

**Cheating in Dating: Examining the Nature and Process of
Infidelity in Dating Relationships**

A Thesis Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis submitted, entitled “**Cheating in Dating: Examining the Nature and Process of Infidelity in Dating Relationships,**” submitted to Sikkim University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology, is my original research work carried out by me from August 2020 to December 2023 under the supervision of Dr. Saurabh Maheshwari, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Sikkim University. Any part or content of the thesis has not been submitted to this or any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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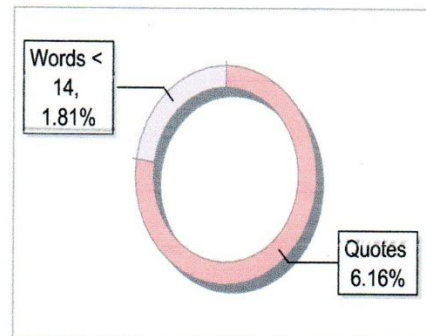
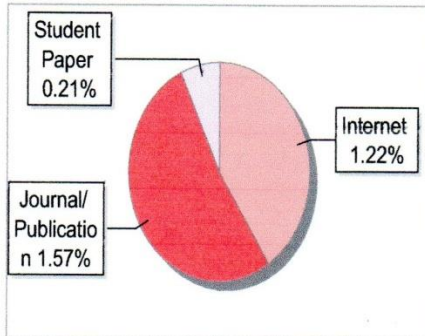
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Parvati Varma

Place:

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Abstract

Infidelity, often recognized for its profound personal and relational consequences, extends beyond the conventional understanding of dissatisfaction as its sole motivator (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014; Shrout & Weigel, 2018). Various factors, such as an individual's inherent traits, situational dynamics, life events, attraction, incompatibility, and being uncertain about their dating partners, significantly motivate individuals to engage in infidelity (Allen et al., 2008; Ciarocco et al., 2012; Omarzu et al., 2012; Selterman et al., 2019). Drawing inspiration from previous research indicating that infidelity could be a phenomenon following systematic progression with distinct components and phases (Allen et al., 2005), this investigation aims to uncover patterns and dynamics inherent in the occurrence of infidelity. By analyzing retrospective accounts provided by the perpetrators themselves, the research endeavors to explore the process of infidelity moving beyond a simplistic cause-and-effect understanding. This study recognizes the pivotal role that the dating episode of an individual's life holds. Therefore, given the potential implications of infidelity on individuals and their relationships, especially in the context of dating, the research underscores the importance of studying this phenomenon in a dating population especially since Indian studies have not investigated it. By contrasting the viewpoints of individuals who have played different roles in instances of adultery, namely those who have committed and those who have suffered from such actions, the research aims to shed light on the diverse experiences and perspectives associated with infidelity. This study, therefore, undertakes a thorough exploration of infidelity in dating relationships, aiming to address critical questions of its motivations, types, processes, gender roles, and consequences.

This comprehensive study on infidelity unfolds in two phases, to offer a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon – a narrative and a survey study. The first phase involves a qualitative exploration utilizing narrative inquiry, delving into the experiences of individuals who engaged in infidelity. Forty individuals from Sikkim, 21 males and 19 females ($M_{age} = 27.15$ years) engaged in romantic relationships who had cheated on their partners, shared their narratives, providing insights into the motivations and the intricate processes of infidelity. These participants were identified through a snowball sampling method and met stringent criteria, including being perpetrators of infidelity and having committed relationships lasting a minimum of six months. This study delves into the dynamics of infidelity in dating relationships, exploring the factors influencing involvement, distinct types of infidelity, and the nuanced processes shaping these transgressions.

The second study adopts a survey method, involving 622 participants from Sikkim aged 18 to 39 ($M_{age} = 24.46$). Through voluntary participation and ethical approval, the survey categorizes participants into self-reported perpetrators, victims, and a fidelity group. Criteria for inclusion encompassed relationship duration, heterosexual relationships, and not being married or divorced during the infidelity incident. With a focus on understanding differences in infidelity types, gender roles, and consequences, this quantitative study complements and extends the insights gained from the narratives. Additionally, the study also investigated socialization patterns, perceived power dynamics, gender differences, attitudes toward infidelity, and the consequences of unfaithfulness among the three groups.

The present study identified four overarching factors contributing to infidelity: personal, situational, relationship, and third-party elements. Personal factors encompass dispositional traits, desires for exploration, and self-control issues.

Notably, uncertainty about the partner and relationship emerges as a significant motivator particularly because of the emphasis on pragmatic dating as a precursor to marriage. Relationship issues play a pivotal role, with dissatisfaction, sexual discontentment, and unmet needs fuelling infidelity. Relationship toxicity also serves as a reason for infidelity, often utilized as a coping mechanism. Additional relationship factors include physical distance, feelings of neglect, incompatibility, and a desire for revenge. Third-party factors, including the allure of alternatives providing love and validation of self-worth, forming a bond, and attraction contribute to the complexity of infidelity. Contextual elements, such as life events and triggers, also play a role, with opportunities arising as motivating factors.

