

# Infidelity, Paternity Disputes and Bastardy Phenomena: Emerging Trends in Oyo State' Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*Infidelity, paternity disputes and bastardy (IPDB) seem to be on the increase in global context, and it is worrisome because of its effect on the couples, children and society at large. Thus, this article examines the rate of IPDB, its causes, consequences and effective ways of managing them in Oyo State, Nigeria. A questionnaire was administered on 400 respondents for this survey. Discussion of findings is underpinned with Social Exchange and Feminist Theories. Findings show an increase in infidelity among salaried workers (m= 4.3.6), self-employed (3.9), urban centres inhabitants (m= 3.6), polygamous households (m= 4.1), monogamous households (m= 4.7), illiterate people (m= 4.2) and literate people (m=3.8). Causes include neglect of family responsibilities (m= 4.3), sexual incompatibility (m= 3.8), bullying (m= 3.7), poverty (m= 4.1) and covetousness/greed (m= 4.8). Consequences include poor partners' mental health (m= 3.2), violent behaviour (m= 4.7), withdrawal syndrome (m= 3.8), divorce (m= 4.6) and low productivity at work (m=4.0). Traditional family interventions prevent divorce (m= 4.3), religious bodies mitigate divorce (m= 4.5), therapeutic counselling relieves mental health (m=3.6), mediation centres transform relationship (m= 3.4), social works adjudication removes social stigmatization (m= 3.9) and DNA test reduces suicidal thought (m= 3.9). The incidents of infidelity, paternity dispute and bastardy generate complex social as well as legal challenges in Oyo state, Nigeria. Thus, regular studies of these phenomena remain the only means of understanding their dynamics and mitigating the consequences.*

**Key words: counselling; dispute; divorce; family, suicidal thought**

## Introduction

Several issues continue to affect marriages in negative ways. Infidelity, which is one of the marital problems, has become a controversial issue in contemporary society and has been a source of concern locally and globally (Ebhojaye et al., 2024; Maftai *et al.*, 2022). Infidelity has been described as cheating within a union and involving sexual intercourse with someone different than one's partner. It is an immoral phenomenon that is causing a high rate of marital separation and divorce among couples (Okere & Ubani, 2020). It has increased drastically, especially in places where there are economic downturns and idleness. Economic challenges for the majority of families, such as unemployment and poverty, have been identified as significant precipitating factors for infidelity (Odebode & Adegunju, 2022). Economic hardship typically leads to marital discord, which causes individuals to look for emotional or financial support outside their marriages. Research on infidelity in Nigeria reveals a complex interplay of gender inequality, cultural norms, and economics. Increasing rate of infidelity among married women who lack economic powers have been documented by Odebode and Adegunju, 2022; Okere and Ubani, 2020 and a host of others. Atapour *et al.* (2021) found in their studies that 65% of persons involved in infidelity had been having this secret affair for over five years, while the secret was revealed to their partners through the mobile phones of their spouses or social media.

One of the consequences of infidelity among women is paternity fraud. In recent times, the prevalence of infidelity among married couples in Nigeria has raised multifaceted legal, cultural, and social challenges, particularly concerning disputes of paternity (Afunugo, 2024; Obalowu & Abdul-Rahim, 2022). Ihejirika (2024) noted that 27% paternity tests conducted from July 2023 to June 2024 exposed non-biological fatherhood, which depicts that more than one in four men tested were not the biological fathers of their children. Paternity dispute, defined as a situation where the biological father of a child is questioned (Obalowu & Abdul-Rahim, 2022), has given rise to bastardy. Bastardy is a term used to describe children born outside marriage or resulting from an adulterous relationship.

Ogundipe et al (2021) revealed that after Jamaica, Nigeria is reported to have the second-highest rate of paternity fraud globally, with many married men unknowingly nurturing children who are not biologically theirs. A senior geneticist at the DNA Centre for Paternity Test in Lagos, Nigeria, Abiodun Salami, revealed that cases of paternity disputes have increased significantly. He noted that there is a tremendous rise in DNA tests in recent times compared to what they used to be, as DNA Centre for Paternity Test in Lagos usually handled 100 cases monthly; however, this has drastically increased to 400 cases monthly (Abugye, 2021).

In Nigeria, as in most African countries, family structure and lineage are deeply linked to social status and identity. Thus, disputes over the biological fatherhood of a child can lead to mental health issues, serious social and emotional problems, such as identity crises, stigmatization and legal battles (Ebhojaye *et al.*, 2024; Obalowu & Abdul-Rahim, 2022). In recent times, paternity crises are not only restricted to the confine of the family, but are being escalated and publicized through the media (Ebhojaye *et al.*, 2024). The question of whether a man is the biological father of his child is a sensitive issue in many cultures and can lead to litigation, divorce, disinheritance, and disputes about child support (Gigerenzer & Garcia-Retamero, 2024).

