



<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18501121>

Infidelity and Marital Stability among Married Persons in Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between infidelity and marital stability among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria. Five research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 8,889,293 married persons in Delta State (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015). A sample of 250 respondents was selected using multistage sampling involving purposive and simple random techniques. Data were collected using the Infidelity and Marital Stability Questionnaire (ISIMSQ), which included four subscales measured on a four-point scale: Sexual Infidelity (19 items), Social Infidelity (20 items), Emotional Infidelity (13 items), and Marital Stability (16 items). Face, content, and construct validity were established through expert review and factor analysis. Cumulative variances were 68.67% (Sexual), 55.43% (Emotional), with acceptable rotated factor loadings ($\geq .40$) across all scales. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded an overall coefficient of 0.81, with subscale values ranging from 0.73 to 0.85. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and path analysis at a 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that (i) the prevailing degree of marital stability among married persons in Delta State is high; (ii) the prevalence of infidelity among married persons is low; (iii) there is no significant relationship between sexual infidelity and marital stability; (iv) there is a significant relationship between emotional infidelity and marital stability; and (v) there is no significant relationship between social infidelity and marital stability. The study recommends programs that strengthen emotional intimacy, responsiveness, and mutual attentiveness among couples to sustain marital stability.

Keywords: Infidelity, Marital Stability, Emotional Infidelity, Sexual Infidelity, Social Infidelity

INTRODUCTION

Infidelity is commonly understood as a breach of the marital commitment to exclusivity. It reflects a deviation from the norms, trust, and expectations that uphold a healthy marital union. According to Adeoye and Odukoya (2020), infidelity represents marital behaviour that violates agreed-upon relational boundaries necessary for trust, intimacy, and long-term companionship in marriage. This means that infidelity is a willful act that undermines essential marital expectations in ways capable of weakening the emotional and structural stability of the family. The causes of infidelity can be traced to individual, social, cultural, economic, and psychological factors. Personality traits, low marital satisfaction, peer influence, financial stress, emotional neglect, and exposure to social media are but a few examples (Okonkwo & Eze, 2021). Infidelity behaviour often manifests when marital relationships begin to deteriorate emotionally or sexually. Some common indicators include secrecy, reduced communication, declining intimacy, withdrawal, and increased external attachments (Nwankwo, 2022). Scholars have identified different forms of infidelity, including sexual affairs, emotional involvement with another person, pornography use, and romantic communication with outsiders (Ogunlana & Ayo, 2023). These behaviours may serve as expressions of dissatisfaction, resentment, loneliness, or a desire for validation outside the marriage. Therefore, couples often experience emotional injury, mistrust, anger, and marital instability when infidelity occurs.

One form of infidelity, sexual infidelity is one of the most widely recognized. Sexual infidelity refers to engaging in sexual activities outside the marriage without consent or knowledge of one's spouse. It violates the expectation of sexual exclusivity that marriage upholds. Sexual infidelity is often associated with betrayal, humiliation, increased suspicion and, in many cases, physical violence (Olorunfemi & Adebayo, 2021). The consequences may extend to the spread of sexually transmitted infections, separation, divorce,

and emotional trauma for spouses and children in the family. In Delta State, issues such as urban migration, economic pressures, and cultural silence around marital struggles have contributed to the rising cases of sexual infidelity among married persons (Emede & Akpojotor, 2022). Thus, sexual infidelity remains a leading cause of marital breakdown in Nigeria.

Another form of infidelity of interest in this study is emotional infidelity. Emotional infidelity is the kind where one becomes emotionally intimate with another individual who is also committed to someone else, an aspect that is characterized by secrecy, expression of affection, and deep forms of personal communication with the third person while hiding the activities from their spouse. Another disadvantage of emotional infidelity is that it creates a distance in a marriage since one creates an emotional dependence on another instead of their spouse for emotional comfort (Okocha & Ume, 2020). According to Ogunlade (2023), with the increase in the use of instant messages on social media, emotional infidelity is increasingly on the rise without the husband even realizing it until the time the bond has diminished.

Infidelity, either sexual or emotional in nature, is rather significant in terms of its impact on the stability of a marriage. Infidelity is likely to cause distrust, disagreements, hostility, lack of commitment, as well as distress for the spouses (Adamu & Danladi, 2022). The homes where such incidents of infidelity happen would likely face significant challenges in terms of the oneness, respect, and together formation of decisions that could eventually lead to separation or disintegration in the marriage. That is rather sensitive from the angle of cultural oneness in marriages in Delta State. With these concerns in mind, the study concentrates on the aspect of sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity in relation to conjugal stability between married individuals in Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is not only expected to provide emotional security, companionship, and stability for the couple and their family but also a host of other benefits. However, with some contemporary shifts in society and growing reports of marital crises, it seems that many marriages are falling short of these expectations. In Delta State, patterns of marital dissatisfaction such as frequent quarreling, emotional withdrawal, and persistent mistrust have become more manifest in family life. A major reason that has been largely linked with such marital issues is infidelity. Infidelity, whether emotional or sexual, may threatens the very foundation of trust, commitment, and fidelity that binds a marriage. Most married couples in many towns across Delta State are confronted with either suspicion or actual cases of infidelity, which most often lead to emotional upset, antagonism, family conflict, and in extreme cases, divorce. However, there are couples who remain together despite instances of infidelity — which means its impact on marriage stability can be varied based on individual and relationship circumstances. Despite the increased information on marital instability brought about by unfaithful conduct, empirical studies have not in many instances sought to clarify how infidelity directly influences marital stability among married couples in Delta State. Most of the existing information is based on assumptions, personal narratives, or generalized reports from other regions, and these might not be adequate to capture the unique cultural, social, and economic conditions of couples in the state. As a result of this, there is a compelling need to discover the incidence of infidelity among married couples in Delta State and its implications for their marital stability.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a guide to the study:

