
| RESEARCH ARTICLE**Perceptions on Extra-Marital Affairs among Married Couples in Kilifi South Sub-County, Kenya****Caroline Achami¹, Timothy Musa² ✉ Halimu Shauri³, Nicholas Walter Otieno Ajwang⁴ and Hassan Mutembwa⁵**¹³*Department of Social Science, Pwani University*²*Pwani University, P.O. Box 195-40100, Kilifi, Kenya*⁴*Department of Business Management and Economics, Pwani University*⁵*Independent Researcher, Mombasa, Kenya***Corresponding Author:** Timothy Musa, **E-mail:** t.musa@pu.ac.ke

| ABSTRACT

Marital infidelity is regarded as one of the most serious hazards to the well-being of marriages and families. Infidelity has been identified as the single most common reason for divorce in numerous cultures around the world. Men and women engage in extramarital affairs at a rate alarmingly higher than unmarried partners in relationships. Affairs outside marriage often result in emotional depression for individuals and conflict among married couples, and, in other cases, lead to divorce as well as a sense of relational betrayal. Several scholars have sought to identify triggers of infidelity in individuals and couples. Extramarital affairs are known to break apart families and raise the likelihood of mental health problems, including depression in affected spouses and impairments in children's emotional as well as cognitive growth. The paper investigated the perceptions of extramarital affairs using a sample of 200 respondents in Kilifi South sub-County with a view to establishing the level of extramarital affairs among married couples, assessing the knowledge and attitudes of married couples on extramarital affairs, and finding out the challenges faced by affected couples. Survey research design was employed, and the sample (200) was drawn using a purposive sampling technique, and data were collected using interview schedules. Data was gathered, verified, revised, and coded in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Qualitative data derived from interviews were presented in narrative form, citing stories, voices, and experiences from the respondents, while quantitative data were displayed using statistical methods. The study findings showed that there is a high (81.3%) rate of cheating among married men, while 18.7% among married women. Further, over three-fifths (68%) knew someone cheating on their partner. Lastly, high cheating rates were said to contribute to financial constraints, a breakdown in communication between spouses, leading to domestic violence. In conclusion, the majority of respondents stated that cheating is wrong in every way, regardless of how convincing the justifications may be. The study recommends engaging local chiefs and non-governmental organizations in educating the community on changing one's attitude regarding marital infidelity. There is a need for laws, like gender mainstreaming, which aims to reduce the harmful impact of gender discrimination.

| KEYWORDS

Acquaintances, Cheating, Infertility, Temptations.

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1. Introduction

Marriage and family are often regarded as the basis of society. However, extramarital affairs have been part of human existence for as long as marriage has existed (Kanchan & Nagesh, 2008). In marriage, there arise cases of cheating or adultery, which fuel extramarital affairs (Hertlein et al., 2005). Blow & Hartnett, (2005) asserts that marital infidelity may be sexual infidelity, romantic infidelity, and sexual and romantic involvement. Statistics

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indicate that cheating poses an alarming situation as the number of such cases is increasing at a significantly higher rate. According to a survey done by the National Opinion Research Center (2018), 17% of women in marital relationships have committed adultery, while 25% of men have had extramarital affairs. Approximately 40% of unmarried relationships and 25% of marriages record at least one incident of infidelity (Pittmann & Wagers, 2005).

According to a study by Ben-Ami and Baker (2012), marital infidelity causes family strife and unhappiness. It could result in family changes including divorce, separation, and other mental health issues like anxiety in kids. Infidelity is generally unfavorable in the marriage institution and can harm confidence between spouses, claim Raguram & Mao (2009). As a result, children's mental and emotional growth during this delicate time may prevent them from demonstrating unilateral commitment to a parent. Nogales & Bellotti (2009) conducted a study on marital infidelity and found that 80% of participants' perceptions toward love and relationships were impacted by parental infidelity. The same survey also found that 70% of participants said their ability to trust romantic partners had been hindered or decreased as a result of their parents' affair.

However, according to current research, men are more prone to engage in adulterous conduct and have a larger need for novel experiences (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011). Additionally, women experience emotional infidelity while men experience sexual affairs (Guadagno & Sagarin, 2010). Why do people seek intimacy outside their marital relationship? The majority of wives expressed discontent with some component of their marriage, most frequently the expressive area, according to researchers Gray-Little & BurksGoldenberg (2002). Additionally, they stated that their marriage relationship had improved, which they attributed to their extramarital involvement.

Husbands, on the other hand, engaged in extramarital affairs because of sexual pleasure. Intimacy in marriage is also an important component of marital stability and satisfaction (Edwards & Booth, 1994). These researchers discovered that a decline in intimacy among married couples was related to a higher chance of breakup five years later. Generally, research suggest that increased intimacy or frequency is connected with marriage longevity (Yeh et al., 2006).

