sokoto metropolis, most metropolitans do not observe fertility tests. This is because all the responses elicited from the interview did not show the viability of this test, as many were unaware of it until after marriage (Zara'u, 2022). Some were aware of it but could not go for the test because the result of the test was merely hypothetical (Maryam Abubakar, 2022). Others did not go for it because they had seen some couples test negative but were blessed with kids over time. The general reason behind low patronage or complete abstinence from the test is that most couples see whether giving birth or not is the will of Allah (SWT), which He bestows to whom He wishes.

However, along the same vein, some respondents expressed that they went for it after marriage when they realized that the issue regarding having children had appeared to be a serious concern.

c) Genotype Test in Sokoto Metropolis:

As one of the critical pre-marital medical tests, it is also the baby parade. As earlier stated, this test will tell whether one or both partners are sicklers (SS), carriers of the sickle cell trait (AS), or their genotype is normal (AA). In the Sokoto metropolis, this medical test is observed by some of the inhabitants as interviewed. However, despite the poor patronage of the pre-marital screening by the vast majority, people are fully aware of the implications of the genotype test. The result reveals that the genotype medical test is preferred over the remaining categories of tests. However, some maintained that they are aware of the Genotype test, but considering their adoration for their prospective spouse(s), they do not go for it, since it would not change their minds.

Nevertheless, according to some respondents, the pre-marital test for genotype could not be conducted on them in their first marriage but was successfully carried out in their later marriages.

d) Blood Group Test in Sokoto Metropolis:

It remains an obvious fact that understanding both partners' blood groups will help prevent Rhesus incompatibility issues during pregnancy. However, here in Sokoto metropolis, only in rare cases do potential couples subject themselves to the above medical test before marriage. Notwithstanding, in most instances, the metropolitans only know their blood group when it comes to blood donation, particularly with the males, while for the females is mainly post-marital affair, either during or after gestation.

Even though the knowledge of one's partner's health status helps in taking suitable measures, should one decide to go ahead or not, interactions in the course of this investigation reveal that the resistance of the blood group test and other pre-marital medical tests generally by some people in the metropolis, could lead to mistrust, especially on the person requesting the test. This suspicion is unfair in the presence of trust. At the same time, some regarded it as an in-depth investigation discouraged in Islam, especially concerning the first category (HIV and STDs), and for that, they never gave it a thought. More so, the researchers observe that in some cases, the concerned attitude of the parent or guardian, and even the prospective spouse themselves, contribute to the consequence of resistance to the pre-marital medical tests. The resultant effect of which is regretted afterward (Asma'u, 2022). Two instances were unveiled in this study, where a lady married a man without any medical investigation (Ummul Khair, 2022). Unknown to them, the man has been on (HIV) drugs and refused to disclose to the lady, let alone her family. Following the marriage, in the long run, the reality was unveiled after they had a daughter, and the issue was already out of hand.

Consequently, the lady fell ill to the point that she was taken back to her family, where the truth was discovered, and she later lost her life. Due to the so-called trust, the same thing also happened to a medical nurse. She was unaware of the health status of the person she married, who was HIV positive. It was after having two children with him (a boy and a girl) that the long-hidden secret was revealed, and subsequently, the nurse fell critically ill and died after being admitted to the hospital (Jamila, 2022).

On the genotype, also, findings reveal that many parents have suffered from the consequence afterwards. However, it is not out of place to mention that some are not to be blamed as the idea was not common during their days, giving rise to children with sickle cell disease. On the other hand, the genotype test, as earlier mentioned is the most patronized in Sokoto metropolis. It was why the sickle cell phenomenon has drastically reduced, despite some rare cases, due to unawareness of the pre-marital medical test, or perception.

The fertility test, however, is the most unpatronized pre-marital medical test in the Sokoto metropolis, which, even if it is observed, is mainly in the post-marital phase. As explained earlier, it cannot be unconnected with the societal perception of deeming the test a mere hypothesis. Hence, the resultant effect is mainly seen in the absence of children or the inability to conceive by the wife for a quiet frame of time, which sometimes raises blame on the side of the spouse's relatives for the married couple and sometimes leads to a broken home.

One example was observed within the metropolis, where the couple spent more than a decade (both marrying for the first time) without production. The husband went ahead for a second wife, but the problem persists. As for more than half a decade in the second marriage, neither the former nor the latter had conceived. And neither of them possesses a compatibility marriage certificate. These are among the consequences observed in the metropolis for avoiding pre-marital medical tests. However, having prior knowledge and taking the appropriate steps will no doubt reduce the risk of some diseases, infertility, and miscarriages.

Islamic Perspective on Pre-Marital Medical Test

To begin with, the legality or otherwise of the pre-marital medical test in contemporary times appears to be a controversial issue. However, the dynamic nature of the religion of Islam will never do away with what safeguards and preserves an individual's life, which is one of the five objectives of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*. As such, it is not out of place to say that a pre-marital medical test or examination becomes a mechanism to be used in the bid to achieve the fundamental objectives of *Shari'ah*, which goes beyond *darurah* (necessity), as a means of safeguarding life and integrity of the individual (Ahmad, 2011). Islam values human life, health, and morality beyond any imagination. Hence, it encourages anything that can prevent the loss of human life or

anything that can protect and enhance people's health and morality.

