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IMPLICATIONS OF MARITAL INFIDELITY IN AROCHUKWU

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ABSTRACT

Infidelity in marriage has broken many homes and contributed largely to the increasing number of ill-bred children. The word infidelity refers to the act of having a romantic or sexual relationship with someone other than one's marital spouse or partner. It hinders the respect of the contract established in marriage between a man and a woman. Some couples violate the sacredness of a marriage contract through extra-marital affairs. This is unacceptable in some cultures. However, on account of a culture that is steeped in superstitious beliefs, women in Arochukwu are subjected to severe sanctions in cases of infidelity. Culture should promote gender equality, harmony and overall well-being of one and all. The objective of this paper is to examine the concept and sanctions for marital infidelity in Arochukwu. The study adopted historical and survey research methods. Findings from this study have shown that the consequences of marital infidelity in Arochukwu are assumed to be grave only when women are involved. This gives rise to lopsidedness and inequality in handling marital infidelity in Arochukwu. Such lopsided sanctions are gender-targeted and constitute an affront to women's dignity. Based on the findings, this study recommends awareness of gender equality in marriage, and marital infidelity be given an egalitarian consideration. Gender mainstreaming should be observed in resolving issues in marriage.

Keywords: Implications, Marriage, Marital Infidelity, Family, Arochukwu.

Introduction

Marriage is an agreement, a contract, a relationship, a bond that is initiated by the two people involved, built on mutual rights and obligations, Ashley Crossman (2019). As a social institution demands equal responsibility on both parties to succeed. The union of marriage supposedly is between two equals, not between an inferior and a superior being. The mutuality that should exist in marriage touches every aspect of the couple's life and in their shared responsibilities.

Marriage is often assumed as a relationship between a superior and an inferior. The creation account in Gen 2:18 is often cited as the origin of this misconception. God is being quoted as creating Eve as a helper to Adam. By implication, the helper cannot be equal to the one being helped. It is a literal interpretation of the text, a myth that has given rise to the models of male dominion in marriages, where men are always and in every way considered superiors and women inferiors in every sense of it, (Uchem, 2001). Following Adam's aloneness and need of a helper, one of his own kind and suitable for him, God made Eve. This was because no other creature was equal enough to be his partner. The relationship was meant to be egalitarian. As Acha (2015) correctly observed, "The woman was therefore created of the *same specie* as man and the purpose is for her to be the full partner of the man's life".

Marriage is an essential element of culture. It is contracted and handled according to the culture of the different societies. What is considered a norm and accepted in a particular culture may not be acceptable in another. Culture is an essential aspect of the society; every society has a culture that defines an acceptable way of life for its members in particular. Many African cultures are similar in the concept of marriage and what the place of each partner is to be within the marriage. Most African cultures see child-bearing as the purpose of marriage, and often deny women the opportunity to assertively create and own their identity, independently of men. She is either to be identified as the daughter of her father or the wife of her husband. Her last name must be either that of her father or husband. Hence, the role of a woman in marriage remains secondary to that of the man. Gender inequality has so many implications in marriage. Gender though a social construct, defines roles for each party not without the influence of patriarchy.

Infidelity in marriage is despicable. It cannot be excused, irrespective of who is guilty of the act. However, in Africa many cultures condone marital infidelity in men, while women are made to suffer the shame and degradation that goes with it. Acha (2015) writes "In most societies of Africa, women are severely punished for infidelity in marital life. These societies turn blind eyes when men commit the same offence" The picture of marriage in most societies when critically examined depicts marginalization and oppression of women, physically, emotionally, economically and psychologically.

This paper revolves around three axes. First, it examines the concept of culture with highlights the concept of marriage and argues in favour of the equality of partners in a marriage, while deploring marital infidelity. Second it Second, it explores the issue of marital infidelity, it's causes and consequences. Third, it studies the institution of marriage in Arochukwu culture as well as the perceived consequences of marital infidelity and argues against the lopsided sanctions imposed on female partners in marriage as discriminatory and unjust, since equals who commit the same offence should be treated with equality. The paper concludes with recommendations.

