

# What Men In Extradyadic Involvement (EDI) Desire Their Spouses To Know: An African Perspective

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*Abstract: This article presents research that utilized quantitative-qualitative mixed design to explore disclosure of EDI by married men aged 25 to 60 years with two or more years in marriage in Kenya. A literature search shows a rarity of data in the area of disclosure of EDI by men. The focus was on the men's experience of EDI, EDI impact and what they would wish their spouses to know. Quantitative data was gathered from self-administered questionnaires (n=152, men) and qualitative data from two focus group discussions (n=16 men). Results revealed that though 65% and 40% of the respondents had physical and emotional EDI respectively; 92.5% of the respondents' spouses were not aware about the EDI and only 7.5% of the respondents disclosed their EDI to their spouses. Further, 66% of the respondents expressed that their worst fear was hurting their spouse. This was determined to be out of fear of potential negative consequences once discovered with 62% of the respondents fearing their spouse would leave them. Themes from qualitative data indicated respondents' perception of EDI and what they wished their spouses would understand. The findings may inform clinicians working with couples affected by EDI by the male partner, on the subtle predisposing and maintaining factors of the EDI by the men, and hence inform planning effective treatment approaches.*

*Keywords: extradyadic involvement, disclosure, mixed-design, themes, men*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Extradyadic Involvement (EDI) denotes infidelity and is explained by a wide range of behaviors that occur outside a committed dyadic relationship such as a marriage. The behaviors have been classified as physical, emotional and relational (Allen & Rhoades, 2007). Physical EDI comprises physical connection such as sexual activities with another individual. Emotional involvement, occurs when a partner devotes emotional resources such as love, time and attention to another individual other than their spouse. Relational is a combination of both physical and emotional involvement.

Various studies on EDI have investigated different aspects of EDI. Allen and Baucom (2004) concluded that men engage in EDI to meet autonomy needs while women are driven by intimacy needs. Other reasons for EDI discussed by Traeen and Thuen (2013) comprise boredom, poor sex life and

infatuation. Mark, Macaуда, Erickson and Singer (2011), using a cultural model of EDI showed that cheating was more of a response to a set of social, economic and emotional-biological realities. Other aspects explored are impact of EDI.

A study by Wilkinson, Littlebear and Reed (2012) observed the impact of EDI on the involved individual, couple and family to include trauma reactions, anxiety, obsessive rumination, depression, suicidal ideation and violent thoughts. Similarly, Lusterman (2005), noted that EDI causes serious distresses such as divorce, anger, disappointment, self-doubt and depression in the betrayed spouse. EDI is a major reason for divorce in both western and non-western countries and causes a host of social problems such as battering, spousal homicide and suicide attempts (Previti & Amato 2004).

Similar conclusions were drawn from a demographic survey by Stephenson (2010), of eight African countries (Chad, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

and Zimbabwe) that assessed associations between married men's engaging in risky extradyadic sex or unprotected sex and pointers of gender parity and other community characteristics. The survey revealed that most married women contracted the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from their husbands.

In Kenya a report by the National AIDS Control Council (2014) where EDI has been associated with increased HIV/AIDS infections in married couples shows that though the percentage of married men and women engaging in EDI or having multiple sexual partners has increased over the last ten years, the rise has been higher amongst men. Another indicator of EDI in Kenya is the increased number of children born out of wedlock as reported in a study of single mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa by Clark and Hamplova (2015). It further claims that three in 10 Kenyan girls become pregnant before the age of 18 years, and majority are due to irresponsible married men. The study also intimates that six in 10 Kenyan women are likely to be single by the age of 45 due to marriage dissolution, whose highest cause is EDI. There is however no data on disclosure of EDI.

Different studies on disclosure of EDI in the context of therapy indicate that it could be difficult for some people, easy for others and relatively relieving for some persons. According to Baucom et al., (2006) who investigated 145 clinical couples affected by EDI, couples were distressed after disclosure of EDI but improved greatly to dyadic adjustment similar to other couples. Permissive attitudes towards EDI were noted to lower the obligation to disclose EDI (Seedall, Houghtaling, & Wilkins, 2013). Equally significant were restrictive attitudes which caused men to fear the consequences of disclosing EDI, making disclosure more difficult.

However, despite disrupting relationships, disclosures can initiate meaningful discussions that may lead to resolving the impact of EDI and hence sustenance of a primary relationship. Disclosure of EDI has positive results as individuals report a sense of relief (Corley, Pollard, Hook & Schneider, 2013).

