

Relationship Between Lack of Sexual Satisfaction and Childlessness and Attitude toward Infidelity Among Couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study was carried out to determine to the factors that are related to attitude towards infidelity among married persons in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions with their corresponding null hypotheses were guided the study. The research designs adopted for the study were ex-post-facto and correlational. 400 married persons from Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, drawn through purposive and simple random sampling techniques constituted the sample for the study. Data for the study was collected by means of a researcher designed questionnaire. The instrument for the study were validated by experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Data was analyzed using mean, standard deviation for the research questions, while the null hypotheses were analyzed by means of independent t – test statistical technique at 0.05 alpha level. Result of the study revealed that while lack of sexual satisfaction significantly related to attitude toward infidelity, childlessness did not significantly relate with attitude to infidelity. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that couples should not gloss over issues concerning sexual satisfaction but amicably discuss it and if possible talk with professional couples or marriage counsellor.*

KEY WORDS: infidelity, attitude, childlessness, sexual satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a practice that takes place in every society. In other words, it is a culture universal. People from almost every background get involved in marriage in one way or the other. Though the method of entering into marriage may not be the same, the issue of harmony in marriage is a common feature that concerns all, this is so because the desire of everyone going into marriage is that their own will be a blissful and fulfilling one, but from what we observe every day, we know that it is not so. Marital relationships are fraught with a myriad of problems that threaten its

existence and the well-being of those involved. Such problems may include lack of commitment from one or both partners, incompatibility and growing apart, lack of communication, infidelity or extramarital affairs, financial incompatibility (money problems), substance abuse, domestic abuse, conflicts over family responsibilities, sexual satisfaction, erectile dysfunction, lack of communication, childlessness, gender of child, and differences in cultural norms among others. Although the problems affecting marital relationships are numerous, infidelity is a significant problem as it has severed the joy of many marriages, disrupted family harmony and has made the family institution to experience series of transitions with grave consequences.

According to Omarzu, Miller, Schultz and Timmerman (2012) “infidelity is any action that violates an implicit or explicit agreement between two people, thereby undermining the relationship”. Infidelity is commonly referred to as a breach of expectation of sexual exclusivity. Zare (2011), opined that infidelity is also termed “unfaithfulness” by virtue of being unreliable and cheating on a relationship partner despite a commitment to exclusiveness. He further stated that sometimes, infidelity by a marriage partner is often referred to as philander, adultery and affair. However, what can be regarded as infidelity varies from culture to culture. Even in an open relationship, infidelity may arise if a partner in such relationship acts outside the understood boundaries of that relationship.

Infidelity covers a wide range of sexual acts such as one-night stands (sexual relationships that last for only a night), emotional connections, long-term relationship and philandering, having an affair, extra-marital relationship, coitus, oral sex, kissing, fondling, friendships, internet relationship and pornography use (Blow and Hartnet as cited in Zare, 2011). In addition, infidelity may be physical, emotional or both. It is physical when it is done without any emotional strings (for example, when a married man visits a brothel) perhaps for the fun of it or to ease tension. On the other hand, infidelity is emotional when strings of affection are attached. It is both physical and emotional when the act goes on with some level of commitment. Levay and Valente (2011) assert that no matter the form that acts of infidelity may take, it disrupts marital harmony and rob partners of their affection. In fact, infidelity in a marital relationship has devastating consequences as it leads to violence and/or divorce. It also alters the ideals of marriage and shatters family ties. The consequences of infidelity can be actually horrendous as about 13 percent of all homicides are spousal murder (Zare, 2011).

Less noticeable perhaps, infidelity puts a crack on the essentials of marriage and pilfers the peace of couples. Marriage is commonly described as the state of being united with a person of the opposite sex as husband and wife, in a consensual relationship according to the beliefs, laws, rules and customs of partners. Olds and Papalia (2011); Umoh and Adeyemi (2010) and Hetherington (2003) agree that although marriage customs differ around the world, there are universal essentials that marriage seeks to achieve such as the many personal and social functions it performs. These functions include regulation of sexual behaviour, procreation, care of children (for example, their education and socialization) economic production and consumption, regulation of decent, satisfaction of personal needs (for example, need for social status, companionship and affection)

and division of labour between husband and wife. In addition, marriage legitimizes and regulates sexual relations; it creates family life and serves as an institution for financial support for its members; and serves as a means for determining the father of a woman's children (Nevid and Rathus, 2013).