1. What is the prevalence of infidelity among married persons in Delta State?
2. What is the prevailing degree of marital stability among married persons in Delta State?
3. What is the relationship between sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability among married persons in Delta State?
4. What is the relationship between Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability among married persons in Delta State?
5. What is the relationship between social infidelity and its components of Internet Flirting, Commitment to Spouse, Secretive Association, and Social Flirting with marital stability among married persons in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses served as a guide to the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

2. There is no significant relationship between Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.
3. There is no significant relationship between social infidelity and its components of Internet Flirting, Commitment to Spouse, Secretive Association, and Social Flirting with marital stability among married persons in Delta State

RESEARCH METHOD

Correlational survey research design was adopted by the study. The population of the study consisted of 8,889,293 (eight million, eight hundred and eighty-nine thousand, two hundred and ninety-three) married persons in Delta State as reported by the Federal Republic of Nigeria No. 24, vol of 2015. Two hundred and fifty (250) married persons constituted the sample size of the study. The sampling technique that was adopted for this research is the multistage sampling procedures of purposive simple random sampling technique of balloting were used.

Data were collected with Infidelity and Marital Stability Questionnaire (ISIMSQ). Infidelity Questionnaire consist of four subscales which were based on a four-point scale (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, and SD = Strongly Disagree). the first subscale was Sexual Infidelity Scale (had 23 items, reduced to 19 items), Social Infidelity Scale (had 21 items, reduced to 20 items), Emotional Infidelity Scale (had 13 items, all items were deemed fit), and the Marital Stability Scale (had 20 items, reduced to 16 items). The face, content, and construct validity of the instrument were established after thorough scrutiny by experts as suggested by Okorodudu (2012). The content and construct validity of the instrument were determined using factor analysis. The instrument was administered to 68 (sixty-eight) married spouses from Delta state, and the data obtained were subjected to factor analysis. The content and construct validity of the Sexual Infidelity, Emotional Infidelity, Social Infidelity, and Marital Stability scales was estimated using multivariate factor analysis. The Varimax Kaiser Normalization Extraction method was used to estimate the content and construct validity of each scale. This was established by the total cumulative variance of all the items. A total cumulative variance of 68.67% was obtained for the Sexual Infidelity Scale (SIS). The Emotional Infidelity Scale (EIS) had a total cumulative variance of 55.43%.

The construct validity was estimated with the rotated factor loading matrices, with items having rotated factor loadings matrices of .40 and above was considered valid. Items on Emotional Infidelity Scale (EIS) Scale has rotated factor loadings matrix which ranged between .46 and .94 were considered valid. Items in the Social Infidelity Scale (SIS) has rotated factor loadings matrixes which ranged between .47 and .75 it was considered construct valid, items on Marital Stability Scale (MSS) have rotated factor loadings matrixes which ranged between .42 and .83 therefore it was construct valid.

The instrument was subjected to a reliability test, and the result was used to complete the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha was applied, and a general reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained for the entire instrument. Whereas coefficient value of 0.73 for Sexual Infidelity Scale, Emotional Infidelity Scale has 0.85, 0.85 for Social Infidelity Scale (SIS) and 0.84 for Marital Stability Scale (MSS) indicating that the instrument was quite reliable for the study. The data for this study were gathered from respondents in Delta State. The instrument was distributed and retrieved by the researcher and two other research assistants.

The questionnaire was retrieved from the respondents and scored for both positively and negatively worded items according to their weighting. The research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviations were employed. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the simple relationships and regression. The Multiple Correlation and Multiple Regression Statistical Model was employed for data processing. Path analytic models were adopted to present causal relational patterns. Testing of hypotheses were done at the 0.5 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

What is the prevalence of infidelity among married persons in Delta State?

Table 1:
Mean and standard deviation of the prevalence of infidelity among married persons in Delta State.

Variable	Mean	SD	Prevalence
Infidelity	45.86	6.69	Low prevalence

Decision rule:

Table 1 indicate that the average score for infidelity was 45.86, with a standard deviation of 6.69, reflecting relatively low variability in responses. Overall, the results reveal a low prevalence of infidelity among the married population surveyed, suggesting that infidelity is not a common occurrence in this group. Any married person who scored above fifty percent in their responses was considered to be guilty of infidelity. This can be explained from the view that culturally among the group investigated, infidelity is not seen as morally wrong behaviour. Men are not regarded as being unfaithful.

Research Question 2

What is the prevailing degree of marital stability among married persons in Delta State?

Table 2

Mean and standard deviation of the prevailing degree of marital stability among married persons

Variable	Mean	SD	Degree
Marital stability	52.72	9.43	High prevalence

Mean Bench mark:

As shown in Table 2, the findings indicate that the average score for marital stability was 52.72, with a standard deviation of 9.43, reflecting some degree of variability in the responses. In the table, the results point to a high prevalence of marital stability, suggesting that stable marriages are a common feature among the population surveyed. Any married person who scored above fifty percent was considered to be experiencing marital stability. Marriages are prevalently stable among the married persons investigated, as a result of the virtues among the married persons.

Research Question 3:

What is the relationship between sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability among married persons in Delta State?

Table 3

Correlation matrix of sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Unsatisfactory with marital stability among married per sons in Delta State.