The study assessed the self-disclosure of EDI by men in heterosexual monogamous relationships in Kenya and documented their experiences. It explored what the men involved in EDI would like their partners to understand and identified the main issues that keep men in EDI, hence hindering the healing of the couple relationship. Insights from the study could meaningfully contribute to better treatment planning for couples or individuals affected by EDI as the involved men's experience and perception of EDI is considered as opposed to only focusing on the betrayed spouse as has been the case more often, by psychologists and other professionals, thereby saving marriages and families.

## II. METHODS

### A. PARTICIPANTS

The study population consisted of Kenyan men aged 25-60 years living in both urban and rural settings who were in a monogamous heterosexual marriage and had disclosed EDI in couple therapy, in a clinical setting or in faith-based counseling centers such as churches and mosques. The

exclusion criteria included polygamous and homosexual relationships, marriages of less than two years as well as men below 25 years or above 60 years of age. All participants gave their informed voluntary consent to participate in the study. All participants had at least a high school education and upward to university level and were hence able to understand and respond to the questions.

### B. PROCEDURE

The researcher arranged for meetings with therapists, counselors and religious leaders of selected study sites to know the most conducive way of getting volunteers for the study and how to contact them and issue the questionnaires for the quantitative data. The participants approached by the counselors and pastors were assured of confidentiality. For the qualitative method, face to face meetings with the researcher were organized and they seemed to bolster participants' assurance and confidence. The purposive method, considering the sensitivity of the study, disguised the focus group discussions as 'Men's Seminar'. Participants were assured of confidentiality by not having a list of their names. All participants consented to being in the discussions by signing a consent form.

Owing to the sensitivity of the study, caution was taken to avoid or reduce any emotional or psychological harm by proper briefing before the study including an explanation of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. No monetary incentives or payments were made to the participants.

### C. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

The study applied quantitative-qualitative mixed design. The qualitative method collected information from two focus groups; an urban setting with 10 participants and a rural mini group with six participants. The questions explored personal constructs of EDI by the participants, or their understanding of EDI, and what the men would want their spouses to know. The questions were posed in an open-ended method to allow broader, contextual and flexible discussions. All the group conversations were audio recorded. The researcher ensured saturation was reached when the groups had no new information.

For quantitative data, 152 participants completed two instruments: A social demographic questionnaire that measured age, education level and type of wedding and The Extradynamic Experiences Questionnaire (EEQ) by Allen & Baucom (2004). The EEQ is a self-report measure developed to assess patterns of EDI as well as the extent of participants' engagement in EDI on a 7-point Likert scale, usually from "not at all true" to "very true."

### D. DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was analyzed by applying descriptive statistics (univariate and bivariate) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Windows. Qualitative analysis utilized Grounded Theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967) allowing development of themes from

participants' discussions. The researcher transcribed the audio recordings and using open coding, each participants' narratives of EDI experience and self-disclosure were carefully scanned, labelled and categorized into concepts. The open coded data was regrouped, compared and relationships between concepts identified through axial coding. This allowed the most closely interrelated open codes to be linked to form major themes. The researcher reviewed the themes with her peers and supervisors to ensure additional clarification and coherence, hence validity checks.

### III. RESULTS

The researcher identified five themes that explain what men involved in EDI would want their spouses to know.

#### A. THEME 1: "SEEKING COMFORT"

One of the major concerns that all participants raised as something they would wish their spouses to know was that the discomfort and ill treatment that most men receive from their spouses makes them vulnerable to engaging in EDI as a way of seeking comfort and peace. The men reported that if they were comfortable in their homes and treated with respect, they would have no need for another woman in their life.

The reported ways in which men experience discomfort in their homes ranged from verbal insults, violence, humiliation especially in the presence of the children, frustrations due to unrealistic expectations from their spouses, unending minor conflicts that result in cold treatment, denial of conjugal rights and manipulation. The men complained of their spouses being unavailable to them especially when they were struggling financially. This appeared to be a common experience especially with the rural participants. This corresponded with statistical results where 49 % and 41 % of the respondents felt uncared for by their spouses and neglected in their marriage respectively (Table 1).

Covariate	Response	Frequency	Percent
I was feeling neglected in my marriage.	Not at all true	89	58.5
	True	73	41.4
My primary partner was pushing me away too much.	Not at all true	83	54.6
	True	69	45.4
I wasn't feeling supported or valued in my primary relationship.	Not at all true	74	48.7
	True	78	51.3
I was feeling insecure in my primary relationship.	Not at all true	89	58.6
	True	63	41.5
I was lonely and needed to feel cared about.	Not at all true	78	51.3
	True	74	48.6

Table 1: Extradynamic Contact was to Compensate for Unmet Intimacy Needs

One participant narrated how his spouse dresses him down in the presence of the children. In most cases, the men confessed they do not intend to engage in EDI but those who take alcohol, end up overstaying at the bars and end up with a sexual partner. One man actually retorted that, "Maybe if my spouse styled up and started treating me with care and meeting my needs I would get remorseful and stop the affair."

