

## Original Paper

# Navigating Wellbeing and Coping: Quantitative Analysis of The Experiences of Teenager of Infidel Parents in Ibadan

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### Abstract

*Infidelity has a pervasive impact on social systems, but none is more affected than the nuclear family. However, existing studies have not explicitly focused on the experience of teenagers in low and middle-income countries like Nigeria. Hence, this study explored the psychosocial wellbeing and coping mechanism of teenagers with infidel parents in Ibadan. The study used descriptive survey research; 200 teenagers were selected through purposive sampling technique in secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis. A validated questionnaire (parental Infidelity, and psychosocial Wellbeing Questionnaire) was used. Data was analyzed at 0.05 level of significance, using inferential statistics. The study indicated that parental infidelity negatively affects the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis ( $F(2/196) = 26.3 < 0.05$ ); the multiple regression indicates that coping skills such as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping affects wellbeing of teenagers who have experienced parental infidelity in Ibadan Metropolis ( $P < 0.05$ ). In conclusion, children experiencing parental infidelity utilize problem-focused coping skills, while there was a negative wellbeing among teenage from infidel parents. Hence, social workers should help teenagers with infidel parents to cope while navigating live stressors through innovative social work skills.*

### Keywords

*parental Infidelity, psychosocial wellbeing, coping mechanisms, teenagers*

### 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this phase, individuals are particularly susceptible to the influence of their family, peers, and community, which can profoundly impact their psychological and emotional wellbeing. In diverse societies such as Nigeria, where religious beliefs often play a central

role in individuals' lives, the experiences of teenagers from families with non-faith orientations require careful examination. The wellbeing and coping of teenagers of infidel parents has become an important area of research because the experience of infidelity is a stressor that does not only affect the couple but also the children. Infidelity has been defined as the "breach of trust and/or violation of agreed upon norms" (Blow & Hartnett, 2005) within a romantically, sexually, and emotionally exclusive monogamous relationship. Infidelity, also known as extramarital affairs, can have profound and detrimental effects on married couples and their relationships. Infidelity in marriage not only affects the couple directly involved but also has significant repercussions on children, teenagers, and adults (Mark & Janssen, 2019).

Previous studies have examined the effects of infidelity on married couples; the study by Mark and Janssen (2019) indicated that infidelity can lead to a breakdown of trust, emotional distress, and significant conflicts within marriage. The impact of infidelity on the marital bond may result in a higher likelihood of separation and divorce (Amato & Previti, 2003). In addition, feelings of betrayal, anger, and sadness, which can lead to a loss of intimacy and emotional connection between partners has been reported in the betrayed spouse (Whisman & Snyder, 2007). Also, the effects of infidelity in marriage on children and adults have been reported in previous studies (Amato, 2010; Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2018).

Religious beliefs and practices have historically constituted a cornerstone of Nigeria's social, cultural, and psychological life. However, shifting global trends and increased exposure to different worldviews have given rise to a growing number of families with non-faith or alternative belief systems, including atheism, agnosticism, and secular humanism. Consequently, adolescents raised in such households may grapple with unique challenges and opportunities in the realm of wellbeing and coping mechanisms. Despite the general awareness of the impact of religious beliefs on mental health and coping strategies, limited empirical research has explored the experiences of teenagers in non-faith families within the Nigerian context. For children, the revelation of infidelity within their parents' relationship can be highly distressing and traumatic. Witnessing parental conflict and experiencing the emotional aftermath of infidelity can lead to feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and a sense of betrayal (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2018). Amaro reported that infidelity can weaken the parent-child bond as the adults' focus may shift away from their children due to the intense emotional turmoil they are experiencing (Amaro, 2010). Yet, there have been few examinations of the effect marriage infidelity can have on teenagers' psychosocial well-being and coping mechanism. Practically, the insights gained from this research can inform mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers about the needs and resources required to support this understudied population's mental and emotional growth. Additionally, on a societal level, understanding the challenges and strengths of teenagers from non-faith families contributes to the ongoing discourse on religious diversity, tolerance, and pluralism in multicultural societies like Nigeria. Hence, this study aims to unravel the impact of parental infidelity on the

wellbeing and coping of teenagers in Ibadan using appropriate data collection instruments and report their coping mechanisms.

## 2. Research Hypotheses

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant effect of parental infidelity on the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is significant effect of coping skills (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant) on wellbeing of teenagers with infidel parents in Ibadan Metropolis.

## 3. Methods and Designs

### 3.1 Research Design

The study is a cross-sectional design, and a descriptive survey research design was adopted. It is suitable for this research because it helps to describe, record, analyze and interpret the conclusion that exists in the study. It is described as the plan structure and strategies of investigation concerned so as to obtain answers to research questions which will elicit information on the survey of the coping mechanisms and psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers who experience parental infidelity in Ibadan Metropolis.

