



Roles of Personality and Gender in Sexual Infidelity of Married Persons

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ABSTRACT

Despite the significant contributions of infidelity in marital instability among couples, the construct has not been given much attention in existing literature, especially in Nigeria. This study investigated the roles of personality and gender in sexual infidelity among married persons. Three hundred and fifty (350) married persons (Male = 199, Female = 151) participated in this study. Their age ranged from 19-62 (years) (Mean age = 36.72; SD = 7.26). Cross sectional design was adopted. Two instruments were used in the study for data collection, namely: The Big Five Personality Inventory and the Sexual Infidelity Behaviour Scale. Step-wise multiple regression was the main statistics used for data analyses. Results indicated that Conscientiousness was a significant negative predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.40$, $p < .001$. Extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience were not significant predictors of sexual infidelity. Also, gender is a negative and significant predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.17$, $p < .001$. A significant reduction in infidelity among married persons in society can be achieved when people are socialized from childhood through the lifespan to be diligent and committed to their relationships.

Introduction

Marriage refers to a long-term partnership that involves married persons (Elizabeth, 2016). It is a religious, social, and legal relationship that allows a man and a woman to live together. In Nigeria, only heterosexual marriage is legally recognized. Marriage is the state of being connected as husband and wife with a partner of the opposite sex for the purposes of companionship, procreation, and family maintenance (Ojukwu, 2014). Hence, marital compatibility, commitment, and understanding are required to sustain a marriage. All of the behaviours, customs, roles, expectations, and values associated with a man and woman's legal partnership are represented by the institution of marriage (Ojukwu, 2014). To form a stable family, married persons must understand each other (Anderson, 2015). Marriage is the least restrictive way for society to ensure the well-being of children by encouraging marital life norms in a civil society, which reduces the chances of a broken home, because a peaceful home leads to a peaceful society, and an unstable home leads to an unstable society (Anderson, 2015).

In spite of the aforementioned advantages of marriage and marital life, the institution of marriage has seen a significant drop in patronage by young people as a result of sexual infidelity, resulting in a low likelihood of achieving happy, rewarding, and stable marriages (Ojukwu, 2014). Sexual infidelity rates have risen to a high level globally in recent years, making it a major cause of marriage breakup (Fincham & May,

2017; Frisco et al., 2017). It was reported that Nigeria has a high rate of sexual infidelity in West Africa, with one out of every three marriages failing within the first three years (Adegoke, 2010). Animasahun and Oladeni (2012) reported that sexual infidelity is a major cause of divorce in Somolu Local Government Area's Grade "A" customary court, where five (5) of the eight (8) sexual infidelity cases, or 62.5 percent, resulted in divorce. Sexual infidelity is described as participation in sexual encounters with someone that is not one's sexual partner (Hertlein et al., 2005). Hertlein et al. see sexual infidelity as any sexual action outside of one's marriage that violates the trust of sexual exclusivity inside a marriage, such as sexual kissing, heavy petting and sexual intercourse. Words like cheating, adultery, unfaithful, extramarital, or stepping out can be used to describe sexual infidelity (Fincham & May, 2017).

The Vulnerability Stress Adaptation (VSA) inventory was proposed by Karney and Bradbury (1995) to explain variations in marital adjustment, quality, and stability over time and across partners. According to Karney and Bradbury's model, the ways in which couples deal with life events play a key role in their perceptions of the quality of their marriage, and when their perception of the quality of their marriage is low, it can lead to sexual infidelity as a way of coping with the stress of marital instability. The couple's adaptive mechanisms produce communication between the individual spouse's persistent vulnerabilities and the type and severity of life events they

encounter, particularly in connection to sexual infidelity. Adjustment, happiness, and stability may be relatively high for a couple with few persistent vulnerabilities and inadequate communicative adaptive mechanisms if those traits are examined infrequently. Also, exposure to stressful situations on a regular or ongoing basis (e.g., instances of infidelity) can jeopardize the coping capacity of many couples. Increased understanding of sexual infidelity is important from the perspective of psychology. The present study examines personality and gender as factors in sexual infidelity among married persons.

Personality is the first independent variable of interest in this study. Personality is defined as a relatively consistent pattern of behaviour that develops throughout the course of a person's life. According to Schacter et al. (2011), personality refers to a person's way of thinking, feeling and acting. It has been discovered that a person's personality can predict how they behave to other people, how they express and solve problems, and how they are influenced by stressful events in their environment (Krauskopf & Saunders, 1994). As a description of the enduring traits of people, personality traits that the two people bring to their marriage may have an impact on their marital compatibility (Zoby, 2005).