Some of the paternity dispute cases of influential people that were publicized on social media are, paternity dispute of the child of late musician Ilerioulwa Aloba (Mohbad), where the father of the musician demanded that DNA test should be conducted to ascertain of his grandson is truly theirs (Onu, 2024), and the case of Adams Nuru, the managing director of FCMB, whose alleged infidelity with Moyo Thomas resulted to the death of her husband after it was revealed that his acclaimed children are bastards (Adamolekun, 2021). Another notable case is the one reported by Premium Times (2021), whereby it was stated that a judge of the Delta State High Court, Anthony Okorodas, said the DNA tests conducted to ascertain the paternity of his children with his former wife revealed that he is not the biological father of the three children.

In Oyo State, a major Yoruba-speaking region of Nigeria, an increase in infidelity, paternity disputes, and bastardy (IPDB) has been a source of conc, leading to a growing call for effective

means of resolving them. The prevalence of infidelity has been reported by several media reports, with couples seeking divorce from their marriages. Odunade (2016) reported that no fewer than 500 divorce suits were filed in two customary courts in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, between January 2014 and December 2015, out of which 468 of the marriages were dissolved. The trend of the reported divorce cases seems to stem from IPDB, among other reasons. The Eagle Online of November 20, 2020, reported the case of a man who resides in Oke-Labo area in Ibadan, Oyo State who approached a Grade 'C' Customary Court sitting at Mapo in Ibadan, Oyo State to dissolve his eight-year-old marriage with his estranged wife on grounds of infidelity and lack of love. The Eagle Online reported that the President of the Court dissolved the union between the couple to forestall an impending calamity as a result of the wife's unfaithfulness. Arinremi (2024) also reported in PMnewsnigeria.com about a man who resides in Alata Road, Ifesowapo area of Ibadan, Oyo State, who filed for divorce of his wife because of infidelity and unruly behaviour at the Grade 'A' Customary Court in Ibadan, Oyo State. The President of the Court invalidated the marriage between the couple. Likewise, Nseyen (2022) reported a case in Daily Post on March 4, 2022, in which a man filed for divorce from his eight-year-old marriage to his estranged wife over alleged adultery at the Mapo Grade 'A' Customary Court in Ibadan, Oyo State.

The rising rate of infidelity, therefore, poses multi-faceted challenges (Ibitoye, et al., 2024; Abidin et al., 2018). There exists a series of empirical research conducted separately on marital infidelity, paternity disputes, and bastardy. Significant to note is that these studies did not examine the triad of IPDB phenomena collectively. Likewise, none of the studies explored the emerging trends in resolving IPDB in Oyo State, Nigeria. More so, attendant problematic paternity disputes and bastardy arising from infidelity require an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and proffering suggestions on how to handle consequential trauma. Therefore, this study intends to investigate rates of IPDB in Oyo State, Nigeria, psycho-social effects, emerging trends in resolving these social maladies as well as the effectiveness of legal, medical, counselling, religious and cultural interventions.

### Objectives

1. Examine the perception of people on the rate of infidelity in Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. Investigate the social and economic precipitants of infidelity in Oyo State, Nigeria.
3. Find out the perception of people on infidelity, paternity disputes, bastardy and their psycho-social effects in Oyo State, Nigeria.
4. Explore the emerging conflict resolution mechanisms and platforms that are engaged in handling infidelity cases, paternity disputes and bastardy in Oyo State, Nigeria.
5. Find out how people assess the effectiveness of emerging conflict resolution mechanisms and platforms engaged in handling infidelity cases, paternity disputes and bastardy as means of addressing their psycho-social effects in Oyo State, Nigeria.

### Research Questions

1. What is the perception of people on the rates of infidelity in Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the social and economic precipitants of infidelity in Oyo State, Nigeria?
3. How do people perceive infidelity, paternity disputes, bastardy, and their psycho-social effects in Oyo State, Nigeria?
4. What are the emerging conflict resolution mechanisms and platforms engaged in handling infidelity cases, paternity disputes and bastardy in Oyo State, Nigeria?
5. How do people assess the effectiveness of emerging conflict resolution mechanisms and platforms engaged in handling infidelity cases, paternity disputes and bastardy as means of addressing their psycho-social effects in Oyo State?

### Literature Review

#### Infidelity

Infidelity is the act of being dishonest to a partner or spouse by being engaged in sexual activities with another party different from one's partner (Ebhojaye et al., 2024). Infidelity, according to

Fife, Stewart and Hawkins (2020), is defined as involvement in sexual intercourse with someone other than one's spouse and may also include watching pornography, physical and amorous closeness and displaying emotional intimacy with someone who is not one's spouse. Marital infidelity, according to Blow and Hartnett (2005), Middleton (2023), can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including having an affair, having an extramarital relationship, cheating, emotional connections that go beyond friendships, online interactions, and pornography usage.