Infidelity truly alters the functions of marriage as it incites jealousy, regrets and bitterness in couples. When marital conflict arising from infidelity hitches a marriage, it tears the family apart and leaves the children of such marriage to bear the brunt. Nowadays infidelity is one of the most important reasons for divorce as 90 percent of all divorce cases involve infidelity (Zare, 2011). Research reveals that about 19 percent of married couples (12% of men and 17% of women) have engaged in sex outside their marriage (Omarzu et al, 2012). Also, Baker (as cited in Zare, 2011) observed that there has been a dramatic increase in the rate of infidelity. He stated that the rate of life-time infidelity for men over 60 increased from 20% to 28% between 1991 and 2006. For women over 60, the rate increased from 5% to 15% between 1991 and 2006. Therefore, infidelity among married persons has become a subject of concern to psychologists, researchers and others who cherish the ideals of marriage. More so, infidelity incites feelings of jealousy in partners. Men and women may be made jealous by fear of different kinds of infidelity. Men tend to be jealous when they fear their partners are being physically unfaithful (actually engaging in sexual intimacy with another person). On the other hand, women tend to be jealous when they fear their partners are being emotionally unfaithful, that is, giving affection or sign of commitment to another person (Levay and Valente, 2011). Sadly, most men and women who choose to break their vow of sexual exclusivity to an intimate partner do not realize the effects their behaviour can have on their loved one. Omarzu, et al, (2012) in a study found that wives of men who discovered a pattern of infidelity in their partner experienced acute stress symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorders. Be that as it may, infidelity is a universal phenomenon that occurs with remarkable regularity, despite near universal disapproval of this behaviour.

The axiom that the human mind is like a clean slate has continued to puzzle the thinking of advocates of this theory. It is also in the light of this theory they have tried to postulate that human by nature is good, born a saint but society made him/her bad (Iwundu, 2007). The society here refers to all segments of society and agents of socialization such as the family, church, school, peer group, community, government, mass media, etc. In View of the above, the perpetration of infidelity by married persons in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers state must have some (extenuating) factors which this study seeks to investigate. Researches have shown that a myriad of psychological, cultural and economic variables play a role in the expression and frequency of infidelity. These variables include low self-esteem, feeling of neglect, low sex in marriage, falling out of love and boredom (Omarzu et. al, 2012; Fisher, Tsapelas and Aaron, 2010). Also, most researchers on extra-marital affairs focused mainly on either the infidelity of married women or the infidelity of married men. However, this study seeks to investigate the factors associated with the infidelity of married persons, that is, the infidelity of married men and married women. Factors such as lack of sexual satisfaction and childlessness, will be considered as they are likely to contribute to the perpetration of infidelity among married persons. Lack of sexual satisfaction

refers to the state of sexual encounter between partners not being enough to suit the appetite of one or both partners (Zgourides, 1996). The inability to satisfy a partner's sexual urge could be a result of sexual dysfunction which could bring about feelings of frustration, guilt and sadness in marital partners. As such, if the situation is not properly handled a partner may want to seek satisfaction outside his/her matrimonial home (Oyewo, 2012). In addition, childlessness is also capable of luring a marital partner into acts of infidelity. The inability of a woman to conceive after a long period of sexual encounter without contraception raises doubts in the woman and her husband about the possibility of having children. This is likely to disrupt the physical intimacy and emotional closeness which such husband and wife enjoy. As the world watches to see the fruit of such marital relationship, pressures from family and friends of the couple break in. These pressures could incite marital conflicts and either of the partners may prove that he/she is fertile by "trying-it-out" with someone else. Be that as it may, Levay and Valente (2011) opined that the inability of a woman to achieve pregnancy over a long period of sexual intercourse without contraception is equally likely to be the result of a disorder in the man or in the woman. The researcher observes that in most cases the woman bears the blame for not getting pregnant. Also, the gender of children is capable of influencing infidelity. A couple who continues to give birth to children of a particular sex (particularly female children) may trade blames and one of the spouse may want to indulge in extramarital affair to prove that he/she is capable of having a child of the desired sex. This is mostly the case in this part of the world where male children are held in high esteem. Observation shows that in most incidences the woman is blamed for not giving birth to male children and the man is advised to look for male children elsewhere or to take a second wife. Therefore, if advocates of sexual exclusivity of marital partners perceive that the above mentioned factors are likely to influence the attitude of married persons towards infidelity, then it is worth investigating so as to enlighten society of how these factors contribute to the perpetration of infidelity among married men and women. This forms the basis of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing rate of infidelity has become a source of worry to many Nigerians, especially psychologists, counselors, and crusaders of the sanctity of the marriage institution. It is saddening to know that marital vows of faithfulness are no longer sacrosanct as some married persons engage in extramarital affairs without considering the consequences. Infidelity severs the bonds of affection in a marital relationship and unleashes terror on the couples. This terror affects members of the couple's families and the society. Marriage is widely regarded as the formal process through which a family is established. The infidelity of a partner breeds hatred, anger and feelings of neglect in the other partner and this hatred is sometimes extended to the children which such marital relationship has produced. Infidelity creates room for disaffection, feelings of inadequacy, separation, divorce and even violence that can result in homicide.

