



## **CONCEPTUALIZING *SIDECHICKISM* AS A THREAT TO MARITAL SECURITY AMONG CISGENDER MARRIED WOMEN IN NIGERIA**

**Andrew, Stephen Ubong Ph.D, Dr. Jacob E. Odiong,  
Dr. Atu Emmanuel Eta & Andrew, Aniekeme BNSc**

Onion: AJU Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies  
Volume 1, Issue 2 - 2024

Published by Arthur Jarvis University Press

For additional information about this article  
<https://arthurjarvisuniversity.edu.ng>

# CONCEPTUALIZING SIDECHICKISM AS A THREAT TO MARITAL SECURITY AMONG CISGENDER MARRIED WOMEN IN NIGERIA\*

Andrew, Stephen Ubong Ph.D, Dr. Jacob E. Odiong,  
Dr. Atu Emmanuel Eta & Andrew, Aniekeme BNSc

*Sidechickism is one philosophy and practice that appears to be gaining wide acceptability among members of society despite the negative consequences it poses. This paper seeks to introduce the concept of sidechickism and its kindred concepts and spotlight its problems and effects on victims -wives, children, active sidechickists and the larger society. It also seeks to identify the enablers and consequences of sidechickism and some strategies to contain it, as a way of improving marital security for married women. The researchers used secondary sources to support their arguments and advocate for embracing gynaecological technologies, quick resolution of matrimonial conflicts between couples, religious-centered teachings and practices, and legal prohibition, among others, to be engaged to abate sidechickism. Taming the tide of sidechickism will strengthen marital security for married cisgender women in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** Gender-based violence, side chicks, sidechickism, marital infidelity, sidechickist

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is expected to be an institution where parties involved enjoy the privilege of sharing friendship, love, companionship, cooperation, trust, openness and intimacy. However, some married persons in several parts of the world and indeed Nigeria have been battered, maimed, and have lost their homes, and even their lives as a result of the incidence of marital infidelity and other related issues. Several narratives about the physical combat between married women and their husbands' side chicks have made the rounds at different times on the news or social media (TCV NEWS, 2023, Daily Times Nigeria, 2022).

These points to clear evidence of avoidable threats that wives face in marriages where side chicks are a decimal to contend with. Famakinwa (2022) contended that concubines are dreaded by many married women because of the belief that concubines pose a threat to marriages. Similarly, Oladotun (2022) argued that Side chick as a word sends shivers down the spine of some married women during a discussion about their husbands.

Sadly, sidechickism as a philosophy and a practice appears to be gaining wider acceptability among members of society despite the dangers it portends for the general society and victim-wives, in particular. Waithira, (2022) made the following observations: The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, surveys show that 25 percent of married men and 15 percent of married women have had extramarital affairs. Also, the Kenyan Demographic and Health survey of 2014 found that about one in every five men in Nairobi between the ages of 15 and 49 has cheated on his sex partner. Again, a 2018 survey in Kenya carried out by Research Firm Consumer Insight showed that 24 percent of those in romantic relationships admitted to cheating on their partners.

The matter of marital infidelity in general and sidechikisim, in particular, may not be new to society. But marital infidelity, when perpetrated by men didn't seem to generate many issues from women in traditional African societies where according to Reuben-Etuk (2019) women were generally uneducated and expected to be seen but not heard. Nevertheless, in contemporary times where women's empowerment and women's rights are fast being entrenched in society, marital infidelity committed by men against their wives has suddenly become a matter of interest to cisgender women. This might explain why some married women now overtly and publicly confront their husbands and their side chicks without any show of timidity. A popular instance though tragic, was that of the woman in Calabar, Nigeria who allegedly died in a road accident while chasing her husband who allegedly was with his side chick in his car (Otang 2022).

Another instance is a case where four married women wrote an open letter to their husbands' side women asking them hard questions (Waithira, 2022). Other strategies adopted to handle the issues of side chicks by wives have been the contracting of thugs to beat up their husband's mistress(es), and open radicles of side chicks (Famakinwa, 2022).

These self-help approaches do not seem to have been very effective in securing women in their marriages. Also, the fact that the court frowns at self-help makes these approaches problematic even though some may justify them on the notion that the court in Southern Nigeria particularly has no concrete provisions for addressing the issues of adultery in marriage (see Wigwe, 2016:6 and 75).

*Sidechickism* thrives in society today due to some factors such as poverty among women, patriarchy, (Mensah, Aboh, and Insebot, 2022), long-distance marriage, (Gbadebo, Opaleke, Abraham and Ajao, 2019), cultural beliefs and patriarchal cultural institutions, inadequate affection for one's spouse, (Ikwuegbu, 2019). Others may be personal convictions, peer/group beliefs pressure, etc.

Marital infidelity generally may have far-reaching negative effects on the entire family members of the married practitioners. Sexton (1993) observed that the feeling of loneliness might set in for partners who were cheated on. Brooks (2009) noted that it might breed low self-esteem for the spouse being cheated on. Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013) believe that it can put a strain on the family's financial needs. Moore (2021) argued that it may hinder children from trusting their romantic spouses in future. Okwara (2021) found that women whose husbands kept concubines developed mental health issues.

