

Establishing Attitudes on Extramarital Affairs among Married People and Those in Committed Relationships in Kenya

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Abstract: This study focused on the Mpango Wa Kando campaign that has been running in the Kenyan mass media since 2009. For several years since HIV/AIDS was declared a national disaster, many organizations including the government of Kenya have put up a spirited fight against HIV and AIDS through a number of multi-media strategies. One of these strategies has been the Mpango Wa Kando campaign by Population Service International, a locally based international non-governmental organization. The objective of the study established the attitudes on extra marital affairs among married people. The qualitative methods of data collection through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews were used to investigate the impact of Mpango Wa Kando campaign. The key findings of the study were that the Mpango Wa Kando campaign did not have much impact in changing people's sexual behavior. The study established that many people feel that the mass media in Kenya are not doing enough to fight HIV AIDS. Many of the respondents and informants felt that Mpango Wa Kando campaign should offer more practical solutions such as marriage counseling services. They challenged the government of Kenya to regulate alcohol advertising that encourages people to engage in extra marital affairs and concurrent sexual activities through drunkenness. The mass media in Kenya were also challenged to come up with well-researched documentaries that address behavior change issues instead of relying on campaigns from government and nongovernmental organizations alone.

Keywords: Mpango Wa Kando, campaign, multi-media, extra marital affairs

INTRODUCTION

Extra marital affairs in Kenya

To have an extra marital affair among married people is a question of principles and while some cultures permit it, many do not [1]. Today, many cultures strongly discourage multiple concurrent sexual partners because it hurts marriages and is one of the leading causes of HIV/AIDS infection. Indeed, research indicates that HIV/AIDS has been spreading rapidly among married people in Kenya more than other groups. According to the 2007 Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey (KAIS), in 10% of monogamous couples and 14% of polygamous unions, at least one partner is HIV positive, while two-thirds of HIV-infected Kenyans are in stable relationships [1].

Population Service International (PSI) has been in the frontline of fighting HIV and AIDS by campaigning for safe sex through condom adverts, sexual abstinence among adolescents and faithfulness among married people and those in stable relationships. The *Mpango Wa Kando* campaign is an advertisement that highlights the risk of HIV and AIDS infection as well as the financial burden to married people who engage in extra marital affairs [2]. This is the first

media campaign in Kenya advocating for faithfulness in marriage as its theme in the fight against HIV and AIDS. The campaign addresses other issues like extra financial burdens that people in extra marital affairs incur compared to those that have one partner [2]. The big question is what makes married people not to change their behavior despite the ever rising prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS?

Unfaithfulness has been cited as one of the biggest problems in the fight of HIV and AIDS because human behavior has contributed a great deal to the spread of the disease. Apart from having an extra marital affair, many people who get involved in this practice do not use protection when having sex [2]. Many imagine that their partners are faithful while they also have other sexual partners with whom they have unprotected sex. In return, the unfaithful people end up infecting their spouses with whom they also have unprotected sex [3]. According to Communications Pretest Phase II of *Mpango Wa Kando* Campaign (2010) that was conducted in Nairobi, Eastern, Western and Nyanza province, Nairobi province had 43% of the interviewed respondents agreeing that their culture permits them to have extra marital affairs. Out of the

four provinces, Nairobi is leading with 62% of its respondents agreeing that it is healthy to have *Mpango Wa Kando*. Only 5 % of the interviewed residents in Eastern, 6% in Western and 11% in Nyanza hold the same view. 79% of the interviewed Nairobians agree that, as long as one takes precaution it is okay to have a *Mpango Wa Kando* even if you are married. In Eastern province, only 13% feel the same while in Western, 9% and in Nyanza 13% feel the same [3].

Extra-marital relationships (*Mpango Wa Kando*) is on the rise particularly in urban centers. Extra marital relationships coupled with unprotected sex are likely to lead to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, broken marriages and the ultimate death of victims leading to orphaned children [2] [3]. Despite numerous anti HIV/AIDS campaigns by the mass media and other organizations, the spread of AIDS is still on

the rise, posing serious health, economic and social challenges to the whole nation [4]. Communication plays a critical role in seeking solutions to practices concurrent sexual partners that lead to HIV/AIDS infection. It is necessary to study message appeal among married people and those in stable relationships with regard to the *Mpango Wa Kando* campaign to establish whether the mass media have been successful in arresting the problem of concurrent sexual partners.

Percentage of Attitudes towards concurrency by gender survey on reasons for extra marital affairs conducted in Kenya in Nairobi, Eastern, Western, and Nyanza province. What does someone do with his or her *Mpango Wa Kando*? (By Gender).

