

## Extra Marital Relationship and Marital Crisis: Married Adults' Perception in Kwara State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Extramarital relationship is considered as a destructive development capable of undermining marriages and considered one of the causes of marital problems. This study explored the perceptions of married adults in Kwara State regarding extramarital relationships and their impact on marital crises. The research adopted a descriptive survey design, which allowed for a clear depiction of the factors, consequences, and possible solutions related to extramarital affairs. The study population consisted of adult workers from the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Kwara State Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Kwara State Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution, who were selected using purposive sampling due to their familiarity with marital issues and complaints. A total of 80 respondents were surveyed. The findings indicated that the primary factors responsible for extramarital affairs, as perceived by married adults, include poor communication, unresolved conflicts, societal stigma, dissatisfaction within the marriage, and underlying issues within the relationship. Additionally, the consequences of such affairs are seen to include emotional distress, guilt, and negative societal attitudes. In terms of solutions, respondents emphasized the importance of open communication between partners, support from family and friends, and the power of forgiveness in mitigating marital crises caused by extramarital affairs. The study's findings provide valuable insights into the perceptions of married adults in Kwara State and offer practical strategies for addressing marital challenges associated with infidelity. The study recommended that couples be encouraged to participate in regular marital counseling sessions, efforts be made to reduce the societal stigma associated with seeking help for marital issues through public awareness campaigns and establishment of community-based support groups and couples facing marital crises should be encouraged to lean on family and friends for emotional support.

**Keywords:** Extramarital Relationship, Relationship, Marital Crisis, Kwara State, Marital Counseling

## INTRODUCTION

A man and a woman's relationship is made legal through marriage when society approves of it. Each spouse to a marriage is obligated legally and socially to themselves and to society. A man and a woman who agree to live as husband and wife are united in marriage. The relationship can have a positive or bad impact on the psychological health of the husband or wife, thus for the relationship to succeed and benefit both parties, adjustments must be made. The fundamental principles of marriage, according to Nwaoye (2014), are: i. A union of at least one man and one woman. ii. A culturally acceptable connection. iii. Supporting intimate relationships between spouses that are exclusive of other men and women. iv. The belief that kids will be born. v. a specific pattern of behavior. vi. A committed, everlasting relationship. It is anticipated that by applying Nwaoye's analysis of what an ideal marriage entails to these facts, a hitch-free marriage will result. However, most

of the time, the fundamental ideas Nwaoye proposed are not followed to the letter, which tends to cause problems in marriage. A union is said to be problem-free if the husband and wife concur on important marriage-related concerns like managing finances, interacting with in-laws, and coming to an understanding on shared interests, goals, and beliefs. Sharing is shown with mutual trust and confidence, without any complaints, and harmony is an indication of affection.

Marriage is viewed as a social arrangement that gives an individual the kind of order that allows him or her to express that his or her life makes sense. It is a man and woman relationship that has received cultural approval in which sexual activity between married spouses of different sexes is encouraged. Additionally, Ogundana (2013) saw marriage as a contract for a partnership. When two people (typically a man and a woman) decide on their own and in the presence of at least two witnesses to exchange vows and consent to live a life of vocation of love and sharing among each other for the purpose

of promoting mutual welfare as individuals, this is considered to be the enactment of an escape clause, which is a sacred and permanent contract in marital journey through life.

However, an unsatisfactory marriage will often communicate its issues through extramarital affairs. The idea of an extramarital relationship is viewed as a way to contaminate or undermine a marriage by introducing a alien element. Epstein (2005) characterized a marital problem as a breakdown in couples' ability to communicate, which leads to persistent conflict in the form of verbal and physical aggressiveness as well as psychological, emotional and physical separation. All of these factors may ultimately result in divorce. So, extramarital relationships are defined as emotional adultery that resulted in physical intercourse or a sustained romantic engagement. A spouse engaging in it outside of their marriage is doing so illegally. Numerous elements have come together to impact marital institutions, leading to a plethora of issues that both young and elderly married couples must deal with. Extramarital relationship most of the time is connected to sex issues. Contrary to popular belief, American males participate in extramarital relationships for three reasons: boredom, monotony, and the urge to bolster one's ego, according to a 1993 research by Sexton of 6,000 couples. These men eventually return to their spouses after their demands have been addressed, therefore the study's findings indicate that this does not inevitably lead a marriage to fail.

The state of strain or stress that exists between spouses as they attempt to fulfill their marital responsibilities is known as a marital clash. When two individuals decide to live together as husband and wife, various expectations and hopes are raised, some of which may come true and others of which may not. It is only reasonable to anticipate that there will be disagreements between spouses because they are human and not divine. These disagreements will likely center around differing perspectives, values, wants, desires, and habits. Keeping in mind that every human relationship involves occasional disagreements and conflict, marital conflicts cause problems for a large number of families in modern society. This poses a serious risk to the long-term viability of marital harmony and stability in both our small and large communities. Gordon (2004) asserts that a marriage ought to be a thrilling and lovely journey, and that a husband and wife's connection should improve with each day or year that goes by. Little things, however, can find their way into a relationship. As Glass and Wright (2012) puts it, if these things are not handled appropriately, they can lead to discord and ultimately a split between the married partners that may deepen over time. Information from court proceedings, periodicals, newspapers, electronic media, and environmental observations revealed that marital instability is common in today's society, and that it is mostly caused by marital conflicts that couples encounter while attempting to fulfill the expectations of their society for their roles as husband and wife.