The Big Five Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992a; 1992b) is the most often utilized theoretical framework for understanding personality, and may be used in explaining sexual behaviours like sexual infidelity (Hoyle et al., 2000). Extraversion (energetic vs. reserved), agreeableness (friendly vs. hostile), conscientiousness (well organized vs. impulsive), neuroticism (nervous vs. confident) and openness to experience (imaginative vs. concrete) are the five first-order elements in this paradigm (Costa & McCrae, 1992a; 1992b). These elements have been consistently detected in several studies, groups, languages, genders, and races (Eysenck, 1992). Sexual infidelity has been associated with high levels of extraversion (Allen & Walter, 2018; Barta & Kiene, 2005; Clark et al., 2021; Ingledew & Ferguson, 2007; Miller et al., 2004; Moyano & Sierra, 2013; Schmitt, 2002; Turchik et al., 2010; Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000). However, Isma and Turnip (2019) reported no significant association between extraversion and sexual infidelity.

Sexual infidelity has also been associated with low levels of agreeableness (Apostolou & Panayiotou, 2019; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; McAnulty & Brineman, 2007; Ingledew & Ferguson, 2005; 2007; Miller et al., 2004; Schmitt, 2002; Turchik et al., 2010; Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000), but Mahambrey (2020) reported that agreeableness was positively associated with spousal infidelity. For openness to experience, sexual infidelity is associated with higher levels of the trait (Apostolou & Panayiotou, 2019), whereas studies show that neuroticism has a positive link with chances of sexual infidelity (Allen & Walter, 2018; Isma & Turnip, 2019; Whisman et al., 2007).

The second independent variable in this study is gender - the psychosocial and cultural attributes associated with being man or woman. Kato (2021) examined gender differences

in response to infidelity types and rival attractiveness. It was reported that there were no differences between the genders when considering partners' infidelity. Also, Lalasz and Weigel (2011) investigated the relationship between gender and extra dyadic relationship and intention to engage in sexual infidelity. The result shows that gender correlated with infidelity intention with men reporting a greater intention to engage in the presented sexual extradyadic behavior when compared to women. In another study Saleem et al. (2020) investigated how sexual jealousy can affect partner infidelity among university students while considering gender as a moderating variable. The findings showed that the association between sexual jealousy and partner infidelity was stronger for men compared to women. Generally, studies have reported that men were more likely to engage in sexual infidelity than women (Labrecque & Whisman, 2017; Lalasz & Weigel, 2011; Petersen & Hyde, 2010). However, the knowledge of possible associations of personality traits and gender among married persons is very limited within Nigerian context. Also, there are inconsistencies in literature as regards the role of personality in sexual infidelity (Altgelt et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2021; Isma & Turnip, 2019). This study will tend to fill this gap in literature.

The majority of existing studies which were reviewed in this study were from Western nations. There is a scarcity of data involving the Nigerian people, despite the wave of sexual infidelity that is growing in the society. Furthermore, there is cultural dictum such as "inalienable right" of men to cheat on their spouses. In the same cultural milieu, women are not only expected to remain faithful in marriage, in many instances, rituals are performed to ensure that married women do not step out of their conjugal relationships to have sex, with dire punishment (e.g., insanity) for unfaithfulness. These have produced a gap in the literature, necessitating further research with a Nigerian sample. It was hypothesized that (1) extraversion agreeableness, neuroticism and openness to experience will positively predict sexual infidelity, whereas conscientiousness; and (2) There will be higher level of sexual infidelity among men than women in marital relationship.

Method

Participants and procedure

Three hundred and fifty (350) married persons participated in this study. The participants were drawn using convenience sampling technique from three Local Government Areas namely: Nsukka, Udenu and Uzo-Uwani Local Government Areas in Enugu North Senatorial Zone, Enugu State. The Local Government Areas were selected using simple random sampling (ballot). Inclusion criteria were being married, literate in English language and an adult. The study participants included business-oriented individuals (n = 149, 42.6%) and civil servants (n = 201, 57.4%). They consisted of 199 (56.9%) men and 151 (43.1%) women. Educational qualifications of the participants were as follows: Secondary (n = 66, 18.9%), Ordinary Diploma (n = 39, 11.1%), and Bachelor's Degree (n = 245, 70%). Ethnic groups were: Igbo (n = 238; 68.0%), Hausa (n = 25, 7.1%), Yoruba (n = 41, 11.7%)

