

## Unfaithfulness among married couples

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**Abstract :** *Infidelity is a topical issue in both social and legal spheres. This study was a mixed- method design focused on unfaithfulness among married couples. The aims of the study were to assess the common understanding of infidelity as a practice, estimate the extent of marital infidelity among men and women and to establish the reasons for it as well as the perceived consequences of adulterous relationships. A population of about forty-three was possible as participants. Twenty-three men and women together volunteered to participate in this study. A questionnaire and a focus group discussion were used for data collection. The study findings revealed that the common understanding of infidelity/unfaithfulness was a married person's sex relationship with a person outside the principal relationship, infidelity was more prevalent among married men than it was among married women, reasons for infidelity included sex, finance, respect, dignity and luxuries. The effects of unfaithfulness were diseases, stress, violence and divorce. The study also revealed that after being cheated on one would seek for counselling failure which divorce would be the final. Conclusions were that the understanding of the concept of infidelity in this study was as much as it was understood elsewhere to mean sexual intercourse between at least one dyadic partner and another person who does not belong to the primary relationship. The study recommended that future studies on related topics use bigger samples, more research sites and to carry the study with dating couples to find out whether there is a continuity or discontinuity in whatever infidelity patterns that might be extended to younger people.*

**Keywords:** *infidelity, unfaithfulness, married couples*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of unfaithfulness/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 (Drigotas & Barta, 2001; Glass, 2002; Zare, 2011; Mark, Janssen & Milhausen, 2009). Several dimensions of infidelity include adultery, prostitution of a married partner, casually flirting with someone and/or having a sexually 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 (Handy, 1998; Glass & Wright, 1992). This study limits infidelity to sexual intercourse between a married member and another person outside the primary partnership (Tsapelas, Fisher & Aron, 2010).

Some writers believe that infidelity is widespread: estimated by Time Magazine (1995) at 65 percent for both men and women in the United States, at 15 percent for women and 25 percent for men according the survey by the University of Chicago (1991) and up to 80 percent of all families by Vaughan & Vaughan (1980/1998) in the same country. Infidelity has been reported to have gone up considerably in the HIV/AIDS era (Prins, Buunk & van Yperen, 1993). Reports from the 1920s record that 28 and 24 per cent of American wedded men and women respectively were adulterous and through the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties to 72 percent and 54 percent respectively in the 1990s (Kinsey et al., 1948; Kinsey et al., 1953; Hunt, 1974; Fisher, 1992). Reported prevalence figures for infidelity among married persons are high: 42 per cent for Britain, 50 per cent for America, 40 percent among Germans and Mexicans, 36 per cent for France and 22 percent for the Spanish (Durex, 1999; Mackay, 2001).

Research shows that prevalence is higher for men across all cultures (Greely, 1994; Wiederman, 1997) regardless of the type of primary relationship (married or dating) and whether infidelity is measured as 'wanting to', 'doing' or 'have done' (Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Schmitt, 2003). Some researchers have reported less difference between men and women if infidelity is defined as more than sexual intercourse (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Burdette, Ellison, Sherkat, & Gore, 2007; Allen et al., 2005; Drigotas et al., 1999; Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wiederman, 1997). Across historical eras the world over (Fisher, 1992) and even prior to marriage (among students in college and other unmarried persons) infidelity has been known to be prevalent reportedly as high as 60 percent and upwards (Schmitt & Buss, 2001; Allen & Baucom, 2006).

Human beings fall in and out of love very quickly (Wright, 1994) and some writers see infidelity as the natural state of the human being in the process of individuation which Jung said was a very human characteristic of always breaching boundaries. Wedlock (and the attendant requirement for monogamy) is probably such a boundary that humans have a tendency to breach. The attitude of people to relationship transgression in marriage seems to be the same the world over with public disapproval and private engagement i.e. most people will publicly condemn extramarital affairs and yet participate in them or condone them when they occur close to their life spaces (Feldman & Cauffman, 2000; Barlow, Duncan, James & Park, 2001; Harrison & Allan, 2001).

Various reasons have been given why individuals engage in relationship transgression during their married lives. Evolutionary psychologists employ the Parent Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972) to suggest that men are narrowly interested in sex and hence engage in anonymous sexual encounters or fantasise with a wide variety of real and potential partners (Ellis & Symons, 1990; Bailey, Gaulin, Agyei & Gladue, 1994; Wright & Reise, 1997; Laumann et al., 1994; Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Gold & Gold, 1991; Egan & Angus, 2002; Houston, 2005). Men use their power and resources to attract or claim mates or marry many wives where that polygamy is allowed (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Geary, 1998; Betzig, 1986; Perusse, 1994; Townsend, 1998).