Infidelity or extramarital sex is a controversial topic with varying cultural perceptions and legal implications (Sundaravadivelu, 2023), and its perception varies through cultures and history. In some societies, it is stigmatized, while in other societies, adultery is accepted and sometimes normalized. In the United Kingdom, for instance it not strange to address a lady as a mistress to a man. However, in most cultures in Nigeria, for example, infidelity is normally stigmatized and has a lot of resultant social and legal repercussions. Infidelity as an abhorrent behaviour in African culture and it brings about guilt, shame, anger, and depression for the betrayer and the betrayed. A form of infidelity is adultery which brings about mental instability among those individuals who are unable to cope with the emotional effects. In some jurisdictions, infidelity results in divorce proceedings, custody battles, or spousal support decisions.

### **Bastardy**

The concept of bastardy is very broad and it is of great significance to some people more than others, which demands serious attention because the idea of being a bastard is very important in the traditional culture of the Yoruba people of Nigeria (Adelodun, 2022).

Bastardy is a legal term that is used to describe the civil condition of a child born under illegitimate circumstances. Children who are born out of lawful wedlock are classified as bastards (Stevenson, 2006). Traditionally, bastardy has been used to denote children born out of wedlock. Such children are in most societies socially disapproved and legally disadvantaged, particularly in the areas of inheritance and social recognition (Adelodun, 2022).

In most societies, children born outside of marriage were denied legal rights, inheritance, and societal acceptance. This would typically lead to marginalization and discrimination. However, the stigma of "illegitimacy" has decreased in most parts of the world, though legal and social implications persist; particularly where paternity is in doubt or inheritance is a factor. Bastardy is generally the result of extramarital relationships and is therefore directly linked to infidelity. The discovery of a child being the result of infidelity can add emotional and legal complications. In the past, those tagged as bastards were denied inheritance, barred from professional associations, and forced into poverty (Adelodun, 2022).

### **Paternity Disputes**

Obalowu and Abdul-Rahim (2022) defined paternity dispute as a situation whereby the biological father of a child is questioned. Paternity disputes are a widespread occurrence that ensues over the fatherhood of a child based on doubts about faithfulness or the potential for infidelity by the woman (Asangausung, Okorie & Daniel, 2025). Such conflicts are most commonly brought about by infidelity, but can also be brought about by assisted reproduction, casual relationships, or misunderstandings. A parent's suspicion of a child's behaviour or appearance, particularly if the child displays qualities or attributes that the parent feels are inconsistent with their own, can lead to paternity disputes (Asangausung, Okorie & Daniel, 2025).

Paternity disputes can have severe legal implications, including child support, custody, and inheritance. In adults, conflict can trigger mental instability, particularly if the discovery of infidelity is involved. The concepts of infidelity, bastardy and contested paternity are interconnected, reflecting the complexities of human relationships, social norms, and mental health. Understanding the intricacies in their interconnectedness requires an interdisciplinary approach covering legal, social, and psychological dimensions.

### **DNA Paternity Test**

Smart DNA (2023) stated that DNA paternity test refers to the scientific method used to establish a biological relationship between a child and a potential father by examining distinctive genetic

markers. Although DNA technology is internationally acknowledged as a viable forensic instrument in paternity cases, its legitimacy is not universal. Many developing nations are yet to develop a legal framework for their legitimacy. In India and Pakistan, there have been contradictory Supreme Court rulings that left doubt regarding the significance of DNA evidence in criminal and civil cases (Ahmad et al., 2022).

The use of DNA technology in legal systems is also faced with issues like the necessity of uniform guidelines and regulations (Singh et al., 2021). The use of DNA paternity tests also presents complex social and ethical concerns, particularly the necessity of secrecy in family relationships (Cerfontyne, D'Souza, & Patlamazoglou, 2023). Despite such drawbacks, DNA testing is an indispensable aid to paternity litigation, and multiple countries have promulgated bills and policies allowing its utilization by courts (Singh et al., 2021; Buthelezi, 2021).

Researchers have attributed infidelity in marriage to many factors, like finance, poor economic situation, sexual incompatibility, infertility, pre-marital relationships, ineffective communication, lack of love, involvement of married women in paid jobs, bullying, assault and so on (Ebhojaye et al., 2024; Ibitoye, Falana, Olusegun, Oyeyipo & Ajiboye, 2024; Obalowu & Rahim, 2022; Odebode & Adegunju, 2022; Okere & Ubani, 2020). Despite the causal factors of infidelity and the consequent possibility of bastardy, ways of resolving the disputes that ensue from infidelity and paternity disputes remain a major concern to individuals, families and society.

The Southwest part of Nigeria, which are the Yoruba speaking parts of the country have been using several means to resolve IPDB issues, one of which is the traditional way whereby thunderbolt, popularly called "*magun*" is used to checkmate infidelity and sexual adventure among married women. The use of the dreaded *magun* is usually devastating, because of its death implication (Okunola, Olusola & Oduntan 2022). This is aimed at punishing and shaming randy men and women.