and others ($n = 46$, 13.1%). Religious affiliations were Catholic ($n = 177$, 50.6%), Protestant ($n = 72$, 20.6%), Pentecostal ($n = 67$, 19.1%) and Islam ($n = 34$, 9.7%). Their age ranged from 19-62 years ($M = 36.7$; $SD = 7.26$). All research methods involving human participants align with the institutional research committee's ethical standards and the 1964 Helsinki Statement and its subsequent revisions or similar ethical standards. Also, we obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and an ethical clearance letter from our institution with clearance code (UNN/EC/010-SC/4002-JA-05) to conduct this study. However, copies of the questionnaire were administered to participants individually at the Local Government Areas offices, business stores while some participants were met in their home. The nature of the study was explained to the participants and their sincere responses were sought after eliciting informed consent from them through writing. The questionnaire forms were collected immediately after completion. For data analysis, the 350 completed forms were scored, coded and used for data analysis, yielding a response rate of 85.4% out of the 410 copies of questionnaire initially distributed.

Instruments

Big Five Inventory (BFI)

The scale Big Five Personality Inventory is a self-report inventory developed by John and Srivastava (1999). It was designed to measure an individual's personality. The instrument contains 44 items designed with five dimensional perspectives of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. The following are some of the items: "I see myself as someone who is talkative" (extraversion), "I see myself as someone who tends not to find fault with others" (Agreeableness) and "I see myself as someone who remains calm in tense situations" (Conscientiousness), "I see myself as someone who is depressed" (Neuroticism), "I see myself as someone who is original and comes up with new ideas" (Openness). The scale has a 5-point scale from 1 (Disagree strongly), 2 (Disagree a little), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 4 (Agree a little), and 5 (Agree strongly). To obtain the participants' scores, the researcher sums the values of the ticked numbers for each of the subscales. John et al. (1999) reported that the scale has a reliability coefficient of .80. Also, it was reported that it had a 3-month test-retest reliability of .85. Using a Nigerian sample, Umeh (2004) obtained the following divergent validity coefficients with University Maladjustment Scale (Kleinmontz, 1961): extraversion = .05, agreeableness = .13, conscientiousness = .11, neuroticism = .39 and openness to experience = .24. According to Umeh (2004), the low correlation coefficients obtained when the scores of the participating students on the BFI was correlated with their scores on the Maladjustment Scale shows the divergent nature of the two instruments. Thus, it is an evidence of BFIs cross-cultural validity. In another study in Nigeria, Alansari (2016)

reported satisfactory internal consistency for the neuroticism ($\alpha = .82$ for females and .74 for males), extraversion ($\alpha = .79$ for females and .83 for males), and openness to experience ($\alpha = .82$ for females and .85 for males), agreeableness ($\alpha = .82$ for females and .81 for males), and conscientiousness ($\alpha = .90$ for females and .92 for males) subscales respectively.

Sexual Infidelity Behavior Scale (SIBS)

The Sexual Infidelity Behaviour Scale (SIBS) is a 9-item self-report measuring instrument developed by Immanuel and Adubi (2021). The SIBS was designed to measure sexual infidelity including sex-related actions with another individual outside the marital/intimate relationship. It is a 5-point Likert type scale which is directly scored, and ranged from "Strongly Disagree (1)" to "Strongly Agree (5)". One of the items reads, "I have been in extra marital affair". The SIBS is unidimensional. It has an internal consistency coefficient of .92 and split-half reliability was .87. As evidence of concurrent validity of the SIBS, it had a significant correlation with Attitude Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS) developed by Whatley (2008) ($r = -.48$, $p < .01$) (Immanuel & Adubi, 2021).

Design/Statistics

The study's design was cross-sectional. Data was analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression for the test of the hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique for understanding the link between variables that have relationships (Uyanik & Guler, 2013). This statistical technique was used in this investigation to determine the strength or degree of association between the dependent and independent variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20 was used to analyze the data.

Results

Table 1 shows the correlation among the study variables. Sexual infidelity correlated negatively with agreeableness ($r = -.33$, $p < .001$), conscientiousness, ($r = -.42$, $p < .001$), openness to experience ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$), spiritual intelligence ($r = -.37$, $p < .001$) and communication ($r = -.38$, $p < .001$), but associated positively with neuroticism ($r = .11$, $p < .05$). Extraversion was positively related with agreeableness ($r = .31$, $p < .001$), conscientiousness ($r = .26$, $p < .001$), openness to experience ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), spiritual intelligence ($r = .21$, $p < .001$) and communication ($r = .16$, $p < .01$). Agreeableness was positively associated with conscientiousness, ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), openness to experience ($r = .55$, $p < .001$), Conscientiousness was negatively related with neuroticism ($r = -.29$, $p < .001$) but correlated positively with openness to experience ($r = .55$, $p < .001$), Neuroticism was negatively associated with openness to experience ($r = -.09$, $p < .05$).