Variable	Mean	SD	SI	UF	NC	MS	SIGN
SI	45.8	6.6					S
UF	7.7	1.5	.40	1			NS
NC	21.8	5.3	.52	.08	1		NS
MS	52.7	9.4	.91	.08	.32	1	S

Key: SI - Sexual Infidelity, UF –Unfaithfulness, NC - Not Committed, MS -Marital Stability NS-Not Significant, S-Significant.

The findings, presented in Table 3, show that sexual infidelity had a mean score of 45.86 (SD = 6.69), reflecting moderate levels of infidelity among the participants, while marital stability had a higher mean score of 52.72 (SD = 9.43), indicating relatively stable marriages overall. Among the components of sexual infidelity, unfaithfulness had the lowest mean score (7.74), while not-committed had a mean score of 21.85, suggesting that these traits were less pronounced within the sample.

The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships among the variables. Sexual infidelity exhibited a negative correlation with marital stability ($r = .911$), indicating that higher levels of infidelity are strongly associated with reduced marital stability. Among its components, unfaithfulness showed a weak positive correlation with both sexual infidelity ($r = .404$) and marital stability ($r = .086$), suggesting it plays a minor role in influencing marital dynamics. Conversely, not-committed demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with sexual infidelity ($r = .522$) and a weaker positive correlation with marital stability ($r = .324$), indicating it has a more substantial relationship with infidelity than with marital stability. In conclusion, the findings underscore the detrimental impact of sexual infidelity on marital stability among married persons in Delta State. While the component of "not-committed" shows a stronger association with infidelity, "unfaithfulness" appears to have a lesser influence on both infidelity and marital stability. These results highlight the critical role of sexual behaviour in shaping marital outcomes in this population.

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability among married persons in Delta State?

Table 4:

Correlation matrix of Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

Variable	Mean	SD	EI	NSA	LOI	UF	MS	SIGN
EI	36.8	6.72	1					
NSA	14.9	3.0	.23	1				S
LOI	13.5	2.7	.23	.85	1			NS
UF	8.4	2.2	.14	.85	.63	1		NS
MS	52.7	9.4	.20	.74	.50	.48	1	S

Key: EI -Emotional Infidelity, NSA: - Non- Attentiveness of Spouse, LOI: -Lack of Intimacy, UF – Unfaithful Emotions, MS -Marital Stability, NS-Not Significant, S-Significant.

The findings presented in Table 4 shows that Emotional Infidelity had a mean score of 36.86 (SD = 6.72), reflecting moderating levels of infidelity among the participants, while marital stability had a higher mean score of 52.72 (SD = 9.43), indicating relatively stable marriages overall. Among the components of emotional infidelity, unfaithful emotions had the lowest mean score (8.43), while non-attentiveness of spouse had a mean score of 14.91, suggesting that these traits were less pronounced with the sample.

The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships among the variables. Emotional infidelity exhibited a very strong positive correlation with marital stability ($r = .201$), indicating that higher levels of infidelity are strongly associated with reduced marital stability. Among its components, non-attentiveness to spouse showed a weak positive correlation with both Emotional Infidelity ($r = .230$) and marital stability ($r = .201$). suggesting it plays a minor role in influencing marital dynamics. Conversely, lack of intimacy demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with emotional infidelity ($r = .237$) and a positive correlation with marital stability indicating it has a more substantial relationship with infidelity than with marital stability.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the detrimental impact of emotional infidelity on marital stability among married persons in Delta State. While the components of “non-attentiveness of spouse” shows a stronger association with infidelity. “Lack of intimacy” appears to have more influence on both infidelity and marital stability. These results highlight the critical role of emotional behaviour in shaping marital outcomes in this population.

Research Question 5:

What is the relationship between social infidelity and its components of Internet Flirting, Commitment to Spouse, Secretive Association, and Social Flirting with marital stability among married persons in Delta State?

Table 5.

Correlation matrix of social infidelity and its components of Internet Flirting, Commitment to Spouse, Secretive Association, and Social Flirting with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

Variable	Mean	SD	SI	IF	CS	SA	SF	MS	SIGN
SI	47.2	19.1	1						
IF	19.5	4.8	-.03	1					S
CS	5.6	1.9	.07	.77	1				S
SA	15.3	5.5	-.03	-.18	-.38	1			NS
SF	6.7	2.4	-.04	.86	.52	-.25	1		S
MS	52.7	9.4	.01	.72	.46	-.22	.62	1	

Key: SI -Social Infidelity, IF -Internet Flirting, CS - Commitment to Spouse, SA -Secretive Association, SF- Social Flirting, MS -Marital Stability, NS-Not Significant, S-Significant.

The findings, presented in Table 5, show that social infidelity had a mean score of 47.22 (SD = 19.16), suggesting moderate levels of social infidelity within the sample. Marital stability, with a mean score of 52.72 (SD = 9.43), indicates relatively stable marriages overall. The components of social infidelity, such as Internet Flirting (IF), Commitment to Spouse (CS), Secretive Association (SA), and Social Flirting (SF), vary in their mean scores, with Internet Flirting (IF) having the highest mean of 19.59, and Social Flirting (SF) having the lowest at 6.78.