Couples bedeviled by infidelity experience series of marital conflict which destabilizes their communication flow, disrupt their joy and throw them into a state of regret and confusion. In most cases, wives are the victims of infidelity because of society's double standards regarding infidelity. Marital conflict brought about by infidelity is evidenced in different parts of society; it breeds

anger, jealousy and creates scares of distrust that cannot be easily erased from the mind of the person whose partner has been unfaithful. Marital conflict caused by infidelity depicts an example of the failure in the nurturing factors or “satisfiers” in a relationship and it is one of the major causes of spousal homicide and suicide. The victim of infidelity wonders about his/her area of inadequacy and faces numerous psychological problems which have profound health implications. Hitherto the factor that severs or ends a marital relationship is the death of a spouse. The vow “till death do us part” was unequivocally irrevocable. Today, infidelity has made many women and men single parent and their children face the echoing consequences of not having a complementing parent.

The last blow of infidelity is divorce. When this happens in a marriage that has brought children and the wife is the perpetrator, the husband may leave her with little or nothing for the upkeep of the children. What becomes of such children? It is pertinent to note that such children may experience untold hardship and negative life experiences, and may grow up to become menace to the society. These same children are likely to perpetrate all forms of crimes and unleash terror on society. Observation shows that acts of infidelity are perpetrated on a daily basis in all nooks and crannies of Obio/Akpor local government area under different guises. This act has dealt severely with many married couples by hacking the bond of their marital relationship. This creates marital conflict, physical and emotional distancing, disrupts economic and psychological support, incites spousal violence. Sometimes this violence creates rancor between the families of the couple. Also, infidelity has made many husbands to treat/handle very important family needs with levity while showering their economic, physical and emotional attention on their mistress. To that extent are, it is no news that many husbands complain of lack of finance to meet their family’s needs (such as children’s school fees) but lavish their earnings on those they have extramarital affair with. When the wife complains or finds out the lacuna, the husband will call her a bickering wife or even give her the “third-degree” and threaten divorce.

On the other hand, most wives who perpetrate infidelity abandon their primary obligation of caring for their husband and children (emotionally and physically) and spend quality time with their lover. Some of these women refuse to grant their husbands sexual intimacy after they have had a sexual encounter with their “boyfriend”. Most of them spend their money and that of their husband to maintain such extramarital relationship, and even go as far as bringing their lover into their matrimonial bed. No doubt, children in such a family where acts of infidelity take more of the time of either or both parents are often alone as their parents are not always available for them to gravitate between and share personal experiences. Such children may observe this parental behaviour and inadvertently model same at adulthood. If this happens the society will be populated with persons who perpetrate and glorify infidelity. If infidelity is as consequential as presented above, it requires a good identification and understanding of the factors that are associated with it. The crux of the problem of this study therefore is: to what extent are lack of sexual satisfaction and childlessness likely factors with attitude toward infidelity among couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to find out the factors associated with attitude towards infidelity among married persons in Obio/Akpor. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the following:

1. The extent to which lack of sexual satisfaction relate to attitude towards infidelity among married persons.
2. The extent to which childlessness relate to attitude towards infidelity among married persons.