The Institution of Marriage

In the creation account of Genesis (Genesis 2: 18), God acknowledged that man was not complete without a mate like himself, one who is equal to his status, and so God decided to make woman out of man (Genesis 2:21-25). Marriage was therefore instituted by God to be a union of a man and a woman, who are meant to be united as one flesh. Eve was made from the rib of Adam, when she was brought to him, he recognized her as the bone from his bone and flesh of his flesh. The creation of the first couple as man and woman according to divine wisdom was companionship because God saw that it was not good for Adam to be all by himself without a helper or companion as was recorded by the second chapter of Genesis (Peschke: 1994, p.394). The two are one and do not need any addition to be complete. The union of marriage is indissoluble and inviolable. God blessed Adam and Eve after creation and gave them the injunction to multiply and fill the earth, this is another dimension of marriage in the Old Testament. The contest within which this command of procreation is to be fulfilled is marriage.

Marriage is a major institution in the society, it is the foundation of family. It plays a vital role in the continuity, expansion and formation of the society. Several definitions of marriage

abound, but in this study, the following definition of marriage shall be adopted. "Marriage is a legally recognized social contract between two people, traditionally based on a sexual relationship and implying a permanence of the union" (https://courses.lumenlearning.com). Traditionally, marriage is between a man and a woman, endowed with the right of sharing each other's life exclusively. The couple build a family with their marriage as the foundation. They share their resources, relations, and most exclusively their sexual life. Through the institution of marriage, the status of a family is formally erected and sanctioned. At the inception of marriage, the man and women are bound by a contract that both are expected to respect.

Equality of Partners in Marriage

In Genesis, the creation account demonstrates that man and woman were created equal in the image and likeness of God. This means that they both were made in the image of God equally and share the same human attributes, qualities and essence of God, bestowing on them equal rights over the other creatures. God himself affirm this,

> "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image and likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Gen 1: 26-27).

The above premise forms the basis of the equality that partners should enjoy in marriage. Both parties are obliged to value equality, regarding themselves as equal stakeholders in marriage. This is characterized by mutual respect and the disposition to work as a team in achieving their marital goals. Iwe (1979, p.173) asserts "It is only a matrimonial relationship, which reflects Compatibility, and Complementarity, Equality, Love and Respect, that can be worthy of the dignity of both manhood and womanhood". Marriage should promote the dignity of those involved and not diminish it. Both the man and woman in marriage have the obligation to enhance growth and full realization of the purpose of life in themselves and in each other. Both should have the freedom to contribute their giftedness based on their persons and on their gender. Iwe explains further that "Only the presence of these essential relational qualities can ensure that marriage does not become for women the theatre of disappointment, despair and humiliations, of physical and moral exhaustion and misery". Women are often the victims of failed marriages. This is because the society has immunized men by its constructs and prescriptions against the pains of many odds of life.

Equality in marriage extends to every aspect; rights and obligations. In a healthy marriage, there is shared responsibility and complementarity between husband and wife without bias. It is the joint duty of the couple to create an efficient household equilibrium in a way that is respectful of the role of each party. Equality in marriage, apart from enhancing a more harmonious relationship, interdependence, healthy atmosphere in the family, also promotes a sense of responsibility in couples. It becomes clear to each what they need to contribute to the marriage as well as take responsibility when they fail.

The Concept of Marriage in Africa

Marriage occupied an important position in the affairs of Africans, especially in the past. Without marriage, there is no family, and without a family, one could not bear children. The connection between marriage and family can hardly be separated among the traditional Africans. According to Mbiti (1969) For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet unborn. All the dimensions of time meet here, and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. The family is not just a component of the man, the wife and their children. The departed souls, relatives and the unborn generations are regarded as members of the family. That is why marriage is not the union, or the joining of a man and a woman for the purpose of becoming husband and wife, but a family.

