Mental Health Effects Of Infidelity In Relationships: A Qualitative Study

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY (SPECIALIZATION – Clinical) (Category – GIA)

Dr Rashmin Sompura

GUIDE

Namya Trivedi

RESEARCHER

8022012192

PRN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Faculty of Education and Psychology
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
Vadodara-390007
Gujarat, India

2023-2024

Department of Psychology
Faculty of Education and Psychology
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

DECLARATION

I, Ms Namya Trivedi, hereby declare that the present study entitled "Mental Health Effects Of Infidelity In Relationships- A Qualitative Study" has been conducted by me at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda under the supervision of Dr. Rashmin Sompura. This study is being submitted to The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in partial fulfillment for the requirements of Master of Arts in Psychology (Specialization – Clinical) (Category – GIA). I hereby declare that this is an original study and no part of this study has been published in any journal or submitted to any other university for any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or title.



Department of Psychology
Faculty of Education and Psychology
The Maharaja University of Baroda

CERTIFICATE BY THE GUIDE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled " Mental Health Effects Of Infidelity In Relationships- A Qualitative Study" is a research work carried by Ms. Namya Trivedi in the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Psychology at The Department of Psychology, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda under the supervision of Dr Rashmin Sompura , as per the given certificate /documents by the candidate.

Dr Rashmin Sompura
Assistant Professor
I/C Head Department of Psychology
Department of Psychology
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda



Department of Psychology
Faculty of Education and Psychology
The Maharaja University of Baroda

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms. Namya Trivedi , is a bonafide student of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, studying Master of Arts (Psychology), for the academic period of 2022-2024. This study, entitled "Mental Health Effects Of Infidelity In Relationships", is a bonafide research work, which has been submitted by the candidate as a dissertation in partial fulfillment for the degree Master of Arts in Psychology (Specialization – Clinical) (Category – GIA) of Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat. This study is an original work conducted by the student and no part of this has formed the basis for award of any other accolade or degree earlier. This work is a record of a candidate's personal effort.

Dr. Rashmin Sompura
I/C Head ,
Department of Psychology
Faculty of Education and Psychology
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
Vadodara, Gujarat

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to extend my gratitude to Prof. Ashutosh Biswal, Dean of Faculty of Education and Psychology, and my guide Dr. Rashmin Sompura, I/C Head of Department of Psychology, for giving me this opportunity and for always supporting my endeavors to pursue this dissertation and for his encouragement and guidance throughout all the stages of work. I thank him for the expert advice and insights on the subject matter and for allowing me to benefit from his vast knowledge and experience in the field of psychology. His support and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping my ideas and helping me to develop a deeper understanding of the subject. I would like to thank SHE team for giving me their valuable feedback on this matter and sharing some of their cases with me.. I would like to thank my parents, my family, this would not have been possible without them, even though I may not say it, I love them, this entire work is dedicated to them. I would also like to take a moment to thank my friends, Arjun, Vrunda, Vidhi and Virginiah for being my absolute rock and not letting me give up on my research.

My deepest gratitude to all my participants, each one of them, who took their precious time and shared their personal experiences with me, for trusting me with the most sensitive part of their lives, which has proven to be instrumental for my study.

A special thanks to Mr. Karan Johar who has in a way inspired me through his films like *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* to work on a subject like this.

Namya Trivedi

ABSTRACT

Infidelity has become a widespread phenomenon, and its impact on romantic relationships- both married relationships and unmarried relationships is a topic of growing interest among researchers. This study aims to explore the relationship between infidelity and its effects on mental health in relationships. For the purpose of the present study, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was adopted to explore the lived experiences of the participants and the meaning that they themselves attached to their experiences. The study utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data from 9 participants. Participants were invited to these audio/video interviews via Whatsapp, according to their and researchers availability. The results revealed that infidelity has a substantial impact on a number of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and low self-esteem.The results also highlight the intricate interactions between psychological, emotional, and relational elements that play a role in the fallout from infidelity, emphasizing the necessity for customized interventions and support systems for individuals impacted. The study also highlights the significance of taking into account a variety of cultural, societal, and environmental elements that could affect how people react to infidelity and the effects it has on their mental health. In the end, this research adds to the continuing conversation about relationship dynamics by expanding our knowledge of the impacts of infidelity on mental health and emphasizes the need of giving mental health a high priority in the context of intimate partnerships.

Keywords: Infidelity, Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, and Low self-esteem

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter- I INTRODUCTION…….11

Theories of Infidelity……13

Effects of Infidelity……...21

Mental Health Effects of Infidelity……...22

Objectives…….24

Chapter- II LITERATURE REVIEW……..26

Risk Factors……...33

Protective Factors……..…34

Chapter- III METHODOLOGY……37

Research Design…….38

Sample and Sampling Method……38

Data Collection……....39

Procedure and Analysis……...40

Chapter- IV FINDINGS……..…43

Chapter- V SUMMARY……..81

Discussion…….82

Conclusion…….94

Limitations and Recommendations……106

REFERENCE……..107

APPENDIX……..112

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Table Name	Page No.
1.1-1.9	Analysis of interviews	43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Name	Figure Description	Page No.
Model of Infidelity	Describes researchers model of infidelity	83

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

"The breaking of trust and the keeping of secrets in an intimate partnership" is a common definition of infidelity (Schneider et al., 2012). Prior research has examined several forms of adultery, including emotional, virtual, and physical, and the potential effects that each may have on a partnership. Many people believe that adultery is exclusively associated with physical acts. Nonetheless, adultery is regarded as both a behavior and a mentality. Research has indicated that an individual's mental suffering is more likely to stem from the emotional motivation behind their spouse's sexual conduct than from the actual sexual act itself. Virtual infidelity, also referred to as cybersex infidelity, can cause problems for those involved because there is typically no physical touch and no emotional expression.

"The occurrence of emotional involvement with a third party that violates the ground rules established by the couple (e.g. trusting another, sharing your deepest thoughts with another, falling in love with another, being vulnerable with each other, being more committed to another, spending more money on another)" is the definition of emotional infidelity given by the study (Leeker & Carlozzi., 2014). As a result, a spouse who harbors strong romantic feelings for someone else but has not engaged in any sexual activity may, in certain situations, cause greater harm to their spouse than someone who has never engaged in any kind of extramarital affair. However, a greater proportion of men than women reported feeling more jealous of their partner's sexual activity (Schützwohl et al., 2004). According to Leeker and Carlozzie (2014), "sexual activities" are described as "the occurrence of sexual involvement with a third party that violates the ground rules established by the couple (e.g. kissing, fondling, oral sex, vaginal sex,

anal sex)". This suggests that depending on the nature of infidelity, men and women may experience various mental effects.