### 3.2 Population

The target population for the study consists of teenagers in schools and communities within Ibadan South-West Local Government Area, Ibadan Metropolis. Ibadan South-West Local Government Area is one of the local government areas in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Ibadan is the capital city of Oyo State in southwestern Nigeria and is one of the largest cities in the country. The city is known for its historical significance, cultural heritage, and academic institutions.

Ibadan South-West Local Government Area is a political subdivision within the larger city of Ibadan. Local government areas in Nigeria are administrative units that facilitate the governance and provision of public services at the grassroots level. These areas are further divided into wards, which are the smallest units of local administration.

Ibadan South-West Local Government Area likely encompasses a portion of the southern and western parts of the Ibadan Metropolis. The local government administration is responsible for various services and development projects within its jurisdiction, including health care, education, infrastructure, waste management, and more.

### 3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 200 teenagers for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used because the respondents shared common criteria. 5 wards were used for the study; 40 respondents were selected from each ward which makes 200 the total number of respondents used for the study.

### 3.4 Instruments

The research instrument for the study is a single questionnaire tagged Parental Infidelity and Psychosocial Wellbeing Questionnaire (PIPSWQ). The structured questionnaire is made up of four sections viz A-D.

*Section A: Demographic characteristics:* This consists of item questions on demographic characteristics (age, date of birth, gender, level of education, specialty, religion, tribe, parental marital status, and family background) of teenagers.

*Section B: Awareness of Parental Infidelity Scale (APIS):* This consists of items developed by the researcher to measure the awareness of parental infidelity in the families of teenagers.

*Section C: Psychosocial Wellbeing Scale (PSWS).* This consist of items questions adapted from an internationally tested scale by Keyes C. L. M. (2009) titled Adolescent mental health continuum-short form (MHC-SF) developed by the researcher to measure emotional wellbeing and aspects of psychological and social functioning of teenagers. The respondent mental health is classified into three-flourishing (high positive emotions and functioning), languishing (low positive emotions and functioning) and moderate (neither flourishing nor languishing). The scale contains fourteen items with a multiple-choice format measured on a 6-point scale: 1 (Everyday) to 6 (Never). Respondents are said to flourish when they respond to 1 or 2 to one or more of the 3 emotional wellbeing questions and to 6 or more of the 11 positive functioning questions. Respondents are said to be languishing when they give a response of 5 or 6 to one or more of the 3 emotional wellbeing questions, and to 6 or more of the 11 positive functioning questions. Respondents are said to be have a moderate mental health when they are neither flourishing or languishing.

*Section D: Coping Mechanism Scale (CMS):* This consists of items of questions adapted from an internationally tested scale by Carver, C. S. (1997) titled Brief Cope Scale developed by the researcher to measure how the teenagers cope with the presence of parental infidelity in their family. The scale can determine someone's primary coping styles with scores on the following three subscales: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping. Scores are presented for three overarching coping styles as average scores (sum of item scores divided by number of items), indicating the degree to which the respondent has been engaging in that coping style. 1= I haven't been doing this at all, 2= a little bit, 3= a medium amount, 4= I've been doing this a lot.

### 3.5 Administration of the Instrument

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from her supervisor who introduced the researcher as a postgraduate student of the Department of Social Work for the purpose of identification and to enable the researcher has easy access to interview and administer questionnaire in the selected schools of teenagers. The researcher submitted the letter to all the selected schools in Ibadan South West and permission to conduct the study was obtained by the researcher from the school Principal before the commencement of data collection and verbal informed consent was obtained from each respondent

before the administration of the questionnaire. The researcher also ensured that no harm came on participants while filling the questionnaire. The researcher spent about 10minutes with each respondent.

### 3.6 Ethical Approval

Approval for the study was obtained from the University of Ibadan/University College Hospital Institutional Ethical Review Board (UI/EC/22/0351). Informed consent from each respondent was obtained before the administration of the questionnaire.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The responses gathered from the respondents were analyzed. Statistical analysis was carried out on the dependent and independent variables to test the research hypotheses using frequency table and percentage, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple regression Analysis statistics methods.