Marriage is basically a family or even a community affair. The involvement of the departed souls in African traditional marriage makes it a sacred affair. According to William Abraham (1987): Marriage in African tradition is the joining of two families through the union of one man and one woman and their children, always to the exclusion of all other men as regards the woman, and in monogamous societies, to the exclusion of all other women as regards the man. African traditional conception of marriage is teleological. It is primarily for procreation. Marriage can be dissolved on the ground of childlessness. The importance attached to children is however without basis. One major reason for that attachment is summed up in what Mbiti (1969) calls 'personal immortality.' When a man dies, he needs somebody to bear his name, so that his name does not die.

Unfruitfulness in marriage is not only a misfortune but also a curse since the couple have not contributed to the community of the family and therefore, of the society. A barren woman, however rich, famous or prosperous, is a shame to her race. Importance to children among the traditional Africans can be rationalized. In an agrarian society, especially in the past, the manliness of a man was measured by his farm produce. The higher the produce, the greater the respect accorded a man. Many hands in the farm led to greater output. Also, leadership roles and chieftaincy titles were reserved for men who had many wives and children under them. The reasoning behind this is that, a man who could control many wives and children, if given leadership roles, would be effective. Africans were not taught how not to die, but they believed that if they have many children, some of them would outlive them even if some of them would die.

Having examined the concept of marriage in Africa in general, attention will now be focused on the process of marriage among the traditional people of Arochukwu.

A Brief Historical Background of Arochukwu

One may wonder where Arochukwu is located and who the people of Arochukwu are. Arochukwu is a town in Abia State, covering a total area of 202 sq mi, with a population of 10,776 people. It is located at the southern end of the state, in the boarders of Abia and Akwa Ibom States. Arochukwu kingdom is an Igbo subgroup, comprising 19 villages with a unified leadership of monarchical system of government, called Eze Aro. (en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki) Among other things, the mystic Ibiniukpabi oracle stands out, attracting tourists and curious minds to the area.

Arochukwu Confederacy is said to have been established in the early modern historical era in 1690, and declined after the British conquest of the area in 1902. It is a political union and a regional economic power, which was established by the Aro people, and existed between 1690-1902. Aro Confederacy's presence was felt in different parts of Nigeria and some neighbouring African countries, who were also influenced by its existence (en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki). The people of Arochukwu are famous for their history of migration, they could be found in almost every part of Igboland and beyond. Wherever Aro people are found, they maintain their culture and tradition. Arochukwu is a town with rich tradition and culture, covering a wide spectrum of their life. As in many Igbo societies, their culture is very much influenced by their traditional religious beliefs. This is particularly evident in the area of marriage.

The Process of Marriage among the Traditional People of Arochukwu Culture

In Arochukwu, a man is said to have been legally married to a woman when he has performed all the necessary traditional rites. The process of marriage in Arochukwu culture as articulated by KanuIvi (2021), is initiated by "Nmayinkutu aka" (knocking on the door by the prospective suitor and two elderly members of his family, with a bottle of spirit). This opens a journey of many trips between the two families.

The second stage "Iheavurun'ulo" (the treasure discovered in the house), the suitor will come with more members of his family with some kegs of palm wine and a spirit the seriousness of their intention. During this visit, the girl will be invited to confirm the identity of the visitors and to approve that their gifts could be accepted.

The third stage is "NmayiAjuju", this is the stage that negotiation of the bride price is initiated. A reasonable number of members of both families are involved at this stage and the consent of the young lady is sought for the validity of the process. She is also required to identify her suitor before all present and to present a tray of items to her father as gifts from her suitor and assure her father that he will not vomit the items.