The correlation analysis reveals some interesting patterns. Social infidelity (SI) showed a very weak positive correlation with marital stability (MS) ($r = .016$), indicating that overall, social infidelity has little direct effect on marital stability. However, Internet Flirting (IF) displayed a moderate positive correlation with marital stability ($r = .729$), suggesting that higher levels of Internet Flirting are linked to greater marital stability. Additionally, Commitment to Spouse (CS) was strongly correlated with Internet Flirting ($r = .777$) and moderately with marital stability ($r = .463$), suggesting that a stronger commitment to one's spouse is associated with both lower levels of Internet Flirting and higher marital stability. On the other hand, Secretive Association (SA) and Social Flirting (SF) were negatively correlated with marital stability ($r = -.229$ and $r = -.252$, respectively), indicating that these behaviours may contribute to lower marital stability. In conclusion, while social infidelity as a whole has minimal impact on marital stability, certain components such as Internet Flirting and Commitment to Spouse appear to have a stronger association with marital outcomes. Secretive Association and Social Flirting, however, seem to undermine marital stability, highlighting the complex nature of these behaviours in the context of marriage.

Testing of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

Table 6: Multiple regression and multiple correlation analysis of sexualinfidelity and its components of Sexual Infidelity, unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability

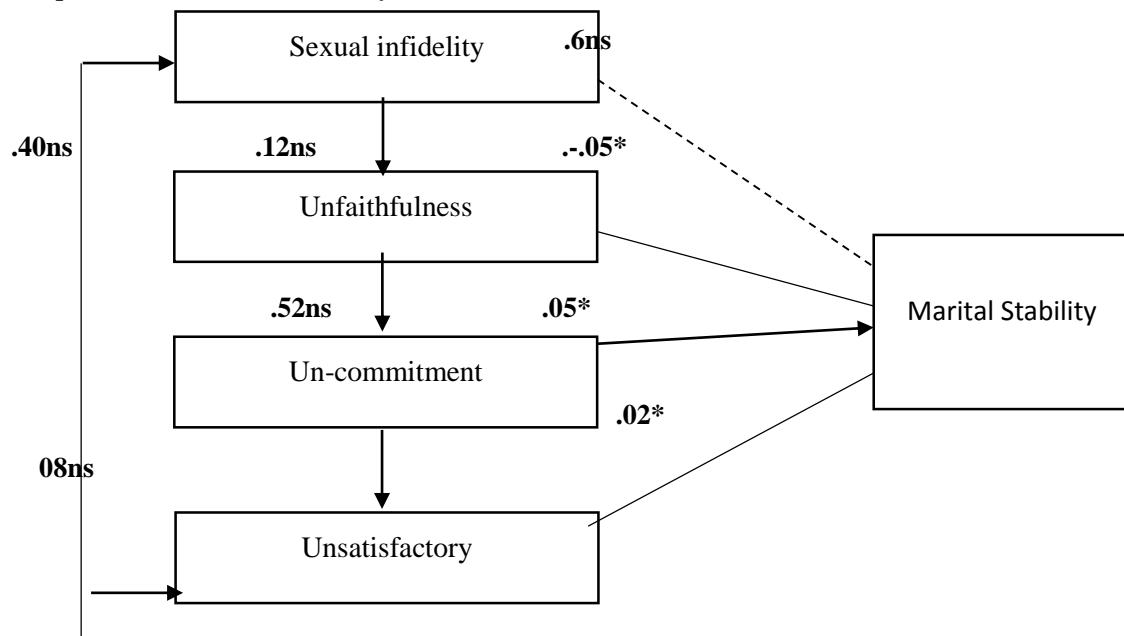
Model	SS	df	MS	F	R	B	SE	β	t	P
Regression	558.610	4	139.652	1.585	.01					.18ns
Residual	21593.346	245	88.136							
Total	22151.956	249								
(Constant)						44.59	5.58		7.98	.000*
Sexual infidelity						.22	.75	.15	.29	.76ns
Unfaithfulness						-.22	.81	-.04	-.27	.78ns
Un-commitment						.31	.87	.05	.36	.71ns
Unsatisfactory						-.04	.76	-.02	-.05	.95ns

Table 6 shows the multiple regression and correlation analysis for the relationship between sexual infidelity and its components (unfaithfulness, not-committed, and dissatisfaction) with marital stability among married persons in Delta State. The overall model is not statistically significant, as indicated by the F-value of 1.585 ($p = 0.18$), which is greater than the typical threshold of 0.05. This suggests that, collectively, sexual infidelity and its components do not have a significant relationship with marital stability. Individually, none of the components of sexual infidelity—sexual infidelity itself ($B = 0.22$, $p = 0.76$),

unfaithfulness ($B = -0.22$, $p = 0.78$), un-commitment ($B = 0.31$, $p = 0.71$), and dissatisfaction ($B = -0.04$, $p = 0.95$)—show statistically significant relationships with marital stability. All p -values are greater than 0.05, supporting the null hypothesis that these factors do not significantly influence marital stability in this context. The strength of the relationship observed among sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability is illustrated in the path analysis model in Figure 1.

Figure 1 :

Path Analysis model indicating the strength of the relationship among sexual infidelity and their components with marital stability



The path analysis in Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between sexual infidelity and its components with marital stability. The analysis reveals that most components, such as sexual infidelity ($B = 0.6$, $p = ns$), show no significant relationship with marital stability, as indicated by the "ns" (not significant) labels. However, a significant negative relationship is observed between one component of sexual infidelity ($B = -0.05$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that this specific aspect of infidelity negatively affects marital stability. Overall, the path analysis indicates that while some components of sexual infidelity are not significantly related to marital stability, there are a few significant negative relationships that suggest certain aspects of infidelity may reduce marital stability.

Table 7: Multicollinearity Diagnosis of Sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability.

