



## Infidelity as Correlate of Reproductive and Mental Health Among Couples in Kwara State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Although, monogamy and sexual exclusivity are the expressed cultural norms of a great majority of people, infidelity is widespread around the world. The study examined infidelity as correlate of reproductive and mental health among couples in Kwara State, Nigeria. Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. Four hundred and fifty (450) couples were selected through multi-stage sampling techniques in the three senatorial districts in the state. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the result which yielded 0.74. Collected data were analyzed with the use of Pearson moment correlation statistical method to test the two hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings revealed that there was significant relationship between infidelity, reproductive and mental health among couples in Kwara State. It was recommended that couples should go extra mile to be faithful to their partners among others.

**Keywords:** Infidelity, Reproductive Health, Mental Health & Couples.

### Introduction

Marriage has taken many forms throughout history and across cultures. Marriage typically involves two heterosexual individuals legally pledging their love and making vows to one another. Important aspect of those vows often include monogamy, trust and an understanding that sexual intimacy may only be shared within the couple (Campbell, 2009, Thapa, Yang & Neget, 2019). Infidelity has been defined as a violation of the commitment to sexual loyalty by one or both members of a committed relationship, extra dyadic sex within the context of a monogamous 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 (Adeola, Adams & Idache, 2020). Several dimensions of infidelity include adultery, casually flirting with someone and/or having a sexual explicit conversation with someone outside the principal dyadic relationship, sexual exchanges with no romantic involvement as well as all shades of sexual and romantic involvement (Mapfuino, 2016).

Although monogamy and sexual exclusivity are the expressed cultural norms for the great majority of married couples, the occurrence of infidelity is widespread around the world (Butovskaya, *et al.*, 2014). It is pertinent to note that, infidelity is as old as creation. Meyer (2005) as cited by Oyedokun (2015) inferred that, it is as old as marriage and has been since

time immemorial. In a major U.S survey of married individuals, as many as 25% of married men and 15% of married women reported having had an affair at sometimes in their live (Kazemi & Jaid, 2015). Pour, Ismail, Jaafar and Yusop (2019) reported that in January 2018, relationship Australia's monthly online study asked visitors on their website to share their understanding of infidelity, approximately 1800 individuals responded to the online survey. Survey respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of couples in committed relationships that have experienced infidelity. The result revealed that approximately 70% of married couples have been unfaithful. One of the most common findings in infidelity research is that males commit more acts of infidelity across all cultures regardless of the type of primary relationship and whether infidelity is measured as 'wanting to' 'doing' or have 'done' (Mapfunmo, 2016). Schmit (2003) cited by Kazemi and Javid (2015) conducted a large scale cross cultural survey of 16,288 people throughout the world and found that men desire more sexual patterns than women do.

Infidelity not just occurs with deleterious effects on couples' relationship but also affects the health of the individuals in the relationship (Shrout&Weigel, 2018). Kazemi and Javid, (2015), noted that 'infidelity or cheating' in romantic relationship has devastating consequences. The marital crisis following the discovery of an affair has been



associated with subjective experiences of poor health and well-being (Kareh, 2008). Also, Kazemi and Javid, (2015) noted that the discovery of infidelity represents a significant life stressor for both partners and is a potential risk factors for a host of health and psychological problems. The association between infidelity and reproductive and mental health is in controvertible (Sweeney & Horowitz, 2008). Coma (2013); Ravikkumar and Balakris(2013) and Thapa, Yana and Negetu (2019) noted that marital infidelity can cause mental health and reproductive issues like depression, emotional pain, stress, infertility and diffusion of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). These negative consequences affect both partners and their children in the present and future development, physically and socially (Pour, et al., 2019).

For years, infidelity has been discussed by researchers and those in other profession. According to them, marital infidelity will continue to be a challenge to marriage institution and couple relationship (Adeola, Adams & Idache, 2020). In Kwara State there have been reported prevalence of infidelity among couples. In view of this, the study examined the relationship between infidelity, and reproductive and mental health among married couples in Kwara State.

### Statement of the Problem

Infidelity has been a 'no go' area in the field of research. There is the need to say that, nearly everybody is involved in it despite the fact that the society frown at it. Religious organizations teach moral to sustain marriages and encourage mutual understanding in families, despite these, infidelity still exists. The level of moral decadence is also on the increase and sexual indiscipline seems to be the order to the day. The language it is a common thing, 'everybody does it' and it is not a new thing' pervades the air. Health wise, couples involved in infidelity are predisposed to reproductive and mental health problems such as, infertility, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDs, depression and emotional issues. Also, there have been reported prevalence of infidelity among couples in Kwara State. Premised on the aforementioned, the researchers ventured into finding out the relationship between infidelity, and reproductive and mental health among married couples in Kwara State.

The study therefore aimed at finding out:

1. The relationship between infidelity and reproductive health issues among couples in Kwara State.
2. The relationship between infidelity and mental health issues among couples in Kwara State.