According to Nwaoye (2014), marriage is a dynamic association that people engage in, and it is seen by many social scientists as a key point in personal-social reorganization. Marriage serves as a means for couples to achieve the satisfaction of stability, enduring love and companionship, sexual gratification, and the establishment of a house and family. Marriage is a religious obligation, thus it serves as both a moral barrier and a social requirement, claims Munroe (2013). It operates as a channel for sexual demands and regulates man's sexual desire / expression, protecting man from becoming a slave to his desires (Ogwokhademhe, 2013).

It has been observed that sex life colours marriage from top to bottom and as a matter of fact, it is the most powerful 'marital glue a couple can have. The implication of this assertion by Glass and Wright (2012) is that a lot in marriage depends on ability of couples to manage their sexual life for marital harmony. Inversely, their inability to handle sex constructively could automatically spell doom for their union and by extension their family and the society. A sexually satisfied fulfilled woman will have less stress and more joy in her life, according to Gordon (2004), whereas a sexually satisfied fulfilled man will typically be a better father and employee.

It has been further noted that to get married is to commit oneself to a regular time of sexual intimacy. In a similar vein , it has been said that marital sex is the most important and the only appropriate kind which unfortunately gets ignored with the consequence that both the couple and the society get to pay and very dearly too for this neglect . It has been observed that sex (especially between the couple) makes everything nicer, representing a microcosm of their marriage. The centrality of sex to marriage is such that men ought to realize that everyday their wives internally ask them if they really care.

## REASONS FOR EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIRS

### 1. Dissatisfaction from Marriage

People become vulnerable in a relationship at some point. They have unresolved problems and poor communication, which makes their marriage unhappy. As a result, one of the spouses begins seeking fulfillment outside of the marriage institution.

### 2. No Spice in Life

In order to maintain this, a marriage needs a spark of love. One of the partners becomes drawn to someone who can reignite the lost spark in a relationship when there is no longer any love left, the relationship has finished, and the spouses have no feelings for one another.

### 3. Parenthood

Parenthood changes everything. It alters the dynamics

between people and adds another responsibility in their life. While one is busy managing things, the other might feel a little aloof. They bend over to someone who can provide them the comfort they're looking for.

#### 4. Midlife Crises

Midlife crisis can also be a factor in extramarital affairs. By the time people reach this age, they have finished raising their family and have given them adequate time.

At this point, people feel the want to explore their younger selves when they receive attention from someone younger, which eventually results in extramarital affairs.

#### 5. Low Compatibility

In order to have a successful marriage, compatibility is crucial. Extramarital affairs are one of the relationship problems that are more likely to arise in couples who are not compatible. Therefore, be sure to maintain your compatibility to avoid any kind of relationship problems.

marital crisis.

## METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

The study adopted survey-type descriptive research design. The design made it easier for the studied phenomena to be described exactly as they existed. The whole adult workers made up the population for this study in the Kwara State. 80 adult workers were picked from the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Kwara State Ministry of Social Welfare and the Kwara State Centre for Alternative for Dispute Resolution Settlement. This group of people was chosen as respondents because they have been familiar with lots of cases and complaints from married couples who have either come to complain about their partners or seek advice on their marital issues. Purposive sampling technique was utilized to sample each of the workers previously indicated.

The instrument for this study is researcher-designed questionnaire. It was used to elicit responses from the workers in the all the Ministries earlier mentioned regarding their perception on the factors causing extra-marital behavior of married adults in Kwara State. The tool was divided into two parts: Items in Section A dealt with the respondents' personal information and, Section B focused on the information from the respondents towards their views on this research in Kwara State. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data that was obtained. All study questions were answered using simple percentage descriptive statistics,

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors responsible for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults?

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study was generally intended to find out the factors responsible for motivation of Extra Marital Relationship Leading to Marital Crisis as Perceived by Married adult in Kwara State. The study identified:

1. The factors responsible for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults.
2. The consequences of extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults.
3. The possible solutions of extramarital relationship and

**Table 1:** Factors responsible for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults

	Factors responsible for extramarital affairs	Mean	SD
2	Marital crises are more likely to occur in marriages with poor communication and unresolved conflicts.	3.50	.513
3	The societal stigma surrounding extramarital relationships makes it difficult for individuals to seek help.	3.40	.598
7	I believe that involvement in an extramarital relationship is a reflection of dissatisfaction with the marriage.	2.65	.875
8	Extramarital relationships are often a sign of underlying issues within the marriage.	2.65	.813
	<b>Weighted mean</b>	<b>3.05</b>	

Table 1 shows the factors responsible for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults. It shows that poor communication and unresolved conflicts (3.50) was the highest, followed by societal stigma (3.40) and reflection of dissatisfaction with the marriage and often a sign of underlying issues within the

marriage (2.65). The weighted mean of 3.05 is numeric confirmation of the level of agreement of the respondents. Therefore, the factors responsible for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults are; poor communication and unresolved conflicts, societal stigma, dissatisfaction with the

marriage as well as sign of underlying issues within the marriage.