Using the Parent Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972) women are said to emphasise quality ('reproductive fitness') and are concerned not with looks but with status and available resources of the male partner (Townsend & Levy, 1990b; Betzig, 1989; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). Women are therefore, known to be opposed to casual sex in general preferring sex with emotional attachment to the partner even in adulterous circumstances (Buss, 2000; Clark, 1990; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Ellis & Symons, 1990; Houston; Ebony, 1998; Wilson & Daly, 1996).

Participation in relationship transgression activities is affected by personal and contextual factors. Some of these factors include personal values, quality of marital relationships, sexual opportunities, level of sexual interest and more permissive sexual values that included premarital sexual permissiveness (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Smith, 1994; Reiss, Anderson & Sponaugle, 1980; Brown, 1991; Greeley, 1991). Adulterous women particularly reported inequity in their marriages (Prins, Buunk & van Yperen, 1983). However, not all marriages that were unhappy led to infidelity for the female or male spouses (Choi et al., 1994) and infidelity could be a consequence of marital problems, a cause of marital problems or both (Previti & Amato, 2004; Spanier & Margolis, 1983) and the role of family discord, for example, in leading to infidelity could not be clearly determined. 'Demographic risk factors', (not accepted by all researchers) (Blow & Hartnett, 2005), that tended to promote engagement in extradyadic partnerships included a liberal education that related positively to permissive values (Smith; Leigh et al., 1993), being male (Choi et al., 1994; Lancaster, 1994) and being young because younger people tended to have more sexual partners than older people (Dolcini, et al., 1993; Smith, 1991; Edwards & Booth, 1994).

Other factors that work against monogamy are the acceptance a relatively promiscuous lifestyle where infidelity is no longer classified as deviant (Allyn, 2000; Pittman, 1989), the presence of many more women than men (Guttentag & Secord, 1983; Pedersen, 1991) and former boyfriends and girlfriends who do not suddenly go away when a former partner marries (Dolan, 1998). There are also numerous attractions and opportunities for sexual relationships outside the principal relationship in the workplace and beyond (Johnson, 1970).

Betrayal result in feelings of anger, depression, self-reproach and jealousy (Buss, 2000; Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buunk, 1995; Shackelford, Le blanc & Drass, 2000; Cramer, Manning-Ryan, Johnson & Barbo, 2000; Glass, 2003). Infidelity is by far the most commonly-cited reason for divorce world-wide (Betzig, 1989; Shackelford, Buss & Bennett, 2001; Amato & Previti, 2003; Hall & Fincham, 2006). Infidelity has also been known to cause a great deal of suffering not only to principal partners but also to any children/dependents in the primary partnership when the dyadic resources are diverted to cater for the needs of the "freak on the side" (Buss et al., 1992; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Shackelford et al., 2000). Physical acrimony including murder and suicide has been reported as a result of misunderstandings from infidelity (Okami & Shackelford, 2001; Merkle & Richardson, 2000).

The study of infidelity in Third World countries has not been prolific and has been more in the nature of studies of concurrent sexual relationships carried out largely in respect to studies on HIV and AIDS (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003/2008; Shumba, Mapfumo & Chademana, 2011) and also in respect to age-discrepant sexual partnerships (Mapfumo & Chinyanganya, 2011). These studies have included both married and unmarried persons and it is difficult to estimate a prevalence rate for infidelity among married couples from those studies. Although in layman's language marital infidelity is widely prevalent in the form of the popular 'small house' (a second tier marriage in Zimbabwe) and other illicit love arrangements outside the principal dyad, there has not been to the knowledge of the authors any empirical studies that address the issue of infidelity of married couples. A great deal has been mentioned in Zimbabwe in popular talk and in the public media with respect to the 'small house' which an institution of infidelity. The 'small house' has all the trappings of the principal dyad except that it is not provided for by the law (the Marriages Act Chapter 5:07 which allows only one wife) in Zimbabwe. However, it is commonly recognised with respect to the children who are sired in that sort of union. These children are entitled in equal amounts to the estate should the father die before they are eighteen years of age (Mapimhidze: *Newsday*, 14/01/2011). Beyond the anecdotal evidence about the 'small house' and other popularly-mentioned sexual misdemeanours, there no formal study that has been reported on unfaithfulness among married persons. The present effort is therefore a modest attempt to contribute to this vitally important but rather unexplored area which is potentially fruitful for study.