Several researches like Afunugo, 2024; Okesina, 2022; Odebode & Adegunju, 2022; Okere & Ubani, 2020 have suggested the interventions of professional counsellors in resolving infidelity and paternity disputes, as well as creating awareness through workshops and seminars on the implications of infidelity and paternity disputes on both the parents and children. Professional counselling has been known to change behaviours, attitudes and manners that are socially unacceptable.

With the old methods of resolving such disputes, such as relying on word of mouth and community-based practices, newer and more scientific approaches are being deployed in order to make significant headway. From time immemorial, paternity disputes were decided in court, but the process was often long, costly, and emotionally draining for both parties. Court processes are not faster new complementary alternative dispute resolution (ADR) trends. For instance, the increased use of arbitration and mediation in family court proceedings offers a more private and less adversarial alternative to lawsuits. These processes not only expedite results but also concentrate on the well-being of the children involved in the paternity dispute. The adoption of ADR stems from the realization that the legal framework surrounding paternity disputes is complex and uneven (Ayres, 2016).

It is argued that traditional approaches to conflict resolution in African societies, particularly among the Yoruba in Nigeria, have been working effectively for a long time in promoting peaceful coexistence and social harmony (Ajayi & Abdulraheem, 2022). Although the colonial period brought modern judicial systems, traditional practices are still in widespread use and applicable in settling marital disputes among various African ethnic groups (Okunola, Olusola and Oduntan, 2022) till today due to their non-adversarial offerings, inexpensive procedure and accessibility to all.

Assen (2019) asserted DNA testing is a critical tool for resolving paternity disputes in marriages with scientific accuracy. Although DNA testing helps to reveal a child's paternity, it has the potential to escalate tensions when results reveal infidelity (Michele et al., 2022). The revelation that one is not the biological father of a child can lead to identity crises, emotional distress, and marital instability, which could lead to separation or divorce. Afunugo (2024) opined that DNA testing remains an essential mechanism for resolving paternity disputes. Although DNA

testing is widely accepted in the majority of countries, some still face legal and constitutional barriers to embracing the technology for determining paternity entirely (Ahmad et al., 2022). Despite all these challenges, DNA testing continues to be a significant resource for testing paternity disputes and determining biological relationships.

### **Empirical Review**

Afunugo (2024) examined the socio-religious need for promoting marital fidelity in Lagos Urban, Lagos State, Nigeria; particularly in light of rising cases of failed paternity tests revealed through DNA results. The study employed a qualitative methodology, including in-depth interviews and focus groups with religious leaders, family counselors, and community members. The findings of the study revealed a high rate of negative DNA paternity tests, showcasing significant unfaithfulness among women in marriage within Lagos Urban, further underscoring how marital infidelity undermines family cohesion and erodes societal trust.

Ebhojaye et al., (2024), carried out a study on infidelity driven paternity crisis in contemporary times in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria focusing on the roles of social media. A significant number emphasized negative roles of the social media, with 38.8% affirming its contribution to escalating these issues, and 77.7% stating that public exposure intensifies conflicts. This study highlights the complex interaction between infidelity, social media, and paternity disputes, advocating for educational initiatives to improve relationship skills and address the influence of modern technology.

Okunola, Olusola and Oduntan (2022) conducted a study on curbing infidelity in African traditional way among the Yoruba people of the South West, Nigeria. The study investigated the efficacy of the dread magun (thunderbolt) and its allies as a traditional means of curbing infidelity, sexual escapade, adultery/fornication among adult females (married, divorced, widow, and young ladies.) in South-West, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive design; using a questionnaire to obtain information from the respondents. The result of the study revealed that the use of magun for and among adult females has reduced in Yoruba land. Although, the findings revealed that there are still some rural parts of the target area that are still using the dreadful charm to checkmate and expose infidelity among the people, and that, the use of this thunderbolt has positively and significantly played roles in curbing adultery/fornication, infidelity and, sexual escapades in Yorubaland.

A study conducted by Obalowu and Abdul Rahim (2022) on marital infidelity and paternity disputes in Nigeria from Islamic perspective revealed that rise in widespread marital adultery be relates to failure to employ Islamic system which prohibits premarital relationships and familiarity with the opposite sex before wedding.

The research carried out by Bah (2024) on the impacts of extramarital affairs: lessons for social workers and child rights advocates using systematic review of the literatures revealed that the impacts of extramarital affairs are numerous and entail: pressure on public institutions, abandoning the family, hatred and enmity, divorce and separation, anger and violent behaviors, mental instability, sexual dysfunctions, scapegoating children, low productivity and financial losses, post-traumatic stress disorders, transmission of diseases, conflict in the family, illegitimate children, depression and anxiety and living in guilt and shame.

Despite the availability of literature on the different variables of this study, infidelity, paternity dispute and bastardy, a holistic study of their interplay has not been sufficiently studied. Hence, this paper aims to examine infidelity as a springboard for paternity disputes and bastardy. The psycho-social effects of paternity dispute and bastardy, the emerging trends in the resolution mechanisms, the interplay of traditional and modern mechanisms and the impact of the use of DNA results on parents and disputed children in Oyo State are also examined.