The fourth stage is "NmayiUbubo" (Drinks for private discussion between the two families of the suitor and intending bride). About six male members of the families retire into an inner chamber to hold a private discussion, mainly on the bride price and how it would be paid. It could also include discussion on help needed from any of the parties concerning the process. At this point, the suitor's family is allowed to take the bride home on credit because marriage has been partly contracted. The payment of bride price is delayed on purpose. However, the children born within these periods belong legally to the husband even though he perpetually remains a debtor to the family of the bride until he completes the remaining marriage rite. If the husband so desires especially in modern era, he can finish the remaining parts of the rite. At the end of this stage, the bride will go into "Mgbede" (the fattening room), where she will be prepared for some months to look presentable and beautiful for the final stages of the marriage ceremony, as well as trained in the rudiments of married life.

The fifth stage is "Ihuonuaku" (negotiation of the bride price), this is a stage the price is negotiated openly and agreed upon. Usually the negotiation can start with millions of naira, finally the father according to Aro tradition will announce that his daughter is worth more than money can buy, and that he can only accept "okwaisiiAro" which translates to be twelve

pounds and twelve shillings, and this is always converted to "twenty-five naira, twenty kobo (N25, 20k) until date From the sum paid as bride price, some amount is given back to the suitor and his relations, this signifies that they are ever indebted to family of the bride, moreover, she is not sold. The sixth and final stage is "NmayiUkwu" (the great wine), this comes in two parts, "Ikwuugwoisinwanyi" (payment of the bride price) and "ItuajuNmayi" (dropping of the pads used in carrying the wine). In a series of colourful ceremony, the bride price will be paid and the six big pads made of dried plantain leaves will be dropped along with six walking sticks. This marks to end of the process of marriage.

This long and rigorous process of marriage in Arochukwu underlines the seriousness with which marriage institution is regarded. It brings with it a lot of responsibilities on both parties both to themselves, their children, their nuclear families and to the entire community. Nevertheless, there are certain rights and privileges enjoyed by men in marriage which women are not entitled to. In the constitution of the family, a woman is limited to own publicly only the members of the nuclear family, even though it is taken for granted that she also has an extended family. The meaning and implication of extended family for a woman is different from the implication of the same concept for a man. The members of an extended family for a man in Arochukwu culture implies in the strict sense some elements of marital infidelity.

Marital Infidelity

Merriam –Webster defines infidelity as "the act of having a romantic or sexual relationship with someone other than one's husband, wife or partner". Marriage binds a man and a woman into an intimate and exclusive union, with no place for a third party. Once a couple is legally married, a part of the contract forbids them to share themselves intimately with any other except their spouse. When a married man or women engages in extramarital affair, it is considered marital infidelity. Marital infidelity could be as a result of inadequate love for the other, lack maturity of cheating partner, greed or male chauvinism. Many religions and cultures abhour marital infidelity, it often attracts severe punitive measures. However, in most cultures, the penalty is only imposed on women.

Possible Causes of Marital Infidelity

Infidelity in marriage which denotes the unfaithfulness of a partner or partners to the commitment to marriage bond is precipitated by many factors. Many individuals in course of marriage go through many experiences which may affect and consequently their marriages positively and negatively. There are a number of issues that could lead to infidelity within marriage may include the following:

Culture: People with cultural background where polygamy is accepted and men marrying as many wives as they wish, many find it easy to have extramarital affairs with impunity. Furthermore, cultures where children are seen as the main reason for marriage, as well see childlessness in their marriages as a reason to break their conjugal union.

Revenge, Anger or Hostility: Some couples use infidelity as a tool of revenge to their partners who may have cheated on them or offended them in one way or another. Here, the intention is purely to hurt the other party.

Lack of Adequate Love and Affection: Infidelity also happens when couples are not truly in love with their spouses. In which case they feel dissatisfied and trapped in their marriages and therefore cheat on their spouses as an outlet.

Lack of Maturity and Discipline: Maturity though a life-long process is an essential component of marriage. Self-control is a sine-qua non in the process of marriage, the adult man and woman in marriage must exercise enough self-mastery to control the desires of the senses in order to stay committed, where this is lacking, the tendency to cheat can hardly be avoided.