Research Questions

For the purpose of adequately achieving the research objectives, the following research questions have been formulated to guide the study.

- (1) To what extent does lack of sexual satisfaction relate to attitude towards infidelity among male and female married persons?
- (2) To what extent does childlessness relate to attitude towards infidelity among male and female married persons?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

1. Lack of sexual satisfaction does not significantly relate to attitude towards infidelity among male and female married persons.
2. Childlessness does not significantly relate to attitude towards infidelity among male and female married persons.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does lack of sexual satisfaction relate to attitude towards infidelity among male and female married persons?

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Criterion Mean Analysis of Male and Female Attitude towards

Items	<u>infidelity.</u>	C.M	Male Mean	SD	Result	Female Mean	SD	Result
1.	There is no sexual intimacy between me and my		2.17	1.07	Disagreed	2.34	1.05	Disagree
2.	My partner's demands for sex worries	2.5	1.94	0.93	Disagree	2.39	1.12	Disagree
3.	I do not enjoy sex with my partner anymore		2.29	1.01	Disagree	2.36	1.01	Disagree
4.	Inability to enjoy prolonged sexual intercourse		1.77	0.65	Disagree	1.97	0.78	Disagree
5.	Frigidity during sex		1.88	0.83	Disagree	2.05	0.97	Disagree
Grand Mean			2.01		Disagree	2.22		Disagree

From the analysis in table s1 above, it can be seen that item 1 had a mean of 2.17 (SD = 1.07) and 2.34 (SD = 1.05) for male and female respondents respectively, while item two had mean values of 1.94 (SD = 0.93) and 2.39 (SD = 1.12) for male and female respondents respectively. Similar trend was observed in item 3 with male respondents having a mean of 2.29 (SD = 1.01) and female respondents having a mean of 2.36 (SD = 1.06). In item 4 male respondents had a mean of 1.77 (SD = 0.65) and female respondents had a mean of 1.97 (SD = 0.78). Finally, the table also revealed that item five had a mean of 1.88 (SD = 0.83) for male respondents and a mean of 2.05 (SD - 0.97) for female respondents. In both gender, the mean values obtained for all items was less than the criterion mean of 2.5, therefore the respondents disagreed in to all the items. Summarily, a grand mean value of 2.01 was obtained for male respondents, while 2.22 was obtained for female respondents. These values were lesser than the criterion mean of 2.5, thus indicating that sexual satisfaction does not relate with attitude towards infidelity.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the extent to which sexual satisfaction relates with attitude towards sex as rated by male and female respondents.

Table 2: Independent Sample t-test of Sexual Satisfaction as Related to Attitude Towards Infidelity by Male and Female Respondents

Respondents	N	Mean	S.D	a	df	T	P	Result
Male	200	9.99	4.68					Significant (Reject H ₀)
Female	200	11.12	5.11	0.05	398	2.316	0.021	

Result of analysis on the relationship between sexual satisfaction and attitude towards infidelity revealed that male respondents had a mean of 9.99 (SD = 4.68), while female respondents had a mean of 11.12 (SD = 5.11). Independent samples t- test further yielded a t-value of 2.316 and a p-value of 0.021 which was lesser than the chosen alpha of 0.05. This suggests that there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on the relationship between sexual satisfaction and attitude towards infidelity. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Research Question 2: To what extent does childlessness relate to attitude toward infidelity among married persons?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Male and Female Response on Childlessness and Attitude Towards Infidelity

Items	C.M	Male Mean	SD	Result	Female Mean	SD	Result
6. Inability of get pregnant is a reason for infidelity		2.02	1.02	Disagreed	2.10	0.97	Disagree
7. Feelings of inadequacy due to lack of child	2.5	2.15	1.03	Disagree	1.99	0.93	Disagree
8. Continuous ridicule by in-laws lead to infidelity		2.03	1.03	Disagree	2.13	0.93	Disagree
9. Pressure from outsiders leads to tendency for infidelity		2.12	1.01	Disagree	2.39	1.03	Disagree
10. Consistent miscarriage is a reason for extramarital affairs		2.31	1.06	Disagree	2.48	1.08	Disagree
Grand Mean		2.13		Disagree	2.22		Disagree