**Research Question 2:** What are the consequences of extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults?

**Table 2:** Consequences of extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults

<b>Consequences of extramarital affairs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	People who engage in extramarital relationships often experience significant emotional distress and guilt.	3.10	.968
2	I believe that societal attitudes towards extramarital relationships influence how individuals perceive and handle marital crises	3.75	.444
<b>Weighted mean</b>		<b>3.42</b>	

Table 2 shows the consequences of extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults. It shows that; societal attitudes towards extramarital relationships (3.75) were the highest, followed by emotional distress and guilt (3.10). The weighted mean of 3.42 is a strong numeric confirmation of the level of

agreement of the respondents. Therefore, the consequences of extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults are; societal attitudes towards it and emotional distress and guilt.

**Research Question 3:** What are the possible solution for extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults?

**Table 3:** Possible solutions to extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults

<b>Possible solution for extramarital affairs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
4	Infidelity can be forgiven and the marriage can recover if both partners are willing to work on the relationship.	3.20	.768
6	Marital crises can be effectively resolved through open communication between partners.	3.55	.510
9	Support from family and friends plays a crucial role in overcoming marital crises.	3.25	.550
<b>Weighted mean</b>		<b>3.33</b>	

Table 3 shows the possible solutions to extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults. It shows that; open communication between partners (3.55) was the highest, followed by Support from family and friends (3.25), infidelity can be forgiven (3.20). The weighted mean of 3.33 is a strong numeric confirmation of the level of agreement of the respondents. Therefore, the possible solutions to extramarital affairs as perceived by married adults are; open communication between partners, support from family and friends as well as forgiveness.

Extramarital affairs are often perceived by married adults as stemming from several key factors. Poor communication and unresolved conflicts are significant contributors, as they can lead to emotional disconnection and unmet needs within the marriage. Haseli et al. (2019) highlights that communication issues and conflict resolution problems are frequently cited in studies as precursors to infidelity. When couples fail to effectively communicate and resolve their differences, it creates a fertile ground for extramarital involvement as individuals seek emotional or physical fulfillment outside the marriage. Societal stigma and dissatisfaction with the marriage play crucial roles. Societal stigma can exacerbate feelings of shame and secrecy, which may drive individuals to seek solace in extramarital

relationships. Epstein (2005) discussed how dissatisfaction within the marriage, whether due to unmet emotional needs, lack of intimacy, or other underlying issues, often leads individuals to seek satisfaction elsewhere. This dissatisfaction is not merely about sexual fulfillment but encompasses a broader spectrum of emotional and psychological needs that are unmet within the marital relationship. These factors collectively underscore the complexity of extramarital affairs, revealing that they are often symptomatic of deeper, unresolved issues within the marriage itself.

Extramarital affairs often result in significant emotional distress and guilt for those involved. Married adults frequently report feelings of intense guilt and shame, stemming from the betrayal of their partner's trust and the violation of marital vows. This emotional turmoil can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, and a pervasive sense of regret. The study by Allen et al. (2005) indicates that individuals who engage in extramarital affairs often experience profound emotional consequences, which can affect their mental health and overall well-being. The guilt associated with infidelity can also lead to a cycle of secrecy and further emotional distance within the marriage, exacerbating the initial issues that may have led to the affair. Societal attitudes towards extramarital affairs further

compound these emotional consequences. In many cultures, infidelity is heavily stigmatized, leading to social ostracism and judgment from peers, family, and the community. This societal stigma can intensify the emotional distress experienced by those involved, as they not only deal with personal guilt but also the fear of public exposure and condemnation. Treas and Giesen (2000) demonstrated how societal disapproval and the potential for social repercussions can add to the psychological burden of those who have engaged in extramarital affairs. This combination of personal guilt and societal judgment underscores the complex and multifaceted consequences of infidelity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study therefore recommended that; couples be encouraged to participate in regular marital counseling sessions, even in the absence of major conflicts; that efforts be made to reduce the societal stigma associated with seeking help for marital issues through public awareness campaigns and establishment of community-based support groups, that couples

facing marital crises should be encouraged to lean on family and friends for emotional support.

## Data Availability Statement

The primary data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author/s upon request.

**Contribution/ Originality:** Sociologists, Marriage/Guidance Counselors, Policy Makers, the general public and future academics are all expected to greatly benefit from the study's findings. The study added more tips of how couples can solve marital crises by effective communication and being open for marriage counseling

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