#### **Statement of the problem:**

Infidelity is a worldwide phenomenon which many people publicly condemn, but privately condone and/or actually participate in. The cost of infidelity is considerable and brings about or deepens dissatisfaction in the primary relationship. Infidelity could indeed be the result of dissatisfaction with the principal relationship in the same way as it could be a cause for marital dissatisfaction. Divorce rates are escalating worldwide and the single leading reason for that is the inability of spouses to observe sexual exclusivity of each other. Children and other dependents of principal dyads suffer when marital resources have to be shared with extramarital partners of their parents and the quality of life within families'

declines. It is even more worrying when it is noted that extra-dyadic relationships have increased in spite of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Multiple concurrent sexual partnerships which include intergenerational and age-discrepant partnerships have lead to the escalation of the pandemic and are the result of infidelity in many countries. It is therefore critical to study the extent and motivation of infidelity for all so that those in public health and other related services could strategise on proper education for those involved and those affected. Those that do participate in such affairs may also need the information that is generated by studies such as the present one to become aware of the dire consequences of infidelity.

**The purpose of the study:**

The question of infidelity is much talked about with little understanding. It has been extensively researched in many countries in the world but remains narrowly explored through empirical research in Zimbabwe. This study, therefore aims to assess the common understanding of infidelity as a practice, estimate the extent of marital infidelity among men and women albeit in a small sample and to establish the reasons for it as well as the perceived consequences of adulterous relationships.

**Research questions:**

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the common understanding of infidelity?
2. What are the perceived prevalence rates of male and female infidelity?
3. What are the perceived reasons for infidelity of males and females?
4. What are the perceived results of participation in extra-dyadic relationships?

**Methodology:**

**Participants and setting:**

This study was set in an institution of higher learning that specialised in offering open and distance learning in Manicaland Zimbabwe. At the time of writing this paper, the first author was a Sabbatical Scholar at that institution and the second author was a full-time staff member in that institution. The staff who could have participated in this study totalled around forty-three of the age range of twenty-two to sixty-six. Of the staff thirteen were females and thirty were male. The staff was employed in various capacities all the way from security guards, grounds people, clerks, secretaries, lecturers and the Regional Director who was in charge of the local management of the Campus. The study itself arose from informal discussions that were routinely carried out by men during lunch hours among other discussions pertinent to their lives and the lives of people in the city in which the premises of the institution of higher learning was situated.

**Design:**

The design that was used here was Mixed Method Design using approaches from the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The quantitative design is normally used with large numbers of participants. Although the sample here was small ( $n = 23$ ) it was large enough to make it appropriate to use the quantitative approach. The quantitative method was used to capture numerical variables such as estimates of people that were perceived to be participating in infidelity, factors behind infidelity, and the various consequences of participating in adulterous relationships. To achieve its objectives, the quantitative design utilises structured instruments requiring participants to give answers in a pre-specified format or to select from presented alternatives (Vitale, Armenakis & Field, 2008; Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007). In this respect most of the questions on the questionnaire that is described below were structured and invited answers that lent themselves to counting frequencies and calculating percentages of the responses.

The qualitative approach describes how people experience the world on given research issues such as infidelity in this case. Qualitative research is more suitable for drawing out participants' social norms that govern behaviour, beliefs, opinions and relationships. Qualitative methods enable researchers to gain enhanced understanding of the specific social contexts and other surrounding phenomena. Information that would be too cumbersome to solicit on questionnaires is easily handled in such qualitative approaches as in-depth interviews and as in the case here through focus group discussions. Qualitative approaches are therefore more flexible than the fixed-answer approaches in quantitative approaches (Greene, 2008; Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007; Cresswell & Takkashori, 2007).

## **II. INSTRUMENTATION:**

Two instruments were used in this study. The first was a questionnaire and the second was a focus group discussion.

**The questionnaire:**

The questionnaire was made up of Section A and Section B. Section A gathered bio data about each respondent e.g. sex, age, and marital status. Section B was made up of twenty-six questions sixteen of which were closed (fixed-response) questions while ten were open and required explanations in the responses. The questionnaire explored participants' understanding of the concept of infidelity, reasons why some married partners did not observe sexual exclusivity of one another, the perceived prevalence of infidelity in the community and what the results of infidelity were.

**Focus group discussion:**

The second 'instrument' used in this study was the focus group discussion. Powell et al. (1996) defines a focus group as a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research.

The focus group was used because it could bring out insights not capable of being brought out by the questionnaire. Some intimate experiential information, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings could also be brought out more by focus group than through

the questionnaire. The focus group was also ideal when attempting to explore the degree of consensus among the participants (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993).

The moderator who was also the second author in this study was trained to run the focus group. She was directed to make certain that rules of the focus groups were closely followed. These included not allowing any one participant to dominate discussion and on the other hand encouraging those that tended to be held back to participate as much as possible. The moderator had to make clear that she was not looking for correct/wrong answers but for the views of all the people in the focus group. She also had to emphasise the anonymity that went with the recording of transactions during the focus group discussions and made sure that the focus group experience was non-threatening to any of the members (Morgan, 1988; Gibbs, 1997). The use of the particular moderator was regarded appropriate because the moderator was a person acceptable at a social level across the gender divide in the particular workplace where the focus group was conducted.

