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Abstract

This study investigated the factors contributing to infidelity among married couples in selected mainstream churches in Kikuyu constituency, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. A working sample size of 140 married couples was picked from the target population of 935 married couples from the mainstream churches in the constituency. The study found out that infidelity is common among couples in the mainstream churches. (99%) of the respondents agreed that there was infidelity in their church. Economic factors contributed to infidelity among married couples as the education level of the respondent was negatively correlated with infidelity and this was statistically significant ($r = -2.38$, $p = 0.017$). There was a negative correlation ($r = -2.53$) between monthly income and involvement in infidelity and this was statistically significant ($p = 0.011$). 99% of the respondents agreed that social factors influenced infidelity among married couples in the mainstream churches. 98% of the respondents reported that cultural factors, influenced infidelity among married couples in the mainstream churches. The respondents in the study had a very high level of acceptance of infidelity (mean of 71.06 ± 1.1621 (SD)). This therefore shows that even though the respondents in the study were Christians, they felt that infidelity was common even among church members.

Keywords: *Social Factors, Infidelity, Married Couples*

1.0 Introduction

Infidelity is a violation of the commitment to sexual loyalty by one or both members of a committed relationship; a sexual, romantic or emotional involvement that violates a commitment to an exclusive relationship and a partner's violation of norms regulating the level of emotional or physical intimacy with people outside the committed relationship (Mapfumo, 2016). Research shows that it is the single most reason for divorce (Cohen, 2015), and it is due to the inability of spouses to observe sexual exclusivity of each other.

Infidelity causes feeling of loss, betrayal, lack of trust, bitterness, anger and revenge. There is a likely linkage between infidelity mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal feelings (Cano & O'Leary, 2000). With the high prevalence and adverse consequences of infidelity, there is need for research to identify the correlates of infidelity.

A research done by Messripour, (2016) in Iran on analysis of the reasons for infidelity in women with extra-marital relationship among 11 participants, indicated that marital infidelity was a multi-dimensional event which involved several factors: intra-personal, sexual reasons and marital conflict. Another study on unfaithfulness done in Zimbabwe by Mapfumo, John (2016) on unfaithfulness among 43 married couples found that infidelity was more prevalent among married men than it was among married women. A research by Ogwokha, Maureen (2013) in Nigeria on factors responsible for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults, revealed that there were different factors that were responsible for extramarital affairs, namely: social satisfaction, sexual fantasies, status, and peer pressure. A research done in Kenya by Kioko (2015), among 265 participants on the determinants of infidelity among married couples, found that the determinants of marital infidelity were gender specific since the attitudes also differed by gender. In regard to social satisfaction, men participated in infidelity because men for example engaged in infidelity to satisfy their ego, to have fun, for entertainment and to take pride in becoming heads of new families. On the other hand, women participated in infidelity for status, where they identified with men of higher status than their spouses. For others, since they spend more time with workmates than their spouses, they tend to ease into illicit sexual partnerships.

Other social factors may include addictive behaviors due to peer pressure like alcohol, drugs, and gambling. This, apart from straining the family financially, also leads to domestic violence, coupled with poor communication. When the communication is poor, couples experience emotional isolation, neglect, sexual difficulties, and uncertainty. This leads to one seeking intimacy outside the primary relationship hence infidelity occurs (Mapfumo, 2016).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Infidelity, being a worldwide phenomenon, has caused tremendous effects on the society and has impacted differently to different couples, socially, economically, psychologically, and culturally. It is one of the most damaging behaviors for the survival of a relationship. It creates a violation of trust and breaks the commitment partners made to each other, it weakens marital relationships and creates tension (Cohen 2015, Mapfumo 2016).

Marital infidelity has been associated with varied emotional responses and behaviours such as increased anxiety and depression, suicidal ideation, along threats of divorce and physical aggression (Taghi, Ismail, & Jaafar, 2019). The act destroys relationships and research shows that it is the single most reason for divorce (Cohen, 2015), and it is due to the inability of spouses to observe sexual exclusivity of each other.

Although there is a substantial body of literature on the prevalence and correlates of infidelity, there is need to pay attention to the factors contributing to infidelity. Therefore, this study sought to find out factors contributing to continued infidelity among married couples in selected mainstream churches in Kenya.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to study investigated the factors contributing to infidelity among married couples in selected mainstream churches in Kikuyu constituency.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Evolutionary Theory

Evolutionary theory (Buss, 1992) provided one explanation for gender differences in reaction to infidelity (Nannini & Myers, 2000; Sheets & Wolfe, 2001). According to this theory, a man is jealous about his female partner's sexual infidelity, because if his partner has intercourse with another man, there is no guarantee that offspring he raises with her are his genetic children. The uncertainty of paternity gives rise to excellent reasons for a man to be intolerant of adulterous sex in his partner. A male in this position may contribute resources to this offspring, as well as squander opportunities to reproduce elsewhere (Buss, *et al.*, 1992).

