

Factors Influencing Sexual Infidelity among the Married In Africa Inland Church -Kitui County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Sexual infidelity (S.I) is one of the world's intractable problems. It adversely affects the sanctity of family which is the basic unit of human society. Decades of deliberate and strategic policies to mitigate S.I have not yielded considerable concrete results. This is despite multidimensional approach from the church, state, and non-governmental organizations. Arguably, in the endeavor to ensure believers are sanctioned against unprecedented rates of S.I, Africa Inland Church –Kenya (A.I.C-K) has established Christian Education programs designed to address developmental needs (formative, teenage, and adulthood) of all adherents. Despite church's effort to eradicate S.I among her married members, the problem still persists. The research sought to examine factors influencing S.I. in A.I.C-K. This study is grounded on the premise that morality marks an essential ingredient in society, especially in the family institution; hence, without family values, society would be disrupted and eventually collapse. The article is justified by the need for the church to regain her moral authority as the conscience of the society. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were used to choose a sample size of the requisite number of respondents. Key findings revealed that inadequate preparation before wedding, marital dissatisfaction, and geographical migration were among highly rated causes of sexual infidelity in A.I.C-K.

Keywords: Sexual Infidelity (S.I), Church, society, and family

INTRODUCTION

Most marriages run into innumerable problems due to sexual infidelity. The sanctity of marriage has been downplayed by main stakeholders thus affecting husbands, wives, children, church and the society at large. The problems have been fueled by accusations and counter-accusations resulting in mistrust and suspicion on the part of spouses (Mobolaji, 2015). The definition of infidelity is when one partner in a marriage is involved in sexual or emotional relationships with another person who is not their marriage partner (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2015). Okelo (2005) explains that infidelity happens when a person gets into a sexual relationship with someone other than their marital partner. Thus, infidelity occurs between a married individual and another person outside the primary relationship. Njoronge (2009) observe that, infidelity is synonymous with adultery, unfaithfulness and extramarital affair. It emerges that 50-60% of those who seek intervention from marriage therapists are about sexual infidelity (Subchi et al., 2019). Arguably, as Amotoye, 2006 observes, many religious traditions like African traditional, Christianity and Islam scorn at sexual infidelity. According to Musau, 2016 and Williams 2017, sexual infidelity is the root cause of marital disharmony globally at 51.3%, divorce at 50% and high vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS. Inadvertently, the vice is very rampant among Christian believers in A.I.C- K. Mapfumo (2016), observes that, although most Christians publicly condemn it, they, however, practice it, or even condone it, when it occurs in their immediate environment. Statistics in Africa Inland Church-Kenya reveal that, S.I is burgeoning and number one reason for dissolution of marriage relationships. Mbunga (2010), reveals that 56% of the married couples in A.I.C-K view S.I as the leading cause of strife in their marriages.

In the same vein, Wanjiru et al. (2020), argues that the factors responsible for S.I are similar among non-Christian couples and Christian couples in many Churches, including A.I.C-K. Thus, the focus of this study is to examine factors influencing sexual infidelity in A.I.C-K.

METHODOLOGY

The research study adopted descriptive design. The design was chosen because it allows for the description of patterns of behavior and the characteristics of the phenomenon under study (Habib et al., 2014). Further, the design collects data so as to answer questions regarding the status of the respondents in the study (Mugenda 2012). The design applied questionnaires as a tool for gathering quantitative data, interview schedules and focused group discussions (F.G.D) to assemble qualitative data that is in tandem with the themes of the study. The study employed Mead’s Symbolic Interactionism theory (Mead, 1931) to interpret the data. The theory emphasizes on the relationship between individual human beings and the larger society. Thus, it was used to “investigate the causes of sexual infidelity among Christians in A.I.C-K”. This is because, sexual infidelity is a behavioral and moral issue inclined on relationship between an individual person and the larger society. The key tenet of this theory is that humans learn the meaning of social behavior by socialization. This implies that, the cause of human action is as a result of what is happening in the present situation within his/her environment. To maintain ethical principles with the respondents, the researcher prepared a consent letter detailing the ethical handling of the respondent and the information accrued. The respondents were assured of their anonymity, and

pseudonyms were used to conceal their identities during presentation of data. The data collection tools generated information that was utilized in establishing the study findings. The target study population was determined to be 1,426. The study used both purposive and simple random sampling method to narrow down the ideal sample size to 150.