Adams (2017) asserts that social media is a valuable tool for communication and connection, it also presents challenges and temptations that can contribute to infidelity in Kenya and elsewhere. Building trust, communication, and setting boundaries within relationships are essential for navigating these challenges in the modern infidelity. People conduct their affairs from the comfort of their seats, lighted by the screens of their computers or phones. It helps individuals to readily reconnect with former acquaintances and gives a path to potentially destructive habits in romantic relationships, such as chatting with alternative partners, which can occasionally lead to relationship breakups. According to a British study published in 2014, Facebook was implicated in three percent of all divorce cases in the United Kingdom. There appears to be a shortage of empirical research addressing social media misconduct and marital relationships (McDaniel et al., 2017).

1.1 Problem statement

Research indicates that extramarital affairs pose threats to family stability, often resulting in serious consequences, including fatalities. Despite societal expectations of marital devotion, infidelity remains common, influenced by factors such as emotional satisfaction, social context, attitudes, and revenge. The study aims to investigate the perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and challenges faced by married couples affected by extramarital affairs in Kilifi South sub-County, Kenya.

African communities uphold policies against infidelity, particularly within marriage, yet reports from the National Aids Control Council (NACC) reveal prevalent adultery in society. This leads to separations, abuse, prostitution in both urban and rural areas, children born out of wedlock, and increased HIV/AIDS infections. Studies have shown that a significant portion of men and women in coastal regions, for instance, have been unfaithful to their marriages. The consequences of extramarital relationships often include emotional depression for individuals, conflict among married couples, and even divorce, leading to a sense of relational betrayal.

While previous research has explored the correlates and consequences of infidelity, there remains a gap in understanding contemporary perceptions of extramarital relationships among married couples, particularly in the

context of modern influences such as social media. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how perceptions of infidelity have evolved in the digital age.

1.2 Objectives

- i. To establish the level of extramarital affairs among married couples in Kilifi South sub-County.
- ii. To assess the knowledge and attitude of married couples on extramarital affairs in Kilifi South sub-County.
- iii. To find out the challenges faced by couples affected by extramarital affairs in Kilifi South sub-County.

2. Methodology

The study was carried out in Kilifi South sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya, covering an area of 400.60 square kilometres and comprising the wards of Junju, Shimo la Tewa, and Mtepeni. Bordered by the Indian Ocean, Chonyi sub-County, Mombasa County, and Kilifi North, it has a population of about 206,753 (KNBS, 2019). The site was chosen due to the researcher’s extensive community engagement and professional involvement in child protection over four years, which revealed high incidences of marital conflict contributing to cases of Violence Against Children (VAC). Additional concerns included rising orphanhood linked to HIV/AIDS, with Mtwapa identified as a hotspot for high-risk populations such as sex workers and people who inject drugs (PWID).

Cultural factors like entrenched gender inequalities further heightened women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. These social and public health dynamics made Kilifi South a relevant setting for examining marital relationships within a socio-cultural and epidemiological context. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey targeting adults aged 18 and above in marital relationships, including those from dissolved marriages. A total of 200 participants were selected using disproportionate stratified random sampling from four sub-locations: Shimo la Tewa, Kidutani Mawamba, Vipingo, and Junju to ensure urban, semi-urban, and rural representation. Data collection involved structured and unstructured interviews due to low education levels in the area, and analysis was conducted using SPSS. Ethical procedures included obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and securing approvals from Pwani University, NACOSTI, and local authorities before commencing the study.

3. Study results

3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

This section outlines the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in Mtwapa and Junju. The representation of respondents in each of these areas is as presented below.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics Among respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Area of study	Mtwapa	120	60%
	Junju	80	40%
Gender	Female	102	51%
	Male	98	49%
Age (years)	18-34	131	65.5%
	35-51	60	30%

	52 and above	9	4.5%
Marital status	Single	6	3%
	Married	106	53%
	Separated	66	33%
	Divorced	16	8%
Religion	Christians	140	70%
	Muslims	56	28%
	Others	4	2%
Level of education	No secular education	9	4.5%
	Primary incomplete	23	11.5%
	Primary complete	36	18%
	Secondary incomplete	31	15.5%
	Secondary complete	56	28%
	Tertiary	45	22.5%

Findings in Table 1 reveal 60% were from Mtwapa, while 40% were from Junju. Consequently, majority (60%) of the respondents were from Mtwapa, which is explained by the urban nature, which translates into a higher and dense population compared to the rural Junju area.

Study results in Table 1 also indicate 51% of the respondents were female, while 49% male. Equal participation in decision-making and discussion regarding extramarital affairs was vital in relation to the Kenya Constitution (2010), which advocates for equal chances for both genders. The differential numbers in favour of females provide an opportunity for this category of the sample to have their voices heard with regard to the topic of extramarital affairs and cheating among married couples, a field that they have not been privileged to contribute much to, according to the reviewed literature.

