

Abstract

Background Inaccurate suspicions of infidelity among married couples can affect trust and intimacy in a relationship. We sought to establish the prevalence, accuracy and correlates of infidelity suspicions among married couples.

Methods We conducted a cross-sectional survey of 545 couples. We contacted a proportion to size simple random sample of fishermen on each beach as our index participants and asked them to enrol with their spouses. The consenting couples were separated into different private rooms for simultaneous gender-matched interviews. In addition to socio-economic and behavioural data, we collected information on extra-marital sex partners and infidelity suspicions among spouses. We used descriptive statistics and multivariate logistic regression for analysis.

Results A quarter (27.2%) of the women and 16.9% of the men suspected their spouses of infidelity but only 6.2% of the women and 32.1% of the men reported extra-marital relationship. Overall, 43.2% of the women and 6.5% of the men accurately suspected their spouses with sensitivity of 36.6% and 17.6% respectively. Correlates of women accurately suspecting their spouses were: men being mobile (OR, 0.58; 95% CI: 0.39–0.85), couple being in polygamous marriage (OR, 0.48; 95% CI: 0.25–0.90), taking longer time during sexual intercourse (OR, 0.97; 95% CI: 0.95–0.99), men's higher score on male dominance sex roles (for all our scales, higher score better) (OR, 1.08; 95% CI: 1.03–1.13) and higher score on domestic violence scale (OR, 1.27; 95% CI: 1.12–1.44). Conversely, correlates of men accurately suspecting their spouses of infidelity were: women being denied preferred sex position (OR, 0.50; 95% CI: 0.26–0.98), couple being in polygamous marriage (OR, 2.51; 95% CI: 1.01–6.23) and higher score on domestic violence - higher e scale (OR, 1.33; 95% CI: 1.15–1.54).

Conclusion High rates of inaccurate infidelity suspicions in this community may be detrimental to marital relationships. Couples need to consider correlates that aid accurate suspicion before bring up the issue for discussion.