

PROMOTING MARITAL FIDELITY: THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CASE FOR HONEST PATERNITY IN LAGOS URBAN, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article examines 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. This alarming trend highlights significant strains on family trust, child welfare, and social integrity. Employing a qualitative methodology, including in-depth interviews and focus groups with religious leaders, family counselors, and community members, alongside the review of extant literature on the subject matter, the study explores the underlying factors of infidelity and the importance of truthful paternity. The necessary rationales and deductions were defined via phenomenological and culture-centered approaches: Social Exchange Theory (SET) was used to substantiate the claims of this research. The paper fills a knowledge gap by analyzing how Lagos's unique socio-religious context shapes expectations of fidelity and parental honesty, an aspect often neglected in discussions around family values. Findings reveal a high rate of failed 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. Religious teachings and community support emerge as crucial influences on fidelity. Recommendations call for religious institutions to enhance marriage counseling initiatives and for public campaigns to advance a culture of transparency and loyalty, underscoring the social and moral imperatives of honest paternity within marriage.

Key Words: Marital Fidelity, Paternity, Honest, Socio-Religious, Promoting, Case.

Introduction

Paternity scandals are increasingly common in Nigeria, leading to notable social and legal effects on families and communities. Deep-rooted cultural values place great importance on family heritage and the authenticity of children's lineage. As a result, there is intense pressure to uphold a stable family image, often causing individuals to hide paternity matters instead of addressing them directly. Ogundipe et al (2021) elucidate that Nigeria is reported to have the second-highest rate of paternity fraud worldwide after Jamaica, with many men unknowingly raising children who are not biologically theirs. This has led to calls for mandatory DNA testing at birth to address the issue. Paternity determination in Nigeria traditionally relies on acknowledgment, presumption, or proof, with acknowledgment being the most common: Once a man accepts paternity, it's typically unquestioned. When children are born within wedlock, there's a presumption that the husband is the

father, as it's assumed that a mother knows the true father of her child. However, DNA testing has increasingly revealed discrepancies, exposing infidelity and leading to scandals, as some men discovered they were not the biological fathers, resulting in intense social and marital conflicts.

Abiodun Salami a senior geneticist with DNA Centre for Paternity Test, Allen Avenue in Ikeja, Lagos (cited by Augoye, 2021) reveals that based on extensive experience with DNA ordtestingmsw in Nigeria, six out of ten children tested are not biologically related to the fathers who believe they are. The geneticist explained that, particularly with firstborns, many women have established relationships before marriage, which they often continue even after they wed. As a result, it is common for the firstborn child to be fathered by someone other than the husband. Uchediunor (2023) observes that failed paternity tests in Nigeria, especially in the context of rising awareness and access to DNA testing, have created significant social and familial impacts. With advancements in technology making these tests more accessible, families and communities are increasingly grappling with issues around trust, identity, and the psychological effects of discovering non-biological parentage. Pertinent to the core conventional Nigerian various tribal ideals, paternity revelations can strain traditional values around lineage and inheritance, challenging the cultural expectations tied to fatherhood. At a societal level, such revelations often bring into question the role of marital fidelity and trust, raising

discussions on the ethical implications of privacy versus truth in familial relationships.

Ihejirika (2024) reports that paternity fraud in Nigeria has emerged as a significant social crisis, with a recent Smart DNA report indicating that 27 percent of paternity tests conducted from July 2023 to June 2024 revealed non-biological fatherhood, suggesting that more than one in four men tested were not the biological fathers of their children. This troubling trend cuts across all social strata, driven by factors like societal pressure on women to bear male children, infidelity, and the economic security tied to childbearing in certain cultural contexts. Often undiscovered for years, paternity fraud is increasingly revealed during medical emergencies, divorce proceedings, or routine DNA tests, exacerbating familial and legal complexities. Additionally, the report noted a surge in DNA testing for immigration purposes, reflecting the “Japa” phenomenon, where Nigerians seek opportunities abroad, and further highlighting shifts in family structures and economic factors in the country. Samson (2024) articulates that paternity fraud is an increasingly prevalent issue in Nigeria, catalyzed by the growing accessibility of Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) testing, which reveals instances where children are falsely attributed to men, often husbands, without biological ties. A rising number of men discover through DNA testing that they are not the biological fathers of children they believed to be theirs, exposing cases of deception and infidelity that strain familial and marital bonds. According to molecular biologist Andrew Nnaji (cited by Samson), recent studies show that one in four

men tested is not the biological father, placing Nigeria among the highest in paternity fraud globally. Prominent cases, such as comedian Chinedu Ani (known as Nedu), who discovered a son he had fathered was not his, and Delta State Judge Anthony Okorodas, who found three of his children were not biologically related to him, underscore the significant personal and societal implications of this issue, often resulting in broken relationships and publicized controversies.