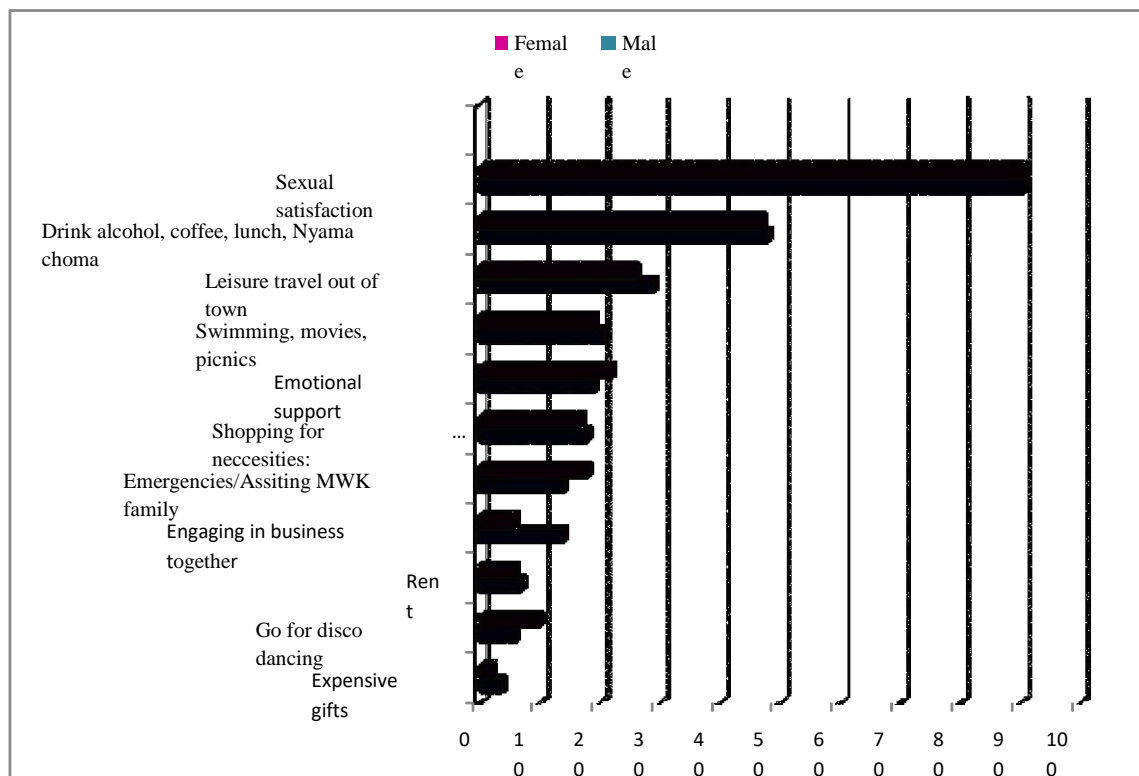


Fig-1: Communications Pretest of Phase II of *Mpango Wa Kando* Campaign: 2010
 Adopted from USAID's publication:

Traditionally, it is believed that more men compared to women tend to have extramarital affairs because they spend more time in social places like night clubs and bars where they can find commercial sex workers [4]. Many married women are home makers and they spend more of their time fending for their families with minimal time to socialize. Among Behavior Change Campaigns (BCC) that have run in mass media in recent times targeting married adults in Kenya, the *Mpango Wa Kando* campaign has stood as the most visible communication campaign targeting

married people and emphasizing on faithfulness [3][4]. The messages have been quite visible in local television channels at prime time news (7 o'clock and 9 o'clock) when many people are assumed to be at home. These ads are also aired on big screens near supermarket counters making them easily noticeable. In public service buses like the Kenya Bus Services (KBS), the ads are run on screens behind the driver making them easy to notice.

Attitudes on extra marital affairs

The role of gender:

Guyer [5] defines gender as the rules, norms, customs and practices through which the biological differences between males and females are transformed into social differences between men and women. Addressing gender issues is not a matter of occasionally or haphazardly including a focus on women. Rather, what is at stake is the equal protection and realization of human rights of men and women, regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, class or any other factor, so that they can realize their full human potential. Jui-Shan [6] posits that higher education and employment outside the home have influenced women's self-definition and career expectations as well as influenced the system of marriage and the family. For example, while most single working class women may see their income as an additional way to support their biological family, personal income also provides a powerful source of autonomy once elements of marital commitment loosen their grip and the allure of Western individualism takes hold. The author further argues that demographically, there may be a growing proportion of women who have pursued high educational qualifications and have developed a professional career, only to find that they have disadvantaged themselves in the marriage market (by being too self assured). Thus, one might speculatively suggest that education-driven modernization might be leading to a growing proportion of sexually active but disenfranchised women in marriage relationships.