	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
Sexual infidelity	.14	.02	.02	.01	71.05
Unfaithfulness	.01	-.02	-.02	.12	8.06
Un-commitment	.12	.02	.02	.20	4.99
Unsatisfactory	.13	-.00	-.00	.02	47.56

The multicollinearity diagnosis in Table 7 provides insights into the relationships between sexual infidelity and its components (unfaithfulness, un-commitment, and dissatisfaction) with marital stability. The zero-order correlations show weak initial relationships between the variables and marital stability, with sexual infidelity showing a slightly stronger correlation of 0.14, while the other components have even weaker correlations ranging from 0.01 to 0.13. When controlling for other factors, the partial correlations remain small, indicating that the relationships between these variables and marital stability are not significant.

after accounting for other influences. The part correlations also reflect minimal independent effects on marital stability.

The tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are critical in assessing multicollinearity. Sexual infidelity exhibits a very low tolerance value of 0.01 and an extremely high VIF of 71.05, indicating severe multicollinearity. This suggests that sexual infidelity is highly correlated with other variables, which could distort the accuracy of the regression results. Similarly, the component of dissatisfaction shows a tolerance of 0.02 and a VIF of 47.56, further highlighting potential multicollinearity issues.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

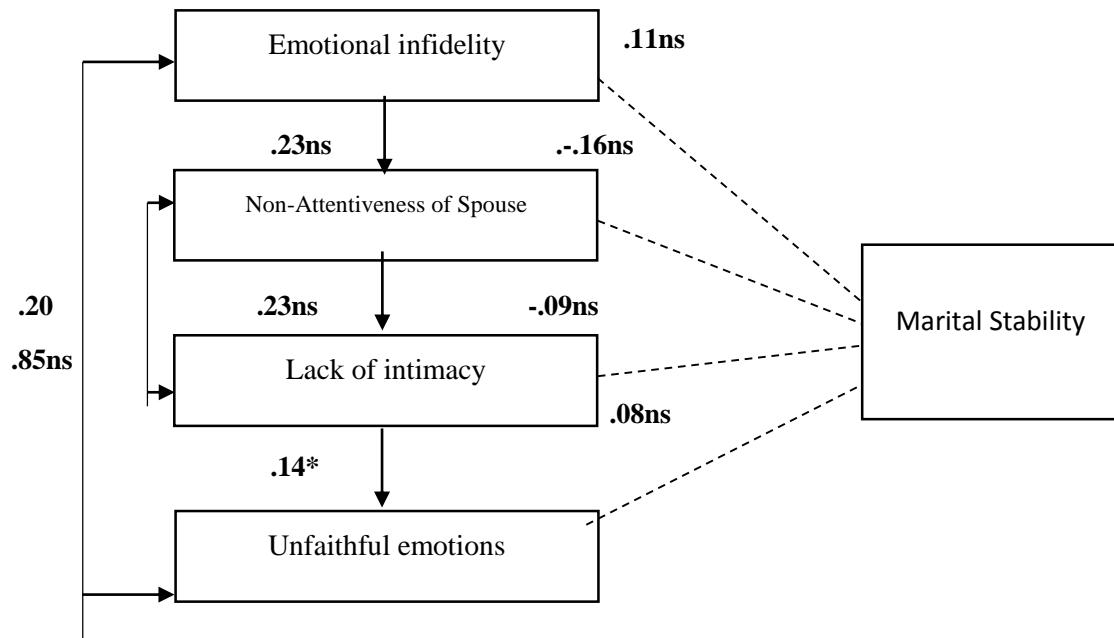
Table 8:

Multiple regression and multiple correlation analysis of Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability

Model	SS	df	MS	F	R	B	SE	β	t	P	PV
Regression	1477.47	4	369.368	4.37	.05					.00*	
		4			7						
Residual	20674.4	245	84.386								
		82									
Total	22151.9	249									
		56									
(Constant)						41.00	3.2		12.45	.00*	S*
Emotional Infidelity						.14	.48	.10	.30	.76	NS
Non-Attentiveness of Spouse						.50	.52	.16	.95	.33	NS
Lack Of Intimacy						-.31	.57	-	-.54	.59	NS
Unfaithful Emotions						.35	.55	.08	.63	.52	NS

Table 8 shows the multiple regression and correlation analysis for the relationship between emotional infidelity and its components (non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions) with marital stability among married persons in Delta State, presents mixed results. The overall model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 4.377 ($p = 0.00$), indicating that, collectively, emotional infidelity and its components are related to marital stability. However, when examining the individual components, none show significant relationships with marital stability. Emotional infidelity ($B = 0.14$, $p = 0.76$), non-attentiveness of spouse ($B = 0.50$, $p = 0.33$), lack of intimacy ($B = -0.31$, $p = 0.59$), and unfaithful emotions ($B = 0.35$, $p = 0.52$) all have p-values greater than 0.05, meaning they do not significantly predict marital stability. The strength of the relationship observed among Emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions with marital stability is illustrated in the path analysis model in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Path Analysis model indicating the strength of the relationship among emotional infidelity and their components with marital stability



The path analysis presented in Figure 2 examines the relationships between emotional infidelity and its components with marital stability. The analysis shows that most of the relationships are not statistically significant, as indicated by the "ns" (not significant) labels. Specifically, emotional infidelity ($B = 0.11, p = ns$), non-attentiveness of spouse ($B = 0.23, p = ns$), and lack of intimacy ($B = -0.16, p = ns$) do not have significant effects on marital stability. However, the component of unfaithful emotions ($B = 0.14, p < 0.05$) stands out, showing a significant positive relationship with marital stability.

