



Causes of Infidelity as Expressed by Literate Working-Class Women in Lagos State, Nigeria

Aminat Adeola Odebode and Kabir Adewale Adegunju

Abstract

The act of infidelity is increasingly high among women and it is causing great concern for stakeholders. This study, therefore, investigated the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State. The study also examined whether moderating variables such as age and the educational qualification would affect the respondents' views. A descriptive design was adopted for the study. A total of 300 respondents were drawn from the target population using purposive random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. A researcher-developed questionnaire tagged *Causes of Infidelity (CIQ)* was used to collect the data. The validity of the questionnaire was established by three experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using a split-half method and a correlation coefficient of 0.74 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level. Results showed that lack of care and attention, nonchalant attitude of the husband, lack of emotional support, etc. are the causes of infidelity among women. It also showed that there was a significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women based on age but there was no difference based on educational qualification. It was concluded that counsellors should organize seminars for couples to disseminate information on the causes of infidelity among women for possible solutions.

Keywords: infidelity, literate working-class women, Lagos State, Nigeria

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Introduction

Marriage is a dynamic association engaged in by adults represents an important life commitment. According to Oniye (2008), marriage is a partnership contract without an escape clause. The implication here is that marriage connotes a life-long engagement where the couples should permanently survive a multitude of demanding situations such as illness and financial constraints among many others. Marriage can also be viewed as the legalizing of a special relationship between a man and a woman to which the society gives its approval; it places each partner under legal and social obligations to the other and the society (Odebode, Oniye & Akangbe, 2018). As a life-long agreement between the couples, marriage is supposed to be a sacred and permanent contract that is assured to outlive the couples. The social recognition of mating that is accorded to marriage, gives children produced by the couples a legal recognition in the society. It is worrisome that infidelity seems to be associated with marriage.

Infidelity or extramarital affairs, which is as old as life itself, is an act that various societies, religions and ages frown upon. In many societies, infidelity strives, leaving one to wonder why it has taken a form of legacy that is passed from one generation to another. Since the early 1990s, infidelity is almost becoming a norm among couples, particularly women. Recently, many married women engaged in extramarital affairs, which is absurd and very different from what was in existence decades ago when women were faithful, patient, and tolerant.

These days, infidelity is the most common reason for divorce. Based on research reports, 90% of all divorces involved infidelity (Amato & Previti, 2003; Oge, 2015; Odebode, James, Adegunju & Julia, 2021). Infidelity is commonly referred to as a breach of the expectation of sexual exclusivity. Infidelity can comprise several activities including having an affair, having an extramarital relationship(s), cheating, having sexual intercourse (involving oral sex), kissing, fondling, having emotional connections that are beyond ordinary friendships, internet relationships and pornography (Blow & Hartnet, 2005). In most cultures, during intimate relationships, there is usually an expression of, or implied expectation of exclusivity, especially in sexual matters.

Infidelity is defined as being unfaithful to and cheating on a relationship partner that takes place despite a commitment to be faithful. Infidelity by a partner is commonly called philander, adultery or having an affair. The excessive use of internet pornography has increased the trauma of virtual marital infidelity among women. Also, infidelity is increasing through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, yahoo messenger, Whatsapp, Mitz, and Instagram (Cravens, Leckie & Whiting, 2013). The rising rate of infidelity between couples calls for worry as many marriages have been dissolved as a result of it. Infidelity by a woman, either actual or suspected is the leading cause of spousal battering and spousal homicide (Lammer, Stoker, Jordan, Pollman & Stapel, 2011).

Most times women cheat because they seek emotional connection, intimacy and even friendship which many lack in their marriages. Research has asserted that one in every five women have extramarital affairs at one point or another making it the highest rate in history (Lammer, Stoker, Jordan, Pollman & Stapel, 2011). Nelson (2010) explained some fundamental causes of infidelity in society which are, longing for wholeness and vitalization of the self, the need for new sexual excitement as a result of sexual boredom which could be caused by

repetitive exposure to the same erotic experience, sexual dysfunction of the partner such as inability to achieve orgasm, lack of interest in sex, premature ejaculation and lack of physical attachment.