#### **Data collection procedure:**

This study developed from informal discussion among men and women at the campus of the particular institution of higher learning. After consultations with the Management of the institution, further consultations were held with members of the institution to find out whether they would be interested in participating in the intended study. All the members of the institution expressed willingness to participate in the study after the study was explained to them in their offices.

On an appointed day the lead author of this study, went round the offices distributing the questionnaire to all the participants. Respondents were allowed the morning to complete the questionnaire. The lead author went round to collect the completed questionnaires. Of the forty-three questionnaires distributed only twenty-three were returned with many prospective respondents citing work commitments to explain their failure to complete and return the questionnaire.

On another appointed day two focus groups made up six participants each were set up one for men and another for women. The second author moderated the focus group discussions in a spacious office that could seat up to thirty people. The focus group discussions were held in quick succession to avoid contamination of one group's responses by the other. The data gathered from the discussions was recorded by two volunteers; one male for the male group and one female for the female group appointed and prepared for the purpose. The records of the recorders were compared and agreed after the focus group discussion.

#### **Data analysis strategy:**

Data analysis was both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis was made up of the numerical values that gave certain responses on the questionnaire in response to closed questions. The focus group discussions as well as the open questions on the questionnaire produced qualitative data that was used to explain the quantitative data. The qualitative data was presented in the form of paraphrases and verbatim statements that helped reveal the explanations and the motivations for the various trends in patterns of infidelity. Qualitative data was included only where it helped to amplify the responses already made on the questionnaire. Some responses of men and women were put parallel to each other where important contrast in intended.

#### **Limitations of the study:**

This study like all studies in this area was fraught with difficulties. There are few institutes and scholars who specialise in this rather interesting area. The concept of infidelity itself is variously defined and it is unclear if any two people writing on infidelity are writing about the same thing. For instance, it could be asked if someone who is preoccupied with an intention to have sex outside of the family is already participating in infidelity. Participants cannot always be trusted to report accurately on their experiences of the infidelity. Women, for instance, might underreport their participation while some men may exaggerate their experience to seem 'macho'. Because the area seems under-researched in Third World countries, it is not possible to make generalisations to situation in the developing world.

#### **Results and Discussion:**

The data from this study are presented by question in the sections below.

##### **Common understanding of infidelity:**

The common understanding of infidelity/unfaithfulness was a married person's sex relationship with a person outside the principal dyad. Twenty out of twenty-three respondents stated that infidelity included sexual intercourse between a member of the principal relationship and someone or some people outside the relationship. The other three respondents stated that infidelity was made up of 'lack of transparency in married life', 'cheating', and 'lack of openness to each other' without specifying the content of the cheating, transparency and openness.

Results from the focus group discussion for both male and female participants emphasised having sex as the key component of infidelity. Some of the explanations, made included infidelity as a common problem whereby one or both partners were 'not playing the game marriage according to the rules'; 'cheating one another when in marriage'; 'not excluding other partners from the sex act' while others equated infidelity to 'having feelings for people outside marriage and sleeping with them'.

The focus on sexual intercourse in understanding infidelity was consistent with the sentiments of Tsapelas, Fischer & Aaron (2010); Atkins, Baucom & Jacobson (2001). This is the gist of what Ward & Tracey (2004) and Pittman & Pittman-Wagner

(1995) alluded to when they stated that infidelity should be perceived basically as any misunderstanding around sexual monogamy in the dyadic relationship. Some sentiments expressed in this study (clearly in minority) suggest that infidelity included all actions that were of an untrustworthy and non-transparent nature. These latter sentiments were in agreement with the assertions of Glass & Wright (1992), Handy (1998) and also Parks & Floyd (1996) who did not restrict the meaning of infidelity to sexual intercourse. None of the participants in this study (specifically) mentioned flirting on-line as a type of infidelity (Mcown, Fischer & Page, 2001; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Ward & Tracey, 2004). The observation in this study that infidelity was a problem for couples is in line with the assertions and findings of Afifi, Falato & Weiner (2001) and Covell (2003) that marital infidelity is problematic to marriages in the United States of America and around the world (Brase et al., 2004; Lary, Maman, Katebalila & Mbwambo, 2004; Whitty, 2003).

#### **Perceived prevalence of infidelity among married men**

Prevalence was assessed on a Likert scale type question ranging in responses from hearing about infidelity 'very often', 'quite often', 'only sometimes', 'not at all'. Twelve out of twenty-three participants (just over half the group) responded that they heard about male marital infidelity 'very often'. Ten out of twenty-three respondents reported that they heard about marital infidelity 'quite often' while only one participant stated hearing about male marital infidelity 'only sometimes'.