The Operations Manager, Smart DNA, Elizabeth Digia (cited by Addeh, 2024) commenting on the status of the DNA failed paternity tests in Nigeria, exclaim that the reports of recent findings on DNA testing in Nigeria reveal changing dynamics in family structures, with a notable increase in negative paternity results and a rise in immigration-related testing requests. The concentration of testing in Lagos highlights issues around accessibility and awareness of DNA services in other parts of the country. The data shows a high preference for early paternity confirmation, with over half (54%) of the children tested being aged 0-5. Additionally, the majority of requests came from men aged 41 and above (45.6%), followed by those aged 31-40 (37%), suggesting economic capacity and heightened paternity concerns among older men. Addeh relates that a spokesperson from the testing company emphasized their commitment to expanding services nationwide while maintaining high standards of accuracy and confidentiality.

Pertinent to the aforementioned contexts, this study explores the socio-religious importance of promoting

marital fidelity in Lagos Urban, Lagos State, Nigeria; specifically against the backdrop of rising surging paternity tests exposed through DNA analysis. The research seeks to understand the underlying causes of marital infidelity and its adverse effects on family trust, child welfare, and social cohesion in Lagos, a city where socio-religious expectations heavily influence family values. It focuses on how Lagos's unique socio-cultural context shapes attitudes toward fidelity and the ethical significance of honest paternity, an area often overlooked in broader discussions of family dynamics. The study adopts a qualitative methodology, utilizing in-depth interviews and focus groups with religious leaders, family counselors, and community members, alongside a review of relevant literature pertinent to the study's focus. Generalizations and conclusions were streamlined using phenomenological and culture-centered approaches. Social exchange theory was applied to reinforce its arguments.

Examining the Essence of DNA Paternity Test; Precision alongside Reliability

Adams (2008), Pollack (2012) and Smart DNA (2023) elaborate that DNA paternity testing is a scientific method used to establish a biological relationship between a child and a potential father by analyzing unique genetic markers. Unlike earlier methods, such as ABO blood typing and HLA antigen testing, which could only exclude possible fathers with limited reliability, DNA testing offers a high level of accuracy. The authors equally posit that DNA testing addresses critical questions of parentage that arise in legal, social, and

personal contexts, helping individuals verify or establish family relationships. The authors declare that DNA paternity testing is one of the most advanced methods for determining parentage, boasting a high degree of accuracy and precision, with a 99.99% probability of parentage when the alleged parent is indeed biologically related to the child and 0% when they are not. However, they exclaim that the test is not infallible: While most individuals have a single genetic makeup, rare individuals known as chimeras possess two different sets of DNA. This unique genetic condition can lead to a false negative result in cases where the DNA in the reproductive cells differs from the DNA sampled for testing. Hence while DNA paternity tests are highly reliable, exceptional genetic variations like chimerism can impact their accuracy in rare instances. The authors moreover caution that while the testing technology is precise, the accuracy of results can be compromised by human error or sample contamination. Therefore, it underscores the importance of following sampling procedures closely to ensure the reliability of these highly accurate tests.

Bassindale (2015), DNA Diagnostics Center (DDC) (2022) and Cleveland Clinic (2024) enlightens that a DNA paternity test determines whether someone is the genetic parent of a child by analyzing and comparing their DNA. DNA, a hereditary genetic code present in nearly every cell, is inherited from both parents, making it possible to trace biological relationships. According to the aforementioned sources, paternity testing, typically used for legal purposes or establishing whether a

pregnancy resulted from consensual sexual intercourse or non-consensual acts like rape, resolving family uncertainties, or medical reasons, involves comparing specific genetic markers in a child's DNA with those in a potential parent's DNA. A strong match suggests a genetic link, while a lack of shared markers rules out paternity. The sources reveal that although alternative methods like blood and HLA type comparisons exist, DNA testing is preferred due to its superior accuracy in establishing biological connections: Illuminating that DNA tests are reliable and can be done at various stages, including during pregnancy or after birth, using simple cheek swabs to collect genetic material. The process is scientifically rigorous, providing trustworthy results that are legally admissible when performed at accredited testing facilities. The source's emphasis on facility approval highlights the need for controlled conditions to ensure results meet legal standards, reaffirming the precision of DNA testing as a definitive method for establishing biological relationships. Ultimately, from the findings hitherto, DNA paternity testing is widely recognized for its high accuracy in confirming biological parentage; however, ensuring its reliability demands rigorous attention to detail throughout the testing process. This level of precision is crucial to prevent human errors or any potential for organized manipulation, as lapses in handling or interpreting results could lead to significant legal, social, and emotional consequences. Thus, while the technology itself is robust, the integrity of the outcomes hinges on careful, standardized procedures at every stage.