Many women observed a drastic change in their relationships with their spouses after marriage. Before marriage, husbands were more attentive and more willing to do all sorts of things they associated with romantic love. These changes are attributed to the relative shift in power that occurs at marriage. During courtship, a woman has two authoritative vetoes: she can deny sexual access and she can refuse to marry. But in Africa, once a woman is married, the ability to opt-out of either marriage or marital sex is dramatically reduced. Why women cheat differs from woman to woman. Some do it for love while some do it for sex, some to boost their self-esteem and some just love to be unfaithful.

Several reasons have been put forward on why women engage in infidelity. For instance, some studies report various results about the impact of the level of education on infidelity. Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson (2001) found that highly educated people are more likely to engage in extramarital sex. In another national study, Forte and Tanfer (1996) found that education has a significant correlation with infidelity in married women who differ in the case of degree and their partner's education level. More specifically, they found that if a married woman is more educated than her partner, she is more likely to be unfaithful in her marriage compared to a woman with a lower level of education than her spouse (Barta & Kiene, 2005). Atkins, et al. (2001) found that extramarital affairs were negatively associated with several aspects of a relationship including the degree to which the relationship was generally satisfying, whether personal needs were being fulfilled, the degree of love felt for the primary partner and the length of the marriage. Together, these account for some of the variances in the incidence of infidelity. According to Allen et al, (2005), boredom and lack of emotional support in marriage can put partners at risk for infidelity.

Another possible reason why women cheat is to get back at their husbands (i.e. for revenge); and unexpressed anger or desire to get even with the partner for some perceived pains. Another occasion that could give rise for a woman to cheat is lack of sex or when a woman is sexually deprived. When sex becomes an obligation or happens occasionally, a wife may lose interest in marriage. Some men withhold sex as a form of punishment. Men who do not express their displeasure with their wives may punish her by withdrawing from her sexually. When a woman feels her husband no longer wants her sexually, she feels deprived and uncared a feeling that may spur her to go outside the marriage to get what she has been deprived of.

Furthermore, Nigerian men are known to be polygamous. They marry younger women as they grow older and because they could no longer satisfy these younger women or give them the sexual prowess that they crave, these younger wives go outside in search of younger men who are stronger to give them what they yearn for. Also, in a polygamous household, there are many wives, a husband sometimes could not meet or match up with the sexual needs of his wives and this inability on his part creates room for infidelity on the part of the various women he acquired but could not satisfy them sexually. Even as expressed by men who are not polygamous, the quest to go after younger women for mistresses and the neglect suffered by their legally married

partner creates room for these wives to go after younger men popularly called “toy boys” (Encyclopedia, 2004). The probability of infidelity is greater for women who had been sexually abused as children.

Multiple sex partners before marriage may lead a woman to cheat on her spouse. Having had more sexual partners previously is associated with a greater likelihood of infidelity (Treas & Giesen, 2000). Some women are thrill-seekers (mostly those that have engaged in several sexual escapades with different men). They seek excitement. They may love their husbands and would never entertain the thought of leaving them, but they need something extra that they cannot get from their spouse (Wilkinson, Littlebear & Reed, 2012). A woman that is used to having sex using different styles will find it boring with her husband, who maintains a particular sexual position (missionary style) during intercourse. Such women according to a psychologist, Felicia Osagie (2015) are hot-blooded; they are nymphomaniacs and have an insatiable appetite for sex. Several causes of infidelity among women are apparent. It is on this note that this study focused on the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate women in Lagos State.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos metropolis?
2. Is there any difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State based on age?
3. Is there any difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State based on educational qualification?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State based on age.
2. There is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State based on educational qualification.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised all the married women in Lagos State. The target population comprised literate working-class women from selected local government areas in Lagos State. The researchers used a three-stage sampling procedure in selecting respondents that participated in the study. Thus, at stage one, a simple random sampling procedure was used to select five local government areas within Lagos State. These local government areas were Surulere, Lagos

Island, Lagos Mainland, Apapa, and Ikeja local government. At stage two, the purposive random sampling technique was used to select four establishments in each of the selected Local Governments Areas. This made a total of twenty establishments that were chosen in the study. The establishments are schools, local governments headquarters and companies. At stage three, a systematic random sampling technique was used to select fifteen respondents from each of the establishments; this made a total of 300 literate working-class women in the study.