Because of the need to protect women and their rights even in Marriage, it may be necessary to corporately address the issues of side chicks as a matter of priority rather than leave it as merely a family affair seeing that the repercussions may eventually become public affairs.

Marital infidelity is one among several concepts that seek to explain what some societies consider deviant sexual behaviour. Other forms of deviant sexual behaviour may include incest, homosexuality, bestiality, etc. As a concept, marital infidelity or extramarital affairs as some may choose to call it encompasses several practices which require some deconstruction to emphasize certain nuances embedded within. For instance, marital infidelity could manifest in the form of what Mensah (2022) identified as transactional sex; or any among what Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013) outlined such as one-night affairs, emotional outbreak affairs, emotional sexual affairs and sexual addict affairs.

However, there is a uniqueness in marital infidelity which has not been properly conceptualized and explored. This has necessitated the introduction of the concept of *sidechickism* and its kindred as well as the dimensions of threat they pose to the wife in particular, other members of the family and the larger society in general.

## **Clarification of concepts**

### ***Sidechickism***

*Sidechickism* is a concept coined by the authors from the popular word “side chicks” which according to the Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary refers to African American Vernacular English word used to describe a mistress or a woman one dates in addition to one's girlfriend or wife. Oxford's definition, suggests that a chick is a metaphor for a woman a man is involved in a romantic relationship with besides the woman he is officially known to be engaged in a romantic relationship with. Another word or sobriquet in the category of Chick are the words, babe and baby, although some women also refer to the men they are romantically involved with as babe and baby. The word 'side' in African Vernacular on the other hand, generally connotes alternative, additional, unofficial or minor. The word suggests that there is a “main stuff”. Hence, in the context of this paper, cisgender women with whom married cisgender men cheat on their wives are referred to as side chicks. *Sidechickism* is therefore a belief and practice where men maintain and service additional romantic relationships besides the formalized romantic relationship. As it is specific to married women, *Sidechickism* is the belief and practice that married men maintain and service extra romantic relationships in addition to that which they do with their wives. *Sidechickism* could be considered a form of gender-based violence against married women as it may negatively affect them in several ways. *Sidechickism* is more commonly practised clandestinely even though some wives eventually have a way of discovering.

### ***Sidechickist***

A kindred concept to *Sidechickism* is *Sidechickist* which connotes any man who maintains a side chick, and/or any person (male or female) who believes in or approves of the practice of

keeping and servicing extra heterosexual romantic relationships besides the formalized one. While men who practice *sidechickism* are “activesidechickists,” the devotees (men and women) are conceptualized as “passive *sidechickists*”

### ***Marital Security***

Marital security is the feeling of emotional, conjugal, psychological, financial, material, health and physical safety that a married person derives from the other partner in the marriage. A spouse, who does not feel that their unique status as wives or husbands and any of the accruing rights in marriage is shared, contended for or completely taken by another, is martially secure. Marital security also refers to the absence of the feeling of fear or threat that a married person's emotional, financial, material, psychological, conjugal, and physical status and rights are contested, shared or completely taken by another person. Marital security for Lawyer Wu has three elements: emotional security, property security, and personal security (Mcquin, 2023).

Insecurity in relationships according to Gupta (2024), could be a result of the lack of self-confidence of the victims. Gupta arguing mainly from the psychological angle pointed to unpleasant past relationships, neglect or maltreatment, social anxieties and fear of rejection as potential causes of insecurity in relationships. Marital insecurity for a spouse including the ones who entered the marriage with self-confidence could emanate from a partner's overly attachment to their mother, other members of their family of orientation, their friends, work, sports, and religious activities among others. Particularly, a wife could feel martially insecure when she senses an enormous intrusion of her husband's relatives and friends in the marriage when she feels or realizes that her husband is into *sidechickism*, gabbling, gambling, patronage of prostitutes and any other thing that is capable of undermining her welfare and/or that of her children.

## **Factors that Facilitate *Sidechickism***

### **Patriarchal culture/institutions**

Patriarchal Culture is the established way of living which enthrones male dominance in society. On the other hand, Patriarchal Institutions are organizations founded to establish and promote laws and practices which tend to promote the enthronement of men's authority and interest at the expense of women's authority and interest in society. Whereas most cultures prohibit women from having extramarital affairs and threaten severe negative sanctions, it appears to encourage promiscuity among married men. In Arochukwu for instance, what constitutes infidelity in women is considered completely normal for men. Hence, extramarital affairs in women are an abomination, while in men it is an extended family (Ikwuegbu, 2019). This practice of *sidechickism* among men in Arochukwu according to Ikwuegbu (2019) is strongly powered by the Izu institution (a patriarchal institution in Arochukwu, Abia State, Nigeria). Elsewhere in the Benin Kingdom, adultery may lead to the death of the children of the wife involved if the act is not confessed to the husband. In the Ibibio culture, married women who committed adultery and never confessed to their husbands were usually shamed publicly at a particular season of the year by Ekpo Ndok (Charles (2008). Also, transactional sex between a married woman and someone other than her husband can lead to the death of the non-husband in certain Yoruba communities, particularly when the 'magun juju' is involved (Ojo, 2013). The sudden death of the male sex partner of an adulterous woman is meant to deter married women from adultery.