Furthermore, cybersex infidelity is a different kind of adultery. Regardless of the user's perception of the conduct as problematic, a previous study on cybersex infidelity discovered that a "cybersex user's sexual activities cause a great deal of emotional distress to his or her partner" (Schneider et al, 2012). This suggests that a person may experience emotional harm even from the mere notion or sight of their spouse having an affair. Virtual infidelity can still be detrimental to the victim's mental and emotional well-being even though it doesn't need in-person contact or emotional connection. The widespread usage of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and others has made it much simpler for people to commit this kind of adultery. With resources at their disposal, an individual can engage in virtual infidelity with ease and in a matter of seconds. They can also delete images and texts in order to get rid of any proof. For this reason, research indicates that 71% of a sampled population believed that virtual infidelity jeopardizes trust, and 48% believe it cannot be rebuilt (Schneider et al., 2012). Regardless of whether the victim chooses to end their present relationship or find someone else, this can also have a significant negative effect on their mental health.

A romantic and/or sexual relationship with someone other than the spouse that starts online and is primarily maintained through electronic discussions that take place through chat rooms and e-mails is now considered infidelity due to the growth of the Internet. The process by which people who are already in committed relationships look to engage in computer-synchronous, interactive encounters with people of the other sex is the focus of this article. A cyber affair

might take the form of an ongoing relationship with a single online user or it can take the form of several sporadic erotic chat room meetings with other online users. The question of whether chat room interactions qualify as "infidelity" is up for discussion. According to Mileham, it qualifies as infidelity for three reasons: First of all, since the concept of marriage entails emotional and sexual exclusivity, having sex with someone other than your husband is frowned upon. Secondly, it normally takes place in private and is kept a secret from the spouse. Third, the fact that chat room relationships can lead to a violation of trust and are significant in nature supports the idea that they should be classified as infidelity. The majority of spouses experience the same levels of betrayal, rage, and hurt from online infidelity as they would from in-person adultery.Mileham goes on to say that this concept is not applicable in situations where one's actions in chat rooms are not concealed from their spouse.

Theories of Infidelity

Researchers over a period of time have established various theories that explain the complex phenomenon of Infidelity, they are Evolutionary Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Attachment Theory, Opportunity Theory, Sexual Satisfaction Theory, Psychological Needs Theory, Cultural and Societal Influences and Internet and Technology Theory.

According to evolutionary theory, humans have developed specific behaviors—such as mating strategies—to increase the likelihood of successful reproduction. It's easy to understand male infidelity from an evolutionary standpoint. Because of the stark differences in parental investment, men have developed a larger inclination for sexual variety than women do on average. Men can procreate as easily as a fertile woman can be inseminated. It takes a woman

nine months of metabolically demanding pregnancy to give birth to a single child. Put another way, one successful reproduction with an affair partner may have improved the reproductive output of an ancestral married male with two children by fifty percent. For women who are currently in a committed relationship, taking on more partners does not and has never significantly improved their chances of getting pregnant. However, women do have affairs; this occurrence has been explained by the "good genes hypothesis" up until now, which holds that women have evolved a dual mating strategy in which they secure investment from one guy while having side relationships with men who are genetically superior to them.

However, the good genes theory is unable to explain why so many women actually wander and choose the affair partner over their present relationship after an affair. The mate-switching hypothesis, a novel idea developed by David Buss and his teammates , bridges the knowledge gap in science by explaining real-world phenomena. According to the mate-switching hypothesis, women conduct extramarital encounters in order to move up to a better partner and avoid a bad marriage. The idea accounts for the typical observation made by both sexes that a woman becomes sexually attracted to her coworker a year after making her marriage vows public. A dad wonders if he made a big mistake and fantasizes about his high school girlfriend who ran away after changing his child's fifth diaper of the day.After six years of marriage, a woman discovers that she is the main provider and that her husband's sloth has damaged their trust in one another; she also observes that her coworker spends more time in her office doorway than is actually necessary. Following years of quiet yearning, a guy begins an intense relationship with his neighbor next door. A woman quietly sets the foundation for her impending divorce from her spouse by opening a second bank account and making an apartment deposit while

admitting to her best friend that she is in love with someone else. All of these different situations have one thing in common: humans have developed tactical adaptations for mating, a phenomenon that occurs in many other animals as well. The most basic kind of adaptation is known as the "walk-away" strategy, wherein organisms merely distance themselves physically from expensive cooperating partners. According to the mate-switching hypothesis, humans have psychologically evolved to recognize and reject expensive partners in favor of more advantageous ones. This variation of the walk-away tactic is based on these adaptations.

Three major challenges characterized the lives of early humanity. The physical environment's risks came first: finding a place to shelter from the storm, obtaining enough food to eat, and avoiding extremes of heat or cold. Conflicts with other animals came in second. Dangerous snakes, voracious cats, and parasites that made human bodies their home posed a constant threat to survival. Competition and conflict within members of our own species proved to be a third class of obstacles that were no less important. With their many slings and arrows, other people combined to form a powerfully hostile force of nature. Humans developed a variety of mating techniques in response to these conflicts, with long-term, committed pair bonding emerging as a key tactic. When berries weren't flowering during the severe winters, a dedicated partner could supply meat. A committed spouse could provide defense against unfriendly people and ravenous predators. A person's life partner has the ability to raise their offspring, who are priceless messengers of priceless genetic information. In summary, long-term mating provided a plethora of advantages that aided in the fight against all three categories of human conflicts. However, a problem might always arise. An accident or sickness could cripple a hunter who was once quite promising. A regular partner may be killed in intergroup fighting, wounded in combat, or bitten

by a venomous spider. Alternatively, his standing within the organization can drastically decline, lowering his priority for accessing the group's vital resources. A partner's mate's worth may experience disastrous setbacks even when it first seemed to be on the rise. Future trajectory is the main consideration in long-term partner choosing, and the future is frequently fraught with tragedy and treachery.

The mate-switching hypothesis states that even in happy partnerships, individuals are still actively searching for new partners. When newly available mates emerge or when a possible mate's attraction or interest grows, tracking can occasionally take place at low levels. It can occasionally become highly engaged, such as when a woman wants to end a relationship because she is growing increasingly unhappy with her usual partner.These widely recognized, traditional patterns would not have developed without influencing actual mating choices and behaviors.