## 4. Results

**Table 1. Analysis of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents N=200**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Age group</i>		
13 to 15years	111	55.5
16 to 17 years	68	34.0
18 to 19 years	21	10.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	117	58.5
Female	83	41.5
<b>Religion</b>		
Islam	62	31.0
Christianity	125	62.5
Traditional	13	6.5
<b>Tribe</b>		
Hausa	27	13.5
Igbo	35	17.5
Yoruba	136	68.0
Others tribes	2	1.0
<b>Parents Marital Status</b>		
Married	50	25.0
Separated/Divorced	48	24.0
Widow	98	49.0

Widower	2	1.0
Others	2	1.0
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Junior secondary school	126	63.0
Senior secondary school	58	29.0
O level certificate holder	14	7.0
Graduate	2	1.0
<b>Specialty</b>		
Commercial/Social Sciences	58	29.5
Arts	124	62.0
Science	15	7.5
Others	2	1.0
<b>Family Background</b>		
Nuclear	48	24.0
Polygamous	85	42.5
Extended	67	33.5

Table 1 revealed the frequency distribution according to age range of the respondents. The result showed that respondents with age range of 13 to 15 years were 111 (55.5%) while those with age range of 16 to 17 years were 68 (34.0%) of the total respondents and 21(10.5%) had age range between 18 to 19years. This showed that respondents with age range of 13 to 15years had the highest percentage. The study revealed that 117 representing 58.5% of the respondents were males, 83 of them or 41.5% were females. Therefore, the above result implies that the majority of the respondents were males. The result showed that majority were Christians 125 (62.5%) while those who were Muslim were 62 (31.0%) of the total respondents and 13 (6.5%) of the total respondent are traditional worshippers. This showed that Christians had the highest percentage. The result showed that Yoruba were 136 (68.0%) while Igbo were 35 (17.5%) of the total respondents and Hausa were 27(13.5%) while other tribes were 2(1.0%) of the total respondents. This showed that Yoruba had the highest percentage. The respondents. The result showed that married respondents were 50 (25.0%), while separated/divorced were 48 (24.0%) of the total respondents and 98 (49.0%) were widow, while widower and others were 2 (1.0%) of the total respondent respectively. This showed that married respondents had the highest percentage.

The result showed that respondents in Junior secondary school were 126 (63.0%) while those in Senior secondary school were 58 (29.0%) of the total respondents and 14 (7.0%) were O level certificate holder while graduate respondents were 2(1.0%) of the total respondents. This showed that respondents in Junior secondary school had the highest percentage. The result showed that respondents in

Commercial/Social Sciences were 58 (29.5%) while those in Arts were 124 (62.0%) of the total respondents and 15 (7.5%) were specialized in science while others specialty were 2(1.0%) of the total respondents. This showed that respondents specialized in Arts had the highest percentage. The result showed that respondents from nuclear family were 48 (24.0%) while those from Polygamous family were 85 (42.5%) of the total respondents and 67 (33.5%) were from extended family. This showed that respondents from polygamous family had the highest percentage.

### Testing of Hypothesis

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant effect of parental infidelity on the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis.

**Table 2. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Effect of Parental Infidelity on the Psychosocial Wellbeing of Teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis**

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	f-crit	P
Between Groups	379.003	2	42.111	26.3	1.99	<0.05
Within Groups	137.622	196	1.600			
Total	516.625	198				

F=26.3, df=9/86, f-crit=1.99

Table 2 shows that, there was a significant effect of parental infidelity on the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis. The result indicated that F-calculated (26.3) is greater than f-critical value (1.99) at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected, and this indicated that there was a significant effect of parental infidelity on the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is significant effect of coping skills (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant) on wellbeing of teenagers with infidel parents in Ibadan Metropolis.

**Table 3a. Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Joint Contribution of Coping-skills Variables on Wellbeing in Ibadan**

R= 0.939

R<sup>2</sup>=0.882

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.879

Standard error of estimate= 4.54426

<i>Analysis of Variance</i>				
	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F
Regression	2531.814	4	632.954	
Residual	338.635	142	2.385	65.417
Total	2870.449	146		

Table 3a which showed the combination of the independent variables (coping skills) account for 88% of the variance on wellbeing variables ( $R^2$  adjusted = 0.879). The analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio value which was found to be significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $F_{(4,142)} = 65.417$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3b. Showing the Contribution of Independent Variables (Coping Skills Variables) on the Dependent Variable (Wellbeing)**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	2.649	.823		-3.219	.000
Problem-focused	1.780	.090	.813	19.862	.000
Emotion-focused	.516	.066	.358	7.826	.000
Avoidant skills	.339	.063	.197	5.339	.000

The results obtained from table 3b above indicate the joint and relative effect of each of the independent variables (the use of problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping mechanisms) on the dependent variable (wellbeing). In terms of most significant effect Problem-focused contributed significantly to the wellbeing of teenagers who experienced infidel parents in Ibadan Metropolis ( $\beta = 0.813$ ;  $t = 19.862$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Next in terms of magnitude of contribution is emotion-focused ( $\beta = 0.606$ ,  $t = 18.070$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and then avoidant skills ( $\beta = 0.197$ ,  $t = 5.339$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the three coping skills variables are strong contributors to wellbeing of teenagers with infidel parents in Ibadan Metropolis.