Table 1: Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Category of Respondents	Target Pop of Respondents	Sample pop of Respondents	% of Sampled respondent	Type of Sampling
Bishop (Male)	1	1	100	Purposive
Reverends (Male)	8	8	100	Purposive
Pastors (Male)	21	8	38	Simple Random
Lady Pastors	5	5	100	Purposive
Married Couples	1,230 (AIC Data)	80	—	Simple Random
Separated/Divorced	126 (AIC Data)	32	22	Simple Random
Akamba Elders	70(AIC Data)	16	20	Simple Random
TOTALS	1,461	150	10.00	—

Purposive sampling selects participants on the basis of their having a significant relation to the research topic (Seale, 2004). Thus, the Bishop (1) Reverends (8), Lady pastors (5) and Akamba elders (16) were selected purposively. The pastors (8), separated/divorced (32) and married church couples (80) were selected through a simple random sampling method.

The researcher and the two assistants collected data which was analyzed and presented in form of narratives

and verbatim responses for qualitative data while tables and figures were used to present quantitative data.

Existence of S.I Among Married Members of A.I.C

The study sought to confirm whether sexual infidelity existed among married members of A.I.C-K. Below are the results that emerged from two categories of respondents; pastors and the divorced/separated.

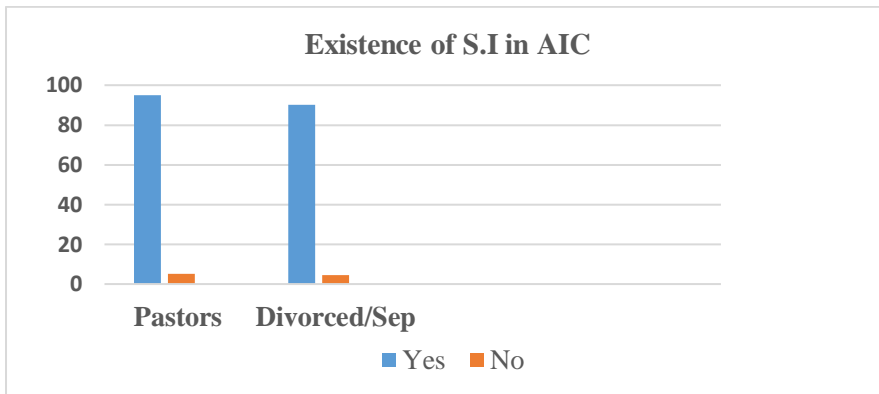


Figure 1: Existence of Sexual Infidelity in AIC

From figure 1 above, 95% of pastors and 90% of divorced/separated rated existence of sexual infidelity very high. Further, the bishop and Reverends who are tasked with the responsibility of handling marital challenges confirmed that they have been directly involved in cases of sexual infidelity among the married members of A.I.C-K. The Bishop revealed that, some of the cases on S.I involved members of the clergy in A.I.C-K. The married couples disclosed that believers in A.I.C-K have been widely involved on matters of sexual infidelity, and in some cases the leadership would wish away the issues to avoid confrontation with the culprits. During F.G.D held on 28th February, 2021 at A.I.C Kitundu, Mwendwa and Mwelu (O.I 28/02/21) indicated that the perpetrators of sexual infidelity comprised of pastors, elders and some congregants in A.I.C-K, which makes the issue more complex to deal with. This implies that, S.I is an intractable problem burgeoning among A.I.C-K members. These revelations will go a long way in ensuring infidelity as a moral issue is addressed adequately for stability of marriages. The findings are in line with an earlier study by Mbunga (2010), who found out that, 56% of the married couples in A.I.C-K identify S.I as the leading cause of strife in their marriages.