How Lagos's High Religiosity Shapes Expectations of Marital Fidelity

In Lagos Urban, high levels of religiosity shape societal expectations surrounding marital fidelity. As Laguda (2013), Ofuafo (2019) and Janson (2021) rightly underscore; Lagos, as a vibrant metropolis, is home to diverse religious communities, primarily Christian, Muslim and African Traditional Religion. Almost every street in Lagos Urban has one or more peculiar religious faith worship center situated therein: Each promoting values of loyalty, commitment, and integrity in marriage. Religious leaders and institutions play a significant role in shaping cultural norms, emphasizing that marital fidelity is essential for preserving the sanctity of marriage, family stability, and societal cohesion. Sermons, religious gatherings, and marriage counseling sessions regularly highlight fidelity as a moral duty, reinforcing it as an obligation that transcends personal choice, with spiritual and communal repercussions. According to M. Iliyah (personal communication, October 31st, 2024), religious teachings on marital fidelity influence both social perceptions and individual actions, creating a collective moral standard in Lagos: For many residents, faith-based ethics deeply inform daily decisions and actions, and marriage is seen not only as a social contract but also a sacred covenant. Violating this covenant through infidelity is often viewed as both a betrayal of trust and a transgression against divine law, resulting in social and spiritual consequences. This viewpoint is particularly pervasive in Lagos Urban as religious institutions wield considerable moral authority, holding individuals accountable and, at times,

publicly addressing issues of infidelity within the community.

Moreover, the high religiosity in Lagos cultivates a sense of community responsibility toward upholding marital fidelity. Communities often feel a duty to support marriages and discourage infidelity through informal monitoring and interventions, especially in religious settings. Friends, family members, and faith communities often act as mediators when marital issues arise, reinforcing a framework in which marital fidelity is not only a personal responsibility but also a collective concern. This shared accountability cultivates an environment where fidelity is socially encouraged, making individuals more likely to honor their marital vows to preserve their social standing and align with religious expectations. O. Johnson (personal communication, October 31st, 2024) observes that Lagos's religious landscape provides numerous support systems to reinforce marital fidelity, from premarital counseling to faith-based relationship seminars. These initiatives offer practical guidance and foster discussions around loyalty, commitment, and the consequences of infidelity. Via incorporating religious values into these programs, religious institutions in Lagos help couples build a foundation of trust and moral fortitude, equipping them to overcome challenges that might threaten fidelity. Thus, the high religiosity in Lagos not only shapes expectations of marital fidelity but also provides a robust support network to sustain those commitments, reflecting a deeply ingrained cultural ethos where

fidelity is seen as both a religious duty and a pillar of a moral society.

How Lagos's Core Traditional Value Shapes Expectations of Marital Fidelity

The topic of marital fidelity in Lagos Urban is profoundly influenced by Yoruba core traditional values that strongly abhor infidelity. Z. Sam-Obi, O. Adeleke, J. Idowu and L. Babatunde (personal communication, October 31st, 2024) portray that the Yoruba core cultural values are in ascendancy in Urban Lagos. Yoruba culture, much like other African societies, holds marriage in high esteem, viewing it as a union that binds not only two individuals but also their families and communities. This commitment to fidelity is rooted in the deep belief that loyalty in marriage preserves family honor and community stability, key tenets of Yoruba tradition as enunciated in Heritage (2015). Therefore, marital fidelity is not solely a private commitment but a public expectation, with society placing immense value on trust and integrity within the marital bond. One of the essential Yoruba values that support marital fidelity is *iwarere*, or "good character." As O. Adeleke (personal communication, October 31st, 2024) elucidate, this value encourages individuals to act with honesty, respect, and self-discipline, particularly in marriage. A person with good character is expected to respect the sanctity of marriage, abstaining from infidelity as a way to honor their spouse and family. This emphasis on good character has long served as a moral compass in Yoruba society, with elders, parents, and community leaders reinforcing these virtues through storytelling, teachings, and

traditional ceremonies that celebrate fidelity and integrity.