#### B. THEME 2: "LACK OF APPRECIATION"

The participants narrated how their efforts of raising their families are minimized or undermined leaving them feeling unappreciated. Some of the spouses were reported to even be lying to the children that their fathers don't provide for them since most of the time they are away working and they send money to the spouses who spend more time with the children. The lack of recognition and appreciation of the men's contribution made them feel insignificant, unloved and uncared for.

This was noted to be worse for those men whose children had finished schooling where the men reported that their partners made them look and feel irrelevant. The lack of appreciation was reported to make the men vulnerable to EDI, since they found it difficult to desire their unappreciative wives sexually. The men thus felt entitled to have EDI, seeking appreciation and care from another woman, sometimes consciously, and at no point would they even think of disclosing it. This was confirmed by the quantitative findings that showed that over half, 51%, of the respondents felt unsupported and unvalued in their marriage (Table 1), implying that unmet intimacy needs can predispose men to EDI.

#### C. THEME 3: "ACCOMMODATING WOMAN"

Contrary to a spouse's reaction, the "accommodating woman" or affair partner was noted to allow what spouses would normally complain about. This would include the EDI men drinking alcohol into the wee hours and flirting with other women, but the accommodating woman being vigilant that the man does not get out of control. In addition, the woman would not complain about the man's money spending habits or even the untidiness. One man quipped how the accommodating woman appeared not to be put off by the man's smelly socks or alcohol-laden breath. Another man asserted that the "accommodating woman" knew she had limited time with the man and therefore appeared not to focus on the man's negative habits so as to have a good time.

The "accommodating woman" was therefore concluded to be less stressful, welcoming and accepting. This appeared to boost the EDI men's ego. This correlated with statistical results where 59% of the men in EDI felt the EDI partner made them feel desirable while 57% of the respondents felt their self-esteem was boosted during the EDI (Table 2). One participant however clarified that the "accommodating woman" is well calculating as they know the man is only with her briefly and would eventually go to their spouse.

Covariate	Response	Frequency	Percent
I really needed to feel good about myself.	Not at all true	62	40.7
	True	90	59.3
The other person helped me feel like a desirable person.	Not at all true	63	41.4
	True	89	58.5
The other person gave me a much-needed boost of self-esteem.	Not at all true	66	43.4
	True	86	56.5

Table 2: Ego-Bolstering as a Reason for Extradyadic Contact

D. THEME 4: "CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION"

The respondents said that men are polygamous by nature and God created them that way. One participant added that, "The men that God used in the Old Testament such as King Solomon had many wives and concubines". Another man retorted, "Men unlike women have no 'seasons', meaning they are ready and can sire a child anytime". It also means that men can have sex anytime. Another man even quoted a proverb by the local Kikuyu tribe that goes, "there is no one cock that mates with one hen". This means that a man is created to have many partners and can sustain them materially and sexually. Hence men with money can afford a polygamous marriage but if restricted by Christian values, they end up in EDI.

The causal attitudes men have towards EDI were obvious as the men gave examples of all men regardless of status, religious affiliation or position in life being easily prone to EDI. One man actually asserted that "It takes more serious effort for a man to say no to EDI than to say yes, a fact that women need to understand". Yet another man quipped, "This is why it is expected by the society that every man will once, twice or more frequently be involved in EDI in his lifetime unlike women who are stronger emotionally and can withstand vulnerability to EDI".

With a permissive culture and a socialization process that is almost accepting of EDI by men, there may be less obligation to disclose EDI leaving the marital bond threatened. These results are similar to Seedall, Houghtaling and Wilkins (2013) findings that permissive attitudes towards EDI maintain EDI relationships.

E. THEME 5: "DISCLOSE AT YOUR OWN RISK"

On disclosure of infidelity or how the spouses discovered the EDI, it was clear from the discussions that it would be very odd for a man to self-disclose an EDI to their spouse. A number of men said that that is tantamount to murder in the home. Statistical results confirmed this narrative as 92.5% of the respondents' spouses were unaware of their husbands EDI compared to only 7.5% of the spouses who knew about the EDI (Table 3).

Covariates	Frequency	Percent
Knew nothing about the other person	77	49.8

Knew about the person but did not know my sexual or romantic involvement with them	40	26.3
Knew some aspects about my sexual or romantic involvement but not all	25	16.4
Knew most or just about everything about my sexual or romantic involvement with other person	10	7.5
Total	152	100.0

Table 3: How Much the Spouse Knew About Sexual or Romantic Involvement by her Husband?