Numerous data that might otherwise remain puzzling are explained by the mate-switching hypothesis. It explains why the majority of people nurture backup partners, why characteristics of opposite-sex friends correspond to characteristics of a long-term partner, and why backup partners usually go unnoticed by the primary partner. It clarifies why women grow unsatisfied with their current relationships when there are more mate-valued options accessible in the mating pool than their usual mates. It offers a persuasive justification for women's high risk-taking behavior in having affairs, which has long been a mystery in evolutionary theory because women do not directly profit from successful reproduction. It will surely disturb many to realize that humans have created a mind devoted to mate-switching. A guy may find it unsettling to learn that his spouse has "just a friend" who is his competitor, is holding a mate-insurance policy, or

has sexual fantasies about her coworker. Realizing that you are more interchangeable than you previously thought may be disheartening. If you realize that your partner's dissatisfaction may not be temporary but rather signals a covert strategy to quit the relationship, it could be unsettling.

Thus, some trajectories can be explained by the conceptual underpinnings of evolutionism, but not all of them. Its contributions are essential to comprehending human partnership. Women are drawn to men who exhibit maturity and a higher social and financial position, whereas men are interested in youthful, attractive women. However, people are not defined by the roles and actions that evolution has prescribed. As time passes and these run out in relationships, additional factors may come into play to sustain the partnership and determine whether it dissolves or not.

A framework for comprehending interpersonal dynamics, including the dynamics of infidelity, is provided by social exchange theory. This idea holds that people make relationship decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. They aim for the best results for themselves, maximizing rewards and minimizing expenses.According to social exchange theory, people are more likely to have extramarital affairs if they believe the advantages of doing so exceed the disadvantages. These advantages and disadvantages can change based on the specifics of each situation, but they usually include things like ego enhancement, camaraderie, excitement, emotional fulfillment, and sexual satisfaction.

According to social exchange theory, people may balance the advantages of having an affair—like feeling passionate or exciting—against the possible disadvantages, including jeopardizing their main relationship, hurting their spouse, or becoming socially stigmatized. A person may be more inclined to commit infidelity if they believe the benefits exceed the costs. Furthermore, according to the social exchange hypothesis, people may commit adultery if they feel their present relationship is not fulfilling their needs or if they think they would benefit more from an extramarital relationship. This could happen if someone looks for other sources of fulfillment because they feel unsatisfied or unfulfilled in their primary connection. All things considered, social exchange theory sheds light on the decision-making processes that underlie adultery by emphasizing how people may balance the advantages and disadvantages of their choices in the context of their relationships. The complexity of human conduct must be acknowledged, though, as there can be a vast range of reasons why someone would commit adultery depending on environmental, cultural, and personal variables.

It is crucial to look beyond evolutionary and social theories in pursuit of a more holistic perspective for comprehending and describing couple interactions in order to prevent encouraging polarity between them (Rose & Rose, 2000). Evolutionary trajectories in couple relations are a relatively recent field of study (Campbell & Ellis, 2005). Therefore, in order to have a deeper understanding of the characteristics that influence relationship longevity and stability, it is reasonable to incorporate perspectives from several disciplines, including sociology, psychology, culture, and philosophy. Therefore, it would be intriguing to provide a multidisciplinary method for explaining marital trajectories.

Attachment theory provides an alternative viewpoint on infidelity by emphasizing the emotional connections that arise within interactions between people. Based on their early experiences with caregivers, people form internal working models of relationships, according to attachment theory. Their expectations, actions, and emotions in subsequent relationships, especially romantic ones, are influenced by these internal working models. According to attachment theory, people's attachment styles have an impact on how they view relationships, how they feel about their partners, and how they behave in them, including how likely they are to commit infidelity. It's crucial to remember that attachment styles are not fixed and that, with enough reflection and work, people may become conscious of their attachment patterns and alter them.

According to the opportunity hypothesis of infidelity, people are more inclined to have extramarital affairs when they believe there are good opportunities to do so. Opportunity theory stresses the relevance of situational elements in encouraging infidelity, in contrast to other theories of infidelity that concentrate on individual attributes or relationship dynamics.
Individuals and couples can take proactive measures to safeguard their relationships and lower the risk of infidelity by identifying and resolving situational circumstances that provide opportunities for infidelity.

According to the sexual satisfaction theory of infidelity, people who are unhappy with their sexual experiences in their primary relationship may have extramarital affairs. According to this view, seeking sexual fulfillment outside of a committed partnership might be significantly motivated by feelings of sexual dissatisfaction. The possibility that one partner may look for

fulfillment outside the partnership can be decreased by addressing underlying issues through couples therapy, sexual counseling, and initiatives to improve sexual closeness and pleasure.

According to the psychological needs theory of infidelity, people may have extramarital affairs in order to satisfy psychological demands that aren't being satisfied in their main relationship. This theory focuses on the psychological and emotional elements that lead people to look for fulfillment outside of committed relationships. In order to stop infidelity, it's critical to treat underlying emotional and psychological problems in relationships, according to the psychological needs theory. Couples can lessen the likelihood that one spouse will look for fulfillment outside of the partnership by meeting each other's psychological needs and fostering a stronger emotional bond through open communication, empathy, and mutual support.

Social and cultural factors greatly influence the attitudes, customs, and actions related to adultery. These factors can have a significant impact on how infidelity is viewed, accepted, and dealt with in many cultures and countries. The focus of the Internet and technology theory of infidelity is on the ways in which digital platforms and tools for communication impact and promote extramarital encounters. People now have unmatched access to possible partners and prospects for infidelity thanks to the Internet and technological breakthroughs. This theory investigates the ways in which different facets of the digital environment influence the dynamics and frequency of infidelity.

Effects of Infidelity

Breaking up with a partner is one of the most frequent outcomes of infidelity (Harris, 2002). In a poll conducted by Roscoe et al. (1988), more than half of the participants said they would end the relationship with an unfaithful spouse (44%) or consider doing so (16%) (see also Knox et al., 2000). More than half would talk about the occurrence with their spouse in an attempt to comprehend or clarify it. Even while a tiny percentage of respondents say they would overlook the offense or take revenge, their true feelings can differ.

There is a causal connection between infidelity and domestic violence.It is noteworthy that poor condom use rates with second partners put the primary partner at indirect risk of STD exposure and increase the direct risk of exposure to STDs; most women who get HIV are infected through their primary relationships. Thus, infidelity poses a serious threat to public health.

Few researchers have looked at the connection between trauma stemming from infidelity and the physical health issues that follow; nevertheless, several researchers have noted the physical reactions that occur immediately after these affairs are discovered. For instance, research by Lonergan et al. discovered that, right after suffering romantic betrayal, infidelity victims reported persistent somatic symptoms such as insomnia, weight loss, difficulty concentrating, and lack of appetite and libido. Another study by Roos et al. discovered that when remembering their prior relationship, undergraduate students who were victims of romantic betrayal and infidelity reported experiencing breathing difficulties, physical trembling, intense anxiousness, and a racing heart . Findings from Shackelford et al. that asked female participants to perceive their boyfriend as unfaithful while in an experimental environment revealed that they experienced more physical sickness and nausea. In the end, it is recommended that further research be done to

look at the long-term physical impacts of trauma stemming from infidelity in order to provide preventative care for individuals in these situations.