Furthermore, Table 1 reveals that about 66% were between 18-35 years, 30% between 35-51 years, 4% comprised of 52 years and above. The majority (66%) of the respondents were below 35 years, which portrays the youthfulness of the population in the study sites. The youthfulness of the population is critical in understanding the dynamic nature of extramarital affairs. More so, the differential age brackets provide a prime opportunity for the study to benefit from the voices of respondents across age categories.

In addition, Table 1 shows that 53% were married, 33% separated, 8% and 3% were either divorced or single, respectively, while only 3% were widowed. Majority (53%) of the respondents in marital unions had their own

nuclear families that required them to make daily decisions, nevertheless, this was appropriate to involve respondents who were separated (33%) to determine if the separation was resulted by cases of extra marital affairs.

Exactly (70%) comprised of Christians, 2% believers of Traditional Religion and 28% Muslims as shown in Figure 4.5. This indicates that Mtwapa and Junju are predominantly Christian communities. The greater share of Christians (70%) reflects Kenya, due to the dedicated entry of Christian evangelists and extent of the Christian faith, which gives it an advantage in terms of assets and quantities surpassing different beliefs in the country.

Finally, Table 4.1 shows 4.5% had no formal education, 29.5% had some primary education with 18% having completed primary education, 43.5% had some secondary education, 28% having completed secondary education, while 22.5% had tertiary education. It appears in Table 4.1 that nearly half (49.5%) accessed basic education and it is important to note that education was key in understanding extramarital affairs. This is because of the awareness on the consequences of such actions and those with education have some level of critical mind useful in decision-making processes in society.

3.2 Knowledge and Attitude of Respondents on Extramarital Affairs

One of the study's goals was to determine spouses' knowledge and attitudes toward marital infidelity. This data was critical in determining whether their attitude contributed to marital infidelity, which was the study's emphasis. The findings are reported in the following parts under the sub-themes: comprehension of marital infidelity, tolerable types of infidelity, infidelity rates, and incidences of infidelity among spouses in Kilifi South sub-County

3.2.1 Knowledge of Extramarital Incidents among Married People

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman as spouses. It is a relationship that allows a man and a woman to live together on religious, social, or legal grounds (Girgis et al., 2012). It establishes a joint commitment between the husband and wife. Marriage is well known as the universally acknowledged relationship that shapes the male-female conjugal life all over the world through unquestionable acceptance for child reproduction (Jahan et al., 2017). No religion permits satisfying this biological urge outside of marriage. When a married individual gets intimate with an external partner, it is referred to as infidelity (Ibid). It also applies to a single individual being intimate with a married person. Figure 1 presents findings on knowledge of extra marital cases.

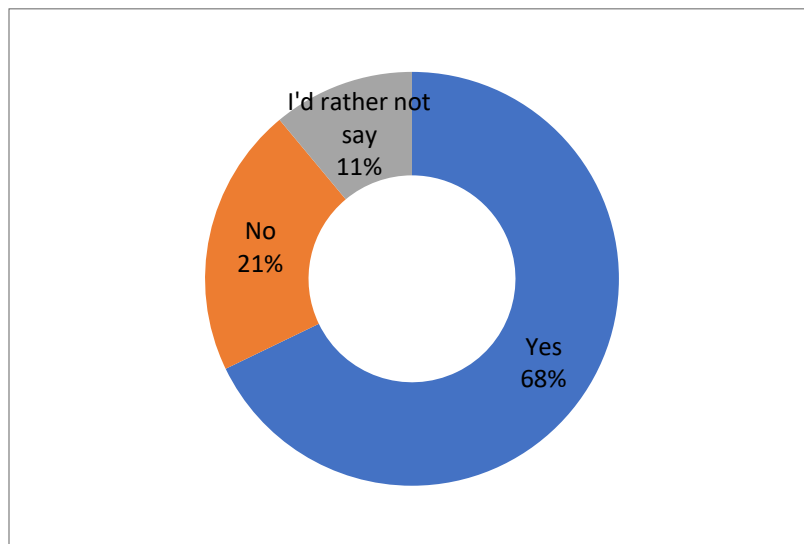


Figure 1: Knowledge of extra marital cases

Results presented shows 68% were aware someone in an extramarital affair, 21% did not know friends with extramarital affairs, while 11% were not certain and could not tell if friends had extramarital affairs. The higher (68%) percentage of study participants having knowledge of someone involved in extra marital affair is a clear testimony

of how widespread the problem is in study area. However, these results are not surprising given the observation that Mtwapa, one of the study sites, is well known for easy and commercial sex. The rampant casual sex in Mtwapa may have a spillover effect into marital unions, making extra marital affairs a norm. In fact, respondents easily described extra marital affairs as situation where a married partner has sexual satisfaction outside the wedlock or man/woman has another partner outside marriage (Mpango wa Kando). The use of the words "Mpango wa Kando", signifies not only the prevalence of the practice but also that participants were aware of it.