### **Poverty among Women**

Mensah, Aboh and Nsebot (2022) consider socioeconomic factors as the greatest trigger for transactional sex in Africa, where women are not generally as opportune as men in terms of access to education, employment, contracts, political appointments, and land inheritance. Mensah et al (2022) imply here that *sidechickism* is encouraged by the fact that many more men are richer than women and some women had to condescend to become side chicks to have a fair share of the economic good either for survival or for ostentatious living. In consonance with this view, the UN Women (2014) contended that women and girls living in poverty are more susceptible to sexual exploitation.

## Financial demands of marriage ceremonies

The financial demands of marriage ceremonies in many cultures are very high, especially in the face of Nigeria's failing economy. Besides the bride's wealth is the high cost of feeding guests even though salaries are not increasing commensurately. Considering this situation, some men may be discouraged from embarking on marrying multiple wives but may prefer to keep ladies as side chicks.

## Monogamy

Monogamy is the marital practice emphasized among the Christian circles in Nigeria and the Marital Act in Nigeria supports this. Bigamy (marrying more than one spouse at a time) is considered a felony by the Criminal Code and Marriage Act 1959. As such, some men who profess Christianity try to keep pace with the custom of monogamy. However, in situations where some men find it difficult to stay faithful to one wife, they tend to play safe by engaging in *sidechickism* instead of marrying other women they are attracted to or want to be intimately involved with.

## Long-distance marriage

Long-distance marriage is a situation where couples stay in different physical homes far from each other and maybe try to visit periodically but rely more on communicating via letters or electronic media in contemporary times. In contemporary Nigeria, long-distance marriage may be triggered basically by the quest for employment, contracts, transfers at the workplace, the pursuit of higher education or the quest for greener pastures. Today, with the *Japa*(emigration) syndrome getting so rampant in Nigeria, especially among medical personnel, long-distance marriage is becoming a more regular experience because in most cases not many people leaving the country leave with their spouses for the first few years of their departure. According to a study carried out on working couples in Oyo state by Gbadebo, Opaleke, Abraham and Ajao (2019) 73.1% of their respondents agree that long-distance marriage creates an emotional distance among married couples; 41.3% of respondents accept that long-distance marriage creates infidelity in their marriage; 71.3% accepted that they didn't have a

warm and comfortable relationship with their spouses due to long distance relationship; while 69.4% of respondents acceded that they find it difficult to communicate with their spouse due to long distance relationship. These findings thus directly or indirectly suggest that long-distance marriage may lend support to *sidechickism*. Again when couples live together, husbands may have some checks on them by their wives which may limit their chances to maintain side chicks. But in long-distance marriages, such checks from the wife may not be possible thereby creating an enabling environment for *sidechickism* to thrive.

### **Loss of affection for one's wife and search for sexual fulfilment**

In her study of Lagos state, Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013) found that married adults in Lagos state perceived “sex-related factors” to be the highest factor responsible for extramarital affairs. In marriages where the husband is not sexually fulfilled or where the husband loses emotional affection for their wife, side chicks may be turned to as an alternative to sexual fulfilment.

### **Barrenness/ Male child preference/search for a male child**

In her Lagos state study, Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013) found that married adults in Lagos state perceived the “infertility factor” to be one of the factors responsible for extramarital affairs. The high premium placed on procreation and on having male children, especially in Nigerian culture, may also encourage *sidechickism* where married couples find it hard to secure their biological offspring, especially male children.

### **Chaotic marital relationships**

Protracted conflict between married couples could trigger *sidechickism* among married men as a way of making up for the affection and bliss which their marriage fails to provide for them. Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013) acknowledged that there is some form of marital infidelity which is activated when marriage is experiencing problems and during those times, one partner turns .

towards a friend or companion of the opposite sex. Also, according to Ikwuegbu (2019), some couples may go into infidelity for revenge on their partners who may have cheated on them or offended them in one way or another. The narrative of one popular human developer Iginla, who claimed he began to engage in the practice of keeping a mistress besides his wife because his wife first cheated on him and even got children for another man (Olu, 2019) corroborates Ikwuegbu's view