The critical question, assuming this speculation is well founded, is whether women in this position might take sexual activity as part of lifestyle and identity rather than an enactment of familial or marital commitments. In this context, such women might see married men as "fair game" or more appealing because of lack of commitment [7]. Structurally the growth of female participation in the workforce, particularly in the professions, means that there is an expanding arena in which men and women alike are exposed to more opportunities for relationship and romance, independently of marriage [6]. Because of the expansion of education, industrialization, and urbanization, an increasing number of women have obtained a higher education and entered the labor force.

Another consequence of modernization has been the expanded opportunities for establishing and doing business. Within the business world, systems for engendering trust, making contracts, and keeping in touch with developments involve a range of social encounters between businessmen that are supported by hospitality and escort services [6]. Vost [8] argues that, businessmen have to travel on business-particularly to other cities and small towns where there is a great disparity of income and they may find themselves exposed to opportunities for extra marital adventures.

Modernization has thus has had its own share of unintended consequences for gender relations and the marriage system: the marital disenfranchisement of some educated professional women in the marriage market and the extra supply of potential brides, the increased opportunity for work-based relationships becoming romantic, and the wider access to business trip-based opportunities for extramarital adventures [7]. Regardless of the actual proportions involved within each of these consequences of modernization, these speculations can be seen as a background for defining the kinds of extramarital encounters, or as questions that require answers. They all provide new challenges for existing values and thus new norms to be specified.

The notion that men need sex

In Sub-Saharan Africa, men have an all-but insatiable need to copulate, (the repetitive and overpowering nature in males) and that this need must be satisfied if they are to remain in good health [9]. The idea that retained semen is somehow poisonous and dangerous to health is frequently expressed [7]. African cultures see frequent sex to be healthy and strengthening, and some researchers contend that men measure their health status by their ability to achieve multiple orgasms with different sexual partners. The same author says that, a study in Zambia reports that there exists a belief that sexual deprivation may cause emaciation and madness.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the qualitative method of data collection through focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews. The qualitative research interview sought to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects [10]. The focus group discussions enabled the respondents to share experiences through discussions on the *Mpango Wa Kando* media campaign. The approach was important in giving participant a voice and to demystify culture by discussing sex openly [11]. The interaction among participants brought out different perspectives and views. The researcher purposively selected five key informants for in-depth interviews. The informants constituted a magistrate, a marriage counselor, a Christian pastor, a Muslim religious leader (sheikh) and a sociologist. After the focus group sessions, data was transcribed. Only the findings that reflected on the topics of discussion that were derived from the objectives were recorded as findings of the study [12]. Key statements, ideas, and attitudes that were expressed for each topic of discussion were listed. The topics of discussion were level of knowledge, attention, attitudes and behavior change related to *Mpango Wa Kando* campaign. Data from key interviews were analyzed thematically according to knowledge, attention, attitudes and behavior change related to *Mpango Wa Kando* campaign. The findings were transcribed and important points noted as key findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attitudes on extra marital affairs

Some married men and women said that it is not right for any married person to have an extra marital affair. This elicited a heated debate with some people arguing that certain circumstances force people into having affairs outside marriage. An interesting point came from a forty five year old male discussant who said,

It is very hard for a normal functioning man to be 'tethered' to one woman. Even in the Bible where King Solomon is said to be the wisest man to have ever lived but had 700 concubines.

This provoked all married women in the group who said that many men do not want to be role models in society but have reduced themselves to the level of animals. This was in response to the term "tether" which is a practice of reducing the movement of an animal in a grazing area. They said that this is an excuse that men give for unfaithfulness and yet they expect women not to revenge. They rebuked this thinking as being repugnant, chauvinistic and bullish. A female discussant in her late thirties said,

I would have an extra marital affair if my husband cheated on me or refused to give me proper attention.

A major question put to the discussants was what qualifies married people (both men and women) to have extra marital affairs. Many responses were elicited but the main reasons are captured below.

Why married men have extra marital affairs (Mpango Wa Kando)

1. Nagging wife who is always complaining
2. A wife who is too moody
3. Wife smelling of milk after giving birth
4. Wife shifts attention to child after giving birth
5. Wife not appealing sexually e.g. too fat, not beautiful
6. Rigid wife who never wants to explore new styles of having sex unlike a *Mpango Wa Kando*
7. *Mpango Wa Kando* appreciate good sex unlike wife who just looks at the ceiling
8. Lust- man is born with hot blood
9. When a wife is under medical prescription e.g. cancer or tuberculosis (TB) drugs that prevent a woman from having sex
10. Excess money that leads to drug abuse
11. Peer pressure

Why married women have extra marital affairs (Mpango Wa Kando)