Taking male respondents on their own about one half reported that they had heard about male marital infidelity 'very often' while the other half reported that they had heard about male marital infidelity 'quite often'. Not a single male respondent stated that he had heard of male infidelity 'only sometimes' or 'not at all'.

Half the female respondents (in questionnaire) stated that they had heard about male marital infidelity 'very often' while about another half stated that they had heard about male marital infidelity 'quite often'. One respondent reported that she had heard about male infidelity 'only sometimes'. No respondent stated that she had not heard about male marital infidelity.

The responses above reveal that even by their own admission males perceived those of their gender to be participative in adulterous relationships in large measure in agreement with findings around the world (ScienceDaily, 7 May 2007); SafAIDS (2004); Schmitt & Buss (2001). From both the male and female responses, it is clear that gender plays a big part in participation in infidelity (Cann et al., 2001).

When asked to estimate male marital infidelity by percentage male respondents believed that the rate was about 60 per cent. Female respondents on the other hand believed that the rate of male marital infidelity was about 64 per cent. The prevalence of infidelity as estimated by men and women in this study the prevalence in the United States in the nineties where it was estimated to be much lower (about one third of married men and about one quarter of married women) (Janus Report, 1993) and even lower from the National Opinion Research Centre (University of Chicago)(1991) where it was estimated at twenty-five percent of married men and seventeen percent of married women. The response of the women on male infidelity tended to bear out the findings of Hyde (1995); Broady & Hickman (2007) who concluded that women stereotypically tended to view men as having higher levels of infidelity than men thought themselves to have.

#### **Perceived prevalence of infidelity among married women**

About half the males (7 out of 16) stated that they had heard about infidelity of married women 'quite often' whereas six out of seven females also reported that they had heard about marital infidelity among married women 'quite often'. None of the women respondents reported that they had heard about female marital infidelity 'very often'. About a quarter of the male respondents, however, stated that they had heard about female infidelity 'very often' and about another quarter reported that they had heard about female infidelity 'only sometimes'. The basic point emerging from these responses is that married women were perceived to be much less adulterous than married men. This is common feature the world over (Greeley, 1994; Wiederman, 1997).

When asked to estimate the prevalence of infidelity of married women by percentage male respondents opined that the prevalence rate was at 41 percent. Females themselves estimated infidelity among married women to be about 30 percent. As observed elsewhere above men believed that women were much less faithful than the women themselves reported (Hyde, 1995; Broady & Hickman, 2007).

Among themselves men in the focus group accepted that infidelity was clearly more prevalent among married men than it was among married women. In both groups the percentage of married women that were perceived to participate in adulterous activities was clearly lower and was estimated to range between 30 and 45 percent.

In their group women explained that it was much more difficult for married women to engage in adulterous activities because they normally did not initiate relationships themselves in the way men did because that was 'socially unacceptable'. In any case, while men seemed 'not to have boundaries, women were expected to keep themselves for exclusive sex with their marital partners'. Most of the women seemed to agree with the sentiments of Helman et al. (2001) and Eaton et al. (2003) that in certain cultures, there was a double standard whereby infidelity among men was condoned or even encouraged whereas it was frowned down upon when women participated in the same activities.

None of the women (in focus group) admitted to have ever participated in an extramarital affair. It is possible that women merely underreported (Glynn, Kayuni, Banda, Parrott, Floyd, et al., 2011) their participation in extramarital matters but their responses bear out the world-wide trend that married men are nearly always more involved in extradyadic partnerships than married women (Helman, 2001; Eaton et al., 2003).

#### **Reasons for male infidelity**

Out of a possible thirty-two responses from male participants on why married men took part in cheating activities, only 24 responses were received. Of these, twelve clearly mentioned the word 'sex' as a motive i.e. sex 'with someone different', 'sex 'for satisfaction', for more 'experience', and for 'pleasure without responsibility'. Other responses (5) did not directly specify 'sex' but were sex-related i.e. 'physical appearance' (2), 'good features (bums, legs)', 'love', 'companionship'. Factors that were not related to sex that were mentioned by male participants in the study (7) were 'finance', 'honesty', 'care', 'cash', 'acceptable character of the new partner', 'respect from the new partner', and the 'dignity of being a new head of family'.

In their focus group men underlined important features of their infidelity as they 'chased new experiences', 'sampled a variety of different women', 'increasingly engaged in formal/informal small house partnerships' to borrow the phrases of some of the male focus group participants. In the words of one of the participants, 'If the small house had resources to share that would be a real bonus'.

The focus on sex by adulterous men has been confirmed in other studies cited around the world (Ellis & Symons, 1990; Bailey, Gaulin, Agyei & Glaude, 1994; Egan & Angus, 2002) where men were found to relish many partners, engage in anonymous sex and use sex for entertainment. Emerging in this study were new dimensions such as men seeking financial resources from female partners and taking pride in being heads of new families. Infidelity for procreation does not seem to be a worldwide feature but is found in societies where polygamous relationships are permitted or condoned (Moyo & Mbizvo, 2004).