### **Absence of effective legal prohibitions**

In countries like Morocco and Kuwait, adultery is a criminal offence that attracts punishment for whoever is involved (men or women). In Morocco, article 491 of the penal code stipulates one to two years' imprisonment for any married person convicted of adultery (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2013). In Kuwait, any married person who has consensual sexual relations with anyone other than their spouse can be punished by imprisonment or deportation as transactional sex is considered a moral crime (al-Mughni, 2010). However, the Nigerian Criminal Code only prohibits bigamy. The penal code criminalizes adultery but accommodates polygyny which may not still give married women an adequate sense of marital security. In this regard, Bahari, Northayati, Hazlina, Aiman and Arif (2021) argued that jealousy ensures amongst co-wives over their husband's affection and resources. They also noted that women in polygamous marriages experience depression and anxiety compared to women in monogamous marriages. The inadequacy of legal prohibition to *sidechickism* in Nigeria goes on to validate the argument that: Laws and regulations aimed at the crimes of the powerful are inadequate and often do not exist; if they do, they frequently result in fines or monetary payouts awarded after civil litigation. They usually do not result in prison (Brandt, 2023:406).

### **Peer pressure**

Peer Pressure is simply defined as any form of encouragement or influence people receive from their peers. The aphorism, "Show me your friend and I will tell you who you are" suggests that people are influenced by the company they keep. To this end, it may be logical to assume that some men engage in the practice of keeping side chicks because of their company. Since most of their friends practiced it over the years, they were influenced and began to practice the same.

## **Intra-gender victimization/ women's insensitivity to other women**

Intra-gender victimization refers to an unfair treatment of a member of or a considerable number of a gender as a group by a person of the same gender. According to Ebekue (2017:86), although rarely spoken about, most of the injustices allegedly meted out to women in Africa have women at the vanguard of their execution. *Sidechickism* appears to be one form of gender-based violence against women which cannot thrive without the active support of women. Side Chicks in Nigeria, some of whom will get married someday to their husbands and will not like to have their husbands shared have refused to be empathetic to the strain they put the wives of their active *sidechickists* through. The moment Side Chicks begins to be sincerely empathetic to the plight of married women, *sidechickism* might lose its popularity and gradually fizzle out of fashion.

## **Personal convictions**

Some men just believe that it is abnormal or impossible for a man to maintain sexual fidelity maybe because of their biological wiring. Hence for such men, *sidechickism* becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## **The rise of church doctrines and church leaders validating *sidechickism***

Church doctrines refer to the beliefs and practices taught in churches by church leaders to their church members. Adultery and its kindred offences are clearly prohibited in Exodus chapter 20:14, Proverbs 6:32, 1 Corinthians 6:18, and Ephesians 5:3 among others. There are, however, some doctrines and lifestyles by some church leaders that contradict scriptural standards on marital relationships. The example of Iginla, a famous Nigerian religious leader who divorced his wife and allegedly married his side chick after a public confession to marital infidelity and that of Yul Edochie the popular Nollywood movie star (he sometimes appears as a pastor on some church posters) who allegedly married his side chick with whom he already had a son may serve as an endorsement for which many more people may believe in and practice *sidechickism*.

## **Dangers of *sidechickism* to the victim-wife**

### **Threats to the life of the wife and her early death.**

LindaIkeji (2024) posted a conversation about how a side chick sent a message to the wife of her boyfriend threatening to kill her and her child if she would not quit the marriage for her to take over the position of the wife. According to the post, the message from the side chick to the legitimate wife on Facebook went thus “Happy death year Te Ga *dis* year no go pass you by as you no wan leave valentine na *dis* year you go die...” This kind of message can trigger fear and some other kinds of emotional problems for a legitimate wife. It can even be worse when the legitimate wife does not know the side chick but is known by the side chick.

Beyond threat messages, a married wife may still live in fear of death once she discovers that her husband maintains a mistress. From the angle of health, the wife may be afraid of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections such as Staphylococcus, HIV, Gonorrhea, Human Papillomavirus, (HPV) genital herpes, chlamydia etc. which might increase the risk of infertility, cervical cancer and several other complications if not detected and treated early (Vinetz, 2023). Indeed, every year globally, there are approximately 376 million new transmissions of syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhoea and trichomoniasis and many living with an STI do not know because some of the STIs do not show symptoms (Vinetz, 2023). The wife may also lose her life prematurely due to the complicated problems arising from side chicks. The narrative of the woman in Calabar, Cross River State who died in a road crash while pursuing her husband and his side chick in 2022 (Otang 2022) further tells how *sidechickism* can bring the legitimate wife to an early grave.

### **Early widowhood and its accompanying plights**

Women whose husbands engage in *sidechickism* stand the risk of becoming early widows. Instances abound where men are killed and robbed by their side chicks thereby making their wives widows. In 2021, Chidinma, a 21-year-old University of Lagos student stabbed her clandestine lover, the Chief Executive Officer of Super TV, Usifo Ataga, to death in a hotel after an argument (Oyero, 2021). A similar development in the same 2021 was the story of another man, Mr. Okpako who died in a hotel in Delta State Nigeria during a sex competition with his wife's sales girl.