1. Unresolved domestic quarrels
2. Revenge
3. When a man does not perform sexually
4. Man fails to provide for his wife financially e.g. money for cosmetics
5. Man never pays attention to his wife
6. Repulsive behavior e.g. man is too drunk most of the time
7. Poor hygiene by man e.g. smelling mouth/breadth, feet and armpits
8. When a man is physically abusive and not friendly

Why young people in stable relationships have concurrent sexual partners

1. The need for adventure
2. Peer pressure
3. Availability of condoms that prevent STI's and pregnancy

Single people said that alcohol is the biggest catalyst that leads one to have concurrent sexual partners. They said that the need to have fun in different places under the influence of alcohol gives somebody the courage to have sex with different people. Two female respondents in their mid twenties argued that the desire for a lavish life makes a girl to have sexual relationships with rich men and get extra money in return. Some said that many young women sleep with their boss so that they can get a promotion or even be employed.

As per the interviews from key informants, the sociologist said that society does not seem to be bothered about married men engaging in extra marital affairs, adding that,

for women, having an extra marital affair shows that the social structure has been messed up. And it is shocking because the Kenyan society is not used to this. Traditionally, men were allowed to have extra-marital affairs because the women were left at home to take care of children and men went away for days and they would have sexual encounters with other women out there. Society has condoned this behavior from men but not women. This is a new thing for women because the modern woman has now been empowered and it shows that the institution of marriage has been reduced to a shell because when married couples have extra marital affairs, then both of them have walked away from their responsibilities.

The Muslim religious leader said;

The content is good but is time barred because the problem is already deeply rooted in our society. Apart from being against religious faith, this shows that people have deserted traditional African values that were against such practices. It also shows that religious leaders have failed in instilling concrete moral values because there is no religion that condones extra marital affairs. All the holy books, Torah, Bible and the Quran do not. It is normal that men do not like having one wife because of many societal pressures and that is why Islam provides for a man to marry a maximum of four wives as long as he will care for them and plan for their future.

The marriage counselor argued that;

Sex is one of leading reasons for most men while lack of attention is the reason cited by women. A man (male) cannot live without engaging in sexual intercourse while many women can. On the other hand, women cannot live without emotional satisfaction while men (males) can. For a mutual relationship to take place in marriage, these two needs should be met. Men should learn to be friendly to their wives by listening to them. Listening entails leaving everything and paying full attention to a woman. By doing this, a woman feels attached and secure. After listening, a man can make sexual advances and the woman will not resist. This means that their relationship is balanced and both parties will be fulfilled emotionally and sexually. When a man doesn't pay proper attention to his wife and attempts to make sexual advances, the woman will resist because she is emotionally detached and if sex happens, she will feel used.

The study found out that availability of condoms has made it easy for people in marriage and in stable relationships to have casual sex with other people. This does not have to be with people that they know but even with strangers and acquaintances. Culture plays an important role in peoples' behavior, many married men, and those in stable relationships admit that it is not easy to be faithful to one partner. Alcohol and the desire to have fun play an important role in making people to be unfaithful to their partners. This factor applies more to men as compared to women. According to both the participants and informants, many women are driven to being unfaithful to their partners when they fail to meet their emotional and financial satisfaction. Men should try and understand that women are emotionally different from them. Simply because a woman is moody does not mean that she warrants to be cheated on. The question of attitudes towards *Mpango Wa Kando* is a deeply rooted social

issue with many other contributing factors coming to play. Some of these factors include culture, upbringing, financial status, level of exposure and societal expectations.

CONCLUSION

Behavior change is achieved through a much more complex process that involves among other things life skills that enable the target audience to decide to move a step further from just message reception and acceptance to trying the new behavior, practicing it repeatedly in order for the behavior to change. While nearly all the participants agreed with the message in *Mpango Wa Kando*, none of them could say that it achieved its goal. This is because the acronym *Mpango Wa Kando* is widely used by people across the board including politicians showing that the advert was successful in reaching out to a huge chunk of Kenyans. With condoms being offered as an alternative to unprotected sex, the advert is viewed as advocating for immorality while failing to address the root causes of extra marital affairs.

Recommendations

- PSI should provide marriage counselors through *Mpango Wa Kando* campaign instead of offering condoms. Condoms offer a temporary solution through sexual satisfaction while marriage relationships are still hurting.
- The issue of extra marital affairs is a manifestation of society and how morals have degraded. Our leaders should be the leaders that they are expected to be and not agents of immorality.
- As Kenyans, we need to borrow a leaf from United States of America and teach our children about systems that impart values to our children. For example, Kenyan values and Kenyan democracy. These will help us to shape our society in a certain way that is deemed correct in our society. This does not appear anywhere in your findings

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