Using this same model, a woman is concerned about her partner becoming emotionally attached, lest he abandons her for the new partner, leaving her to rear their offspring without resources or assistance from the father. If her partner is investing more assets into another woman's offspring, whether in a monogamous or polygamous relationship, it is to the detriment of her own children. This theory is consistent with results wherein married women overwhelmingly selected emotional infidelity as more distressing, and more men selected physical infidelity (Harris & Christenfeld, 1996; Whitty & Quigley, 2008). Additionally, physiological studies support this perspective, finding that men demonstrate greater autonomic arousal response to foreseeing sexual infidelity and married women have a greater response to emotional infidelity (Buss *et al.*, 1996).

Attribution Theory focuses on two types of goals, learning goals and performance goals. Students who have learning goals are students who want to learn more and work hard to succeed. Students who have learning goals can see failure as a motivator. For students with performance goals, failure is anti-motivation. These students are normally very anxious. Most students do not want to try carrying out a task if they anticipate failure (Vockell, 2015).

One of the most important aspects of the evolutionary theory is that it deals with systems, structures, adaptations and change as part of social stratification. On the other hand, it tends to offer simplistic explanations of social complexities such as the integration of technology into the lives of individuals and how it affects their psychology, their perception of the society, tolerance level as well as their beliefs with regard to social values and norms.

2.2 Empirical Review

Given the nature of humans as social beings, there are a lot of social factors that contribute to infidelity among married couples. According to reviewed literature, there are various reasons for people to participate in infidelity, some of which are for social satisfaction, sexual fantasies, status, peer pressure, among others.

Messripour, (2016) indicated that marital infidelity was a multi-dimensional event which involved several factors which included intra-personal, sexual reasons and marital conflict. According to Messripour's study, intra-personal factors included sensation-seeking, low self-esteem and negative self-image. Sexual reasons included curiosity for sexual experiences, sexual frustration and sexual experiences from the past.

The reasons married couples engage in infidelity varies, in that female infidelity differs from male infidelity. For example, according to a study by Mapfumo (2016), female infidelity is due to a lack of warm and intimate connection with their spouse, loneliness, personality disorders, and lack of sexual satisfaction, while male infidelity is because they are chasing after new experiences, to sample a variety of women, they are also motivated by sex for pleasure without responsibility and others would seek financial help from male partners.

Marital conflicts included unfulfilled emotional needs, instability and differing values between couples, marital discord, revenge, and lack of boundaries. These factors are in a cyclical form and they differed in various cases but generally, the interaction and mutual effects of these factors may lead to infidelity.

The study concluded that personal characteristics such as personality and sensation-seeking in women led to their dissatisfaction with their husbands as well as unfulfilled needs. Another observation was that severe marital conflicts and inability to resolve problems coupled with unmet emotional needs, reduced women's excitement in regard to sexual intimacy thus leading to infidelity.

Other factors that affected marital infidelity according to the study were: "lack of interest in the spouse, wrong choice of spouse, and social non-compliance between couples, unrealistic expectations of married life, failure to express emotions and cold emotional relationships, lack of proper sex, unlimited relationships between families and friends, personality and emotional differences, childhood conflicts and lack of satisfaction with adolescence needs and stereotyped gender schemes for both men and women's roles." (Bahrami & Rezwan, 2006 as quoted by (Messripour, 2016).

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population was 2600 married couples from the seven mainstream churches in Kikuyu constituency. The area was divided into four strata. One mainstream church was then purposively sampled from each stratum. A sample of 140 married couples from the four mainstream churches in the constituency was used.

Responses were analysed by assigning numerical values to Likert-type scales. The study used multivariate regression analysis to establish a relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The chi-square test was used to test the significance between variables. P values < 0.05 was regarded significant. Chi-square was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the expected variables and the observed variables. The frequency of each category for one nominal variable was compared across the categories of the second nominal variable.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 To examine whether social factors contributed to infidelity among married couples

The study sought to find out whether social factors influence infidelity among couples in the mainstream churches. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Social Factors Influencing Infidelity