### **Methodological and Theoretical Framing**

#### **Social Exchange Theory**

An American sociologist, George C. Homans (1910-1989) is generally credited with developing social exchange theory through his 1958 paper "Social Behavior as Exchange" and his 1961

book "Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a sociological and psychological theory that explains social behaviour as the result of an exchange process. It postulates that individuals behave in social interactions based on a cost-benefit analysis, where they weigh the potential rewards against the costs of such interactions. The theory can be used to explain various types of relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and professional interaction.

The theory contends that human relationships are governed by a cost-benefit approach. In the case of infidelity, individuals may engage in extramarital affairs if they believe the rewards (e.g., emotional or sexual satisfaction) outweigh the costs (e.g., social rejection or dissolution of marriage). People engage in affairs outside marriage if they think rewards will exceed costs (Afunugo, 2024).

### **Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory is a broad and multidisciplinary area of study that emerged from feminist movements. Feminist theory attempts to explain and critically examine the nature of gender inequality by examining social roles, power relations, and daily experiences. Feminist theory encompasses a variety of distinct disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economics, philosophy, and more. Feminist legal theory challenges patriarchal legal systems and advocates for gender equality in various fields.

Feminist Theory resists the gendered regimes of adultery and bastardy. Women have long been disproportionately blamed and punished for bearing children out of wedlock, while men are spared the blame. Feminist theorists demand equitable legal systems that protect women's and children's rights, particularly in paternity disputes. Feminist scholars advocate for the equal participation of women and men in legal reforms and policy-making in order to ensure gender-equitable outcomes (Marita & Pramesti, 2023). Research shows that women's movements have successfully employed international norms to challenge women's subordination in areas such as violence against women and gender equality in the workplace (Cherif, 2020).

Feminist theory is plagued by internal debate over legal reform approaches, the nature of the state, and methodological approaches (Munro, 2017). These variations have been sharpened by the development of postmodernist perspectives, challenging essentialist accounts of womanhood and placing subversion ahead of critique (Munro, 2017). Feminist theory condemns unequal gender norms that are paid for by women, particularly in family law and domestic work (Taib & Johari, 2024). The correct understanding of paternity is evolving with the existing knowledge being influenced by gender identity and social constructions that equalize the rights of all child guardians. Paternity establishment can be voluntary or legally compelled and entails considerations in civil, family, and international law (Gussev et al., 2020).

### **Methodology**

Oyo State which was created on February 3, 1976 is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. It is in the Southwest geo-political zone. The population of Oyo State in the 2006 Census was 5,580,894, while the estimated figure was put at 8.54 million for 2025 at a growth rate of 2.3% per year from the 2022 population of 7,976,100. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Purposive sampling was used to select three major cities, namely Ibadan, Oyo and Ogbomoso to represent each of the three senatorial districts. However, random sampling was used to select 400 respondents to the questionnaire. The sample size of 400 was arrived at using Yamane(1967) formula from the estimated population of 8,540,000 of Oyo State in 2025, adopting a 5% margin of error with a 95% confidence level. The formula and illustration are presented below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = signifies the sample size

N = signifies the population under study (8,540,000)

e = signifies the margin error is 0.05

$$n = \frac{8,540,000}{1+854,000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{8,540,000}{8,540,001(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{8,540,000}{21,350.002}$$

Therefore, the sample size is 399.99. This is approximated to 400 respondents.

Quantitative data was obtained through a specially constructed questionnaire administered to 400 respondents at different localities spread across three main cities in Oyo State. Primary data were collected through questionnaire while secondary data were obtained from articles in journals, books and internet. A pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out to ensure clarity and relevance. The researchers managed the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software to get mean scores.

### Results and Discussion of Findings

Through the use of means as descriptive statistics, the results of primary data obtained through the questionnaire, were presented in tables to answer research questions 1- 5. Discussion of findings followed each of the tables in narrative form. To enhance robustness of the study, current findings were juxtaposed with earlier research findings of numerous scholars.

Table 1: Five-point Likert scale distribution of respondents' perceived rate of infidelity in Oyo State.

S/N	Perceived rate of infidelity	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
1	Rate of infidelity among salaried workers	400	Positive	5	1	4.2	Favourable
2	Rate of infidelity among the self-employed class	400	Positive	5	1	3.9	Favourable
3	Involvement of women in the acts of infidelity	400	Positive	5	1	3.6	Favourable
4	Involvement of men in the acts of infidelity	400	Positive	5	1	2.1	Unfavourable
5	High infidelity in urban centres	400	Positive	5	1	3.6	Favourable
6	High infidelity rural areas	400	Positive	5	1	2.7	Unfavourable
7	Low infidelity in polygamous households	400	Negative	5	1	4.1	Unfavourable
8	Low infidelity in monogamous households	400	Negative	5	1	4.7	Unfavourable
9	Infidelity among illiterate people	400	Positive	5	1	4.2	Favourable
10	Infidelity among literate people	400	Positive	5	1	3.8	Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value = Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value = Unfavourable