### The researchers therefore conjectured that:

1. There is no significant relationship between infidelity and reproductive health among couples in Kwara State
2. There is no significant relationship between infidelity and mental health among couples in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### Methodology

Correlational Survey design was adopted for the study. The choice was influenced by the fact that the Correlational survey research design allows for the use of questionnaire in gathering information and it enables results to be reported without any manipulation (Szapkiw, 2012). The study population comprised an estimated of 150,000 married couples in kwara State. A sample of four hundred and fifty (450) respondents were used for the study. The researcher adopted a multi-stage sampling techniques to select sample for the study. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select all the three senatorial districts in the State. At stage two, simple random sampling technique by balloting without replacement was used to select nine Local Government Area from the three senatorial districts. Finally, the researcher adopted simple random sampling technique to select fifty (50) respondents from each of the Local Government selected.

The research instrument that was used in gathering and collecting data for the study was a self-designed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contains two (2) sections of five (5) items each on the relationship between infidelity and reproductive and mental health problems. The items on the questionnaire was rated on a four Likert scale ranging from 1-4 using the key of strongly agree – 4 points, agree -3 points, disagree points2, and strongly disagree -1 point. To ensure the instrument validity, experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba examined the items on the questionnaire and necessary corrections were done. The reliability index stood at 0.74. The instrument was personally administered by the researchers. Filled questionnaires were collected on the spot and coded for analysis. The data collected



was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correction at 0.05 alpha level of significant to test the formulated hypotheses. Therefore, any mean score of response that is 2.5 and above is positive or acceptable and any mean score of response less than 2.5 is negative or not acceptable.

**Results**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between infidelity and reproductive health among couples in Kwara State, Nigeria

**Table 1: Pearson moment correlation table showing the relationship between infidelity and reproductive health among couples in Kwara State**

Variables	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Df	r-cal. Val	P. Val	Remark
Infidelity	450	2.76	0.198	448	0.56	0.003	Significant
reproductive Health	450	3.66	1.576				

Table 1 above present the result of the relationship between infidelity and reproductive health among couples. The correlation coefficient r value is 0.56 while the significant or probability value is 0.003 at N value of 450. Since the r value is positive and more than .05 it can be said that there is strong positive relationship between infidelity and reproductive health among couples. Furthermore, the significant value of 0.003 which is less than 0.05 level of significance indicates that the relationship is not by chance. Hence,

it can be affirmed that there is a strong positive relationship between infidelity and couples' reproductive health in Kwara State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between infidelity and mental health among couples in Kwara State.

**Table 2: Pearson moment correlation table showing the relationship between infidelity and mental health among couples in Kwara State**

Variables	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Df	r-cal. Val	P. Val	Remark
Infidelity	450	2.76	.798	448	0.69	0.004	Significant
Mental Health	450	3.47	1.684				

The result of table 2 showed the relationship between infidelity and mental health among couples in Kwara State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient r value is 0.69 while the significant or probability value is 0.004 at N value of 450. Since the r value is positive and greater than .05, it can be said that there is strong positive relationship between infidelity and mental health among couples in Kwara State. Furthermore, the significant value of 0.004 which is less than 0.05 level of significance indicates the relationship is not by chance. Hence, it can be affirmed that there is a strong positive relationship between infidelity and mental health of couples in Kwara State.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result shows that there is a significant relationship between infidelity and reproductive health. This is a clear indication that couples involved in infidelity stand the risk of secondary infertility, sexually transmitted diseases and other deadly infections such as HIV/AIDS. This finding collaborates with Coma

(2013), Ravikumar and Balakrishna, (2013); Thapa, Yang and Neget (2019) who opined that infidelity has been a powerful factor in the diffusion of the HIV/AIDs pandemic in many part of the world. Conney (2014); Oyedokun (2015) and Mopfumo (2016) in separate studies found that HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are spread mostly through heterosexual contact, especially through unfaithful men and women engaging in an extramarital affair. Oyedokun (2015) was of the view that women who engaged in infidelity stand the risk of contracting infectious diseases which if not properly treated may cause damages to the reproductive organs therefore causing secondary infertility. Also, Asayesh, Farahbakhsh, Delavar and Salimi, (2017) reported that infidelity can cause hormonal interruptions (sex hormones) thereby interfering with reproductive organs functions thus leading to secondary infertility among affected couples.

The result of the finding in hypothesis two shows that there is significant relationship between infidelity and



mental health among couples in Kwara State. Most of the respondents agreed that infidelity can lead to anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. This finding is in agreement with Asayesh et al (2017) who found that the discovery of a partner having an extramarital affair can impair brain functions and cause physical symptoms of anxiety and stress. Also, studies by Ben-Ami and Bakar (2012); pour et al (2019) and Thapa et al (2019) affirmed that infidelity increased the risk of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety among couples. According to them, their mental problems make distress in partner intimacy and reduces relationship satisfaction in both spouses.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that infidelity contributed immensely to the spread of HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases among couples in Kwara State. The study further established that infidelity causes mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress among couples.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

- Couples should go extra mile to be faithful to their partners
- Health educators, marriage counsellors and religion leaders should ensure adequate counselling and teaching are provided to discourage couples from engaging in extramarital affairs.

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