#### **Perceived reasons for infidelity among women**

According to the women participants, women participated in infidelity with men of higher status than their spouses seeking resources and opportunities when husbands were not 'bringing enough to the family and 'the other man comes in handy.' A disputing voice was that not all resources shared by men were necessities as 'some of the items and gifts given to the women were mere luxuries e.g. cell phones and various perfumes and some kinds of clothes.'

Women reported that some men took too much beer, so much that they neglected the sexual needs of their wives and drove their wives into 'relationships' because the men were 'cold, aloof and even abusive.' One female respondent said,

*'It does not always start with the females. Sometimes, you can see that the man is in a relationship somewhere from the things he does and the lame excuses for coming home late and having no money to spend on the family. Then you retaliate even when you know that infidelity is not good.'*

An issue that arose in both focus groups was the continued involvement of former lovers with those who were now married. These former lovers did not suddenly back off. As one female participant testified, 'the connection with the former lover comes when the realities of the new marriage emerge and the former lover tends to be more sympathetic and supportive and in the process the old love come back.' Added one female participant with the apparent assent of the other participants,

*'In many cases some of the former boyfriends are really the people you loved but they did not go all the way to marry you. You have a lot to share from the past.'*

This finding is akin to what Weurtzel (2012) has warned against i.e. the too close involvement of the former lovers in each others' families.

Both men and women (in their groups) agreed that women were drawn to certain men by the opportunities which those men held out i.e. employment or advancement. Working together, solving work-related problems and perhaps travelling together continuously on business allowed workmates to 'ease' into illicit sexual partnerships, which one male participant described as 'seeming good and dignified'.

Resources are important in the women's selection of male mates is important in developing countries where women have been reported to be economically dependent on men due to their inferior educational and life opportunities (Robinson, 2000; Dunkle et al., 2004; Martin & Curtis, 2004; Eaton et al., 2003). The situation whereby women are dependent on men for various resources is assisted by males who also wish to express their mating value by making resources available to their target women (Hill & Buss, 2008; Davis, 2010; Janssens, Pandelaere, van den Bergh, Millet, Lens, Roe, 2011).

The workplace has been found here as in other studies to provide more choice and opportunity for affairs as women and men spend more time with workmates than they do with their spouses in meetings and business travel (Treas & Gierson, 2000; Johnson, 1970; Wellings, Field, Johnson & Wadsworth, 1994).

Also found here as in other studies are relationship factors that predispose to adultery. These include conflict, low levels of intimacy, partners living apart (Buss, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Brown, 1991; Walster, Traupmann & Walster, 1978).

#### **Reasons for female infidelity: Male participants' responses**

The majority opinion of men in the study (nineteen out of thirty-one responses) believed that women in adulterous partnerships sought sex and sex-related advantages (sex =11 responses; love = 7 responses; pregnancy=1). Important also in women's choice to engage in extra-dyadic partnerships, according to male respondents, were financial and related motivations (Finance and material resources 11 out of 31 responses) and others (opportunity for employment and good behaviour of partner).

The finding here suggests that women are not only interested in resources which their male mates could share with them (Betzig, 1989) but also in love and care and other advantages in life.

### **Reasons for female infidelity: Female participants' response**

Ten out of thirteen responses by women indicated sex/love/caring as the most important attractions for women into adulterous relationships. Three out of thirteen responses pointed to money as a factor for women entering adulterous relationships.

The finding reported here is also interesting because it seems to point to different needs from the resource-related needs of women that were established by other scholars (Swidler & Watkins, 2006; Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggins, 1989; Hunter, 2004; Shetton, Cassell & Adekunji, 2005). Women in adulterous relationships seemed to be more concerned about being loved and cared for and, perhaps, in the reckoning of Houston (2005), Ebony (1998) and Wilson & Daly (1996) being validated as women. 'Care' and 'love' do not, however, necessarily exclude the sharing of resources in the many transactional partnerships that are found in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ankomah, 1999; Pittin, 1983). Women enter relationships with men and receive money and gifts in a relationships that have a strong economic element but 'poverty itself may not be a factor' (Shetton, et al., 2005:1058; Hunter, 2002).

### **Personal experience of infidelity**

With respect to their personal experience seven male participants reported that they had never participated in adulterous sexual activity while nine reported that they had participated for reasons mainly to do with 'fun', 'trying out my libido', 'peer pressure while leaving away from wife'. Of the nine that had participated in adulterous relationships, five had done so for barely six months while the remaining 4 had participated with the same partners for more than two years and they reported their adulterous relationships to be ongoing when this study was conducted.