Factors Influencing Sexual Infidelity Among the Married in A.I.C-K

Various studies have shown that there are several reasons associated with the decision to be involved in sexual Infidelity among married couples. This section will discuss a number of those factors, existing among A.I.C-K members. The results are as presented in Table 2 below

Table 2: Causes of Sexual Infidelity Among Married Couple in A.I.C-K

Causes of Marital infidelity	Divorced/Separated		Pastors (Clergy)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Geographical Migration/ Separation	18	69.23	9	69.23
Poverty	17	65.38	8	61.54
Marital Dissatisfaction	21	80.77	7	53.85
Lack of Preparation before Marriage (Wedding)	23	88.46	11	84.62
Influence from Media	16	61.54	9	69.23
Seduction (Dressing), Sex attraction	14	53.85	10	76.92
Childlessness	8	30.77	3	23.08

As shown in table 2 above, the data presented portrays a number of factors influencing S.I as presented by respondents. These factors include geographical migration/separation, poverty, marital dissatisfaction, lack of preparation before marriage, influence from media, seduction/sex attraction, and childlessness.

Geographical Migration/ Separation

Premised on the above, Atkins et al. (2001) reveal that persons separated from their spouses in search of work are predisposed to sexual infidelity. The findings of the current study show that, 69.23% of the respondents cited geographical migration and separation as a major cause of sexual infidelity. Likewise, the bishop and reverends observed that, in most cases sexual infidelity occurs when one of the spouse is away from the partner. However, the clergy clarified that, it is not necessarily physical migration responsible for S.I, people engage in it while living under one roof due to “spiritual” separation. Participants in F.G.D (28/02/2021) observed that, chances are high for partners to engage in sexual infidelity due to geographical distance. Mulatya (O.I 28/02/2021), informed the study that when the married separate due to work or business, there are high chances to engage in S.I to address their sexual needs. The results are consistent with the finding of Kalilombe (2015) who found out that, immigrants who leave their partners behind, create a room and a possibility for them to engage in extramarital sex. Thus, the study established that geographical migration and separation contributes on a larger scale to sexual infidelity. It is prudent for A.I.C-K church to guide her members on the need to stay together as married couple within the biblical sanction in Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Poverty

The results show that there is a significant relationship between sexual infidelity and poverty. The findings depicted that poverty contributes to S.I at the rate of 65.38% (divorced/separated) and 61.54% (pastors) respectively. In the same trend, the bishop and Reverends observed that poverty can drive a believer to engage in S.I. While commenting on poverty during F.G.D with married men and women on 21st March, 2021, Kavoi (O.I 21/03/2021) said that: Women are more susceptible to poverty challenge compared to their male counterparts. This happens as women search for financial security especially where the husband fails to provide basic needs to the family. However, the study established that there are no incentives provided by the church to alleviate susceptible members from the problem. The results agree with Kioko (2015) who found out that sexual Infidelity was prompted by poverty among married couples. The information accrued affirm that poverty triggers one’s involvement in SI. This implies that, financial security is vital basis for sustainability of marriage institution. Thus, the church should provide a multidimensional approach which is both preventive and curative. This can be achieved through purposeful training to the couples before a wedding is conducted and provision of incentives to the married to start income generating projects as mitigation measure to S.I.

Marital Dissatisfaction

There are several factors that cause marital dissatisfaction. Research conducted by Okero et al. (2020) reveals that in some instances, sex can become monotonous to the married couple. This state leads to slackened desire, less passion, and romance in the relationship, pushing one to seek alternatives, thus leading to extramarital relationships. The findings from respondents in the current article reveal that, 80.77 % of the divorced/separated and 53.85% pastors indicated that marital dissatisfaction trigger sexual infidelity among married Christian couples in A.I.C-K. The respondents identified unhappiness, sexual dissatisfaction, and lack of moral support as major contributors to marital dissatisfaction. According to the Bishop and Reverends, sexual infidelity occurs when sex is unfulfilling in a couple, and unhappiness engulfs Christian marriage. Ndululu (O.I 28/02/2021) and Katile (O.I 21/03/2021) explained that quite a number married couple, live for convenience sake, to measure up with the societal expectations and raise children.