A medical examination is a fundamental phenomenon for the sustainability of marriage between intending couples. It helps secure their lives and shape the fate and future of their prospective children. Pre-marital medical examination nowadays goes beyond the doctrine of *darurah* (necessity). It is a mechanism to achieve the fundamental objective of *Shari'ah* (Islamic law), safeguarding people's lives and morality. Islam values human life, health, and morality more than anything one can think of. Hence, Islam encourages Muslims to do anything that can prevent the loss of human life or anything that can lead to protection and enhancement of people's health and morality. To this end, the Almighty Allah said:

...whoever saves a single soul as if he saves the lives of the entire mankind (Qur'an, 5:32).

Given this, prospective parents should, as a matter of obedience to the law of Allah, examine their health status so that they cannot cheat themselves and, as well, cheat the younger generations. To this effect, the Prophet (s.a.w) was reported to have said:

A patient will not come closer to a healthy one (Bukhari, 12:288). To this end, Allah (SWT) says: Whoever saves a single soul as if he saves the lives of mankind (Qur'an, 5:32).

Given this, prospective parents should, as a matter of obedience to the law of Allah, examine their health status to avoid harming both themselves as well as the younger generations.

Islam encourages prospective spouses to conduct a medical examination before marriage to curbe a high rate of incurable and infectious ailments, leading to mortality such as those highlighted earlier (HIV, STD, Hepatitis, Genotype, and so on) to save both lives of the parents and the future generations.

Although the pre-marital medical test is not among the essential elements for a valid marriage does not mean our contemporary leaders and scholars should not encourage it among prospective couples, considering the dynamism of Islam. It is because after the demise of the Prophet (SAW), the Sahaba (RA) addressed new issues of importance through *Ijtihad*. An example was the compilation of the Qur'an that was not done during the Prophet's time. Similarly, the penalty for theft (amputation) was lifted during the second caliph, 'Umar Bin al Khattab (RA), because of famine.

Furthermore, during the time of the *Tabi'un* (followers of the *Sahaba*), including the founders of the prominent schools of law, *Ijtihad* was used to solve evolving issues or phenomena amongst the Muslims. An important example similar to the subject matter of this article is the consensus of the Muslim jurists on the subject of *Istihbab* (approval) to look at the woman one intends to marry. For instance, Imam Malik states that "it is allowed for a man to see from the woman he intends to marry, her face and the palms to gauge the kind of body she possesses (Zakariya, 2011). It stresses the practice of pre-marital observation of one's prospective spouse to ascertain body structure and physical health status right from the time of *Tabi'un*, as modern technology was absent then. Thus, the wisdom behind conducting the pre-marital medical test will go a long way, enhancing a conducive atmosphere among couples on the one hand and the larger Muslim community on the other. It is because Islam aims at deriving benefits for man and, at the same time, prevents what will be detrimental to him. Therefore, Islam condemns the act of cheating and harming one another. The Prophet (SAW) says: "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm" (Badi, n.d).

Similarly, procreation as one of the objectives of marriage in Islam can be best achieved in a sound and healthy atmospheric condition. Therefore, the encouragement to go for a pre-marital medical test for a Muslim could be best spelled out comprehensively in the existing subsidiary sources of Islamic law to avoid misconceptions. It proves that Al Ghazali's view in *Mustapha Min Ilm al Usul* maintained that logical argument is necessary to solve the method of *Shari'ah*.

More so, another scholar, Wa'el, reported that "the devices to be considered in introducing Islamic law into *Shari'ah* include *darurah* (necessity); the principle of derivation; *takhayyur* (selection) and *talfiq* (amalgamation) approaches- an interpretive approach otherwise known as neo-*Ijtihad*; and adoption of a principle which says any law that does not contradict the principle of *Shari'ah* may be deemed as lawful" (Wael, 2009). He also pointed out the dynamism of *Shari'ah*, maintaining that deducing a new solution or rule in *Shari'ah* should always go in line with the philosophy and objective of *Shari'ah*. As such, scholars can use their talent and the methods on the ground, such as *Qiyas* (analogical deduction), *Istihsan* (equity), *Masalih al Mursalah* (public interest), and *Ta'liq* (following the doctrines of other jurists) in an attempt to make their analogy, and even elaborate more. The primary reference remains the Glorious Qur'an and *Sunnah* of

the Prophet (SAW) (Wael, 2009).

Further, an *Ijtihad* can be conducted using evidence in the sources referred to as *Mutlaq* (independent *Ijtihad*). At the same time, it is concerned with the confining of a particular *madh-hab* (school of law), which is known as *Ijtihad muqayyid* (dependent or limited *Ijtihad*) (Wael, 2009). Thus, Imam al Ghazali was the first to categorize *Ijtihad* into two, as mentioned above. And that the former still exists, whereas the latter was long forgotten or obscured after a long period (Alhowiti and Shaqran, 2019).