The distributions of the survey variables as presented in Table 1 show that six out of the ten variables that were used to test perception of the respondents on causes of infidelity are favourable while four were not. Results show infidelity among salaried workers ( $m= 4.3.6$ ), self-employed class (3.9), women ( $m=3.6$ ), men ( $m= 2.1$ ) infidelity in urban centres inhabitants ( $m= 3.6$ ), infidelity in rural areas inhabitants ( $m= 2.7$ ), low infidelity in polygamous households ( $m= 4.1$ ), low infidelity in monogamous households ( $m= 4.7$ ), illiterate people ( $m= 4.2$ ) and literate people ( $m=3.8$ ). It is further revealed that while infidelity in rural area is low, type of household, whether monogamous or polygamous, does not make infidelity low.

The response to rate of infidelity among men, which is said to be low, in Oyo is shaped by deeply ingrained cultural values and religious beliefs, which tend to stigmatize women more than men for extra-marital affairs. Contrary to the finding of this study, Okunola, Olusola & Oduntan (2022) posited that males are more likely than women to engage in extramarital affairs as their statistics shows that 50% of men and 26% of women had engaged in infidelity at one point or the other in their marriage. Extramarital relationships for men were widely accepted in the traditional past, while women were expected to be monogamous (Irinoye, 2005). This double standard persists, with married women under greater societal pressure to transform from “promiscuous girls” to “good wives” (Smith, 2010).

**Table 2: Five-point Likert scale distribution of respondents perceived social and economic precipitants of infidelity in Oyo State.**

S/N	Perceived causes of infidelity	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
1	Neglect of family responsibilities	400	Positive	5	1	4.3	Favourable
2	Sexual incompatibility	400	Positive	5	1	3.8	Favourable
3	Bullying	400	Negative	5	1	3.7	Favourable
4	Poverty affecting the couple	400	Positive	5	1	4.1	Favourable
5	Peer group influence	400	Positive	5	1	2.9	Unfavourable
6	Ineffective communication among couples	400	Positive	5	1	2.7	Unfavourable
7	No delay in childbirth	400	Negative	5	1	2.6	Favourable
8	Social media influence	400	Positive	5	1	2.7	Favourable
9	No financial burden from family members	400	Negative	5	1	1.9	Favourable
10	Covetousness/greed	400	Positive	5	1	4.8	Favourable

\*\* A positively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value = Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value = Unfavourable

The distributions of the survey as presented in Table 2 show that two out of the ten variables that were used to examine causes of infidelity are unfavourably scored by respondents. These are peer group influence ( $m=2.9$ ) and ineffective communication among couples ( $m= 2.7$ ). The favourably scored variables are neglect of family responsibilities ( $m= 4.3$ ), sexual incompatibility ( $m= 3.8$ ), bullying ( $m= 3.7$ ), poverty affecting the couple ( $m= 4.1$ ), no delay in childbirth ( $m= 2.6$ ), social media influence ( $m=2.7$ ), no financial burden from family members( $m=1.9$ ) and covetousness/greed ( $m= 4.8$ ). Social exchange theory, in the context of family relations, presumes that individuals make logical choices through cost-benefit calculations in social relations (Afunugo, 2024). Thus, rather than external influence, individual engaged in infidelity seems to be attracted by accruing benefits.

From the results, it is observed that double standard has marred debate on the justification of the root causes of infidelity. Some people blame men for poor handling of their homes and

rush to justify women who resort to infidelity to cope with the psychological and material needs of everyday life. Women have also been blamed for driving their spouses out due to a lack of marital care. It has also been argued that economic inequality and aspirations for modern lifestyles drive vulnerable women to rich men and also act as impetus to men's involvement in extra-marital misbehavior (Smith, 2007). Feminist theorists opine that patriarchal society that has relegated women's opportunities to economic and political opportunities puts them in situations of want that rich men exploit to get at their emotions and entangle them in sexual relationships.

**Table 3: Five-point Likert scale distribution of respondents' perceived psycho-social effects of IPDB in Oyo State.**

S/N	Perceived effects of IPDB	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
1	Affects partners' mental health	400	Positive	5	1	3.2	Favourable
2	Results to violent behaviour	400	Positive	5	1	4.7	Favourable
3	Does not result to social anxiety	400	Negative	5	1	4.1	Unfavourable
4	Lead to withdrawal syndrome	400	Positive	5	1	3.8	Favourable
5	Lead to divorce	400	Positive	5	1	4.6	Favourable
6	Lead to low productivity at work	400	Positive	5	1	4.0	Favourable
7	Does not Result in social isolation	400	Negative	5	1	4.1	Unfavourable
8	Leads to stigmatization	400	Positive	5	1	2.3	Unfavourable
9	Leads to low academic performance	400	Positive	5	1	2.3	Unfavourable
10	Does not lead to suicidal thought	400	Negative	5	1	4.2	Unfavourable

\* A positively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value = Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value = Unfavourable

The distributions of the survey as presented in table 3 show that five out of the ten variables that were used to test the effect of IPDB from the respondents are favourable, while five are not. Affects partners' mental health (m= 3.2), results to violent behaviour (m= 4.7), leads to withdrawal syndrome (m= 3.8), leads to divorce (m= 4.6) and leads to low productivity at work (m=4.0) are favourably scored. On the other hand, does not result to social anxiety (m= 4.1), does not result in social isolation (m= 4.1), leads to stigmatisation (m= 2.3), lead to low academic performance (m= 2.3), does not lead to suicidal thought (m= 4.2) are unfavourably scored.