The Implications of Marital Infidelity for Women

The aftermath of infidelity in marriage is enormous and could be devastating especially for the one being cheated. The pains of infidelity by a partner may remain for a very long time and cause a number of damage on the individuals and the relationship. A number of issues or conditions could result from it, such as; chronic anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression, and mistrust (Moore: 2021).In other words, infidelity in marriages can necessitate ripples of effects; especially on women, these effects could be physical, psychological/emotional or social.

Physical Consequences

The recent study by Francis O. Okwara (2021) on Arochukwu women whose husbands had concubines, reveal the damaging effects done to the marriages and life of the victims. He observed that women whose partners keep mistresses suffer from significant number of health and socio-economic strains. Sometimes they have to develop a bipolar adjustment strategy to enable them cope, which in turn manifests itself through aggressive behaviors towards their spouses and the mistress(s), and exaggerated motherhood paradigms. Marital infidelity encourages the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, the tendency to substance abuse thereby creating life-threatening situations. This implies that the life and fertility of a woman is endangered by the unfaithfulness of her partner.

Social Consequences

Extramarital affair leaves a man with little or no respect; such a man lacks integrity and composure because of the guilt due to his ruinous lifestyle. This is even more intensified when the spouse and the society gets to know of his irresponsible proclivity for infamous habits. The woman in such a marriage will lose her pride as a partner in the marriage and may lose respect before others. Socially this may make her reluctant to associate freely with people without feeling of embarrassment and being sometimes mocked for being in an unsuccessful marriage. In some societies, she may even be accused for being the cause of her husband's infidelity.

Psychological/Emotional Damage

The emotional and psychological trauma of a person in a cheating relationship may predispose him or her to; Self-blame or Self-loathing, the person may begin to think that there must be something he or she did or did not do to push the partner into being unfaithful. There is also a sense of Loss, the feeling that a most cherished relationship/marriage has been lost. This experience can result to Anxiety, having an edgy or anxious feeling that the person's life is unsettled, and probably about to crash. The other impact which has been found to be quite

damaging is that the cheated partner suffers from Reduced Self-Esteem, the feeling that the person who much loved and treasured has chosen another. The person may wonder if he or she is not good enough, or probably the new person is better in some aspects; more beautiful, more intelligent, more personable (Smith 2020). Such strains in a marriage can lead to divorce.

Implications of Marital Infidelity for Children

Children who find themselves in a family torn apart by infidelity are often faced with a number of issues. They will often be confused about figuring out who the actual cause is between their parents. Such children usually have issues of trust, confusion, abandonment and isolation. They may also develop trust issues with their romantic partners in their future relationships, as well as develop negative perceptions of fidelity (Moore: 2021).Extramarital affairs have financial and health consequences as well, on the promiscuous partner and the family. Infidelity is expensive to maintain, the man involved will need to split his resources among his wife and mistress(s), as a result he is poorer for it and his responsibilities may not be adequately attended to.

Children are dependent on their parents for emotional, physical, and psychological balance, this gives them a conducive environment to grow and develop into mature and well-adjusted people. The healthy and proper development of children are hindered by the effects of infidelity in a home that is more likely to be wrecked by anger, withdrawal, violence, and other unpleasant and damaging emotions (Kass: 2018).

Implications of Marital Infidelity on the Society

Marriages happen and are lived out within the context of a society. When a marriage suffers a breakdown on any account, especially on account of infidelity, the members of the families (immediate and extended) are affected as a result; their friends and their acquaintances are equally hurt (Kass: 2018). The state of such marriages also affect the upbringing of their children as has been observed above, this in turn may affect the society since the children are members of the society. The negative energy produced by infidelity resonates in the society, the productivity of the couples may be affected, hence their positive contributions for the growth of the society will be truncated. Moreover, such couples are negative role models to the younger members of the society who may tend to replicate their distorted lifestyle.