The Yoruba value of *Omoluabi*, which translates roughly to a "person of good conduct and integrity", also reinforces the importance of marital fidelity. R. Adedeji (personal communication, October 31st, 2024) illuminates that *Omoluabi* stresses the values of responsibility, respect, and consideration for others, all of which play a significant role in maintaining healthy marital relationships. According to Yoruba beliefs, being an *Omoluabi* means that a person should honor commitments and act in ways that reflect positively on their family and heritage. In marriage, this means a steadfast commitment to one's partner, as infidelity would violate not only the spouse's trust but also the cultural and moral expectations of the community. Adedeji explicates that Yoruba culture's emphasis on communal accountability also shapes the expectations of marital fidelity. Unlike in more individualistic societies, the Yoruba view marriage as an integral part of social cohesion. Communities often hold couples accountable for upholding cultural norms, especially fidelity, as any violation of these norms reflects poorly on the family and wider community. This collective accountability serves as a moral deterrent, dissuading infidelity by reinforcing that one's actions in marriage carry consequences beyond personal life. Through these core values, Lagos's Yoruba traditional society maintains a strong emphasis on marital fidelity, making it a fundamental aspect of social stability and cultural integrity.

Pertinent to the Yoruba traditional core values on marital fidelity is Kehinde (2015) and Egbemode (2023) discussion on *Magun* and *Tesho*, traditional anti-adultery devices used by the Yoruba people to curb marital infidelity. These charms were intended as deterrents, punishing adulterers who unknowingly crossed them. *Magun*, for example, could be discreetly placed on a thread, broom, or other everyday items near a target's path, so that crossing over would activate its effects, potentially leading to severe, even fatal, consequences. The Yoruba's use of traditional antidotes like *Magun* and *Tesho* speaks volumes about their strong cultural stance against marital infidelity. These powerful charms reflect a community that viewed adultery as a serious breach of trust, warranting immediate and sometimes harsh consequences. By lacing everyday objects with these deterrents, the Yoruba sent a clear message: Unfaithfulness would not be tolerated, and those who strayed risked severe repercussions. This approach not only underscored the high value placed on marital loyalty but also acted as a social control mechanism, reinforcing the expectation of fidelity. However, while these methods were effective in their time, they now raise ethical concerns, calling for modern, humane responses to uphold respect for both marriage and human dignity.

Indices of the High Rate of Failed DNA Paternity Tests in Lagos Urban

Ozibo (2024) and Ojuroungbe (2024) document that a recent Smart DNA report covering June 2023 to June 2024 highlights that Lagos Urban leads DNA testing in

Nigeria, accounting for 73.1% of tests conducted nationwide, far outpacing other states such as Oyo (5.5%), Ogun (5.3%), Rivers (4.0%), and Delta (3.5%). The report reveals that 27% of paternity tests yielded negative results, meaning that in over one in four cases, the man tested was not the biological father. In Lagos Urban, Lagos Mainland tests comprised 67.5%, while the Lagos Island accounted for 32.5%, with the report attributing this difference to purchasing power. The primary reason for DNA tests was ‘Peace of Mind’ (85.9%), with immigration-related tests rising by 11.5%, largely influenced by the “*Japa*” syndrome of emigration. Men made up 88.2% of test initiators, showing they are more likely to question paternity, although the report cautions that sample bias may inflate fraud rates. Demographically, most test requests came from Yoruba individuals (53%), followed by Igbo (31.3%), Hausa (1.2%), and others (14.5%). Tests were predominantly conducted on male children (52.8%) and younger children aged 0-5 years (54%), reflecting a cultural inclination to confirm paternity early and more frequently for male offspring according to the report’s illustration. Commenting on the findings, Operations Manager at Smart, Elizabeth Digia, (cited by Ojuroungbe) noted the report’s valuable insights into the evolving dynamics and societal trends within Nigerian families.