Widowhood in most communities is accompanied by several dehumanizing ordeals which can be very devastating. Coming from the deviant place theoretical orientation, Andrew and Ashibi, (2022) contended that women who are from or who marry men whose communities practice some form of widowhood rites may suffer serious deprivation of their fundamental human rights like the right to life, right to dignity of the human person, right to personal liberty, privacy, political right and association.

### **Threatens the economic well-being of the wife.**

In Christian marriage, which is the most dominant in the southern part of Nigeria, the woman has a right to the husband's properties and vice versa to the extent that none of the parties is allowed by law to sue each other for property offences so long as the marriage is still valid (Wigwe, 2016). Sidechickism infringes on the right a wife has over the husband's property as most active *sidechickists* maintain their clandestine romantic relationships with money without the authorization of the wife. Besides volitional giving to the side chick(s), active *sidechickists* could be robbed by side chicks. For instance, Chidinma, the Three Hundred Level Mass Communication student of the University of Lagos who killed Mr. Usifo Ataga went on to withdraw ₦380,000 from the account of her victim using his bank card (Oyero, 2021).

As an offshoot of widowhood following the death of the husband, the victim of *sidechickism* might lose most of her husband's properties to her husband's relatives as part of the widowhood rites in some African communities. Manala (2015) recounted an instance in a community in South Africa where the relatives of a late man were struggling to strip his widow of some material benefits the late man's employers bequeathed his widow for the services of her late husband while he worked with the employers. Although the story Manala cited had it that the attempt of the late man's relatives failed due to the widow's enlightenment and the intervention of her lawyer, not many widows are usually this privileged in Africa.

### **Emotionally threatens the legitimate wife**

Following the fact that marital relationships are expected to involve the emotion of jealous love between the marriage partners, *sidechickism* breeds negative emotions in the wife of the active *sidechickist*.

Such negative emotions may result in, or aggravate several other health crises such as hypertension, and high blood pressure which end could be quite devastating. Sometimes, when not well managed, the negative emotions could affect even every other social and economic relationship of the victim-wife negatively. As the general strain theory of Robert Agnew (1992) suggests, the victim-wife may become aggressive due to the strain of having another woman struggle her object of love with her. At home, she may express aggression towards the members of her household and at work towards her colleagues and the persons she is expected to serve. In the same vein, Okwara (2021), in his study on women in Arochukwu whose husbands were active *sidechickists*, found that sometimes the women develop a bipolar adjustment strategy to enable them to cope, which in turn expresses itself through aggressive behaviours towards their husbands and the side chick(s). For some women, such experiences may result in a serious mental health challenge which could make them require the services of the Neuro-Psychiatrists and further aggravate their marital crisis.

### **Threatens the marital status of a wife**

Although marital infidelity may not necessarily result in divorce or polygyny as found by Lee (1999) in his studies of 6,000 couples in America. Nigerian women are aware that some men end up marrying their side chicks either in addition to their first wives or are forced to divorce their incumbent wives to accommodate the side chick as a new wife. The experience of the famous Iginla a Nigerian religious leader who eventually divorced his wife and married the alleged Mistress (Olu, 2019) and that of the popular Nollywood movie star Yul Edochie who allegedly married his side chick in addition to his wife (Eberechukwu, 2023) are contemporary examples among many others. This thought or experience of losing her home or status as the only legitimate wife can be demoralizing and hurting for the woman especially if she has invested unquantifiable resources into the marriage. Besides, the unhealthy rivalry that follows polygyny especially when the wives are to cohabit in the same house can lead to lots of avoidable disasters.

### **Dangers of *sidechickism* to the children**

*Sidechickism* could affect the children of the family economically, socially, educationally, and psychologically. In the economic sphere, the children's needs and comfort might sometimes be compromised for the needs, wants and or comforts of their fathers' Side Chick depending on the hold of the Side Chick on the Active *Sidechickist*. Ogwokhademhe and Ishola (2013) observed that a man's reckless spending for his side chicks may hinder him from taking care of his family. The children of the average active *Sidechickists* may suffer relative deprivation in terms of play and communication time with their father and meeting their financial needs especially in most developing economies today because Side Chicks in most cases are flamboyant in appearance and lifestyle which makes maintaining a relationship with them quite financially demanding. Also, when Side Chicks become second wives, the children of the first wife may become an object of attack for fear that those children may fight her at the demise of their father or that those children might hijack all the family properties without considering her and her children. The children in such homes might also not develop properly as they may according to Moore (2021) grow up to develop trust issues with their romantic partners in the future.

It is necessary to note at this point that what directly affects the children, might indirectly affect their mother and vice versa because of the emotional connection. Hence, the negative effects of *sidechickism* on the children are an extension of its effects on the mother.

### **Dangers of *sidechickism* to the *sidechickist***

Active *sidechickists* stand the risk of contracting STIs, becoming victims to robbers, encountering premature death which could sometimes be violent, losing the respect of their wives and children, losing the affection of the wife and children, being neglected by wives and children in old age and some may be killed by their wives in extreme cases as a reaction to the emotional hurt.