Table 9:

Multicollinearity Diagnosis of emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, Lack of intimacy, and Unfaithful emotions with marital instability

	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
Emotional infidelity	.23	.01	.01	.03	30.92
Non-attentiveness of spouse	.23	.06	.05	.13	7.44
Lack of intimacy	.14	-.03	-.03	.13	7.29
Unfaithful emotions	.20	.04	.03	.21	4.70

Table 9 provides a multicollinearity diagnosis for emotional infidelity and its components—non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions—in relation to marital instability. The zero-order correlations reveal weak positive relationships between the variables and marital instability. Emotional infidelity and non-attentiveness of spouse both have the highest correlation ($r = 0.23$), followed by unfaithful emotions ($r = 0.20$) and lack of intimacy ($r = 0.14$). After controlling for other variables, the partial correlations indicate even weaker relationships, all close to zero. This suggests that none of the components have a substantial independent effect on marital instability. The tolerance values highlight potential multicollinearity issues, particularly for emotional infidelity (tolerance = 0.03) and non-attentiveness of spouse (tolerance = 0.13). Similarly, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values confirm high

levels of multicollinearity, with emotional infidelity ($VIF = 30.92$) showing the most severe multicollinearity, followed by non-attentiveness of spouse ($VIF = 7.44$) and lack of intimacy ($VIF = 7.29$). Unfaithful emotions ($VIF = 4.70$) show a lower but still notable degree of multicollinearity.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between social infidelity and its components of Internet Flirting, Commitment to Spouse, Secretive Association, and Social Flirting with marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

Table 10:

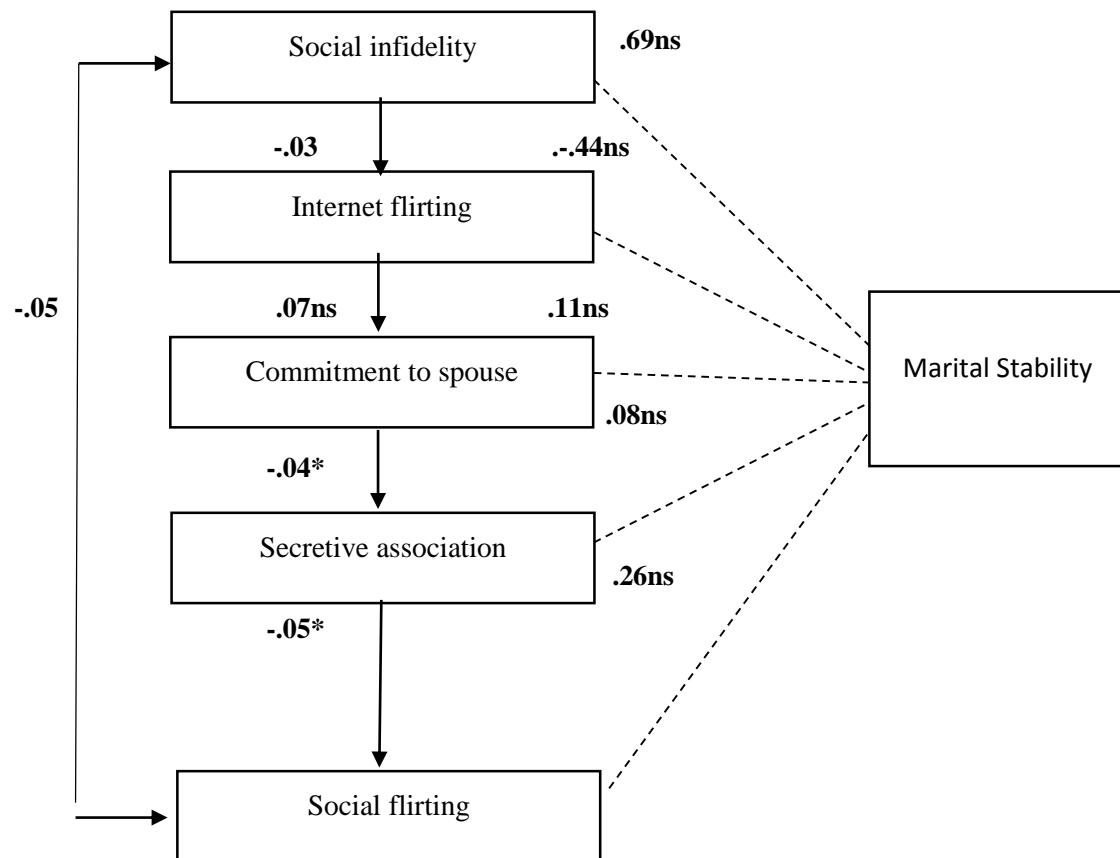
Multiple regression and multiple correlation analysis of social infidelity and its components of Internet Flirting, Commitment to Spouse, Secretive Association, and Social Flirting with marital stability

Model	SS	Df	MS	F	R	B	SE	β	t	P	PV
Regression	919.25	5	183.85	2.11	.22					.06ns	
Residual	21232.7	24	87.02								
	1										
Total	22151.9	25									
	6										
(Constant)				52.30	3.8			13.52	.00*	S*	
				6				8			Type e
Social Infidelity				-.64	.25	-		-2.53	.01*	S*	
						.69					
Internet Flirting					.86	.29	.44	2.94	.00*	S*	
Commitment To					.51	.39	.11	1.28	.19n	NS	
Spouse											s
Secretive Association						.38	.28	.23	1.34	.18n	NS
											s
Social Flirting							.78	.39	.21	1.98	.04*
											S*