	N Valid	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sum
Respondent's level of agreement on unfaithfulness	100	6.68	1.154	668
Respondent's level of agreement infidelity in a marital relationship is grounds for divorce.	100	6.65	1.282	665
Respondent's level of Agreement on whether infidelity is acceptable for retaliation of infidelity	100	5.31	1.542	531
Whether it is natural for people to be unfaithful.	100	4.04	2.02	404
Whether Online/internet behavior is an act of infidelity.	100	4.37	2.159	437
Whether infidelity is morally wrong in all circumstances regardless of the situation	100	6.05	0.783	605
Whether being unfaithful in a relationship is one of the most dishonorable things a person can do.	100	6.86	0.725	686
Whether Infidelity is unacceptable under any circumstances if the couple is married.	100	6.7	1.159	670
Whether infidelity is unacceptable under any circumstances if the couple is married.	100	6.78	0.76	678
Whether it would be acceptable for respondent to have an affair, but not his/her significant other.	100	5.95	0.592	595
Whether respondent would have an affair if he/she knew the significant other would never find out.	100	5.73	1.033	573
Whether if respondent knew significant other was guilty of infidelity, would confront him/her.	100	5.94	0.736	594
Total		71.06	1.1621	

Table 1 presents the information on the social factors influencing infidelity. From the table, 99% of the respondents agreed that all the factors listed influenced infidelity. Only one respondent disagreed with the responses and pointed out to other factors influencing infidelity and not the ones listed. Among the factors cited by this responded included the tribe of origin, relationship with the spouse's family, and social behaviour of a spouse.

Table 2 shows the SPSS output of the results.

Table 2. Summary of the Social Factors Influencing Infidelity

	Frequency (n)	%	Valid Percent	Cumulativ e Percent
Valid Peer Pressure, Working away , Marital conflicts, feeling unappreciated Low self-esteem, Insecurity, Living Apart , etc	99	99.0	99.0	99.0
Others	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows a summary of the findings of the social factors influencing infidelity. The findings on table 1 and 2 indicate that even couples in the mainstream churches engage in infidelity for social reasons. These results further point to the fact that the human mind is the same and issues to do with religiosity do not play a significant role in reducing infidelity.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.107	4	.027	2.891	.026 ^b
	Residual	.883	95	.009		
	Total	.990	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Whether there is infidelity in the Respondent's Church

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resource Owned by Respondent, Highest Education Level of your Respondent, Social Factors Influencing Infidelity, cultural factors Contributing Infidelity

The significance level of this study was 0.026 and it indicates the goodness of fit of the model. From statistics, the lower the value the better the model. When the value equals or less than one, then it can be concluded that the model best fits the data. From table 3, an F significant was established with a value of $p = 0.026$ hence less than 0.05. This is an indication that the model was very significant. The value of F calculated was 2.891 while the F critical (df 4, 95). Given that the value of F was less than that of F critical, the model was significant in predicting the extent at which the social, economic, and cultural factors influences infidelity.

4.2 Discussions

The main aim of this study was to investigate the factors contributing to infidelity among married couples in selected mainstream churches in Kikuyu Constituency, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study found out that 99% of the couples agreed that Peer Pressure, working away from your spouse, marital conflicts, feeling unappreciated, low self-esteem, insecurity, living apart for extended periods of time, nature of environment, internet addiction, poor boundaries, lack of communication, emotional disconnect, incompatibility, frequency of sexual intimacy, lack of sexual satisfaction, wide age difference between couples influenced infidelity among couples, while only one couple disagreed with the factors on the list and gave other factors such as the tribe of the spouse, social behaviour of a spouse, and relationship with the members of the extended family.

The findings also seem to agree with those of Ogwokha, Maureen (2013) who pointed out that a number of social factors influence infidelity among married couples. There is a strong indication in this study that marital conflicts brings about emotional needs, instability and differing values between couples, marital discord, revenge and lack of boundaries, all are likely to influence infidelity.

5.0 Conclusion

Infidelity is a common vice that cuts across in the society regardless of the religious status of an individual. The factors that influence infidelity among non-Christian couples also seem to influence infidelity among the Christian couples. This is a worrying trend because Christianity should inculcate and embed positive values among Christians.

The world is looking at the church to set a pace in most other issues that pertains to marriage and fidelity because marriage is supposed to be a holy institution that was first ordained by God in the Garden of Eden. Strong messages from the pulpit should be given to change the view of some of the Christian couples. For the church to thrive, a functional family is key because different family units constitute the church rendering it an essential agent of socialization.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that the mainstream churches need to initiate counseling programmes to deal with the psychological issues arising among couples. Infidelity can be dealt with through therapeutic interventions. The mainstream churches need to intensify programmes on family life so that social skills training and discussion of pertinent issues related to marriage can be discussed. Economic empowerment of couples is very essential. Through regular seminars, couples can be psycho-educated on the economic activities that they can initiate in to build a secure financial base. The mainstream churches need to address the issue of culture and its influence on marital relationship between couples. The church needs to address the concept of human sexuality among congregants. This will lead to a positive attitude change.

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