### **Dangers of *sidechickism* to the society**

Ikwuegbu (2022) noted that pregnancies resulting from extramarital affairs may be rejected by the man responsible for it. Out-of-wedlock children as well as children from dysfunctional homes may not be well catered to and may become child labourers, street children, and some juvenile delinquents and adult criminals

(Andrew, Akwaji and Udo 2023; Okpa, Eshiotse, Ofem, Sylvester and Andrew 2021), thereby increasing insecurity in the society. In addition, such children are predisposed to replicating dysfunctional marital relationships due to suspicion and aggression that their childhood experience has built into them.

## **Combatting *Sidechickism* for a more secure marital experience for women in Nigeria**

### **Cultural reorientation**

Culture is a very strong factor that not only shapes the lifestyle of people but also regulates the lives of several people. Some cultural elements that have been identified as facilitators of *sidechickism* include Male child preference and the Izu institution of the Arochukwu community. For some persons, they do things simply because their culture or tradition lends support to or stipulates it. For this reason, cultural reorientation is imperative for the custom of *sidechickism* to lose its credence and popularity among cultural bigots. The dynamism of culture gives room for cultural reorientation and for lots of harmful traditional practices to change for the good of society. Influential members of society who have seen the problems in the cultural elements entrenching *sidechickism* in collaboration with women groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) seeking to defend the dignity of women can team up to accomplish a change of such cultural elements.

### **General women empowerment**

The low socio-economic status of women in society is one social problem that is largely responsible for their susceptibility to sexual exploitation in society (Andrew & Ashibi 2022; Mensah et al. 2022; Mensah, 2020). Specifically, Formson and Hilhorst (2016) identified 'survival sex' as one of the two kinds of transactional sex women engage in. Following this fact, the upgrading of women's socio-economic status generally in society will help reduce the incidence of *sidechickism* in Nigeria. The Federal Government, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, as well as pro-women NGOs can help in this direction. The empowerment can take the form of mentorship, orientation, skills, education, and exposure to legitimate life-enhancing opportunities.

## **Legal measures**

The law especially when enforced regularly and unselectively can be a strong source of regulation of human behaviour in every society. The containment Theory of Walter Reckless and classical criminology is oriented towards this viewpoint. Nigeria can take a clue from countries like Kuwait and Morocco to make and enforce laws proscribing *sidechickism* in Southern Nigeria in particular and marital infidelity in general. The Marriage Act which regulates marital relations in the southern part of Nigeria can be amended to proscribe *sidechickism* besides bigamy which it already proscribed.

## **Avoidance of long-distance marriage**

Couples should do all that is possible to avoid long-distance marriages because of its contribution to the facilitation of *sidechickism* as already established above with empirical research. Couples should not just seek greener pastures at the expense of their marital relationship as success in life is not just a function of how much people earn. Sometimes, for the safety of the marriage couple may take a lower-paying job and frantically seek a quick reunion if they must stay apart for any compelling reason. The federal and state governments should, as much as possible, avoid posting married people out of their base, as this may place an unhealthy strain on the finances and well-being of the family, due to the difficulties faced in relocating the entire family.

## **Embrace of gynaecological technologies**

With advancements in gynaecological technology in contemporary times, couples can resolve the issues of the sex of their children as well as infertility without necessarily exploring the option of *sidechickism*. As such it is advisable that married couples having issues with having their biological children generally and male children specifically should take advantage of technological advancement in the medical field to solve their problems together, rather than taking to the option of *sidechickism*.

## **Quick resolution of marital conflicts between couples**

Married couples should try all in their power to avoid marital conflicts, especially protracted ones, because of the emotional distance it causes and the room it creates for *sidechickism*. Couples can take to the options of mediation, and marriage counselling when necessary.

Although this could be considered hard work, there is no doubt that the rewards (family peace and tranquillity, a conducive atmosphere for child growth and development, emotional support etc.) that follow it are worth the sacrifice.

### **The role of church/Christian leaders**

The church and its leadership should model purity because Jesus Christ the leader of the church is known as a holy man across various religions. Church leaders, therefore, should stay on the prescription of the bible on sexual relations and not on the descriptions or mere narrations of the Bible, by lifestyle, and by their teachings because of the strong influence many of them have on their followers. For example, the Bible teaches that “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). First, the scripture here emphasizes a man and his wife not wives implying monogamy. Secondly, the scripture emphasizes that the two shall become one flesh which is an indictment of *sidechickism*.

### **Conclusion**

This paper identified the problem of *sidechickism* and how it hinders women from experiencing marital security. The paper further introduces concepts such as *sidechickism* and active and passive *sidechickists* as factors that have facilitated the practice of this dimension of marital infidelity. Some of the factors highlighted as enablers of *sidechickism* include patriarchal culture/ institution, women's poverty, absence of legal prohibition, long-distance marriage, peer pressure, barrenness/ search for male children, women's insensitivity to other women etc. The article then discussed the negative consequences of *sidechickism* to the victim-wife, the active *sidechickist*, the children born to the active *sidechickists* in and out of wedlock, and society at large. Particularly, the article identified early widowhood, threat to economic well-being, threat to life, threat to health, threat to marital status as well as threat to emotional peace as ways in which *sidechickism* disrupts the marital security of the wife of the *sidechickist*. The article also suggested a few strategies for combatting *sidechickism* to improve marital security for women. Some of the strategies highlighted include legal measures, general women's empowerment, cultural reorientation, the embrace of gynaecological technologies, and avoidance of long-distance marriages among others.