From the analysis in Table 3 above, it can be seen that item 6 had a mean of 2.02 (SD = 1.02) and 2.10 (SD = 0.97) for male and female respondents respectively, while item 7 had mean values of 2.15 (SD = 1.03) and 1.99 (SD = 0.93) for male and female respondents respectively. It was also observed in item 8 that male respondents had a mean of 2.03 (SD = 1.03) and female respondents had a mean of 2.13 (SD = 0.92). From item 9 male respondents had a mean of 2.12 (SD = 1.01) and female respondents had a mean of 2.39 (SD = 1.03). Finally, the table also revealed that item 10 had a mean of 2.31 (SD = 1.06) for male respondents and a mean of 2.48 (SD = 1.08) for female respondents. For both male and female respondents, the mean values obtained for all items was less than the criterion mean of 2.5, therefore the respondents disagreed in to all the items. In general, a grand mean value of 2.13 was obtained for male respondents, while 2.22 was obtained for female respondents. These values were lesser than the criterion mean of 2.5. Thus indicating that male and female respondents disagree that childlessness influences married person's attitude

towards infidelity.

Hypothesis 2 Childlessness does not significantly relate to attitude towards infidelity among male and female married persons.

Table 4: Independent samples t-test of childlessness as related to attitude towards infidelity by male and female respondents

Respondents	N	Mean	S.D a	Df	T	P	Result
Male	200	13.23	5.47				Insignificant
Female	200	13.65	5.11 ^{o105}	398	0.793	0.428	(Accept Hoi)

Result of analysis on the childlessness and attitudes towards infidelity reveals that male respondents had a mean of 13.23 (SD = 5.47), while female respondents had a mean of 13.65 (SD = 5.11). Independent samples t-test further yielded a t-value of 0.793 and a p-value of 0.428 which was greater than the chosen alpha of 0.05. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on the relationship between childlessness and attitude towards infidelity. The null hypothesis was therefore retained and accepted.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

From the finding concerning research question one and its corresponding hypothesis, it is discovered that sexual dissatisfaction among married persons significantly relate to their attitude towards infidelity. This finding means that most of the respondents are quite aware that lack of sexual satisfaction always leads to infidelity among them. The finding is also in line with that reported by Fisher, Tsapelas & Aron (2010), observed that lack of sexual satisfaction or intimacy in a relationship due to prolonged absence of one's partner can drive some people into extramarital affairs. When sex becomes an obligation or happens occasionally, a person's partner may lose his or her interest in the marriage. This finding also supports the finding by Zare (2011) who observed that dissatisfaction with marital sex is associated with an increased likelihood that men will commit sexual infidelity and women will indulge in both sexual and emotional infidelity.

With regards to research question two and its corresponding hypothesis, the finding revealed that childlessness does not influence couples to indulge in extramarital relationship. Though some male respondents agreed that childlessness can lead to infidelity, it was insignificant. This finding of this study however is not surprising as well because, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, many married couples who do not have children are still leaving together and faithful to each other. To support this finding, Naughton (2014), asserted that anyone who thought that motherhood was the default position for women may think again with the surprising results of the Open University's Enduring Love research which set out to uncover what makes relationships last. Involving more than 5,000 people over a two-year period, the study found that those who did not have children were more satisfied with the quality of their relationship than those who did.

CONCLUSION

Though many people believed that certain factors such as childlessness, financial problems, family background of spouse can influence couple attitude towards infidelity, but this study debunk against such agitation. The family that is built on love and trust can survive no matter the challenges facing. It is pertinent to note that, sexual weakness or pre-mature ejaculation which aspects of sexual dysfunction can be corrected through proper medical examinations. The matter that attitude towards one another can lead to infidelity does not suggest that it is a determinant of infidelity or extra marital affairs.

Recommendations

- 1, To be able to weather the challenges that come with marriage it is important that couples pass through a well-designed and implemented pre-marital counselling program that will equip those who want to marry with matured physical and mental responsibility necessary for marriage.
2. Couples should learn to seek for help from professional counsellors and psychologists who will be able to professionally help them through the challenges of marriage.
3. Couples should learn to communicate with their partners with empathic understanding and patience when it comes to issues that bother on sexual satisfaction. There are many options that can produce a lasting solution instead of marital infidelity which will create more problems for both partners and the children.

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