3.3 Manifestation and Reasons for Extra-Marital Affairs among Married People

Married people are expected to be monogamous and remain faithful to their partners, (Johnson, 2002). However, in older cohorts, up to 34% of men and 19% of women report having sex outside their marriage at some point in their life (Wiederman, 1997). Infidelity is regarded as a spousal deception when it occurs, which is associated with behavior change with accompanied poor communication among married partners. In most cases people learn about cheating partners through rumors from friends and stories told about their spouses. Some people view it as a disrespect and betrayal of their marriage unions, which lead to changing of attitudes, and increased mistrust among couples.

Study respondents reported that some married couples cheat due to denial of conjugal rights, which is viewed as desperation and frustration in their marriage life. Sometimes when there is disagreement and lack of self-respect married people tend to find a hiding place where they can express themselves. Due to failing to meet their spouse expectations, fights and failure to provide for the family leads to financial instability and some people cheat to support family provisions. Further, participants said that due to peer pressure and curiosity, married couples engage in sex outside their wedlock, and sometimes they attributed it to the need for exploration and satisfaction as well as lust and personal desires. It also emerged from the findings of the study that when spouses are working, there is a tendency of over concentration in work, and some forget about their families and their spouse, coming home late and work stress. The couples stop sharing and due to family ignorance people cheat to get a shoulder to lean on during adversities.

More so, study participants indicated that triggers of cheating among spouses include: drug abuse, especially alcoholism. Many married people meet with their partners in restaurants and bars and through their interactions coupled with bad company and peer pressure, they participate in infidelity and in most cases under the influence of alcohol. The desire to be rich without working was found as another factor contributing to cheating among married people. Married people reported that domestic conflict was another factor leading to extra-marital affair due to lack of peace in their families and hence couples find other places for solace.

It was observed also during the study that in the event one partner is caught cheating, there is increased disbelief and mistrust. This leads their partners to cheat too in return as a form of revenge on their spouses. Furthermore, respondents reported that if their partners were not fertile and could not get children, they would cheat to get children. Finally, the respondents indicated that the upbringing of children in a family practicing extramarital affairs socializes them into perceiving cheating as normal, probably explaining the prevalence (68%) of the practice. From interviews with different community members, a few observations emerged on the causes and feeling about extramarital affairs in the community.

From an interview at Majengo Mtwapa: *My friend, you are a man like me. You know how important it is to get a child who is going to inherit you and keep your name alive. As you can see my wife has four girls. The reason why I am in that other relationship is to try and get a baby boy. It is not that I don't love her.*

From the above statement, culture is seen as one of the causes of extramarital affairs. As well, polygamy and *Boyfriend-Girlfriend-Paradigm* are clearly indicated in the collected data as the main contributing factor leading to extramarital affairs, more on the family that holds dear to the African culture.

Furthermore, according to an interview at the Juju area, an elder confessed: *It is true that polygamy has encouraged extra-marital affairs. One man blasted me as I tried to talk to him to stop extra-marital relationships. He told me to have all church members who are polygamous drop all other spouses and be left*

with one then I can go and talk to him.' Why the double standards? He asked.

The belief of the man clearly shows the negative contribution that culture, especially polygamy, has had on extra-marital affairs. Bertus Preller, a Divorce Attorney in Cape Town, has talked of the fine charged on someone who has been caught having a sexual affair with somebody's wife. However, as the Attorney observes, many foreign jurisdictions do not tolerate such claims anymore, and there seems to be developments in countries such as South African case law to that effect.

From an interview with a marriage counsellor: *From the many years that I have done marital counseling, I have found that lack of sexual satisfaction within a couple leads to an extramarital relationship. This is caused by the historical experience of some spouses who, before marriage, have had many sexual experiences with different people. The moment they become married and don't get the same treatment sexually from their spouse, they are bound to look for a place to be satisfied, hence an extramarital relationship.*

From the information given by the marriage counsellor, we can see that sexual dissatisfaction can be a major problem in a marriage, leading to an extramarital relationship. According to a recent study, spending too little time with your partner can also increase the chances of infidelity and on such basis, emotional needs end up contributing to incidents of cheating, for it is established that men and women who are involved in both sexual and emotional infidelities reported being the most dissatisfied in their relationships than those who engaged in either sexual or emotional infidelity alone. While this infidelity might initially be restricted to an emotional level. Additionally, when a woman was asked by a researcher about the father of the newly born baby, she replied:

I will speak the truth because I am not the one to blame. My husband has been away for a year now. He sends me money but he doesn't want me to visit him. What did you expect me to do? I got into a relationship with another man after knowing that he had another woman in Nairobi. My friend, if it were you, what could you have done? I know the father of my baby is ready for anything. Let him decide what to do.