Mental Health Effects of Infidelity

In a study involving both men and women, the findings that their partner's emotional involvement with someone else was more likely to elicit feelings of jealousy than their partner's extramarital affairs were reported by both sexes (Schützwohl et al., 2004). When infidelity in marriage is discussed, it is implied that the pair entered into marriage with the intention of making a meaningful, long-term commitment to one another. As a result, it seems sense to believe that marital infidelity is a big, bad life event. According to studies, "bad life events appear to influence the risk of Major Depressive Episodes (MDE) independent of genetic predisposition and are strongly associated with depression in women" (Cano et al., 2000, p. 774). Even though a lot of study focuses on the effects on women, anyone—regardless of gender, sex, race, or cultural background—can develop depression as a result of a traumatic life event. However, infidelity has a negative impact on the victims of the affairs, increasing their worry and sadness (Atkins et al., 2010).

A considerable degree of trust and dependence on one another is implied for a couple to proceed to the point of marriage. When such trust is violated by their partner, it can cause the other person great emotional distress. Reduced self-esteem, an increased risk of mental health issues, guilt, and despair are some of the effects that are frequently observed in infidelity victims and perpetrators (Russell et al., 2013). More reported symptoms of sadness, anxiety, and distress may

depend on the degree of guilt and self-blame or blame on the partner who cheated (Shrout et al., 2017). The manner in which the victim learns of the affair also affects the severity of mental health consequences, such as depression; learning of the affair directly from the perpetrator results in better mental health outcomes than learning of it indirectly (Whisman, 2016).

Studies have shown that, in extreme situations, cheating—regardless of how long ago the betrayal occurred—can result in symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder that are comparable. It can cause a great deal of anxiety that affects a person's life and functioning when victims find out about the infidelity months or years later (Rachman, 2010). As per Kelley et al. (2012), there have been instances where PTSD symptoms produced by felt betrayal have been more severe than those resulting from harm or imagined threats to one's life. According to Roos et al. (2019), experiencing infidelity has been linked to PTSD symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, traumatic flashbacks, behavioral and psychological avoidance, physiological hyperarousal symptoms, and hypervigilance. Infidelity exposure can result in grief reactions that comprise the five stages of grief in addition to trauma symptoms (Dean, 2010).

Therefore, it is proposed that, while valid traumatic experiences, attachment-based trauma as shown in extradyadic affairs should be considered unique and complex from PTSD trauma. There are benefits to validating such an emotionally traumatic incident, as some psychologists think that framing the experience of infidelity as a form of trauma may allow greater emotional healing for its victims. Thus, seeing infidelity through the lens of AD as a distinct traumatic event may assist to clarify the significance of these circumstances and cast doubt on the overuse and overdiagnosis of the PTSD label .

For those who are vulnerable, infidelity may seem like an insurmountable issue that inspires suicidal ideas and thoughts . These problems may affect the hurt partners of an affair as well as the offenders, according to a Snyder et al. article . After discovering their partner's betrayal, the injured party may experience erratic feelings of anger, helplessness, abandonment, and victimization that leave them traumatized and unable to maintain themselves. Suicidal ideation could result from this. However, if an affair is discovered, those who commit infidelity may also go through similar emotional reactions, including suicidality, severe anxiety, and sadness. This is thought to happen repeatedly after disclosure and threats of divorce or separation from the marriage.

Objectives

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To explore how individuals make sense of and give meaning to infidelity experienced in their relationships(both married and unmarried).

2. To understand how an individual's health is affected after the revelation about their partner’s infidelity.

3. To explore mental health effects of infidelity in relationships.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review Of Literature

Infidelity, a phenomenon observed across diverse cultural contexts, is typically construed as a violation of the emotional and/or sexual fidelity inherent in a romantic partnership. Its manifestation often triggers a cascade of negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, and a sense of rivalry between intimate partners. While historically, avenues for infidelity may have primarily entailed physical encounters, the proliferation of modern technology has facilitated the emergence of emotional infidelity as a prevalent issue in contemporary relationships.

As noted by Sly (2021), infidelity frequently serves as a catalyst for marital dissolution, with many mental health professionals regarding it as one of the most detrimental events capable of befalling a relationship. Addressing its ramifications within the therapeutic setting poses a formidable challenge. This underscores the increasing significance of research in this domain, particularly in light of the escalating prevalence of infidelity in modern society. Such inquiries are pivotal in augmenting our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of infidelity, as well as its attendant risk factors. A deeper understanding of these elements not only enhances our theoretical grasp of the phenomenon but also facilitates a more nuanced appreciation of the psychological distress experienced by individuals grappling with its aftermath.

Moreover, insights gleaned from research studies, such as that conducted by Sly (2021), serve to illuminate the intricacies of emotional responses to infidelity. Findings from this study indicate that both men and women exhibit heightened feelings of jealousy upon discovering their partner's emotional connections with others, surpassing the intensity evoked by instances of purely sexual infidelity. Such empirical evidence underscores the complex interplay of emotions within the context of romantic relationships, further underscoring the need for comprehensive

investigations into the psychological dynamics of infidelity. Hence, in certain instances, a partner who harbors emotional connections with another individual without engaging in physical intimacy may inflict greater emotional distress upon their spouse compared to an individual who participates in extramarital sexual relations devoid of emotional attachment. It was also seen that more men feel jealous with their partner's sexual activities than women. Sly (2021) suggests that the psychological impact of infidelity may vary between men and women, contingent upon the specific nature of the transgression.

An additional research study demonstrates a contrast in emotional responses associated with these distinct forms of infidelity. Specifically, both male and female participants concurred that emotional infidelity evokes greater distress for the aggrieved party, whereas sexual infidelity is characterized as more upsetting (Carpenter, 2012, p.30). Although these emotions share similarities, being upset is typically regarded as a transient state, whereas distress implies a more enduring impact.

The available research on the psychological impacts of infidelity within marital relationships remains limited. By centering on infidelity within the context of marriage, it is implied that the partners entered into matrimony with the intent of establishing a profound, enduring commitment to one another. Consequently, it is reasonable to surmise that infidelity within marriage constitutes a significant and adverse life event. Studies indicate that "negative life events are strongly linked with depression in women, and these occurrences appear to heighten the risk of Major Depressive Episodes (MDE) irrespective of genetic predisposition" (Cano et al., 2000, p. 774). While much attention has been devoted to understanding the repercussions for women, it is noteworthy that individuals of any gender, sex, race, or cultural background may experience

depression as a consequence of adverse life events. This could also apply on persons engaged in not marital but serious monogamous relationships still.