Previous studies have found that mental instability, as a state of psychological or emotional distress that interferes with an individual's ability to function normally, may result from unfaithfulness of a spouse (Falana & Bada, 2013; Yahaya, 2015), Effects may include anxiety, depression, mood swings, or other severe psychiatric illnesses. Betrayal, guilt, and trauma caused by court cases may exacerbate pre-existing illnesses or create new ones (Esere, 2015). The discovery of misattributed paternity by direct-to-consumer DNA testing can lead to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and panic symptoms (Oliveira, et al., 2021). Depression for couples, poor health, suicidal ideation, killing of spouse, separation, divorce, poor children's upbringing

and poor academic performance of children are consequences of infidelity that have been established in literature (Abidin et al., 2018; Esere, 2015; Falana & Bada, 2013; Yahaya, 2015).

Bastardy, being a consequence of infidelity, upsets the social equilibrium within families and tends to result in fights over paternity and child support. Infidelity by parents has been found to have negative impacts on children's self-esteem, relationship trust, and psychological well-being of the entire family (Ibitoye, 2024; Amparo, Saluna, & Rungduin, 2023). The economic consequences of cheating are actual, both at the family level and at the societal level. Cheating impoverishes families and generates adverse spillovers that burden taxpayers in the form of family disintegration (Crouch & Dickes, 2016).

**Table 4: Five-point Likert scale distribution of the emerging conflict resolution mechanisms and platforms in handling IPDB in Oyo State, Nigeria.**

S/N	Resolution mechanisms	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
1	Traditional family intervention	400	Positive	5	1	4.7	Favourable
2	Religious bodies mediation	400	Positive	5	1	4.2	Favourable
3	Professional therapeutic counselling	400	Positive	5	1	3.3	Favourable
4	Court adjudication	400	positive	5	1	1.6	Unfavourable
5	Mediation centres arbitral roles	400	Positive	5	1	3.9	Favourable
6	Social works adjudication is ineffective	400	Positive	5	1	3.5	Favourable
7	Radio and Television med-arb programmes	400	Positive	5	1	2.6	Unfavourable
8	DNA test	400	Positive	5	1	4.4	Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value = Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value = Unfavourable

The distributions of the survey as presented in Table 4 show that six out of the eight variables that were used to test the use of certain strategies as perceived by the respondents are favourable while two are not. The methods favourably acknowledge are traditional family intervention (m=4.7), religious bodies mediation (m= 4.2), professional therapeutic counselling (m= 3.3), mediation centres arbitral roles (m= 3.9), social works adjudication (m= 3.5) and DNA test (m= 4.4). Court adjudication (m= 1.6) and radio and television med-arb programmes (m= 2.6) are not favourably scored.

More and more, mediation and ADR are being used to resolve paternity disputes outside the courtroom. It is often less adversarial and can preserve family relationships. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR), particularly mediation, has gained widespread use in settling family conflicts, including paternity disputes, outside of court. The strength of mediation lies in the focus on parental cooperation, emotional issues, and preventing polarization in negotiations (Emery, 2011).

The adversarial approach to litigation in court often exacerbates parents' separation or divorce, thus, ADR is a highly desirable alternative in resolving marital differences. ADR procedures, for example, arbitration, mediation, and hybrids like rent-a-judge programs, summary jury trials, and mini-trials, offer faster, less public, and less expensive ways for resolving differences (Foster, 2025). However, previous study by (Bah, 2024) found that traditional mediation and arbitration procedures at the family level, though culturally relevant, are often disproportionate in their interventions particularly to women and children.

Professional therapeutic counselling has been found to be useful in managing IPDD cases. According to Chang (2016), this is achieved through re-unification counselling. This is an umbrella term to refer to counselling interventions designed to renew the relationship between a parent and a child who has refused contact with that parent due to a number of reasons which may include paternity dispute. Once this is achieved to couple begins to relate again and try to forget past mistakes.

The introduction of DNA testing has changed the way paternity controversies are resolved. Courts in Oyo State now increasingly use DNA evidence to determine paternity, lending a scientific dimension to judicial determination. DNA testing has greatly impacted paternity cases in legal systems worldwide. Courts increasingly rely on DNA evidence to determine paternity, introducing a scientific factor to judicial decisions (Singh et al., 2021). This has led to unprecedented rulings, such as the Tangier Court case in Morocco, where DNA tests were utilized as proof in a family law case (Serrano-Ruano, 2018).