Table 10 shows the multiple regression and correlation analysis for the relationship between social infidelity and its components (Internet flirting, commitment to spouse, secretive association, and social flirting) with marital stability among married persons in Delta State, reveals mixed results. The overall model is not statistically significant, with an F-value of 2.113 ($p = 0.06$), suggesting that, collectively, these variables do not significantly predict marital stability. However, when looking at the individual components, some show significant relationships with marital stability. Social infidelity ($B = -0.64$, $p = 0.01$) and Internet flirting ($B = 0.86$, $p = 0.00$) have significant relationships with marital stability, indicating that social infidelity negatively affects marital stability, while Internet flirting has a positive impact. Social flirting ($B = 0.78$, $p = 0.04$) also shows a significant positive relationship with marital stability, suggesting that greater involvement in social flirting may be associated with higher marital stability.

On the other hand, commitment to spouse ($B = 0.51$, $p = 0.19$) and secretive association ($B = 0.38$, $p = 0.18$) do not show significant relationships with marital stability, as their p-values exceed the threshold of 0.05, while the overall model does not significantly predict marital stability, individual components such as social infidelity, Internet flirting, and social flirting do have significant relationships with marital stability, partially rejecting the null hypothesis. The strength of the relationship observed among environmental insecurity and its components of Economic Instability, Social Unrest, Perceived Lack of Safety Violence, Mistrust, and Nervousness with social phobia is illustrated in the path analysis model in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Path Analysis model indicating the strength of the relationship among Narcissistic personality traits and their components with marital stability



The path analysis in Figure 3 shows the relationships between narcissistic personality traits and their components with marital stability. Most of the relationships, such as those involving narcissistic personality traits ($B = 0.69$, $p = ns$), un-commitment ($B = -0.03$, $p = ns$), and over-valued self ($B = -0.44$, $p = ns$), are not significant, as indicated by the "ns" (not significant) labels. However, a significant negative relationship is observed between one component of narcissism ($B = -0.04$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that this specific trait negatively affects marital stability. Other relationships, like superiority ($B = -0.05$, $p < 0.05$), also show significant negative effects on marital stability. In summary, the path analysis indicates that while most narcissistic traits and their components do not significantly affect marital stability, a few components, particularly related to superiority and a specific narcissistic trait, show significant negative relationships with marital stability.

Table 11:

Multicollinearity Diagnosis of sexual infidelity and its components unfaithfulness, not-committed, and Dissatisfaction with marital stability

	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
Social Infidelity	-.03	-.16	-.15	.05	19.34
Internet Flirting	.07	.18	.18	.17	5.72

Commitment To Spouse	-.03	.08	.08	.55	1.78
Secretive Association	-.04	.08	.08	.13	7.18
Social Flirting	.01	.12	.12	.36	2.70

Table 11 provides a multicollinearity diagnosis for sexual infidelity and its components (unfaithfulness, not-committed, and dissatisfaction) with marital stability. The zero-order correlations indicate weak initial relationships between most variables and marital stability, with the highest correlation being between Internet flirting and marital stability (0.07), while others are near zero or slightly negative. The partial correlations, after controlling for other variables, remain weak, suggesting that the components of social infidelity do not have strong independent effects on marital stability.

The tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values assess multicollinearity. Tolerance values for social infidelity (0.05), Internet flirting (0.17), and secretive association (0.13) are low, indicating potential multicollinearity, meaning these variables are highly correlated with other predictors. High VIF values for social infidelity (19.34) and secretive association (7.18) also suggest significant multicollinearity, which could distort the regression results. However, the VIF for commitment to spouse (1.78) and social flirting (2.70) are within acceptable limits, suggesting no multicollinearity concerns for these variables.

Discussion of Findings

Prevalence of Infidelity Among Married Persons.

The first finding that the prevailing degree of marital stability among married persons in Delta State is high highlights the strength and endurance of marital relationships within the socio-cultural context of the study area. Marital stability reflects the ability of couples to maintain commitment, resolve conflicts, and sustain emotional and social bonds over time. In Delta State, marriage is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and extended family systems that emphasize perseverance, tolerance, and mutual responsibility. These structures may provide couples with social and emotional support that helps them navigate marital challenges without resorting to separation or dissolution. The presence of children, economic interdependence, and community expectations may also reinforce the desire to preserve marital unions despite difficulties. This finding aligns with the view of Amato and Rogers (1997), who noted that strong social and moral commitments to marriage often promote marital endurance even under stress. Similarly, Karney and Bradbury (1995) emphasized that supportive environments and effective coping strategies contribute significantly to long-term marital stability. Together, these perspectives suggest that the high level of marital stability observed may be sustained by cultural norms, shared values, and adaptive relationship behaviors among couples.

The Prevailing Degree of Marital Stability Among Married Persons in Delta State

The second finding that the prevalence of infidelity among married persons is low provides further insight into the relational dynamics of marriages in Delta State. Infidelity, whether emotional, sexual, or social, is widely regarded as a serious violation of marital trust and commitment. Its low occurrence may reflect strong moral values, fear of social stigma, and adherence to religious teachings that discourage extramarital relationships. Cultural sanctions and community disapproval may act as deterrents, reinforcing fidelity as a central expectation of married life. This finding corresponds with Allen et al. (2005), who reported that moral commitment and relationship satisfaction are associated with lower tendencies toward infidelity. Likewise, Treas and Giesen (2000) found that strong normative beliefs about marriage reduce the likelihood of extramarital involvement. Collectively, these viewpoints support the idea that deeply rooted socio-cultural norms and personal commitment may play a crucial role in minimizing infidelity and sustaining marital stability in the study area.