The decision for a couple to commit to marriage suggests a substantial foundation of trust and reliance upon one another. When this trust is compromised by one partner's infidelity, it can result in profound emotional anguish for the affected individual. Common consequences observed in both victims and perpetrators of infidelity encompass diminished self-esteem, heightened vulnerability to mental health disorders, feelings of guilt, and the onset of depression (Russell et al., 2013).

In certain extreme circumstances, research indicates that infidelity can trigger symptoms resembling those of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), regardless of whether the betrayal occurred recently or occurred years ago. Discovering infidelity months or even years after it took place can generate significant distress, significantly affecting an individual's daily functioning (Rachman, 2010). Kelley et al. (2012) observed that in certain instances, perceived betrayal led to more severe PTSD symptoms than those arising from physical injury or perceived threats to life.

Benjamin Warach & Lawrence Josephs (2019) report that Infidelity is a common phenomenon within romantic relationships, with nationally representative studies indicating that a significant proportion of Americans have engaged in extramarital sexual activity at least once in their lives. Prevalence rates range between 11% and 25%, as observed in various studies. Moreover, rates of sexual infidelity tend to be higher among individuals outside of marital unions. For instance, in unmarried samples, approximately half of men and nearly a third of women reported involvement in extradyadic sexual intercourse.

Emotional infidelity is also a widespread occurrence, as evidenced by research conducted by scholars such as Allen & Baucom (2006) and Luo, Cartun, & Snider (2010). It can manifest independently or concurrently with sexual infidelity, according to studies by Allen & Rhoades (2008), Glass & Wright (1985), Luo et al. (2010), and Thompson (1984). Despite its prevalence, relatively few studies have investigated the rates of emotional infidelity. Thompson's (1984) research, for instance, revealed that 18% of participants admitted to emotional unfaithfulness, defined operationally as being "in love" with someone other than their primary romantic partner, without engaging in sexual infidelity. This compared to 21.6% of participants who reported sexual infidelity without emotional involvement, and 19% who acknowledged both sexual and emotional infidelity.

While there is no doubt that infidelity decimates the quality of a relationship, as far as mental effects go, apart from the ones already mentioned before.According to a variety of scholars (Johnson, 2005; Johnson et al., 2001; Schade & Sandberg, 2012), interpersonal transgressions within intimate relationships, which encompass abandonment or breaches of trust, including instances such as romantic infidelity, can give rise to what is termed as "attachment injuries." These injuries represent deeply distressing interpersonal experiences that defy an individual's expectations regarding the reliability and trustworthiness of a close relationship partner for emotional support and a sense of security. An attachment injury manifests through either abandonment or a breach of trust occurring at a crucial juncture of vulnerability. This harmful occurrence establishes the relationship as insecure and perpetuates ongoing distress within the relationship, as it serves as a benchmark for evaluating the dependability of the partner who caused the injury.

Benjamin (2019) also reports that victimization from infidelity can lead to emotional dysregulation, characterized by a range of specific emotional responses. These include feelings of betrayal, increased anger, fluctuations of rage and shame, jealousy, fear, and elevated sadness, as identified by various researchers. Qualitative research describes the immediate emotional aftermath of infidelity disclosure as an "emotional rollercoaster," marked by intense anger, betrayal, and emotional conflict, as individuals grapple with uncertainty about the future of the relationship (Olson et al., 2002). This period of emotional turmoil is often followed by a phase characterized by reduced emotional reactivity and a heightened focus on making sense of the infidelity. Despite these observations, systematic assessment of attachment status in individuals post-romantic betrayal remains lacking. Additionally, the duration of traumatic emotional reactions following romantic betrayal requires further systematic examination.

The literature indicates that experiencing infidelity victimization can lead to significant cognitive consequences. Betrayed partners often suffer a profound loss of safety and stability in their romantic relationships. Additionally, discovering a partner's infidelity can result in a perceived loss of control and feelings of hopelessness. Furthermore, it can erode the victim's ability to trust others, leading to pervasive mistrust of their partner's fidelity and heightened paranoia about future instances of infidelity. This disruption of core beliefs is unsurprising from an attachment perspective, as the unfaithful partner can no longer serve as the betrayed partner's secure base. According to Bird et al. (2007), betrayed spouses may no longer perceive the world as a safe and predictable place, as the affair violates fundamental beliefs about marriage and commitment.

Infidelity victimization serves as a significant predictor of diminished self-confidence and self-esteem (Bird et al., 2007; Charny & Parnass, 1995; Johnson et al., 2001; Josephs, 2018; Olson et al., 2002). For instance, a therapist-report study revealed that 67% of husbands and 53%

of wives experienced negative impacts on their self-image, personal confidence, and sexual confidence following romantic betrayal (Charny & Parnass, 1995). Josephs (2018) suggests that infidelity constitutes both an attachment injury, undermining secure attachment, and an injury to one's sense of self, eroding self-esteem. The combined effects of reduced self-worth, self-blame, feelings of lost control, shattered assumptions of relationship safety and trust, and other cognitive and emotional repercussions of romantic betrayal may elucidate the correlation between infidelity victimization and the onset of major depressive episodes.

RISK FACTORS

Since we are discussing mental effects of infidelity, especially illnesses, it is important to talk about risk factors that could lead to perhaps increase the likelihood of infidelity and may even lead up to it.

A notable risk factor associated with increased susceptibility to infidelity is the transition to parenthood. Prior investigations, encompassing data from men who engaged in extramarital affairs, have revealed that certain precipitating factors include having a pregnant spouse or one who recently underwent childbirth. The adjustment to fatherhood among men during this phase can exert strains on the relationship, thereby elevating the propensity for infidelity (Whisman et al., 2007).

Another factor posing a risk to the mental well-being of individuals affected by infidelity is the presence of low self-esteem. Research suggests that low self-esteem is correlated with the onset of depression, particularly among women and in the postpartum period (Matthey et al., 2002, p. 114). Consequently, new mothers may face an augmented vulnerability to becoming victims of infidelity, given the heightened susceptibility of their self-esteem during this phase. Regrettably,

individuals with low self-esteem who have experienced infidelity tend to exhibit more severe mental health repercussions compared to those with higher self-esteem levels (Shrout et al., 2020).