Results of the multiple regression for the test of the hypotheses is shown in Table 1. In Step 1, gender was added to the regression model. The result indicated that gender was a significant negative predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.17$. The B showed that being male was associated with increase in

Table 1: Correlations Matrix for Gender, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness on sexual infidelity among married persons.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sexual Infidelity	18.10	9.38	-							
Gender	1.43	.50	-.18***	-						
Age	36.72	7.26	.09*	-.31***	-					
Extraversion	25.57	4.18	-.08	-.18***	.11*	-				
Agreeableness	32.82	6.53	-.33***	-.12*	.08	.31***	-			
Conscientiousness	32.37	7.35	-.42***	-.10*	.02	.26***	.72***	-		
Neuroticism	24.57	4.32	.11*	.12*	-.06	.05	-.26***	-.29***	-	
Openness	30.06	6.05	-.25***	.04	.02	.28***	.55***	.55***	-.09*	-

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; Gender Code: Male = 0 and 1 = Female

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting sexual infidelity among Gender and personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience)

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	β	t	B	β	t
Gender	-3.16	-.17	-3.01**	-4.17	-.22	-4.28***
Extraversion				-.00	-.00	-.03
Agreeableness				-.12	-.09	-1.18
Conscientious.				-.51	-.40	-5.51***
Neuroticism				-.01	-.00	-.05
Openness				.05	.03	.53
R^2		.03			.23	
ΔR^2		.03			.20	
F		5.99 (2, 347)**			14.75 (7, 342)***	
ΔF		5.99 (2, 347)**			17.67 (5, 342)***	

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; Gender was coded (0 = male and 1 = females).

sexual infidelity by -3.16 units. The model was significant, $F(2, 347) = 5.99$, $R^2 = .03$ and indicates that 3% of the variance in sexual infidelity among married persons was explained by gender.

In step 2, extraversion was not a significant predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.00$. Agreeableness was not a significant predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.09$. Conscientiousness was

a significant negative predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.40$, $p < .001$. The B showed that for each one unit rise in conscientiousness, sexual infidelity among married persons decreases by -.51 units. Neuroticism was not a significant predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = -.00$. Openness to experience was not a significant predictor of sexual infidelity, $\beta = .03$. The model was significant, $F\Delta(5, 342) = 17.67$, $R^2\Delta = .20$ and the

five facets of personality explained 20% of the variance in sexual infidelity among married persons.

Discussion

This study investigated the roles of personality and gender in sexual infidelity among married persons. Extraversion did not predict sexual infidelity among married persons. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that extraversion would positively predict sexual infidelity was not supported. Although this result is in line with previous reports of nonsignificant association between extraversion and sexual infidelity (Isma & Turnip, 2019), it contradicts other studies that found significant positive relationship between extraversion and various sexual behaviours, including sexual infidelity (Allen & Walter, 2018; Clark et al., 2021; Ingledew & Ferguson, 2007; Moyano & Sierra, 2013; Turchik et al., 2010). Probable explanation for these could be that a person being extraverted, sociable, out-going does not mean that the person is prone to sexual infidelity. Other variables may have to interact with extraversion to precipitate sexual infidelity.

Agreeableness did not predict sexual infidelity among married persons. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that agreeableness would positively predict sexual infidelity was not supported. This result is contrary to some extant literature (Apostolou & Panayiotou, 2019; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Ingledew & Ferguson, 2005; 2007; Mahambrey, 2020; McAnulty & Brineman, 2007; Miller et al., 2004; Schmitt, 2002; Turchik et al., 2010; Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000) which reported that agreeableness was positively associated with spousal infidelity. Agreeable individuals tend to be kind, cooperative, and empathetic, valuing harmony and positive social interactions. They are generally motivated to maintain stable and satisfying relationships as they often possess prosocial orientation which is associated with lower tendencies for engaging in behaviours that could harm their partner, such as sexual infidelity. Also, agreeable individuals often prioritize the needs and well-being of their partner. They are more likely to value commitment, loyalty, and relationship stability. These qualities make them less inclined to engage in behaviors that violate the trust and commitment inherent in a monogamous relationship, including sexual infidelity.