## 5. Discussion

This study explored the psychosocial wellbeing and coping mechanism of teenager who have infidel parents in Ibadan, which is an important step-towards documenting experiences of teenagers living with infidel parents in Nigeria. Although our study reported significant effect of parental infidelity on the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan Metropolis, this finding is consistent with the view of Amato and Booth (2000) that adolescents whose parents have experienced infidelity are more prone to emotional distress, often reporting feelings of anger, sadness, and anxiety. Moreover, this betrayal can erode trust, affecting teenagers' capacity to form healthy relationships in the future (Markham & Stanley, 2011). Academic performance may also suffer, likely due to increased stress and distractions at home (Jeynes, 2002) found that beyond academic challenges, infidelity can disrupt social relationships, causing teenagers to withdraw from social activities or have difficulties trusting their peers. This body of evidence underscores the profound and lasting impact of parental infidelity on teenagers' psychosocial wellbeing.



The second hypothesis also reported significant effect of coping skills of teenagers of infidel parents in Ibadan Metropolis on their wellbeing. This corroborates the findings of Compas et al. (2001) that coping skills aid in stress reduction, which is vital as adolescents face stressors from academic pressures, peer relationships, family dynamics, and personal identity development. By helping teenagers manage and reduce stress, coping skills prevent it from becoming chronic and detrimental to their mental health. These skills facilitate emotion regulation, a critical aspect of adolescence marked by emotional fluctuations (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011). Therefore, effective emotion regulation enhances mental wellbeing and reduces the risk of mood disorders (Hammen, 2005). Additionally, coping skills build resilience, allowing teenagers to bounce back from adversity and challenges. Resilience is associated with improved mental health outcomes and a reduced likelihood of developing mental health disorders (Masten, 2001). Moreover, these skills enhance problem-solving and decision-making abilities, equipping teenagers to navigate complex situations and make constructive choices, thereby reducing the impact of stressors (Compas et al., 2001). Hence, contributing to better social relationships by helping teenagers manage conflicts and communicate more effectively, ultimately improving their social wellbeing (Aldao et al., 2010).

Our findings showed that wellbeing of the teenagers is based on the specific coping skill used, this is in tandem with that of Compas et al. (2012) that adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving, seeking social support, and emotional regulation, have been associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression in teenagers. Conversely, teenagers who rely on maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, substance abuse, or aggression, often experience poorer mental health outcomes (Connor-Smith et al., 2000). This implies that negative coping strategies may provide temporary relief but can exacerbate stress and lead to long-term emotional difficulties. In conclusion, the wellbeing of teenagers is intricately linked to the coping skills they employ. Adaptive coping strategies can enhance their mental and emotional health, while maladaptive ones may contribute to negative outcomes.

## 6. Conclusion

From this study, it is evident that parental infidelity has a significant effect on the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers in Ibadan. The significant influence of problem-focused coping mechanisms on the wellbeing of these adolescents suggests that when faced with the complex emotional aftermath of parental infidelity, practical problem-solving strategies play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects. Emotion-focused coping mechanisms, while significant, appear to provide a secondary source of support, emphasizing the importance of emotional expression and regulation in this context. Notably, the relatively lower contribution of avoidant skills may indicate that avoiding or suppressing emotions and issues related to parental infidelity is less effective in promoting the psychosocial wellbeing of these teenagers. These findings shed light on the importance of tailored interventions and support systems that focus on problem-solving skills and emotional expression to help teenagers navigate the

challenges posed by parental infidelity.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are given based on the outcomes of this study:

- i. Counseling and Support Services like counseling programs should be specifically designed to address the emotional and psychological needs of teenagers affected by parental infidelity. These programs can provide a safe space for teenagers to express their feelings, process their emotions, and receive guidance from trained professionals.
- ii. Peer support groups where teenagers can interact with others who have faced similar experiences should be established. Sharing stories and coping strategies within a supportive community can help reduce feelings of isolation and foster resilience.
- iii. Community Awareness and Education should be conducted to educate parents, teachers, and caregivers about the potential impact of parental infidelity on teenagers' mental health. Encouraging open communication and empathy within families can create a more supportive environment for the affected teenagers.
- iv. Improve access to mental health services by collaborating with local healthcare providers and organizations. This may involve establishing low-cost or free counseling centers and ensuring that mental health resources are available and easily accessible to those in need.
- v. Implement regular mental health screenings in schools to identify teenagers who may be at risk or struggling with their mental wellbeing. Early detection can lead to timely intervention and support.
- vi. Tailor interventions to be culturally sensitive and relevant to the Nigerian context. Consider incorporating traditional practices and values that promote mental wellbeing and resilience.

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