From the discussion, we find that the main cause for this woman engaging in an extramarital affair is the couple living away from one another. According to the collected data, denial of conjugal rights was highly rated as a causal factor contributing to extramarital affairs. In Kilifi church. Another interview with a lady whose husband was involved in an extramarital relationship reported the following:

It has now three months since we had sex with my husband. We sleep together but he dares to ask for it because he knows that I would not give in, after all, I caught him cheating on me.

From that encounter with that woman, you can realize the danger of one spouse denying the other the conjugal right. The couple remains tied to a dead relationship for a long time, which can be traced as one of the top-most causes of infidelity. The importance of and need for love is the main reason for such cases of infidelity.

She added that: *I am having an affair with another man, but if you were a woman like me, what could you do to a husband whom you have caught red-handed, who promises to change, only to learn later that he is still seeing the friend? I decided to start a relationship internationally to hurt him.*

From that declaration, we can see bitterness among the factors contributing to extra-marital relationships. Where husbands or wives repeatedly keep on hurting the other, problems are bound to occur in that marriage. If one spouse has discovered that the other one is having an affair he or she can react in two ways. He/she can forgive or take revenge.

We had an interview with a married youth who reported that:

To be sincere, I can't love that man; I am in that relationship so that my basic needs are met. I

promise you that the moment I get employed, I will quit that relationship.

Another one reported that: *Since every girl in college has an affair with a married man who provides her with money, I appeared the odd one out and, as a result, started an affair with a married man.*

From that interview, we can see that peer pressure and unemployment among the youth are leading them to extra-marital relationships. Where love, as it is mentioned in Christian common belief (Ephesians 5:22-33) is not the reason behind initiating a marital relationship, partners in the relationship may not endure one another and each may move out of the relationship in search of a loving partner.

In another case, one woman in Mtwapa confessed the following:

I didn't start this relationship with the aim of having an affair with the man. However, the man was so good and available to me that I could not resist sleeping with him. In fact, it's me who pushed him to that level.

Similarly, members have other circumstances, such as where the husband/wife is always absent, the lonely person being tempted to begin a relationship to keep herself busy and loved.

She added: *I know why my husband has walked away from me and our children. I am told that a woman went to a witch doctor in Tanzania and got love charms, and ever since the woman came back, my husband has totally changed, and he has deserted us.*

Generally, the belief is that some Christians involved in spiritually initiated 'Mpango wa Kando' affairs have inherited the behavior from their parents, who also inherited it from their parents. For instance, another community member revealed the following

Don't blame me for what is happening in this marriage. This is common in our family. My grandfather was killed because of this problem. My father had to marry a second wife after my mother discovered he had been in a relationship with another woman, and by then, they had three children. Instead of blaming me, why can't you pray to God to solve the problem in our family? Somebody told me that this is a generational curse that is passed on from one generation to another.

3.4 Knowledge of Individuals who have defected from Extra Marital Affairs

While 68% of the respondents knew someone involved in extramarital affairs in the study area, it was prudent to find out whether there are some who have stopped the practice. This is critical for teasing out the lessons learned and best practices out of the problem with a view of spurring change among couples involved in extramarital sex. Results of the study on defection from engaging in extramarital affairs are carried in Figure 2.