The fear of potential consequences such as rage, verbal abuse, cold war, violence, emotional and psychological abuse, withdrawal of conjugal rights and separation were expressed as major reasons why men don't disclose the EDI. The findings are similar to quantitative findings where 65 % of respondents dreaded going through a difficult time with their spouse if their EDI was discovered while 70 % did not want to go through a scene with their spouse or EDI partner if EDI was discovered (Table 4).

Covariate	Response	Frequency	Percent
I didn't want my spouse or the other person to make a big deal out of it.	Not at all true	50	32.9
	True	97	63.8
I didn't want my spouse to give me a hard time about it.	Not at all true	53	34.9
	True	99	65.1
I didn't want to go through a scene with my spouse or other person.	Not at all true	46	30.3
	True	104	69.7
I didn't want the other person to keep bothering me when it was time to stop the relationship	Not at all true	53	34.8
	True	99	65.2
I didn't want to get caught	Not at all true	52	34.2
	True	100	65.8

Table 4: Distress due to Negative Consequences for Self

One participant noted, "The behavior of a man involved in EDI changes, as he is guilty and fears getting caught". He added, "He may be avoidant and engage less at home, use his phone more than usual while at home, pretend to be working more and therefore spend a lot of time outside the home and also not be interested in sex at home". Statistical results indicated that 54% of the respondents felt guilty about the EDI while 62% regretted involvement in the EDI (Table 5). These findings infer that men involved in EDI were remorseful and regretted the habit, thus begging the question, then why engage in EDI?

Covariate	Response	Frequency(n)	Percent%
I was glad with the EDI relationship.	Not at all true	84	55.3
	True	68	44.7

I was guilty with the EDI relationship.	Not at all true	70	46.1
	True	82	53.9
I was bad with the EDI relationship	Not at all true	75	49.3
	True	77	50.7
I felt I shouldn't have done it.	Not at all true	67	44.1
	True	85	55.9
I wish I had never gotten involved	Not at all true	66	43.4
	True	94	61.8
In general, I think having sexual or romantic contact outside of your relationship is wrong, but my situation was different.	Not at all true	59	38.8
	True	93	61.2

Table 5: Overall Remorse

One participant was quick to explain, "You know some of us don't get involved in EDI because we hate our spouses, but once a wife discovers a husband is unfaithful, the conclusion she may make is that he doesn't love her anymore, which is untrue". One man said that EDI is sometimes just a selfish act by men. As long as the EDI by the men remains a selfish act justified by men's EDI accepting societal attitudes and an accommodating culture, it may continue for a long time.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

From the themes discussed, a number of key suggestions regarding what men involved in EDI would want their spouses to know can be deduced. First is that the marital relationship, if distressful cannot only predispose men to EDI, but perpetuate it. In a negative marital space, the men who are already guilty of EDI, though unknown by their spouse, may choose to stonewall or withdraw as a way of coping with negative treatment. Unfortunately, if the men withdraw to places where their ego is bolstered, albeit falsely by the "accommodating woman", the EDI behavior is likely to continue hurting the marriage further.

Second is that men whose self-esteem is boosted in the marital relationship may feel obligated to care for the marriage and feel restricted to engage in EDI. Being appreciated and validated by their spouses appeared to be a great emotional need that would prevent men from seeking EDI relationships. Third is that men don't necessarily engage in EDI because they hate their spouses or intend to hurt them. Permissive attitudes towards EDI by men in the society and cultural beliefs appear to minimize the potential impact of EDI making the men engage in the habit.

Fourth is the unbelievable fact to many spouses that men who engage in EDI feel remorseful, and suffer guilt and shame. Some men even get anxious and keep away from their spouses where they end up engaging in worse coping mechanisms such as excessive alcohol intake when they

escape to the bars, leaving them vulnerable to the "accommodating woman" and repeating the cycle of EDI.

Fifth is the fact that majority of the men involved in EDI fear to hurt their spouse and hence prefer not to disclose the EDI. However, if it was possible to have a sober discussion about the EDI without all the negative emotional turmoil that the individuals display after EDI is discovered, it would be a relief to talk about the EDI and build the marital relationship.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This study establishes that men involved in EDI would want their spouses to know that they are aware of their vulnerability to EDI and the impact it has on the marital relationship and the family. In addition, the reasons that men engage in EDI may appear as justifications but if ignored, the habit eventually causes more distress in the couple relationship. More importantly are the relationship factors that predispose some men to EDI and if unresolved perpetuate the habit.

The scenarios present a need for clinicians and therapists working with couples affected by EDI to not only treat the impact of EDI but address the subtle EDI predisposing and maintaining factors.

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