Marital Infidelity in Arochukwu Culture

Marital infidelity is often a very sensitive issue, especially when women are involved. In Arochukwu, what constitutes infidelity in women is considered completely normal and correct for men. Extramarital affairs in women are an abomination, while in men it is an extended family. This is very evident in the "Uzi" institution, which is actually an extramarital affair.

"EzinaUlo" and "Uzi"- 'Official' Marital Infidelity

In the ordinary usage of the word "ezinaulo", an Igbo word translated as family (nuclear and extended), brings to mind the regular family or household of a man or woman. However, the meaning for an Aro man is deeper than that. It means both his nuclear and extended family, including his children both from his wife or wives and his concubine(s). The totality of his household within his compound and outside his compound, extended relatives, mistress(s), all are included. "Ezi" specifically refers to all the extended relations and mistress(s), while

"Ulo" denotes his immediate or nuclear family. Thus in the exchange of pleasantries with an Aro man, one enquires about his "Ezi´naUlo", while an Aro woman will only be asked "ndi Uloya" (her immediate household). No one dares to ask her about her "ezi an ulo", that would imply that she keeps extramarital affairs, which is an abomination (Kanu, Ivi, 2021).

Following the concept of a man's "ezinaulo" is the institution of "uzi". "Uzi" is term for an official sexual relationship between a married man and a widow or a matured unmarried woman, who are not married to each other. In some cases, the woman if not a widow may choose to pack into the man's house. Children resulting from such relationships belong to the late husband if she is a widow, but if she is not married, the children belong to the family of the woman. In the olden days, the "Uzi" man has no right of legal ownership to the children. Nevertheless, it is his duty to take care of the child or children and their mother.

It is an official affair, the families of both the man and woman are aware of the relationship, and their consent is needed as well. If the woman is a widow, the family of the late husband is involved in choosing the man to bear children for their late son or brother (Ogbonnaya, Akoma, 2016). If it is an unmarried woman who for some reason decides to stay back in her father's house and bear children, her family members are also aware of the affair and give their consent. The man in question has to be a married man, in which case his wife is expected to accept the arrangement and establish a cordial relationship with the husband's concubine or mistress. It is also purported to be a practice founded to protect widows and keep them from promiscuity. The woman involved in "Uzi" relationships are not regarded as prostitutes, and the men are usually healthy and wealthy men (Kanu, Ivi 2021).

Consequences of Marital Infidelity for Arochukwu Women

Arochukwu women are not entitled to the same 'privilege' of having "Uzi" or extramarital affairs as the men folk. When a woman commits marital infidelity in Arochukwu, it is considered an abomination which has grievous consequences. The sacredness of her marriage has been desecrated, and it is believed that the ancestors leashes out punishments on the perpetrator, until some rituals are performed to appease them.

In Arochukwu, tradition has it that once a married woman indulges in extramarital affair, she brings calamity to her home. The repercussion falls not only on her, but on her husband and entire household. According to this belief, if the woman in question continues to cook and have sexual intercourse with her husband, or make him eat anything from the man with whom she is having the affair, he will begin to experience setbacks in his business and health. The man may get warning signs from the ancestors; he may for no just cause fall while walking or experience other strange ordeals. These bizarre experiences will make the man question his wife. But if he ignores the warnings, he may lose his speech and be stricken with a very strange and grave illness. At this point, the relatives of the man will step in, and question the woman too, and subsequently hand her over to the womenfolk to further examine and penalize her.
When a woman confesses to have committed adultery, the womenfolk will give her a list of items to be provided for her cleansing. Her husband must not contribute in providing the items, she must provide them from her resources or by the man with whom she committed the act. She will be taken to the village square, where the women will shave her hair and perform some other rituals for cleansing. Whether she confesses to the crime or not, her husband will stop eating food prepared by her and having sexual relations with her. After the

cleansing if she can no longer keep to her husband alone, another ritual called "iwupummirina-ezi" (pouring out water) will be performed by her husband. They will separate room and board, and will not have anything to do with each other, though she can still remain in the husband's house if she so desires.