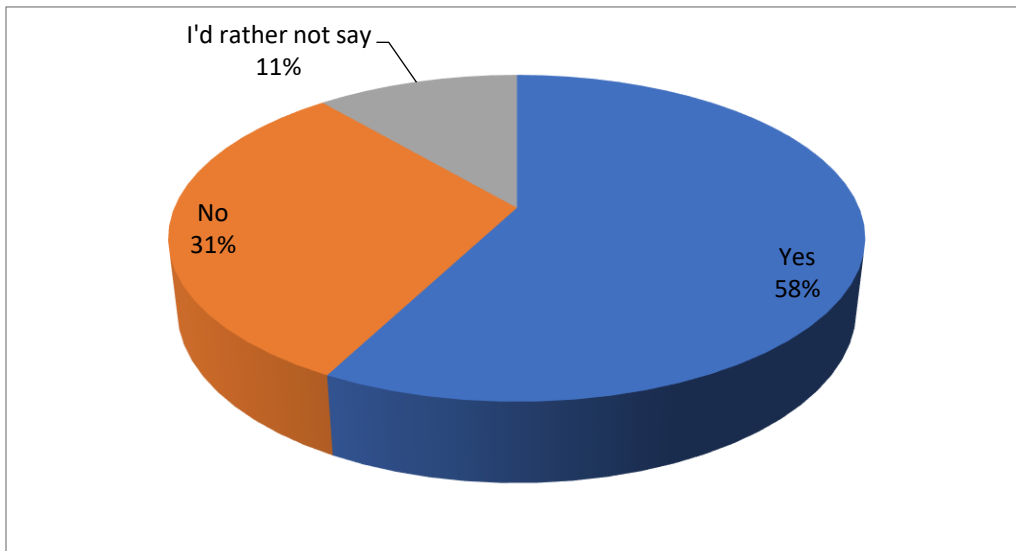


Figure 2: Defecting extramarital affairs

Figure 2 indicate 58% of the respondents knew a friend who had defected from extramarital affairs, 31% said that their friends had not left their extramarital affair partners, while 11% were not sure if the partners were still together. It was revealed during the study that some of those who stopped cheating reported that they were caught in the act and they had to stop the behaviour. Others reported that they realized they were spending most of their money on their other extramarital partners leading to chaos in their families as they could not provide adequately to the needs of their households.

3.5 Preference and Desire to Cheat

This study also asked respondents on the pertinent issues of preference and desire to cheat.

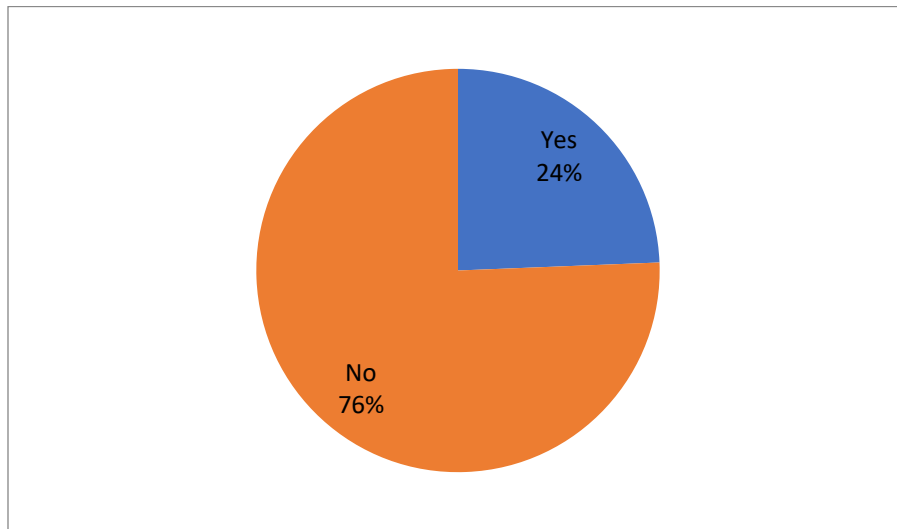


Figure 3: Preference of having extramarital affairs

Figure 3 reveals that 24% of the respondents would prefer having extramarital affairs, while 76% opted to the contrary. Those willing to have affairs outside their marriage insisted that they were beneficial for they felt good having *mpango wa kando* and they could satisfy themselves outside their wedlock. They added that if their partner was not satisfying their sexual urge, they were willing to get another person and even where there are other benefits such as money.

The higher (76%) percentage of those who were not willing to cheat is explained by many reasons as adduced by the respondents. One of the reasons is that some of the respondents were Christians, which strictly enforces monogamous marriages. However, it also emerged from the study findings that other respondents reported that they feared being caught cheating, leading to marital break-ups or divorce. Others claimed that they loved their partners and could not cheat because it was disrespectful, while others claimed that they were hesitant to cheat due to the fear of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), notably HIV/AIDS, which would be problematic in their family.

3.6 Feelings on Discovery of Cheating in Marriage

According to Girgis et al. (2011), marriage is the institution that dictates intimacy, reproduction, and family life. Marriage entails romance and closeness (Etim, 2013). It is within this context that when cheating occurs among married couples, individuals react differently. This variable was included because it was critical in understanding awareness of cheating among partners and the possible reactions. Findings show that 32% of the participants reported that when they realised their partners were cheating, they accepted it and moved on; some were agitated and got angry about their spouse's behaviour and actions. Others reported that when they found out about their partners cheating, they were disappointed and decided to cheat as well, which led to separation from their spouses.

There were 25% of the participants who revealed that when they found out their partners were cheating, they were heartbroken, leading to stress and depression to the extent of being hospitalized. Important observation during field work is that 40% of respondents felt rejected and embarrassed that they could not satisfy their spouses, which lead to insecurity in the family, while some felt unvalued by their partners. There were also those who, upon being informed that their partners were cheating could not believe it until they caught them, which traumatized them and led them to consider suicide.