Remarking on the report of Elizabeth Digia, Operations Manager at Smart, the News Agency of Nigeria (2024) depicts that the report’s indication of Lagos’s dominance due to economic disparity casts light on a profound

social paradox within the urban landscape; one that increasingly correlates with high rates of failed DNA paternity tests. As Lagos remains a magnet for economic opportunity, it also fosters a complex environment of socio-economic aspirations, pressures, and survival tactics that impact familial dynamics. The News Agency accentuates that for many, the pursuit of economic stability is coupled with demands that strain marital commitments, sometimes creating conditions where fidelity becomes secondary to financial or social leverage. The Agency specifies that the evidenced disparity in economic power often leads individuals to prioritize personal advancement, inadvertently destabilizing trust within families and influencing higher incidences of contested paternity. Thus, the urban prosperity that draws people to Lagos also reveals hidden fractures in family structure, where economic motivations may contribute to cases of misattributed paternity.

Agbajileke (2024) alongside C. Udeh, O. Afunugo, F. Babalola, I. Gbenga, K. Adewale and O. Olabisi (personal communication, October 31st, 2024) observe that the rising occurrence of failed DNA paternity tests in Lagos Urban reveals a troubling shift from traditional values, particularly highlighting issues of marital fidelity. E. Nkemakolam (personal communication, October 31, 2024) underscores that in Lagos, one lab, Truth Diagnostics, reported in 2023 that over 30% of paternity tests it conducted within a year revealed non-paternity; an unsettling reality that challenges cultural expectations about marriage and family integrity. He asserts further

that instances like that of a prominent Lagos entrepreneur, who discovered through DNA testing that two of his three children were not biologically his, underscore the profound impact of this trend, not only fracturing families but sparking versed societal conversations. Nkemakolam and Olabisi, spotlight that private paternity testing clinics across Lagos have shared similar observations, noting how families often seek testing to confirm suspicions of infidelity, with outcomes frequently leading to broken relationships and a reconsideration of family roles. This progression cum tidal wave raises critical questions about the depth of religious teachings in a city known for its devout Christian, Muslim together with African Traditional Faith communities, and contrasting Lagos' reputation for religious adherence with the high rates of non-paternity findings. Furthermore, the increasing demand for paternity testing suggests an erosion of trust in marital relationships, where suspicions now lead to the once-uncommon step of DNA testing. This growing phenomenon reflects a profound moral drift in Nigerian society, underscoring an urgent need for cultural and religious re-engagement to realign with long-held traditional values.

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Debacle of Failed DNA Paternity Test in Lagos Urban

Cook (2015), Roeckelein (2018) and Cherry (2023) aver that Social Exchange Theory, a central framework in understanding social interaction and structure, examines social behavior through the lens of costs and benefits in interpersonal relationships. According to the authors,

major proponents of the theory include American social psychologists John W. Thibaut (1917-1986) and Harold H. Kelley (1921-2003), along with American sociologists George C. Homans (1910-1989), Peter M. Blau (1918-2002), Richard Marc Emerson (deceased as of 1982), and the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009). The authors equally delineate that Homans, the founder of Social Exchange Theory, defined it as an exchange of activities that are tangible or intangible, rewarding or costly, between two or more people. His work emphasized individual behavior within dyadic exchanges. Blau and Emerson advanced Homans' ideas, shaping the theory's application within sociology. Thibaut and Kelley focused on psychological aspects, exploring small group and dyadic interactions. Lévi-Strauss contributed an anthropological angle, analyzing systems of generalized exchange in kinship and gift-giving. Overall, the theory highlights that people engage in relationships to maximize benefits and minimize costs, often ending relationships when costs outweigh the rewards.

The submission of Social Exchange Theory exhibits that relationships are guided by individuals' assessments of rewards and costs. In a marriage context, this involves partners evaluating the benefits of loyalty against the potential consequences of infidelity. In Lagos Urban, where socio-religious values play a central role, marital fidelity is often tied to cultural expectations and religious beliefs. SET helps assess how these beliefs influence the perceived 'rewards' of fidelity, such as trust, stability, and societal approval, against the 'costs' of infidelity, like

mistrust, social stigma, and the potential harm to family structure. SET also emphasizes the importance of reciprocity and equity in relationships, which can shed light on dynamics within marriages in Lagos. Fidelity may be viewed as a mutual exchange of respect, commitment, and shared values that both partners contribute to maintain. If a partner perceives an imbalance, such as a feeling that their commitment is not reciprocated, they may be more inclined to engage in infidelity, as SET suggests that individuals seek equity. In a Lagos Urban context, where religious and societal expectations strongly encourage equal commitment to marital values, the theory could be applied to encourage interventions that promote reciprocity. Churches and community groups could foster spaces for dialogue about the benefits of mutual fidelity, positioning it as a rewarding exchange that reinforces family cohesion and community harmony.