Thus, the study notes that, marital dissatisfaction propels married couple to sexual infidelity. The findings collaborate with earlier studies carried out by Mavhua (2021) and Wanjiru et.al., (2020) who revealed that sexual dissatisfaction, unhappiness (Tsuma et al., 2019) and marrying for wrong reasons (Audu, 2016) are key proponents of marital dissatisfaction, thus leading to S.I among the married. It is the authors view that, pre-marital counselling should capture causes of marital dissatisfaction in order to assist married couples to ameliorate future challenges which come as a result of S.I.

Lack of Preparation Before Marriage (Wedding)

The role of premarital counseling in preparing the unmarried for marriage cannot be underestimated. Njoronge (2009) explains that the primary goal of premarital counseling involves preparing the couple on the practical issues of marriage. Egbo (2015) argues that respondents who underwent premarital counseling had more stable marital relationships compared to those who did not go through the counseling process. A majority of respondents in this article felt that inadequate preparation before marriage was responsible for the growing number of sexual infidelity cases. The Divorced/Separated supported the observation at the rate of 88.46% and pastors at 84.62%. The bishop and reverends reported that preparation before marriage is an essential component that if not properly administered can result to failed marriage. The same view was shared by 50% of members of the F.G.D. The Reverends, disclosed that A.I.C-K does not issue them with any counseling materials, procedures on counseling timelines, content, duration, and objectives for premarital counselling. Thus, consenting to the reasons why A.I.C-K performs dismally in preparing the unmarried for marriage.

The sentiments are in-line with the findings Chebbet (2018) who found out that, cases of sexual Infidelity were higher among couples who did not attend premarital counseling than those who attended. The study discovered that A.I.C-K prepares young couples for marriage before the wedding takes place, however, issues of content, counseling duration, and counsellor competence are not unified. This research notes that, while premarital counseling is done in A.I.C- K, it lacks content, timelines and proper structure. Thus, there is no uniformity in A.I.C-K premarital counselling. This implies that the outcome of premarital counseling is dependent on individual counselor's diligence. The findings are consistent with those of Odere (2018) who pointed out that given diversity and complexity of issues to be discussed before marriage, the question of effectiveness based on content, duration and mode remain unavoidable.

Influence from Media

Kimeto (2016) shows the relationship between social media and the ever-increasing marital problems. The respondents in the current study were asked to indicate whether media influence contributes to sexual infidelity, 61.54% of the divorced/separated and 69.23% pastors agreed that media influence is a major trigger to S.I among married Christian couples in A.I.C-K. The Bishop and the Reverends singled out watching of pornography, easy communication and planning dates with sexual partners through WhatsApp and twitter, and access to women flaunting their nakedness in social media as main precursor to sexual infidelity.

The same view was shared by Kalunde (O.I 28/03/2021) during F.G.D. Kalunde opined that, media influence especially WhatsApp has been number one communication channel for pervasive men and women. The messages would be deleted immediately after communication. Thus, fixing immoral sexual dates outside the primary sexual relationship. The result agrees with Okero et al., 2020 who found out that, the use of social media prompts married couples to express themselves and seek extramarital relations outside the primary relationship. Premised on the above, Koigi (2013) found out that, condom advertisement through media promotes extramarital affair in Kenya. The study stresses the importance of awareness on the dangers of negative media influence to caution the married with a view of reducing S.I to bare minimum.