To this end, among the crucial factors to be considered in extra judgment in *Shari'ah* include having an evidentiary knowledge of the indications and their conditions by which demonstrative proofs and evidence produce meaning. By implication, the demonstrative proofs in the context of this article include those mentioned the resultant effect of not undergoing the pre-marital medical examination, which contributes to the high rate of parental mortality, as well as prenatal transmission of inflectional diseases that commonly affect the fetus (unborn child). The repercussion of this affects the future of the younger generation. Allah says in the Qur'an:

And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves to perdition with your own hands, and do good (to others); indeed Allah loves the doers of good (Qur'an, 2:195).

In the above verse, Allah cautions Muslims not to use their own hands to destroy themselves. Given this, Islam does not explicitly make pre-marital medical tests mandatory and, at the same time, does not caution Muslims against checking their health status before engaging in a marriage contract. However, while some scholars did not agree to mandate it upon spouses, as they believe neither the Qur'an nor the *Sunnah* explicitly declares it, some scholars unanimously agreed. One of whom is Sheikh Bn Jibril; when asked about the legality or otherwise of conducting a pre-marital medical test, he is of the view that:

.. If Allah will, carrying out a medical examination before marriage is permissible. It becomes even more confirmed if it is predominantly believed that there are hereditary diseases in the family. It is permissible to do so if an internal disease is feared, affecting one's health and denying the comfort of the spouse's stability and tranquillity. It might be one of them is possessed (by *jinn*) or has epilepsy, or they have a chronic disease even though perhaps the disease may be a simple one, like asthma, diabetes, bilharzia, or rheumatism. The same thing applies to being sterile and not being able to have children. However, if the spouses appear to be in good health and the environment and society where they live have no such

diseases or similar ones, then, in principle, they are not affected by any disease and should not fear anything about them. In this case, there is no need for a medical examination for both spouses. Allah knows best (Islamweb, 1).

From the above, it can be said that pre-marital medical tests do not contravene the provisions of *Shari'ah*.

Moreover, some Muslim-dominated nations, among which include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco, provide an avenue for preventing people against the effects of genetic and congenital disorders, which are rampant in such societies (Alswaidi, 2009). They did this through massive encouragement of an optional pre-marital medical examination, and later mandatory, intending to appreciate its significance in marital life among their citizens. Again, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has advanced since 2004 to make the pre-marital medical test compulsory for spouses (Alswaidi, 2009). This implementation was preceded by the government's procurement of health facilities affordable to the more significant citizens. This development is an aspect of *maslahah*, which concerns the public, otherwise known as *maslaha amah* (public interest). This move by the Saudi Government is indeed a step to make the possibility of pre-marital medical tests accessible, much more manageable, and affordable to an ordinary citizen.

In Nigeria, as one of the Islamic nations, the pre-marital medical test has already been introduced, and arrangements to mandate it began in some states of the nation. Even though it has not been made official in Sokoto, interactions reveal that in one of the *Jumu'ah* mosques within the metropolis, it is made mandatory for both prospective spouses before marriage is solemnized in that respective mosque (Ahmad, 2022).

Similarly, in Kano, arrangements are in top gear through the *Hisbah* Board, in collaboration with the Kano State Agency for the Control of AIDS (KSACA), to come up with a law that would compel couples to undergo HIV screening before marriage (Alswaidi, 2009).

Similarly, Kaduna bans marriage without a medical test (Alswaidi, 2009). In addition, many Imams call on Muslims to conduct pre-marital medical tests before sealing the marriage contract in their *khutbah* (*Jumu'ah* sermon). Some Islamic scholars extend the gesture to counsel the Muslims on the implication of not having the pre-marital medical test at any social or religious gathering where they find themselves. It will go a long way in preserving quality health and the lives of the public, which is one of the core

objectives of *Shari'ah*.

CONCLUSION

Before delving into a marriage contract, this article examines pre-marital medical tests to screen couples' health status. Types of pre-marital medical tests were examined, along with the different diseases, such as HIV, hepatitis, fertility tests, etc, that are rampant in our societies, as well the implications of having or not having the tests. The study also explored the Islamic perspective and socio-cultural aspects of pre-marital medical tests in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria. The findings indicate that the majority of Muslim scholars in Sokoto generally support pre-marital medical tests as a means of promoting health and well-being in marriage, and socio-cultural factors, such as family honor, stigma, and traditional norms, influence attitudes toward pre-marital medical tests. Therefore, there is a need for culturally sensitive healthcare services and education to address misconceptions and promote informed decision-making.

Societal perception and attitudes toward pre-marital medical tests were carefully investigated, and the result reveals that it has not been accorded much priority by the people in the metropolis of Sokoto, and is therefore not surprising to obtain a relatively similar result in the various Local Government Areas of the State. Finally, the article analyzes the Islamic position on a pre-marital medical test, stressing the dynamic nature of Islam to proffer solutions to any contemporary phenomenon, as long as it improves and safeguards the lives of individuals, among which are the pre-marital medical tests, which do not only protects the lives of the spouses but also that of future generations. It is an aspect of *maslaha ammah* (public interest), a portion of the core goals that *Shari'ah* sets to achieve.

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