Furthermore, Social Exchange Theory helps in evaluating how external rewards and punishments influence marital decisions in a technologically advancing society. In Lagos Urban, social media and communication technology can facilitate connections outside the marriage, potentially increasing the 'reward' for infidelity. However, societal and religious influences act as deterrents, imposing high 'costs' for actions that betray marital vows. By using SET, researchers can analyze how technological factors shift the perceived balance of rewards and costs in Lagos based marriages. Initiatives that educate about the long-term 'costs' of infidelity, such as loss of trust and damage to family

reputation may help realign individuals' evaluations toward prioritizing fidelity. SET also allows for an exploration of the concept of relational satisfaction in marriage, as spouses who feel fulfilled and valued are generally less likely to seek rewards outside the marital relationship. In Lagos, marital satisfaction is often enhanced by alignment with socio-religious norms, including honest paternity, which resonates with the high value placed on lineage and family legacy. Programs promoting open communication, emotional support, and shared religious values can reinforce satisfaction within marriages, thus reducing the inclination for extramarital relationships. Through SET, religious and community leaders in Lagos can identify specific marital needs and address them, ultimately contributing to stronger, and more faithful marriages.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) can aid in understanding the role of long-term rewards in encouraging marital fidelity. In the socio-religious context of Lagos, fidelity is often associated with blessings, community respect, and a fulfilling family life. By encouraging couples to focus on these long-term rewards and emphasizing the detrimental effects of infidelity on these rewards, SET provides a strategic approach for religious leaders, counselors, and policymakers. Educating individuals on the benefits of long-term fidelity, such as healthy family dynamics and strong social standing, against the temporary gratification of infidelity can promote a culture of honesty in paternity and commitment in marriage. Thus, SET serves as a valuable tool in fostering fidelity within Lagos Urban marriages by

underscoring the significant rewards of loyal commitment over time.

The Socio-Religious Implications, Challenges, and Solutions to Rising Incidence of failed DNA Tests in Lagos Urban

Frank Tietie, Human Rights Lawyer and Executive Director, Citizens Advocacy for Social and Economic Rights (CASER) (cited by Abiola, 2021) elucidates that Paternity fraud involves a deliberate misrepresentation of a child's biological father, a deception that can be committed not only by women but also by men, including adult children. He stipulates that Section 8(3) of the Armed Forces Pensions Act CAP. A 23 L.F.N. 2004 requires individuals born out of wedlock to prove paternity to claim death benefits of a deceased parent who served in the Nigerian armed forces, and submitting false proof of paternity in this context constitutes fraud. Furthermore, the Legal Luminary enlightens that DNA testing laboratories could potentially engage in paternity fraud by tampering with or issuing false DNA results to mislead parties in paternity disputes, thus contributing to this form of deception.

The rise in failed DNA paternity tests in Lagos State is revealing a disturbing trajectory in family dynamics, igniting both social and religious concerns across its communities. In recent years, as already reflected in this study, cases of misattributed paternity have emerged more frequently, placing families under tremendous strain. As more individuals undergo DNA testing, sometimes prompted by suspicions or routine health

screenings, an increasing number of families are forced to confront hidden infidelities that, in many cases, were long kept under wraps. These findings are not only reshaping family structures but are also challenging established social norms, ultimately putting pressure on marital bonds and trust within households. The fallout from these discoveries leads to emotional, psychological, and financial stress, not only for the adults involved but also for the children whose identities and family ties are suddenly called into question.

The implications of failed paternity tests go beyond personal relationships, striking at the heart of societal values, particularly in a largely religious context like Lagos Urban. For many, family is the foundation of the social structure, and the discovery of infidelity challenges the sanctity of marriage as an institution. Failed paternity tests often expose issues such as dishonesty, lack of marital commitment, and a breakdown of trust between spouses, each of which has extensive social ramifications. Children from such cases may face stigma, experiencing identity crises as they navigate complex family dynamics. This has severe implications, especially in a society where family heritage, lineage, and legitimacy are of utmost importance. Moreover, Tietie (cited by Abiola, 2021) highlights that paternity-related disputes frequently lead to protracted legal battles over child custody, inheritance, and even spousal support: Thus intensifying marital conflict and creating a financial strain on both parties; thereby increasing the burden on judicial systems and further complicating efforts to maintain family unity.