Seduction or Sex attraction

Sexual infidelity is more pronounced for men than for women across all cultures (Lee and Koso, 2014; Mapfumo (2016)). This is as a result of seduction as opined by Yeniceri and Kokdemir (2014). According to the findings of the current study, more than two-thirds of pastors (76.92%) and 53.85% of the divorced/separated indicated that seduction/sex attraction is a major trigger of sexual infidelity among the married in A.I.C-K. The members of the clergy argued that men are very sensitive to women's nudity therefore being subtle to seduction. The Bishop took issue with the erosion of morals in A.I.C-K where young girls and women are shamelessly flaunting their nakedness even in front of church members during worship services like weddings. During F.G.D, Mwikali (O.I 14/03/2021) noted that young women target married men with their skimpy dressing style aimed at seducing men. Mutiso (O.I 21/03/2021) and Munguti (O.I 14/03/2021) informed this study that western culture on dressing has eroded our African culture through westernized TV programs with overtones of sex reflected through seductive dressing. The results are in line with Arugu (2014), who found out that dressing styles which expose most of the female body are seduction conduits towards Sexual Infidelity in the movie industry. Furthermore, Akaranga and Ongong'a (2013), observe that, females flaunt their sexuality with fancy clothes even during Church wedding ceremonies, thus seducing men into sexual infidelity. Therefore, seduction as premised above is a major cause of sexual infidelity in A.I.C-K. It is researchers' view that, seduction problem requires a multidimensional approach; effective and timely legislation of the government on pervasive media programming, church counseling role to address the issue of skimpy dressing and society's input to support government regulations and church policies. The study concludes that seduction is a moral issue because it contradicts the teachings found in I Timothy 2:9-10 where Apostle Paul advises women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety.

Childlessness

The study identified childlessness as a cause of sexual infidelity, though it rated low. Only 30.77% of the divorced/separated felt that childlessness was responsible for sexual infidelity while 23.08% of pastors agreed that it was a causal factor. The Bishop and Reverends indicated that childlessness can trigger sexual infidelity, especially when people fail to understand the biblical concept of procreation. Further, the Bishop observed that children should be viewed as a gift from God. Thus, God can choose to bless a couple with children or not. Both should be understood as the will of God. The study avers that childlessness is a cause of sexual infidelity. This is because men are pressured into polygamy in-case of infertility (as was observed in an earlier study by Muriithi, 2018). However, such assertions differ with the biblical teachings on monogamous relationship. Thus, the study recommends adequate preparation of couples during premarital counseling which will minimize discontentment and societal influence, resulting into sexual infidelity.

CONCLUSION

The study explored on factors influencing sexual infidelity in Africa Inland Church-Kenya. Results obtained from respondents identified geographical migration/separation, poverty, marital dissatisfaction, influence from media, seduction and childlessness as some of the major causes of SI. Respondents rated lack of adequate preparation before marriage, marital dissatisfaction, and geographical migration/separation as high causal factors of sexual infidelity. This implies that, although A.I.C-K has instituted counselling programs, they do not adequately address some of these factors responsible for S.I. This concurs with Mead's symbolic interactionism theory's sentiments, that the cause of human action is as a result of what is happening in the present situation within his/her environment. Thus, the marriage environment based on couple relationship, media influence, among others dictate AIC member's susceptibility to engage in S.I. Based on the findings, it is recommended that there is need for intensive and comprehensive counselling

model for A.I.C-K. The focus should be on the causal factors which downplay gains towards mitigating sexual infidelity among the married in A.I.C-K.

The study findings further disclose that inadequate time taken during premarital counseling, and lack of unified A.I.C-K pre-marital counseling curriculum contribute to inefficiency of A.I.C-K counseling model. The findings correspond with recommendations given by Tsuma et al. (2019) that the duration taken in A.I.C-K for preparation of the couple must be adequate to comprehensively prepare people for lifetime engagement with its strengths as well as immeasurable challenges. Given the above findings, the study recommends that A.I.C-K pastors should be armed with requisite knowledge and skills that can boost their counseling efficiency. The church should develop counseling manuals detailing unified counseling approach, duration, and the relevant content for the postmodern Church. Further, it is hoped the church will see the need to come up with AIC Church counseling policy to be embraced by all pastor-counselors.

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