The instrument used for this study was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Causes of Infidelity Questionnaire (CIQ)*. The CQI which consisted of 20 items, has two sections; sections A and B. The CQI was validated by five experts from the Department of Counsellor Education, University Ilorin. The reliability of CQI was established through a split-half method reliability method; a coefficient of 0.74 was obtained. This reliability figure was considered high enough for the study. The instrument was scored using a 4-point Likert rating scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agreed to Strongly Disagree’. The mean score is 2.5 therefore in section B of the CQI, the mean scores between 2.5 and above indicated the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State.

The questionnaires were personally administered by the researchers. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the personal data of the respondents in section A. The Analysis of Variance statistical methods was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Research question

What are the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos state?

Table 1
Mean and Rank Order on the Causes of Infidelity as Expressed by
Literate Working-class Women in Lagos State

Item No	In my own opinion, infidelity is caused by:	Mean	Rank
13	lack of care and attention from a spouse	3.37	1 st
16	the nonchalant attitude of the husband	3.28	2 nd
14	lack of emotional support from a spouse	3.24	3 rd
18	Sexual dysfunction of a spouse	3.22	4 th
19	infertility of the spouse	3.16	5 th
15	unappreciative husband	3.14	6 th
7	unromantic husband	3.14	6 th
3	higher sexual libido of the wife	3.11	8 th
8	lack of financial support from the husband	3.06	9 th
6	poor communication skills	3.01	10 th
10	uninteresting sexual intercourse	2.99	11 th
17	irregular sexual intercourse	2.98	12 th

2	too many sexual partners before marriage	2.92	13 th
12	lack of foreplay before sex	2.92	13 th
4	feeling of insecurity	2.88	15 th
11	the position of the wife at work	2.54	16 th
9	wife receiving higher income than a spouse	2.42	17 th
1	early marriage	2.40	18 th
20	length of marriage	2.34	19 th
5	women having higher educational qualifications than a spouse	2.32	20 th

Table 1 shows the rank order on the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State. The Table shows that item 13 which stated that “Lack of care and attention from spouse” ranked 1st with a mean score of 3.37. Item 16 stated that the “nonchalant attitude of the husband to the wife “ranked 2nd with a mean score of 3.28. Item 14 which stated that “lack of emotional support from spouse” ranked 3rd with a mean score of 3.24. As shown in Table, 16 out of the 20 items have mean scores above 2.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Kwara State, Nigeria are lack of care and attention from husband, nonchalant attitude of husband, lack of emotional support from spouse, sexual dysfunction of a spouse, and infertility of spouse among others.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity literate women in Lagos state based on age.*

Table 2

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Difference on the Causes of Infidelity as Expressed by Literate working-class Women in Lagos State based on Age

Variables	df	SS	Mean Square	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between groups	1592.548	4	398.137		
Within groups	14790.237	295	50.136	*7.94	2.37
Total	16382.825	299			

*Significant $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows a calculated f-ratio of 7.94 and a critical value of 2.37. Since the calculated f-ratio is greater than the critical f-ratio, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos state based on age is rejected.