One of the central issues driving this phenomenon appears to be female marital infidelity, which remains a sensitive topic, especially within socio-religious frameworks. While male infidelity often receives more cultural tolerance, cases of female infidelity trigger significant backlash, especially in societies with traditional views on gender roles. Women are expected to uphold family honor, and when trust is breached in this way, it is seen as a greater betrayal, with complex implications for marital expectations. Infidelity, and the resulting misattributed paternity, is viewed as not only a breach of trust but also a moral failing that taints family lineage. Thus, the societal reaction to such cases tends to be harsher, leading to calls for measures that encourage fidelity and address the root causes of marital dissatisfaction. Female marital infidelity, in this context, is viewed not only as a personal failure but also as a disruption to the social order, violating religious doctrines that emphasize honesty and fidelity within marriage. The challenges extend beyond the moral implications, encompassing legal, emotional, and economic dimensions. For men, these tests can foster a sense of betrayal, impacting their willingness to invest in relationships or provide for children they may no longer see as their own. For women, these situations may lead to anxiety and public shaming, while children are often caught in the middle, left to deal with the fallout of strained relationships. The increasing demand for DNA tests reflects a growing mistrust that undermines marital stability and the foundation of family units within Urban Lagos society.

The socio-religious implications of these findings underscore the need for communities to address the values that inform marital fidelity. In many cases, religious institutions have positioned themselves as custodians of these values, promoting teachings on faithfulness and the sanctity of marriage. Since Lagos Urban is predominantly Christian, Muslim alongside African Traditional faith-based society: They subsequently play crucial roles in shaping attitudes towards family and marriage. Religious teachings that advocate for loyalty, trust, and transparency in marital relationships can be crucial in fostering an environment where couples are less likely to stray. Furthermore, religious organizations could consider introducing counseling services that promote open communication between spouses, encouraging partners to address their issues honestly rather than seeking validation outside the marriage. Emphasizing the spiritual repercussions of infidelity and fostering a sense of accountability to both one's family and faith could create a deterrent effect that helps curb the problem.

Implementing educational programs that discuss the impact of paternity fraud and its consequences on families and society can help raise awareness and promote fidelity. Couples counseling and pre-marital courses that stress the importance of commitment, trust, and transparency can prepare individuals for the responsibilities of marriage. Furthermore, religious and social leaders could work together to de-stigmatize the act of seeking help within a marriage, creating a supportive environment that encourages honesty and

discourages deceit. There is also a need for legal frameworks that support responsible fatherhood, regardless of DNA results, to ensure that children's well-being remains a priority. Through concerted efforts that merge social, religious, and psychological support, Lagos Urban can address the root causes of marital infidelity and its resulting challenges, cultivating stronger, more resilient families that uphold the sanctity of marriage.

Conclusion

This study illustrates that DNA tests provide a scientific basis for establishing biological relationships while exposing the ethical and emotional ramifications of deceit within familial structures: Affirming biological connections enhances the integrity of paternal claims and fosters a culture of accountability and honesty in marital relationships. The work equally contributes significantly to the discourse on marital fidelity and honest paternity by highlighting the complex socio-religious factors that influence family dynamics in Lagos Urban, Lagos State. In examining the intricate interplay of religious beliefs, cultural values, and urban pressures, this research provides a holistic understanding of the motivations and deterrents surrounding marital fidelity in a rapidly modernizing environment. The study underscores the role of religious institutions in advocating for integrity in family life, promoting trust, and encouraging open dialogue on the ethical implications of paternity honesty. These insights add to existing knowledge by addressing both the moral and societal implications of marital

fidelity within the context of Lagos's urbanized, diverse population.

Despite its extensive coverage, this research is limited by its regional focus on Lagos Urban, which may not fully capture the complexities of similar issues in rural settings or other Nigerian regions. Additionally, while the study offers a thorough socio-religious analysis, it recognizes the potential variability of individual motivations that might not align with general cultural or religious expectations. Future research could broaden the scope by exploring comparative perspectives in rural areas or assessing the impact of emerging technologies, such as Smart Home Devices and Virtual Reality (VR) on family cohesion and honesty. These avenues will facilitate the attainment of a more comprehensive understanding of marital fidelity across Nigeria's diverse social landscape.