Relationship dissatisfaction stands out as a significant risk factor that heightens the likelihood of infidelity within marital unions (Zapien, 2016). Such dissatisfaction may arise from various sources, including a deficit in sexual activity or unmet emotional needs within the relationship. A previous investigation concluded that men are more prone to engaging in infidelity when they experience sexual discontentment prior to marriage (Allen et al., 2008). Conversely, women exhibit a greater propensity for disloyalty when they perceive relational dissatisfaction before entering matrimony (Allen et al., 2008). This evidence suggests that both men and women may anticipate their relational dissatisfaction to be rectified through marriage. However, the failure to realize this expectation could exacerbate matters, potentially leading to heightened mental and emotional distress in the event of infidelity.

Another factor of significance is the disparity in income contribution between partners, which often aligns with traditional gender roles and has implications for the likelihood of infidelity. Research by Munsch (2015) indicates that men who are financially reliant on their wives, the primary breadwinners, are more predisposed to engaging in infidelity. Conversely, the study suggests that women who outearn their husbands are less prone to infidelity. This phenomenon may be attributed, in part, to the potential scarcity of intimate time available for couples to spend together. For instance, if the husband spends considerable time at home while his wife pursues her career outside, it may afford him more opportunities and discretion to engage in unfaithful behavior. Furthermore, within the framework of traditional gender norms, the husband may

experience feelings of emasculation and insecurity if he is not the primary financial provider for the family.

Moreover, individuals with pre-existing mental health disorders or emotional attachment issues exhibit a heightened propensity for engaging in infidelity, particularly in the realm of online interactions. According to Abbasi and Dibble (2019), married individuals grappling with mental illness are more inclined to partake in infidelity-related behaviors facilitated by social networking platforms. Their study revealed that approximately 5-12% of married participants engaged in such behaviors, which correlated with diminished relationship satisfaction, ambivalence toward the relationship, and attachment anxiety. Individuals experiencing significant apprehension about being alone if their relationship terminates may seek alternative partners as a "backup plan" and resort to infidelity as a precautionary measure in case of relationship dissolution (Sakman et al., 2020, p. 3). Moreover, those afflicted with attachment anxiety harbor concerns about their partner's potential neglect or abandonment, fostering a fear of solitude that elevates the likelihood of engaging in infidelity.

In her study, Sweeny (2001) underscores the impact of low income on negative mental health outcomes. However, while low income is indeed associated with adverse mental health effects, the research did not establish a significant correlation between infidelity and negative mental health outcomes. Instead, the study indicated that the majority of negative mental health repercussions were intricately linked with the divorce process itself and ancillary factors such as the extent of control exerted over the divorce proceedings. This suggests a nuanced relationship between infidelity, income levels, and mental health outcomes, with divorce-related stressors emerging as primary contributors to negative psychological well-being.

Finally, infidelity is a prevalent issue within marriages involving spouses affiliated with the army or military. Concerns regarding infidelity among military couples arise from the heightened likelihood of such behaviors during periods of deployment and separation. Research indicates a notably elevated incidence of infidelity within military and veteran populations (Allen et al., 2012). This phenomenon may be attributable to the substantial strain placed on military marriages and families by frequent and prolonged deployments (Kachadourian et al., 2015).

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Within the complex landscape of relationships, understanding the protective factors that safeguard couples from the throes of infidelity is paramount for fostering enduring intimacy and trust.

In their study, Fye and Mims (2019) delineated several factors associated with mitigating the risk of infidelity: fostering a secure emotional connection, maintaining sexual activity, establishing healthy boundaries in behavior, cognition, and relationships, prioritizing monogamy, and employing adaptive coping strategies both individually and as a couple. The presence and application of these protective factors varied among participants, yet their significance lay in the concerted efforts, irrespective of scale, made within each domain.

Other than the factors Fye (2019) mentioned in her study, Atkins et al. (2001) also found religion to be a protective factor as well. Research conducted by Atkins et al. (2001) revealed that individuals who regularly attended religious services exhibited a decreased likelihood of engaging in extramarital affairs, in contrast to those who never attended such services, who were 2.5 times more prone to infidelity. The correlation between religious involvement and lower rates

of infidelity within marital relationships is likely attributable to the strong emphasis placed on the sanctity of marriage within religious teachings and values.

Ultimately, individuals with high self-esteem demonstrate a reduced susceptibility to becoming victims of infidelity. However, should individuals with high self-esteem find themselves in such a situation, they exhibit greater resilience in recovering from the experience. According to Shrout and Weigel (2020), individuals with high self-esteem possess superior self-regulation skills, perceive fewer threats from stressful events, and have confidence in their ability to manage stress. Consequently, self-esteem serves as a protective factor in both scenarios: it acts as a deterrent against partner infidelity and mitigates the potential mental and emotional harm in cases where infidelity does occur.

In summary, it can be said that the psychological ramifications of infidelity victimization are manifold and profound. Research suggests that individuals who have experienced betrayal within their romantic relationships often endure emotional turmoil, including feelings of betrayal, anger, shame, jealousy, fear, and sadness. This emotional upheaval can lead to significant cognitive consequences, such as disruptions to one's sense of safety, stability, and trust in relationships. Furthermore, victims may experience a profound loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, exacerbating feelings of self-blame and a sense of lost control. These psychological wounds inflicted by romantic betrayal may also contribute to the onset of major depressive episodes. The emotional toll of infidelity extends beyond mere emotional distress, shaping individuals' cognitive perceptions and self-concept, ultimately influencing their mental health and well-being.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Introduction

The aim of the chapter is to provide a methodological approach undertaken to determine the relationship between Mental Health Effects and Infidelity in Relationships. This chapter will present the objectives and methodology adopted in the thesis. It will present the sampling method, participant's demographic details, method use for data collection and the process of analysis.

Research Design

Using a qualitative approach, the study's questions were investigated. These techniques are especially helpful when a certain phenomenon is poorly understood and a greater understanding is desired. "Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem," claims Merriam (2009).In-depth, deep insights into people's experiences and viewpoints can be gained via qualitative research, which is also very helpful in creating theories and hypotheses for future studies.

For the purpose of the present study, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was adopted to explore the lived experiences of the participants and the meaning that they themselves attached to their experiences.

The phenomenological approach is followed by interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which focuses on the rich description of a phenomenon as it is lived by an individual as well as

its embodied and experiential meanings (Finlay, 2009). Hermeneutics, or the philosophy of interpretation, is a significant theoretical process covered in IPA. According to Smith and Osborn (2003), IPA is a phenomenological method that focuses on a person's subjective view or interpretation of an event and aims to investigate personal experience. IPA also acknowledges the researcher's role in interpreting the subjective narrative provided by the participant. IPA states that the interpretive activity of the researcher allows access to the subjective world of the participant. Therefore, to put it broadly, IPA comprises two stages of an interpretation process, or double hermeneutic: the researcher interprets how the participants made sense of their experiences, while the participant interprets their inner world in the first stage. Idiographic case approach is another name for IPA. Instead of trying to make generalizations, the idiographic nature of IPA allows for a greater emphasis on the individual and a thorough description of the distinct experiences and meaning-making of a small group of people (Smith et al., 1999). Given the aforementioned circumstances, IPA was determined to be the best methodological strategy for achieving the goals of the current study.