Table 3

**Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) Showing the Differences
in the Causes of Infidelity as expressed by Literate Working-class Women
in Lagos State based on Age**

Duncan Groupings	N	Means	Group	Religion
A	31	*64.45	Above47yrs	1
B	34	59.4	23-28yrs	2
B	68	58.98	29-34yrs	3
B	117	57.46	35-40yrs	4
B	50	50.21	41-46yrs	5

Table 3 shows the Duncan Multiple Range Test indicating the significant difference noted in the ANOVA on Table 2. Group 5 which has a mean score of 59.40 is slightly different from group 4 which has a mean score of 58.98; group 4 is also slightly different from group 3 which has a mean score of 50.21, but significantly different from group 1 with a mean score of 64.45. All the groups slightly differed from one another but the significant difference noted was as a result of group 1 hence, the significant difference was noted in the ANOVA on Table 3. The difference was brought about by respondents between the ages of 47 years and above. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State on the basis of educational qualification.*

Table 4: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) Showing the Difference in the Causes of Infidelity as Expressed by Literate Working-class Women in Lagos State based on Educational Qualification

Variables	df	SS	Mean Square	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between groups	120.291	2	60.145		
Within groups	16262.84	297	54.757	1.09	3.00
Total	16382.875	299			

Table 4 shows a calculated f-ratio of 1.09 and a critical f-ratio of 3.00. Since the calculated f-ratio is less than the critical f-ratio, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos state based on educational qualification is accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

The results obtained from this study showed that lack of care and attention from a spouse, the nonchalant attitude of the husband to the wife, the lack of emotional support from spouse, sexual dysfunction of a spouse, infertility of spouse, and unappreciative husband among others are some of the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State. This is in support of Dyer's (1983) findings which showed that a lack of emotional intimacy, lack of genuine love and affection, lack of sexual gratification, sexual boredom, lack of material gratification as expressed by others are some factors that cause infidelity. Similarly, the finding is in line with that of Nelson (2010) that some fundamental causes of infidelity in society are longing for wholeness and vitalization of the self, the need for new sexual excitement as a result of sexual boredom (boredom in a sexual relationship is caused by repetitive exposure to the same erotic scene), sexual dysfunction of the partner such as inability to achieve orgasm, lack of interest in sex, premature ejaculation, and lack of physical attachment.

The findings of this study revealed that there is a difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos State based on age. This is not in support of the findings of Dyer (1983) and Allen, Atkin, Baucom, Synder, Gordon and Glass (2005) that remarked that the highest rate of extra-marital sex occurs in the age of 36-40 years. According to Dyer, sexual desire and interests were found to be high as expressed by women in this group due in part to a reduction of many sexual inhibitions that these women had when they were younger. Dyer indicated that wives entering this age period may experience concern about losing their youth and attentiveness and they respond to extramarital advances in order to prove they are still desirable.

The result of the findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos state based on educational qualification. This implies that even though working-class women have varying levels of educational degrees, their expressions of the causes of infidelity did not differ. This is not in support of the findings of Forte and Tanfer's (2001) and Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson's (2001) research that found out that education has a significant correlation with infidelity in married women and their education level. The reason for this finding could be that all the respondents are women, they know what could spur a woman to engage in infidelity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is concluded that lack of care and attention from husband, nonchalant attitude of husband, lack of emotional support from spouse, sexual dysfunction of a spouse, and infertility of spouse among

others are the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women. Similarly, there was a significant difference in the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women in Lagos state based on age but, there was no difference based on educational qualification. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- Government should contrive laws that will prohibit infidelity. It should clearly state the consequences of violating such laws. Government should work with non-governmental organizations such as the Nigeria Red Cross Society (NRCS) to campaign and create awareness on the existence and reality of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases which are strong consequences of infidelity.
- It was noted in the result that sexual dysfunction on the part of the husband could lead to infidelity on the part of the wife therefore health practitioners, social workers and counsellors could help identify, treat and give medical advice to spouses who have sexual dysfunction. They should enlighten them on what to do, such as diets and physical exercises. Talks on how to boost sexual performance could also be organized.
- Religious leaders should preach against infidelity. Emphasis should be laid on the consequences of infidelity in the mosque as well as in the church. They should make it known to couples that it is a sin both against God and the sacredness of marriage. Religious leaders should establish marriage counselling centers with experienced and well-trained counsellors seeing to the needs of married couples.
- Counsellors should organize seminars for couples, to equip them with decision-making skills, negotiation skills, conflict resolution skills to enhance and foster love among themselves. Counsellors need to help couples manage their marriage from shifting from manage to damage.

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