Male participants reported that they were interested in 'variety', 'trying out libido', 'pleasure', 'fun', 'sexual gratification', 'ego satisfaction', 'filling the gap while living away from family'. Other less cited reasons had to do with a wife that was pregnant and disagreement with the wife on how many children to make and hence the need to make more children with another wife/sexual partner.

Only one married woman (in questionnaire) reported a previous adulterous relationship after getting married and that for less than six months. This particular relationship was with her first boyfriend but the two agreed to concentrate on their new families instead.

It is possible that women simply underreported (Glynn, Kayuni, Parrott, Floyd, et al., 2011) their participation in unfaithful relationships but the sex-focused motivation for male participation in illicit partnerships (often not related to level of marital satisfaction) is established here as in other previous research (Atwater, 1982; Buunk, 1980; Glass & Wright, 1985; Pestrak, Martin & Martin, 1985; Spanier & Margolis, 1983; Thompson, 1984). This discrepancy between the reported involvement of married men and women in illicit love relationships may be related to the double standard that frowns upon it for women and yet condones and/or even sometimes encourages it among men (Helman, 2001; Eaton, Flishera & Aarob, 2003). Some cultures encourage multiparity i.e. having more than one child and hence some men may have children with women who are beyond the principal dyad (Moyo & Mbizvo, 2004).

### **What men and women felt about unfaithfulness?**

The consequences of infidelity were reported at two levels i.e. how married men and women felt about infidelity and how they would react to being cheated in their married life. Of the thirteen males who responded to this issue nine felt that adultery was 'bad', 'something to be sorry about if one committed it', 'insulting if one's partner cheated', 'morally and socially wrong', 'hurtful', 'an act of betrayal' as well as 'being bad and unfair'. The responses here are common the world over with public disapproval of infidelity (regardless of great liberalisation of attitudes to different sexual behaviours and styles). For instance, sixty percent of the responses in the British Social Attitudes Survey showed that infidelity was wrong always (Barlow, Duncan, James & Park, 2001; Harrison & Allan, 2001). The general condemnation of infidelity is the opposite of the widely reported prevalence of the practice in many cultures.

Four male respondents felt there was nothing wrong as some women enjoyed 'being hunted down', 'marriages and faithfulness were dying away anyway', 'Ok for men but not for women' and when done 'to increase the tribe'. This is, perhaps, a typical male response expressing a more permissive attitude to extramarital sex (Prins, 1993; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Lieberman, 1988; Thomson, 1984). The wish to make more children is perhaps present in some cultures but not in many others (Fernandez & Fogli, 2005; Georgas, Berry, von de Vijver, Kagiticbasi, & Poortinga, 2008; Kabeer, 1996).

The seven women in the study responded that infidelity was 'bad and should not be supported', 'unfair', 'very bad and should be considered a public offence and a crime under the laws of the country' and that it was 'dangerous'. The responses of the female participants are typical in that women perceived infidelity as 'wrong always' while some men held permissive views towards infidelity (Barlow, Duncan, James & Park, 2001; Harrison & Allan, 2001) as reflected by some of their responses as presented below.

Fourteen male respondents in this study answered the question on whether there were circumstances where infidelity could be justified. Seven of these respondents categorically stated that infidelity was not justified under any circumstances. The other seven responded that relationship transgression was justified when 'siring children', 'procreation and strengthening the family', (Moyo & Mbizvo, 2004) 'when denied conjugal rights', 'when separated (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983) or embroiled in domestic violence', 'when wife is not feeling well e.g. when she is having her menses', (or pregnant as reflected by Allen et al., 2005) 'when the couple cannot make children'. One male respondent was more elaborate than the rest. He stated that infidelity was justified 'when sex was not available at home (unmet sexual needs found in 44 percent of men and women in Lawson's (1988) study); when a partner was domineering and gave the other partner no space', 'when

one partner has more money and thinks that the money is a substitute for emotional needs', and 'when a couple is finding problems making children'. Clearly married men identified more situations in which infidelity might be justified.

Six out of seven women answered the question on whether there were any circumstances under which infidelity could be justified. Four of the women opined that infidelity was not justified under any circumstances. Two women responded that 'maybe when one spouse denies the other conjugal rights but infidelity is never justified' and when 'the couple is unable to have children, maybe the man/woman may go outside the family.'