The entry of new forums and technologies such as DNA technology, professional counsellors' intervention, media, and online dispute resolution platforms provides a ray of hope for quicker dispute resolution. Yet their availability and acceptability in Oyo remain limited, raising questions about how well they will work in addressing the unique challenges posed by infidelity and paternity disputes.

**Table 5: Five-point Likert scale distribution of respondents perceived effectiveness of emerging conflict resolution mechanisms and platforms in handling IPDB as means of addressing their psycho-social effects in Oyo State.**

S/N	Perceived effects of resolution mechanisms	Sample Size	Construct Structure	Max	Min	Mean	Decision rule
1	Traditional family intervention reconciliation and prevention of divorce	400	Positive	5	1	4.3	Favourable
2	Religious bodies mediation mitigation of violence and divorce	400	Positive	5	1	4.5	Favourable
3	Professional therapeutic counselling relieves mental health	400	Positive	5	1	3.6	Favourable
4	Court adjudication results in reconciliation	400	Positive	5	1	1.5	Unfavourable
5	Mediation centres arbitral roles bringing transformed relationship	400	Positive	5	1	3.4	Favourable
6	Social works adjudication removal of anxiety and stigmatization	400	Positive	5	1	3.9	Favourable
7	Radio and Television med-arb programmes reduction of violent behaviour	400	Positive	5	1	1.3	Unfavourable
8	DNA test removal of suicidal thought	400	Positive	5	1	3.9	Favourable

\* A positively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value = Favourable

- \* A positively structured construct with less than 3.0 mean value or a negatively structured construct with above 3.0 mean value = Unfavourable

The distributions of the survey variables as presented in Table 5 show that two out of the eight variables that were used to examine effectiveness of various interventions are perceived by respondents as unfavourable. These are court adjudication results in reconciliation ( $m= 1.5$ ) and radio and television med-arb programmes reduction of violent behaviour ( $m= 1.3$ ). Traditional family intervention reconciliation and prevention of divorce ( $m= 4.3$ ), religious bodies mediation mitigation of violence and divorce ( $m= 4.5$ ), professional therapeutic counselling relieves mental health ( $m=3.6$ ), mediation centres arbitral roles bringing transformed relationship ( $m= 3.4$ ), social works adjudication removal of social anxiety and stigmatization ( $m= 3.9$ ) and DNA test removal of suicidal thought ( $m= 3.9$ ) are favourably viewed.

Previous research suggests that mediation at the family level can significantly improve relationships between divorced parents and children (Bastaitis & Mortelmans 2016). Respondents to an earlier study by Odebode, Adegunju, Al-Hikma and Raji (2024) also viewed dialogue as a positive influence on marital dispute resolution. Regular dialogue whether facilitated by third-party interveners or initiated by the couples are useful in navigating disagreements without escalating into major conflicts; making it an essential tool for maintaining marital stability (Fleming & Morrill, 2017).

The finding of this study corroborates that of Angolo & Obida (2020) on the effect of marital counselling on couples' conflict resolution of members of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) in Nassarawa State and Abuja which revealed that marital counselling had significant effect on couples' conflict resolution. Many couples reconcile through intensive counselling even after the courts have granted them divorce.

Interest in DNA testing for contested paternity is on the increase. Obokoh (2024) reported in the *Businessday*, April 21, 2024 that many couples in Nigeria are increasingly resorting to Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) testing due to rising challenges such as infidelity suspicions, fertility struggles, and migration-related worries. Unfortunately, Anyogu and Ozioko (2019) discovered that the arrival of DNA testing has brought new challenges, with projections that 30% of Nigerian men are not the biological fathers of their children. The emphasis on genetic testing has demonized women and overlook concerns like domestic violence or sexual assault (Ayres, 2016). Feminist theorists tend to argue that the present situation is unfair to women as men who are guilty of impregnating another man's wife hardly face social condemnation and labelling. Shameless men even come to the open to contest paternity of children born by their concubines.

## Conclusion

The incidents of infidelity, paternity dispute and bastardy generate complex social as well as legal challenges in Oyo State, Nigeria. The ripple effects of an unstable marriage, divorce, domestic violence, and social unrest are far-reaching and profound. Although the issues are complex, they are not insurmountable. As the world still grapples with these phenomena, emerging trends in dispute resolution, aided by technological advances, hold out the prospect of more even-handed and effective results. By addressing the root causes of infidelity and putting the interests of children affected at the top of the agenda, we can pave the way for an equitable and more humane approach to the management of paternity disputes in the modern age.

Innovations such as DNA profiling and ADR present huge opportunities for the resolution of disputes on paternity issues, but there have to be reforms in law as well as cultural sensitization by professional counsellors and other experts, so that the rights of all the players, particularly the children, can be protected. There will be a need to achieve balanced purposes for settlements of paternity disputes by aligning traditional values with modern principles in law.

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