## NOTES

\* The Authors sincerely acknowledge the reviewers of this article for all their scholarly observations that have helped to improve the quality of the article. We say a big thank you to them.

## References

- Agnew, Robert. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(1)47-87
- Al-Mughni, H. (2010) Kuwait In S. Kelly and J. Breslin (2010) eds. Women's right in the Middle East and North Africa Newyork: Freedom House Laham, PP 1-26 retrieved on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 from <https://www.freedomhouse.org>
- Andrew, S. and Ashibi, J. (2022). Widowhood Rites: A Threat to the Actualization of Women's Rights in Nigeria. *Nigerian National Human Rights Commission Journal*. 8, 126-140
- Andrew, S., Akwaji, F. and Udo, J. (2023). Economic Insecurity and Academic Performance Among Modern-Day Nigerian University Students. *Journal of Social Sciences and Management* 2 (1). 1-13
- Bahari, Shaiful; Norhayati, Mohd; Hazlina, Nik; Aiman, Che and Arif, Nik (2021). Psychological impact of polygamous marriage on women and children: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 21:823; 1-10 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-021-04301-7>
- Brandt, M. (2023). Crime of the Powerful. In: Sheree, Hassan, Dan. Lett, Lesley B. (2023) *Introduction to Criminology*. Canada: Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Brooks, Thom (2009). The problem with polygamy. *Philosophical Topics*. 37(2). 109–122
- Clifford, J. (2021, July 9). Another Sugar Daddy Dies During Sex Competition with His Wife's Sales Girl. *The Nigerian Post* <https://thenigerianpost.com.ng/another-sugar-daddy-dies-during-sex-competition-with-his-wifes-sales-girl-after-seventh-round/>
- Daily Times Nigeria (2022 February 8). Wife Wrestles Husband's Side Chick After She Showed Up at Hospital to See Him [ V i d e o ] . F a c e b o o k . <https://www.facebook.com/482749575105792/posts/4723435761037131/?app=fbl>

- Ebekue, E. (2017). Intra-Gender Subjugation Among Women in Nigeria: A study of Stephanie Okere's Dry. *Creative Artist* 11, 84-102.
- Eberechukwu, F. (2023, July). Yul Edochie's Polygamous Marriage, Drama. *This Day*. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/08/05/yul-edochies-polygamous-marriage-drama?amp=1>, Retrieved March 30, 2024
- Famakinwa, M. (2022). Would You Fight Your Husband's Side Chick? *The Hope Newspaper*. <https://www.thehopenewspaper.com/would-you-fight-your-husbands-side-chick/>, Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024
- Formson, C. and Hilhorst, D. (2016). The Many Faces of Transactional Sex: Women's Agency, Livelihood and Risk Factors in Humanitarian Contexts: A Literature Review. *Wageningen University Working Paper*, 41, 3-24
- Gbadebo, C., Opaleke, D., Abraham, M., and Ajao, B. (2019). Influence of Long Distance Marriage on Working Class Couples in Oyo State. *IJFAC* 8. 43-57.
- Gupta, S. (2024). Insecurity in Relationships: Ways to Cope. *Verywell Mind*. <https://www.verywellmind.com/coping-with-insecurity-in-a-relationship-5207949>
- Ikwuegbu, T. (2019). Implications of Marital Infidelity in Arochukwu. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies*, 5 (1) 61 – 72
- Lee, W. (1996). Development of Moral Thought, Feeling and Behaviour. *American Psychologist*, 34 (10) 956 – 96
- Linda I. (2024). Side Chic Sends Death Threat to Her Married Lover's Wife for Refusing to Leave Him for Her. *Linda Ikeji's Blog*. <https://www.lindaikojisblog.com/2024/1/side-chic-sends-death-threat-to-her-married-lover-wife-for-refusing-to-leave-him-for-her.html>, Retrieved March 5, 2024
- Manala, M. (2015) African traditional widowhood Rites and Their Benefits And/Or Detrimental Effects on Widows in a Context of African Christianity'. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71(3), 1 - 9 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2913>
- Mcquinn, S. (2023) Three elements of marriage security: Money, Love, People, Are you qualified? *Marriage*. <https://vocal.media/marriage/three-elements-of-marriage-security-money-love-people-are-you-qualified>