### **III. The effects of infidelity on individuals and their families**

All respondents except one reported that there were adverse effects of infidelity and these included 'untold suffering for the family', 'stress', 'STIs', 'HIV', 'earlier death for spouses', 'poor performance at work with common absent-mindedness', 'violence in the home', 'lack of trust', 'non-cheating partner may retaliate', 'financial problems in the families', 'emotional trauma', 'wastage of resources', 'divorce', 'children out of wedlock', 'suffering of children and the non-cheating spouse', 'suicide', 'high blood pressure' and other stress-related ailments. The findings here confirm the prior findings of Amato & Previti (2003); Betzig (1989); Kitson, Babri & Roach (1985) who identified infidelity as the leading cause of divorce; Buunk (1995); Charny & Parnass, (1995) who indicated anger, disappointment and self doubt as a consequence of being betrayed; depression as found by Cano & O'Leary, 2000); domestic violence (Buss, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988) and loss of trust, damaged self-esteem (Charny & Parnass, 1995; Spanier & Margolis, 1983); as well as diseases particularly sexually transmitted diseases and HIV (Bell, Molitor & Flynn, 1999; Bohner & Wanke, 2004; Fals-Stewart, Birchler, Hoebbel, Kashdan, Golden & Parks, 2003). The one discordant participant claimed that infidelity was 'culturally acceptable' and should not be treated as deviant a view that was stated by Pittman (1989) in the United States pointing out that there were more incidents of infidelity than there were traffic accidents in that country and hence it was not proper to continue to treat infidelity as deviant.

### **IV. Reaction to being cheated**

Thirteen out of sixteen male participants stated that they had no option but to divorce. Some gave various reasons for divorcing and these included 'sending the wife to the adulterous partner so that they could continue their nefarious activities', 'the pain of having paid a 'bride price' and then the wife cheats on you is just too much and she must go', 'because infidelity by a woman is abomination that will make me doubt if I am the father of her children', 'because it is shameful to live together after such acts (infidelity)', 'culturally not acceptable to live with a woman who cheats', and for cheating, 'the woman must pack and go.' The hard-line stance of males towards adulterous spouses is consistent with Hall & Fincham (2004), Shackelford, Buss & Bennett (2002) who found that in general men typically respond by breaking up with a sexually unfaithful partner.

Three male participants who had different views responded that it was wise 'to seek counselling because the woman might have unsatisfied (sexual) needs,' 'to find reasons for the infidelity and divorce would only be a last resort.' The last male participant stated that his 'dedication and commitment might lead to forgiveness'.

Of the seven conditions for forgiveness given by McCullough et al. (1998), two seem to explain the responses of the few male participants who gave atypical responses. The first is that one partner should have high investment in the relationship and the second is that one or both partners should perceive the principal partnership as a long-term commitment. The findings in this study support the general finding in the literature that men are more likely to break up with a sexually unfaithful partner than women are (Hall & Fincham, 2004; Shackelford, Buss & Bennett, 2002).

The finding that infidelity was in general condemned as a practice by both men and women is in line with the findings of (Barlow, Duncan, James & Park, 2001) who state the same situation worldwide. Further the general condemnation of infidelity is not supported by the high percentages of persons perceived to be involved in the practice even in the present study.

The finding that some men aimed to raise additional families (in the 'small house') alongside those from the primary partnerships is an aspect which seems to be a development of the traditional African polygamy which may be continuing at present in a more decentralised fashion where wives of one man do not as in the past live on one homestead.

### **V. Conclusions:**

From the findings in this study it can be concluded that the understanding of the concept of infidelity is much as it is understood elsewhere to mean sexual intercourse between at least one dyadic partner and another person who does not belong to the primary relationship. Like elsewhere adultery is publicly condemned and yet seemingly widely practised. Reasons presented here are based much of Trivers' (1972) Parent Investment Theory. Although marital inequity links with adulterous relationships, not all unhappy marriages lead to adultery on the part of the spouses. The prevalence of perceived adulterous relationships is comparable to the prevalence in other countries particularly those in the West with men being perceived to outstrip women in their participation in adulterous activities. Males tend to overestimate the participation of females in illicit love affairs while women equally stereotypically overestimate the participation of men in those affairs. All the participants showed that they would be badly affected by a dyadic betrayal. Men are much more likely to end a marriage upon the infidelity of the women than are women upon the infidelity of the men.

Two concepts that have emerged here are those of the Zimbabwean 'small house', which is an institution that has all the trappings of a marriage but is distinct from the primary relationship, some sort of a replica of the old polygamous family which unlike the old institution is not restricted to the same homestead. Another concept is that of transactional sex which has an important economic component but which is not borne out of abject poverty as has sometimes been suggested. It is also short of prostitution.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS:

This study used a very small sample. The background of the research participants was also not wide. It is recommended that a bigger sample be used and that it be extracted from various social settings and not just one academic institution. It is also suggested that future research employ a variety of methods in addition to those that have been used here. Perhaps, it will be more informative if studies were carried out with dating couples to find whether there is a continuity or discontinuity in whatever infidelity patterns that might be extant among younger people.

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