3.7 Perceived Rate of Cheating among Married Couples

Table 2 provides results on the perceived rate of cheating among married couples.

Table 2: Rate of Cheating Among Married People

Perceptions on the rate of cheating among couples	High %	Low%
Among men	81.3	18.7
Among women	40.1	59.9

Findings in Table 2 show that 81% of married couples reported high rates of cheating among married men, which was attributed to the fact that they are always the breadwinners, are financially stable, and they have the freedom to make decisions, including those of an additional partner. It was interesting to hear from the participants that men are not satisfied with one partner and that beautiful women are many and due to their selfishness and lust, they lure them with money and big promises. 18.7% of Participants added that some men cheat because they see their friends enjoying cheating and out of curiosity and sometimes due to high economic status, they tend to distribute their wealth by having multiple women. It was observed from participants sentiments during the field work that, men have high libido and they are born polygamous and they get tempted easily than women.

Conversely, 60% of the participants reported low rate of cheating among married women. They indicated that women have a lot of responsibilities and expected to stay home, which makes it hard for them to have *mpango wa kando*. Participants argued that women are faithful and loyal therefore children tend to stick by their mothers more and ensuring family members are provided for and that women are also fearful of diseases. The results further reveal that 40% of the respondents reported high rate of cheating among women. Reasons given include the desire

for expensive life, drugs and alcohol abuse, unfaithful behavior of their husbands, emotional instability and family conflicts.

The study finding through interview added that, while there is a prevailing perception that married men are more prone to infidelity, attributed to factors such as financial stability and societal expectations of masculinity, there is also acknowledgment of external pressures and individual vulnerabilities that contribute to their behavior. The portrayal of men as inherently polygamous and susceptible to temptation underscores deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and societal norms regarding masculinity and sexual behavior.

Conversely, sentiments regarding infidelity among married women exhibit a complex interplay of traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and personal values. Participants recognize the significant responsibilities placed on women within the family unit, which often serve as deterrents to engaging in extramarital affairs. However, there is also an acknowledgment of the existence of a subset of women who may succumb to the allure of materialism, substance abuse, or dissatisfaction within their marital relationships. This recognition highlights the nuanced understanding of women's agency and the myriad factors that may influence their decisions regarding infidelity.

3.8 Attitude toward Rates of Cheating

To understand the respondents' attitudes regarding the rates of cheating in society, the researcher requested them to rate the degree of Agreement or Disagreement regarding views on extramarital affairs in society. Results are in Table 3.

Table 3: Attitudes and the rate of extra marital affairs

Statement	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
It is better for a man to cheat than a woman	13.1	17.1	8.1	31.8	29.3
It is better for a woman to cheat than a man	3.0	4.0	8.6	45.5	38.9
It is okay to be unfaithful if one has a good reason to do so	8.6	20.7	12.1	30.8	27.8
Infidelity is acceptable in revenge for a cheating spouse	2.6	7.7	5.6	42.8	41.3
The society judges a man more harshly for infidelity than it does a woman	11.7	17.9	10.2	39.8	20.4
The society judges a woman more harshly for infidelity than it does for a man	45.5	15.2	11.1	18.2	10.1

About 61.1% disagreed that it is better for a man to cheat than a woman, with 29.3% strongly disagreeing, while 31.8% disagreed that it is better for a man to cheat than a woman, with only 13.1% and 17.1% strongly agreeing and agree respectively.

Table 3 shows that 84.4% disagreed that it is better for a woman to cheat than a man, with 38.9% and 45.5% strongly disagreeing and disagreeing respectively, while only 7% agreed that it is better for a woman to cheat than a man.

Study findings indicate 58.6% disagreed that it is okay to be unfaithful if one has a good reason to do so, with 27.8% strongly disagreeing, while 29.3% agreed that it is okay for someone to cheat if they have a good reason to do so, with only 8.6% strongly agreeing.

Furthermore, Table 3 reveals that over four fifths (84.1%) of the respondents disagreed that infidelity is acceptable in revenge for a cheating spouse, with 41.3% strongly disagreeing, while only 10.1% agreed that infidelity is acceptable in revenge for a cheating spouse, with 2.6% strongly agreeing.

Finally, 60.2% reported that the society does not judge a man more harshly for infidelity than it does to a woman. Conversely, 60.7% reported that society judges a woman more harshly for infidelity than it does for a man.

3.9 Attitudes and Perception on Cheating among Married Couples

Culture is a community's way of life, expressed in tangible objects or latent in intangibles that reflect various cultures' values and beliefs (Bruner, 2009). A large portion of the research region was rural, where people typically adhered to customary ways of living. As a result, the goal of this study was to identify any cultural norms that influence marital infidelity. Figure 4.11 contains the study's findings for this variable.