- Mensah, Eyo. (2020). When You Open Your Legs, You Eat: The Discourse of Transactional Sex Among Female Youth in Nigeria. *Sexuality and Culture*, 24(3), 543–560
- Mensah, Eyo. (2021). To Be a Man Is Not a Day's Job: The Discursive Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity by Rural Youth in Nigeria. *Gender Issues*, 38:438-460. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-020-09271-2>
- Mensah, Eyo., Aboh R. and Nsebot U. (2022). When Sugar is no longer Sweet: The discourse of regret in sugar relationships among female youth in Nigeria. *Sexuality and Culture* 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-022-09948-8>
- Moore, M. (2021). Long-Term Psychological Effects of Infidelity. *Psych Central*. <https://psychocentral.com>. Retrieved January 25, 2022.
- Ogwokhademhe, M. and Ishola C. (2013). Factors Responsible for Extramarital Affairs As Perceived By Married Adults In Lagos, Nigeria, *Problems of Psychology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* 6, 37-46
- Okpa, J., Eshiotse, E., Ofem, N., Sylvester, A. and Andrew, S. (2021). Child Labour and Delinquent Behaviour in Nigeria: A Risk Factor Analysis. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*. 10 (3), 99-110.
- Okwara, F. (2021) One Vector, Multiple Victims: Assessment of Reproductive Health Risks of Concubine Practice on Married Women in Abia State Community, Nigeria. *International Organisation of Scientific Research Journals*. <https://www.iosrjournals.org>, retrieved 19 November 2021.
- Oladotun, S. (2022). Five ways to deal with your husband's side chick. *Premium Times* <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/entertainment/naija-fashion/546080-five-ways-to-deal-with-your-husbans-side-chick.html>, Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024
- Olu, T. (2019). Shocking! Prophet Iginla Divorces Wife, 'We cheated on each other, had children out of wedlock. *The Whistler*. <https://thewhistler.ng/shocking-prophet-iginla-tells-church-my-wife-and-i-cheated-on-each-other-had-children-out-of-wedlock/amp/>
- Otang, G. (2022, September 19) Wife dies in car accident allegedly chasing husband in Calabar. *The Tribune*. <https://tribuneonlineng.com/wife-crashes-dies-in-car-accident-allegedly-chasing-husband-in-calabar/> Retrieved 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

- Oyero, K. (2021, June 24). How I stabbed Super TV CEO to death, 21-year-old UNILAG student speaks. *Punch NewsPaper*. <https://punchng.com/how-i-stabbed-super-tv-ceo-to-death-21-year-old-unilag-student-speaks/>
- Reuben-Etuk, G. (2019). *Violence Against Women*. London: Lambert Academic Publishing
- Sexton, L. (1993). *The individual marriage and family* (8th Ed.). Belmont: Wordsworth Publishing Co.
- TVC News (2023) Moment Wife Smashes Bottle On Side Chick's Head [ Video ]. Youtube. <https://youtube.com/@TVCEntertainment?si=RQIjiu-qEWM6pgm->, Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
- UN Women (2014). Women and poverty. *United Nations* <https://www.unwomen.org/en/new/in-focus/end-violence-against-women/2014/poverty>, Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024.
- Vinetz, J. (2023). Sexually transmitted diseases (STD) Information for women. *Healthline* <https://www.healthline.com/sexually,-transmitted-diseases/women>. Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
- Waithira, N. (2022). Dear Mistress: An open Letter to my husband's sidechick. *Nation*. from <https://nation.africa/kenya/life-and-style/lifestyle/dear-mistress-an-open-letter-to-my-husbands-sidechick-4001380>, Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> May 2024
- Wigwe, C. (2016). *Introduction to Nigerian Criminal Law*. Osu-Accra: Mountcrest University Press

**Andrew, Stephen Ubong Ph.D** the Ag HOD of the Department of Criminology and Security Studies of Arthur Jarvis University, Akpabuyo Cross River State. He also facilitates for National Open University of Nigeria. He is a data analyst. His scholarly articles have appeared in ingenious and international journals of reputable standards. Email: [stephen.andrew@arthurjarvisuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:stephen.andrew@arthurjarvisuniversity.edu.ng) OCID: 0000-0001-6364-5736

**Dr. Jacob E. Odiong** is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics at Arthur Jarvis University, Akpabuyo, Cross River State Nigeria. He is a member of the Educational Assessment & Research Network in Africa (EARNiA) amongst others. He is a data analyst with publications in indigenous and international journals of reputable standards. Email: [jacob.odiong@arthurjarvisuniversity.edu](mailto:jacob.odiong@arthurjarvisuniversity.edu).

**Dr. Atu Emmanuel Eta** is the Ag Head of the Department of Political Science at Arthur Jarvis University, Akpabuyo, Cross River State, Nigeria. He also takes courses in the department of business administration.

**Andrew, Aniekeme BNSc.** is a Licensed Nurse and Midwife. Besides her passion for nursing which she demonstrates with patients and nursing students posted to her ward. She also expresses a strong interest in issues related to family, marriage and children. Her recent publications have been featured in an international journal. Email: [anijaduk2502@gmail.com](mailto:anijaduk2502@gmail.com).