Recommendations

1. Sheets et al (2018), Cirino (2018), Ellis-Liang (2021) and Ojuroungbe (2024) articulate that Psychologists advise couples to consider a range of factors that could contribute to disputed paternity, beyond the common association with female marital infidelity, in order to prevent emotional and marital distress. They highlight medical errors, inaccuracies in genetic testing, and instances of baby exchanges as potential causes, and recommend pre-marital genetic testing to help identify any underlying issues early on. They emphasize that negligence and a lack of awareness about the importance of comprehensive genetic screening can also lead to

unforeseen outcomes later in life. In addition, the rare genetic condition called chimerism as already accentuated in this work, where an individual carries two distinct sets of DNA due to the early absorption of a fraternal twins cells, can cause failed paternity tests by producing DNA inconsistencies within the body. Such cases can result in false non-paternity findings if the DNA sample taken does not match the child's due to chimerism. Given the high demand for paternity testing in regions like Lagos Urban, where test volumes are notably high, psychologists stress the need for improved standards and reliability in DNA testing practices to ensure accurate results: This study equally upholds this discretion as one of its vital recommendation.

2. Public campaigns should be initiated to foster a culture of transparency and loyalty within families. These campaigns should aim to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of infidelity on family dynamics and societal trust. Utilizing various media platforms, including social media, community events, and local radio, the campaigns can highlight personal stories and testimonials that emphasize the importance of honest paternity alongside the fact that marital fidelity can be practically sustained. Engaging community leaders and influencers in these campaigns can help amplify the message, making it more relatable and impactful for an all-encompassing population.
3. It is crucial to develop educational programs that address the social and moral imperatives of honest paternity within marriage. These programs should be targeted at various age groups, including young adults and

teenagers, to instill values of fidelity and integrity early on. Schools, community centers, and religious organizations can collaborate to create functional, objective and praxis-oriented curricula that discuss the significance of trust in relationships, the responsibilities of parenthood, and the consequences of dishonesty. Lagos Urban can work towards rebuilding the social fabric that is essential for healthy family dynamics and community cohesion as the residents collectively persist in fostering a culture that values fidelity and transparency,.

4. Public officials in Lagos Urban should consider implementing legislative measures that support family integrity and accountability. This may include initiatives that encourage ethical behavior in relationships, promote responsible parenting, and provide resources for families in crisis. As they are consistent in establishing and sustaining a legal framework that upholds the values of honesty and fidelity, the government can further reinforce the societal expectations surrounding marital fidelity and paternity, contributing to a more trustworthy and cohesive community in Lagos Urban.
5. Furthermore, engaging men in the conversation about marital fidelity is crucial. Traditional gender roles often place the onus of fidelity primarily on women, leading to stigmatization and silencing of men's roles in maintaining marital integrity. Programs specifically targeting men can address issues of masculinity, peer pressure, and societal expectations surrounding fidelity. This can go a long way in instilling and inculcating sexual chastity in men. Encouraging men to openly

discuss their thoughts and experiences regarding fidelity can help dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote a more inclusive dialogue about marital responsibilities. Truth remains that every act of adultery involves two partners: Women do not impregnate themselves.

6. It is also essential to leverage technology to facilitate conversations around marital fidelity and paternity. Online platforms and mobile applications can be developed to provide resources, counseling services, and forums for couples to discuss their concerns anonymously. These digital tools can offer educational content on maintaining healthy relationships and understanding the emotional and social implications of infidelity. Utilizing technology in this regard can both enable and expedite the discussion around fidelity to reach a more extensive audience, particularly younger generations who are more comfortable with digital communication.
7. There should be concerted efforts between Religious Leaders and Legislators with respect to creating guidelines for paternity testing that prioritize the psychological well-being of families involved. These guidelines could include mandatory counseling sessions before and after testing, allowing individuals to process their feelings and the potential consequences of the results. Such measures can help mitigate the emotional distress that may arise from unexpected test outcomes and encourage families to seek resolution and healing rather than conflict.

8. Stefansson (2013), Ferro (2013) and Manser (2022) comments on Iceland's Íslendinga-App, developed to prevent accidental incest given their small population, by helping Icelanders verify distant family connections. This kind of App can serve as an innovative model that Lagos could adapt to address its rising DNA paternity failures linked to digital marital infidelity. With rapid technological advancement already shaping society, Lagos Urban, being a densely populated urban center facing increased cases of fraudulent paternity due to hidden affairs, could implement a similar app to promote transparency in relationships. Such an app could allow couples to verify parentage or ensure honest paternity through biometric or genetic links, thereby protecting familial integrity and reinforcing marital fidelity in a modern, tech-driven era. Emulating Iceland's approach, the Lagos State government, alongside the federal government, could leverage technology to help curb deceit in relationships, reinforce family trust, and address these issues proactively; helping to restore confidence in family structures in an increasingly digital age.

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