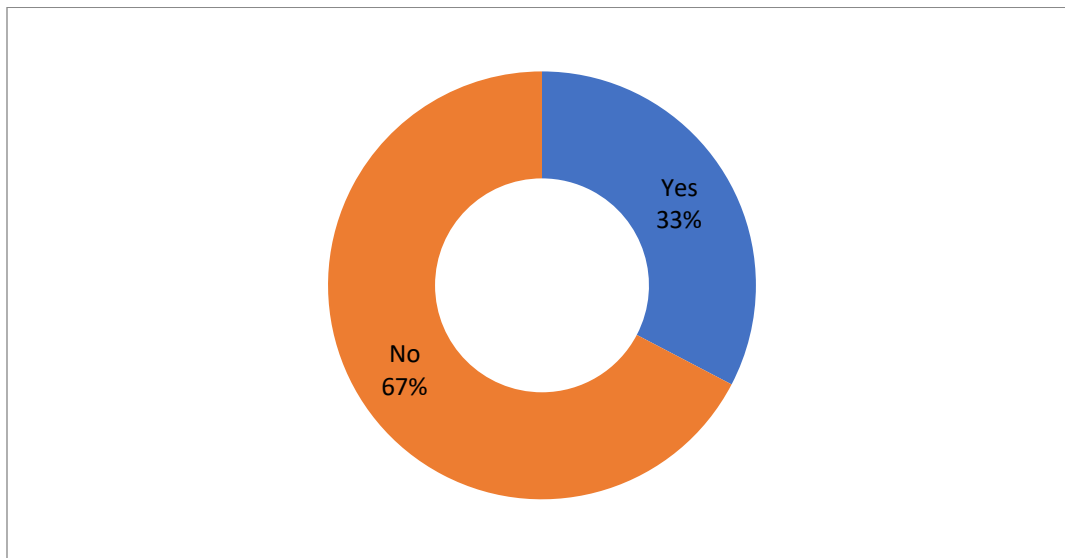


Figure 4: Perception and attitudes relating to extramarital affairs

Slightly above three-fifths (67%) of the respondents were not aware of any attitudes and perceptions that are associated with cheating among married couples, while 33% were aware of cultural beliefs within their communities that were associated with cheating among couples. The latter asserted that cheating was a social problem affecting people all over the country and globally.

4. Conclusion

The paper concludes that infidelity is rife in both men and women albeit in varying degrees and its effects ravages the entire family and shakes its stability. The majority of those surveyed believe that cheating is immoral in all circumstances, regardless of how strong the justifications may be. After experiencing infidelity, a relationship never entirely recovers, and many continue to face conflict, mistrust, and remorse. Infidelity has emerged as a lonely and isolating act after one is caught and leaves an indelible mark on the cheater, spouse and children in the face of the society. Forgiving a cheating spouse is often considered when the offended partner views the costs of leaving the relationship consistently being outweighed by the rewards of staying put, while others opt to walk out when the barriers seem surmountable.

4.1 Limitations

This study faced several limitations. First, the sensitivity of the subject matter posed challenges, as extra-marital affairs are often considered private and stigmatized within society. Some respondents were hesitant to provide full disclosure, which may have resulted in underreporting or socially desirable responses. Second, cultural norms and religious beliefs in Kilifi South may have influenced the willingness of participants to discuss issues related to infidelity openly, potentially limiting the depth of information obtained. Third, the study relied on self-reported data, which is subject to recall bias and personal interpretation of sensitive experiences. Fourth, due to time and resource constraints, the study was limited to a specific sub-county, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural or social contexts. Lastly, gender dynamics may have affected participation, as some individuals, especially women, might have felt constrained in expressing their views in the presence of their spouses or community expectations. Despite these limitations, the study provides important insights into community perceptions of extra-marital affairs, though the findings should be interpreted within the context of these constraints.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- i. There is a need for sensitization to community members on the detrimental repercussions of gender discriminatory practices, values, and beliefs, among other causes of marital infidelity, which should be covered through Chiefs' barazas organized in collaboration with women groups and NGOs. This would assist men and women in avoiding retrogressive primitive cultural practices that denigrate women, encourage infidelity, and portray women as the lesser sex by glorifying men within the framework of patriarchy. Thus, local community leaders and NGOs are taking charge and sensitizing the public on how to prevent infidelity in marriage and bolster the family unit in Kilifi South by tackling the drivers of infidelity through chiefs' barazas, other innovative approaches, and women and men groups.
- ii. There is need also to reform or review the policy to empower the girl child without consideration for empowering the boy child as well. While previous policies favored the boy child, this should not be the parameter to repeat the same mistake by empowering the girl child only, leaving the boy child unattended.
- iii. Gender mainstreaming in families should be the subject of further research in order to support spouses and protect them from the repercussions of infidelity.

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