Sample and Sampling Method

9 participants were included in the sample collected through purposive sampling. Out of 9 participants, 5 participants had experienced infidelity during their marriage and 4 participants had experienced infidelity during their romantic relationships. The inclusion criteria for the interviews was being cheated in a committed romantic relationship. Three types of infidelity were being taken into account- Emotional Infidelity, Sexual Infidelity and Virtual Infidelity.

"The occurrence of emotional involvement with a third party that violates the ground rules established by the couple (e.g. trusting another, sharing your deepest thoughts with another, falling in love with another, being vulnerable with each other, being more committed to another, spending more money on another)" is the definition of emotional infidelity given by the study (Leeker & Carlozzi., 2014).

According to Leeker and Carlozzie (2014), "sexual activities" are described as "the occurrence of sexual involvement with a third party that violates the ground rules established by the couple (e.g. kissing, fondling, oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex)". This suggests that depending on the nature of infidelity, men and women may experience various mental effects.

A "cybersex user's sexual activities cause a great deal of emotional distress to his or her partner" (Schneider et al, 2012).

Data Collection

An interview method of data collection was used. Semi-structured interviews were used as a way of conducting these interviews. A hybrid approach to qualitative research, semi-structured interviews incorporate aspects of unstructured and structured interviewing. A semi-structured interview involves a planned list of questions or themes to cover from the interviewer, but there is some flexibility in how these are asked and how to follow up with additional questions depending on the participant's answers. In addition to allowing for some standardization, this method enables the investigation of pertinent or unexpected topics that come up during the interview. In the social sciences, psychology, anthropology, and other disciplines where it's

crucial to have a comprehensive grasp and insight into participants' viewpoints and experiences, semi-structured interviews are frequently utilized.

Procedure

All 9 participants were invited to an online audio/video interview. The questions were semi-structured and revolved around the main objectives of gaining insights on participants' lived experiences and effects on their mental health after the revelation about their partner's infidelity. The researcher prepared questions keeping in mind the sensitivity of the subject and kept them of open-ended nature. The participants were contacted through WhatsApp and asked for an appropriate time and date for the interview. The time was fixed according to the availability and preference of both the researcher and the participant. Before the interview the participants were briefed about the interview and basic line of questioning so that they know what to expect and can answer in detail. An informed consent was taken to audio record the participants for the interview.Before the interview began, basic rapport formation was made to help participants feel safe while answering sensitive questions. The interview concluded with feedback on their feelings and if the participants had any suggestions for the researcher.

The researcher's motivation behind conducting such a study was personal experience. Researcher has a friend who had been cheated in her relationship which led her to developing depression which affected the researcher deeply and got curious to learn about the subject. Having said that, the researcher gets a lot of inspiration from movies. So films like *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* have affected the researcher to such an extent that they were motivated to conduct a

study on it. This research has been conducted from a place of genuine curiosity and wanting to go to the depths of such a subject.

Analysis

All transcriptions were manually transcribed. Once the data was transcribed, it was analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Researcher kept the exploratory comments first then it was checked by the guide. The next stage involved identifying recurring themes and discussing them.

Note on this copy

This is an abridged copy of the dissertation, published for credential verification. Chapter IV (Findings, original pages 42-80), Chapter V up to the Conclusion (Discussion, original pages 81-101) and Appendix B (interview excerpts, original pages 112-116) are omitted to protect the privacy of the people who took part in the study, who spoke about very personal and painful experiences. All other pages are included unchanged, with their original page numbers: the title page, declaration, the guide's certificates, acknowledgment, abstract, contents, introduction, literature review, methodology, conclusion, limitations, references and Appendix A (interview questions). The complete dissertation is held by the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explored the complex relationship between mental health effects and Infidelity in relationships. Investigating how relationship infidelity affects mental health illuminates the complex and wide-ranging implications that this occurrence can have on people. After conducting a thorough analysis of the body of research and empirical investigations, it is clear that adultery has a substantial impact on a number of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and low self-esteem.

The results also highlight the intricate interactions between psychological, emotional, and relational elements that play a role in the fallout from infidelity, emphasizing the necessity for customized interventions and support systems for individuals impacted. The study also highlights the significance of taking into account a variety of cultural, societal, and environmental elements that could affect how people react to infidelity and the effects it has on their mental health.

Going forward, treating the effects of infidelity on mental health will need a multimodal strategy that includes intervention at the individual and relational levels. This could entail encouraging candid conversation, building relationships of trust and resiliency, offering resources to help couples deal with the fallout from infidelity, and extending psychotherapy assistance to those who are impacted.

In the end, this research adds to the continuing conversation about relationship dynamics by expanding our knowledge of the impacts of infidelity on mental health and emphasizes the need of giving mental health a high priority in the context of intimate partnerships.

Limitations of the research

A major limitation for this study is self-reported data is frequently used in studies on infidelity, which introduces bias. Due to social desirability bias or fear of being judged, participants may underreport or distort their experiences, providing false or incomplete information.

Secondly, results obtained from a particular population or cultural situation might not apply to other populations or environments. Applying research findings to a given community might be impacted by major differences in cultural norms, interpersonal dynamics, and attitudes regarding infidelity.

Thirdly, ethical difficulties arise when researching delicate subjects like infidelity, especially when it comes to participant anonymity and mental pain. It becomes essential to protect participant confidentiality and offer suitable support services in order to reduce potential harm.

Fourthly, it can be difficult to prove a link between infidelity and negative impacts on mental health. Infidelity and psychological discomfort may be correlated, but the findings may be muddied by other variables like relationship quality, coping strategies, and pre-existing mental health issues.

Fifthly, research on infidelity sometimes overlooks the perspectives of people in same-sex partnerships or non-binary people in favor of disproportionately focusing on heterosexual relationships. The inclusion and scope of the research are restricted by this gender bias.

Lastly, instead of expressing their own emotions or experiences, participants may give answers they feel conform to cultural standards or expectations. Due to this bias, the results may be distorted and the frequency or severity of the effects on mental health may be underestimated.

Implications and future research

In order to improve our understanding and the quality of methods in this complicated domain, it is imperative that we investigate the implications and future research pathways related to the consequences of infidelity in partnerships on mental health.: Further studies may concentrate on crafting and assessing treatment approaches that are particularly customized for individuals and couples impacted by adultery. Examining the efficaciousness of diverse therapeutic methods, including couples therapy, trauma-informed approaches, and cognitive-behavioral therapy, may yield significant insights into optimal strategies for managing mental health issues resulting from adultery. Investigating the resiliency and coping mechanisms used by those who manage the fallout from adultery while preserving their mental health is necessary. Comprehending how people handle betrayal and regain their confidence and self-worth could help develop resilience-focused interventions and support systems.