Relationship between sexual infidelity and marital stability among married persons

The third finding revealed that there is no significant relationship between sexual infidelity and marital stability among married persons challenging conventional expectations, and revealing a nuanced understanding of marital dynamics. Infidelity is often viewed as a relationship-breaking behaviour; however, its impact on marital stability appears to depend on context rather than being universally destabilizing. Some couples may view infidelity as a forgivable transgression, particularly when motivated by situational or external factors rather than emotional detachment (Atkins et al., 2020). Moreover, practical considerations—such as financial ties, shared parenting responsibilities, or cultural taboos surrounding divorce—can compel couples to remain together despite infidelity (Fincham & May 2021). Interestingly, some relationships

survive or even grow stronger post-infidelity when couples engage in open communication and therapy, reframing the incident as an opportunity for mutual growth (Gordon et al., 2022). This aligns with studies emphasizing the adaptability of couples in facing relational challenges. However, the finding contrasts with research like Glass and Wright (2021), which links infidelity to trust erosion and marital dissolution, and Hall and Fincham (2020), which underscores the enduring psychological harm caused by extramarital affairs, often leading to instability.

The Relationship Between Emotional Infidelity and Marital Stability Among Married Persons

The fourth finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional infidelity and marital stability among married persons revealing the profound impact of emotional connections outside the marital bond. Emotional infidelity, which often involves sharing intimate thoughts and feelings with someone other than a spouse, can erode the trust and emotional foundation upon which stable marriages are built. This breach often creates a sense of betrayal and emotional displacement, leaving the affected partner feeling undervalued or replaced (Glass & Wright, 2021). Over time, such dynamics can lead to increased relational dissatisfaction and weaken the couple's ability to navigate challenges together (Sharma & Gulati, 2023). Additionally, emotional infidelity often redirects energy and emotional resources that should be invested in the marriage, leading to a gradual decline in marital intimacy and connectedness (Treger et al., 2020). Unlike physical infidelity, which may be perceived as a momentary lapse, emotional infidelity often represents a deeper, ongoing disconnection that destabilizes the relationship's core emotional bond. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing how emotional betrayal undermines marital cohesion, yet it diverges from research by Atkins et al. (2020), which highlights resilience mechanisms that can mitigate the impact, and Fincham and May (2021), which suggest that practical factors like financial interdependence often preserve stability even in cases of emotional infidelity.

The Relationship Between Social Infidelity and Marital Stability Among Married Persons

The fifth finding shows that there is no significant relationship between social infidelity and marital stability among married persons challenges conventional assumptions about the impact of extramarital social interactions. Social infidelity—defined as engaging in platonic but excessive or secretive interactions with someone outside the marriage—might not destabilize marital bonds due to its non-sexual nature and societal normalization. Many couples distinguish between harmless social interactions and actions that genuinely threaten their partnership, mitigating the destabilizing effects of such behaviour (Johnson et al., 2021). Additionally, practical considerations such as financial interdependence, shared responsibilities, and cultural stigmas surrounding divorce often outweigh the perceived harm caused by social infidelity (Sharma & Gulati, 2023). Furthermore, social infidelity is often rationalized by both partners, particularly in cases where the core marital relationship remains intact emotionally and physically (Mark et al., 2022). This adaptability allows couples to compartmentalize social interactions, maintaining marital stability despite potential strains. This helps married couples maintain marital stability despite potential strain.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the influence of infidelity on marital stability among married persons in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that the prevalence of infidelity among married persons in Delta State is low, while the prevailing degree of marital stability among them is high. The study further showed that sexual infidelity and its components of unfaithfulness, lack of commitment, and dissatisfaction did not significantly relate to marital stability among married persons in the state. The findings also indicated that social infidelity, including internet flirting, commitment to spouse, secretive associations, and social flirting, showed no significant relationship with marital stability. However, emotional infidelity and its components of non-attentiveness of spouse, lack of intimacy, and unfaithful emotions significantly correlated with marital stability among married persons in Delta State. The conclusion, therefore, is that since emotional infidelity significantly correlated with marital stability, emotional infidelity is a crucial factor influencing the stability of marriages in Delta State. Married persons who experience emotional disconnection and unfaithful emotional behaviour tend to have reduced marital stability. Furthermore, since sexual and social infidelity did not significantly correlate with marital stability, it is concluded that these forms of infidelity may not operate in isolation to negatively affect marital stability. Rather, emotional closeness and responsiveness between spouses serve as the more powerful determinants of marital stability among married persons in Delta State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were advanced:

1. Organizations, religious bodies, and marriage counselors in Delta State should develop and promote programs focused on enhancing intimacy, emotional responsiveness, and mutual attentiveness among married couples. Strengthening emotional connection can help reduce emotional infidelity and improve marital stability.
2. Government and community-based agencies should provide accessible marital counseling centers to help couples address emotional dissatisfaction and communication breakdowns before they escalate into emotional infidelity and marital instability.
3. Public enlightenment initiatives should emphasize that emotional infidelity can be more harmful to marital stability than sexual or social infidelity. Educating couples about this risk can encourage proactive efforts to maintain emotional closeness.
4. Workshops that teach effective communication skills, conflict resolution, and empathy-building should be organized for married persons across Delta State. These skills will support marital satisfaction and stability.
5. Community groups and religious organizations should establish support platforms where couples can share experiences, learn healthy relationship strategies, and receive support for marital challenges that may trigger emotional drift.

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