Conscientiousness negatively predicted sexual infidelity among married persons, indicating that increase in conscientiousness was associated with low sexual infidelity. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that conscientiousness would positively predict sexual infidelity was supported. This result is in line with several research findings (Apostolou & Panayiotou, 2019; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Ingledew & Ferguson, 2005; 2007; Isma & Turnip, 2019; McAnulty & Brineman, 2007; Mahambrey, 2020; Schmitt, 2002; Turchik et al., 2010; Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000) in which conscientiousness negatively predicted infidelity. Conscientiousness is a trait that involves being responsible, careful, thorough, hardworking and organized. This is a trait that is highly sought after in a partner for marriage. A conscientious partner is likely to consider it unbecoming to flirt with one who is not one's spouse, or to

engage in sexual relationship with non-partner since that would amount to irresponsibility and carelessness, and these are antithetical to the core of conscientious personality.

Neuroticism did not predict sexual infidelity among married persons. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that neuroticism would positively predict sexual infidelity was not supported. This result implies that regardless of the participants' level of neuroticism, sexual infidelity is hardly affected. This result is contrary to previous findings of significant relationship between neuroticism and sexual infidelity (Clark et al., 2021; Isma & Turnip, 2019). The trait neuroticism encompasses the feelings of disgust and negative affect. It is possible that the variation in personality traits of neuroticism not predicting sexual infidelity could have cultural undertone. As a result of cultural influences such as social stigma that is attached to infidelity, neurotic individuals may fear judgment, ostracism, or negative consequences from their community or family if their infidelity is discovered or if they choose to leave the relationship. This state of the mind of neurotic individuals may compel neurotic individuals to stay in the relationship even when they feel disgust or unhappy because of fear of being caught cheating.

Openness to experience did not predict sexual infidelity. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that openness to experience would positively predict sexual infidelity was not supported. This result implies that regardless of the participants' level of openness to experience, sexual infidelity is unchanged. This result is contrary to the works of Allen and Walter (2018) that found a significant relationship between openness to experience and liberal attitudes towards sex. The trait openness to experience encompasses being imaginative and having a higher sense of inquiry. Obviously, the tendencies of persons that have openness to experience personality to exercise their imagination and to explore, does not necessary involve sexual infidelity. Openness to experience may have to interact with other factors to precipitate sexual infidelity.

The results also showed being a man was associated with higher sexual infidelity. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that men would report higher sexual infidelity than women in marital relationship was supported. This result is in line with some past research which showed that men are more likely to engage in extra-dyadic relationships (Labrecque & Whisman, 2017; Lalasz & Weigel, 2011; Petersen & Hyde, 2010). It is contrary to the work of Kato (2021) which showed that there was no difference between the genders when considering partner's infidelity. Gender is a human socio-cultural construct and it is possible that the variation in results may have more to do with the culture in which the studies were conducted. In the culture where the current study was conducted, there is the tendency for the men to take it as their "inalienable right" to cheat on their spouses. In the same cultural milieu, women are not only expected to remain faithful in marriage, in many instances, rituals are performed to ensure that married women do not step out of their conjugal relationships to have sex, with dire punishment (e.g., insanity) for unfaithfulness.

The outcomes of this study have some important

implications that may have an impact on the happiness of couples as sexual infidelity is reduced or eliminated. In Nigeria, professional counselling services are limited. And where it is available, many married persons lack awareness of its existence or the importance of discussing their infidelity challenge with counsellors/therapists. This calls for an urgent need for the application of psychological services to couples. Couples who experience sexual infidelity are prone to being depressed, preoccupied, and exhibiting symptoms such as talking to oneself, desiring to be alone, crying out frequently, aggression, and a lack of communication within the marital relationship. In the counselling sessions, personality of the clients, as well as gender, should be considered, such that responsibility, diligence, and self-management are strengthened in the clients or couples. Parents, educators and religious authorities should enlighten the populace, starting from early years, on the need to build a healthy lifestyle, such as conscientiousness that will promote peaceful coexistence in homes. When families are operating in harmony, communities, villages, towns, states and nations are likely going to be harmonious.

This study has some limitations. One of such limitations is the sample size, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings. Researchers in their subsequent studies should use a large sample size that cuts across the zones of Nigeria, as well as cross-cultural studies that involve married persons from other countries to compare and generalize the finding of the study and adequately determine the connections between the variables. In conclusion, this study has helped in explaining the factors associated with sexual infidelity in a pluralistic environment that is characterized by male dominance.

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