The above process is clearly different from that of men involved in the same act of marital infidelity. The question is; why the difference? If marriage is between equals and a relationship of equality, why are women treated so unjustly? Why are men endowed with so much privileges by culture?

The Christian Perspective of Marriage: Remedy for Marital Infidelity

Christians believe that God intended marriage to be monogamous, lifelong union of flesh and spirit: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Although polygamy was sometimes practiced in Old Testament times, the Bible makes it clear that God intended marriage to exist between one man and one woman for as long as both of them remain alive (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians. 7:39) (McLuhan 1991).

Marriage is the first institution created by God. God made the first man, Adam, but declared that it was not good for Adam to be alone. He then brought to Adam all the animals, which Adam named, but "no companion suitable for him" was found (Genesis 2:20, NLT). God was revealing to Adam his incomplete nature. God then created a woman, Eve, for Adam. He blessed them and their union and gave them the earth to rule over. (Genesis 1:27-28.) The creation of marriage occurred prior to sin's entrance into the world. It was a part of God's perfect design for mankind. Through the prophets, God emphasized three principles: Marriage is sacred, God hates divorce, and marriage is designed to produce children of good character (McLuhan 1991)

Jesus underscored the importance and sacredness of lifelong marriage in His own teachings. (Matthew 19:6.) The apostle Paul further taught that the marital relationship is to be an ongoing demonstration of the sacrificial love of Christ for his church (Ephesians 5:21-33.). This implies that there is no room for infidelity or polygamy in marriage, whether the marriage bears offspring or not. Christ's injunction of one man, one wife is the solution to whatever reason that could encourage infidelity in marriage. This culture instituted by Christ, offers the remedy to the imbalance found in African cultures regarding marital infidelity.

Conclusion

The injustice and double standards employed in handling cases of marital infidelity in men and women in Arochkwu using the culture as an excuse, is a clear evidence of discrimination, bigotry and women subordination. It is extrinsically a gender targeted tradition. Culture is a human invention; it is not absolute neither is it static. It can be changed or modified when it is not promoting the welfare of a particular subgroup of the society. Every culture has positive and negative aspects to it. The continuous review and renewal of any culture is a sign of growth, which eventually influence the life of the members of that society.

The method of addressing marital infidelity in Arochukwu is lopsided and does not promote the equality that should exist in marriage. The man and woman involved in marriage are

equal as persons and share responsibilities inherent in their marriage equally, there is no superior, inferior, sacred cow or victim. The society should give equal consideration to both. Marital infidelity is an evil and shameful act, which affects the couple equally when any of them is involved, condoning the act in one partner by culture tends to deepen and perpetrate the pain undergone by the offended partner and reduces her to an inferior in the relationship. Gender mainstreaming is the key to creating egalitarian relationships between men and women in marriages and the society. The pattern for formulating, implementing and evaluating norms and policies, programmes and projects should be designed with the aim of promoting the dignity of both men and women, so that none feels alienated and discriminated (Council of Europe Portal, 2021). Arochukwu culture needs a major restructuring and readjustment with regards to the issue of marital infidelity. As the saying goes, "What is good for the geese, is equally good for the gender", furthermore, "Do not do unto others, what you would not want done to you".

5. Recommendations

Arochukwu culture in handling marital infidelity is observed to lack the needed balance to respect the interest of all and create harmony. This denigrates the dignity of women as full members of the society. There should be equality in the establishment of norms, in such a way that every member of the society is taken care of, and their dignity respected. There is need to create awareness through various mediums available to the community on the dignity and need to respect and treat women as equal partners to men. The government needs to intervene in such cases through the Social Welfare and the Customary Courts. The culture of laying the blame of marital infidelity on women is to be reexamined and modified to be more egalitarian.

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