It is crucial to take into account how experiences of infidelity and mental health outcomes are influenced by the intersectionality of identities, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic class. To further understand how various axes of identity intersect and affect people's reactions to infidelity, future research should aim for greater inclusion and intersectional studies.

By addressing these implications and prioritizing future research in these areas, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the mental health effects of infidelity and inform interventions that support individuals and couples in navigating the challenges associated with betrayal and relationship breakdowns.

REFERENCES

Abbasi, Irum Saeed, & Dibble, Jayson L. (2019). The Role of Online Infidelity Behaviors in the Link between Mental Illness and Social Media Intrusion. Social Science Computer Review, 089443931985707. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439319857079

Allen, E. S., & Baucom, D. H. (2006). Dating, marital, and hypothetical extradyadic involvements: How do they compare? The Journal of Sex Research, 43(4), 307–317. doi:10.1080/00224490609552330

Allen, Elizabeth S, Rhoades, Galena Kline, Stanley, Scott M, Markman, Howard J, Williams, Tamara, Melton, Jessica, & Clements, Mari L. (2008). Premarital Precursors of Marital Infidelity. Family Process, 47(2), 243–259. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2008.00251.x

Atkins, David C, Jacobson, Neil S, & Baucom, Donald H. (2001). Understanding Infidelity. Journal of Family Psychology, 15(4), 735–749. https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.15.4.735

Benjamin Warach & Lawrence Josephs (2019): The aftershocks of infidelity: a review of infidelity-based attachment trauma, Sexual and Relationship Therapy, DOI: 10.1080/14681994.2019.1577961

Bird, M. H., Butler, M. H., & Fife, S. T. (2007). The process of couple healing following infidelity: A qualitative study. Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, 6(4), 1–25. Doi: 10.1300/J398v06n04_01

Carpenter, C. J. (2012). Meta-Analyses of Sex Differences in Responses to Sexual Versus Emotional Infidelity: Men and Women Are More Similar than Different. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 36(1), 25-37. https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684311414537

Cano, A., & O'Leary, K. D. (2000). Infidelity and separations precipitate major depressive episodes and symptoms of nonspecific depression and anxiety. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 68*(5), 774–781. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.68.5.774

Charny, I. W., & Parnass, S. (1995). The impact of extramarital relationships on the continuation of marriages. Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 21(2), 100–115. doi:10.1080/00926239508404389

Fye, Marissa A, & Mims, Grace A. (2019). Preventing Infidelity: A Theory of Protective Factors. The Family Journal (Alexandria, Va.), 27(1), 22–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480718809428

Glass, S. P., & Wright, T. L. (1985). Sex differences in type of extramarital involvement and marital dissatisfaction. Sex Roles, 12(9–10), 1101–1120. doi:10.1007/BF00288108

Johnson, S. M. (2005). Broken bonds: An emotionally focused approach to infidelity. Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 4(2), 17–29. doi:10.1300/J398v04n02_03

Johnson, S. M., Makinen, J. A., & Millikin, J. W. (2001). Attachment injuries in couple relationships: A new perspective on impasses in couples therapy. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 27(2), 145–155. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2001.tb01152.x

Josephs, L. (2018). The dynamics of infidelity: Applying relationship science to psychotherapy practice. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Kachadourian, Lorig K, Smith, Brian N, Taft, Casey T, & Vogt, Dawne. (2015). The Impact of Infidelity on Combat‐Exposed Service Members. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 28(5), 418–425. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22033

Luo, S., Cartun, M. A., & Snider, A. G. (2010). Assessing extradyadic behavior: A review, a new measure, and two new models. Personality and Individual Differences, 49(3), 155–163. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2010.03.033

Matthey, Stephen, Kavanagh, David J, Howie, Pauline, Barnett, Bryanne, & Charles, Margaret. (2004). Prevention of postnatal distress or depression: an evaluation of an intervention at preparation for parenthood classes. Journal of Affective Disorders, 79(1), 113–126. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0327(02)00362-2

Munsch, C. L. (2015). Her Support, His Support: Money, Masculinity, and Marital Infidelity. American Sociological Review, 80(3), 469–495. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415579989

Olson, M. M., Russell, C. S., Higgins-Kessler, M., & Miller, R. B. (2002). Emotional processes following disclosure of an extramarital affair. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 28, 423–434. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2002.tb00367.x

Phenomenological Psychological Study and Clinical Implications. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 47(2), 134–155. https://doi.org/10.1163/15691624-12341311

Russell, V. M., Baker, L. R., & McNulty, J. K. (2013). Attachment insecurity and infidelity in marriage: Do studies of dating relationships really inform us about marriage? *Journal of Family Psychology, 27*(2), 242–251. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032118

Sakman, Ezgi, Urganci, Betul, & Sevi, Barış (2021). Your cheating heart is just afraid of ending up alone: Fear of being single mediates the relationship between attachment anxiety and infidelity. Personality and Individual Differences, 168, 110366. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110366

Schade, L. C., & Sandberg, J. G. (2012). Healing the attachment injury of marital infidelity using Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy: A case illustration. The American Journal of Family Therapy, 40(5), 434–444. doi:10.1080/01926187.2011.631374

Shrout, M. Rosie, & Weigel, Daniel J. (2020). Coping with infidelity: The moderating role of self-esteem. Personality and Individual Differences, 154, 109631. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109631

Sweeney, M. M., & Horwitz, A. V. (2001). *Infidelity, Initiation, and the Emotional Climate of Divorce: Are There Implications for Mental Health? Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 42(3), 295*. doi:10.2307/3090216

Thompson, A. P. (1984). Emotional and sexual components of extramarital relations. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 46(1), 35–42. doi:10.2307/351861

Whisman MA, Gordon KC, Chatav Y. Predicting sexual infidelity in a population-based sample of married individuals. J Fam Psychol. 2007 Jun;21(2):320-4. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.21.2.320. PMID: 17605555.

Zapien, N. (2016). The Beginning of an Extra-Marital Affair: A Descriptive

APPENDIX

A. Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me about your experience of infidelity? Tell me how it made you feel.

2. How would you describe your relationship before infidelity? (Were there any fights, what was the intensity of it, how do you think it contributed to infidelity.)

3. Why is there infidelity?

4. How was your relationship after infidelity?

5. Did you find enough social support from friends and family?

6. How do you think it has impacted your overall well being? (Mental health)