The research also identified three distinct types of infidelity: emotional, sexual, and emotional-sexual. Emotional infidelity often stems from uncertainty, unhealthy relationships, and feelings of neglect. Sexual infidelity is driven by a need for exploration, sexual dissatisfaction, revenge, and triggers such as intoxication. Emotional-sexual infidelity combines both emotional and sexual elements, arising from factors like lack of self-control, relationship toxicity, and physical distance

The study also notes sequences that explain the processes of infidelity, highlighting variations between spontaneous and planned instances. Spontaneous infidelity typically begins with the introduction of alternatives in conducive environments, triggered by certain aspects and in the study most often by intoxication. The process includes stages of post-infidelity reflection, disclosure/non-disclosure, and resolution, with guilt and fear influencing the decision to disclose. In contrast, planned infidelity originates from certain risk factors that predispose such as dissatisfaction, relationship problems, or personality characteristics leading to the exploration of alternatives. The process involves the development of bonds with

alternatives, negative perceptions of the primary relationship, and various forms of infidelity. Perpetrators of planned infidelity are more likely to confess, engaging in post-infidelity reflection and resolution.

The study also found perpetrators of infidelity perceive themselves to wield more power within their relationships, indicating a correlation between perceived power dynamics and unfaithful behavior. In contrast, individuals who remain faithful report higher satisfaction and fulfillment of their needs in their relationships, emphasizing the significance of relationship contentment as a deterrent to infidelity.

The present study also finds that a gender-based analysis uncovers intriguing patterns. Despite engaging in infidelity, male perpetrators express greater overall satisfaction in their relationships compared to their female counterparts. This challenges traditional assumptions about male infidelity stemming from dissatisfaction, suggesting a more complex interplay of factors. Gender disparities also emerge in the type of infidelity, with males gravitating toward sexual infidelity and females more inclined toward emotional infidelity.

In studying the aftermath of infidelity, the study found that impulsive and spontaneous cheating leads to heightened guilt compared to planned infidelity. Female victims, in particular, exhibit avoidance behaviors toward their unfaithful partners, underscoring the emotional toll of infidelity on affected individuals. This thesis contributes a nuanced understanding of infidelity by examining its multifaceted aspects. The findings provide valuable insights for researchers, therapists, and individuals navigating the complexities of romantic relationships.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Romantic connections are a significant component of most people's lives. Having harmonious romantic relationships has been linked to enhanced physical and mental health, happiness, satisfaction, and improved well-being in general (Bucher et al., 2019; Gómez-López, 2019; Owen et al., 2013). Maintaining harmonious relationships requires couples as well as individuals to go through numerous challenges, fidelity being one of them. It is worth noting that while most people and societies consider infidelity undesirable, individuals still partake in it. Infidelity has been a common theme in a wide variety of media, including literature, film, art, and everyday life. History is witness to stories that depict King David's affair with Bathsheba, Homer's Iliad, which discusses Helen of Troy's affair, and so on.

In long-term partnerships, both involved parties have their commitments to keep; sexual and emotional exclusivity is typically anticipated and believed to be a vital feature of the relationship (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). Yet infidelity is a common occurrence. Infidelity is widely prevalent, even though the infidelity rate may be sample and culture-dependent (Walters & Burger, 2013). A study in India reported that about 35.2 percent of respondents admitted to infidelity through online means (Jain, 2018). The definition of infidelity was initially narrow and confined to sexual intercourse outside the marriage (Thompson, 1983). Beyond merely sexual intercourse, this idea has grown to include emotional infidelity, a mix of sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity, and internet infidelity (Glass & Wright, 1985; Miller & Maner, 2009). Depending on the actions a person tolerates from their partner, the definition of infidelity may vary (Silva et al., 2017). A person may label certain conduct as infidelity, even though it may differ from their partner's or other

people's idea of what is considered infidelity (Hall & Fincham, 2009). As a result, what constitutes infidelity varies depending on how an individual regards exclusivity when in a relationship (Hall & Fincham, 2009). However, couples frequently have similar definitions of what constitutes infidelity, indicating that people may rely on normative or cultural standards of monogamy to build and comprehend their relationships (Rodrigues et al., 2017).

While almost everyone believes that secretly having sexual intercourse with someone other than the committed partner is cheating, numerous additional actions are also regarded as cheating in committed relationships (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). According to Blow and Hartnett (2005), infidelity is a sexual or emotional act that occurs outside of the committed relationship in a way that breaches sexual and emotional exclusivity expectations. Hertlein et al. (2005) also point out that it is widely acknowledged that infidelity refers to all behaviors that violate an implied or stated agreement between a couple, particularly that of emotional and sexual exclusivity. It should be understood that notions of polyamory, wife swapping, open partnerships, and other forms of consensual non-monogamy also exist and are not to be confused with infidelity, as this works with the approval and acceptance of both parties (Conley et al., 2017).

Infidelity amongst couples can be damaging for both of the partners, with individuals showing symptoms of depression and anxiety (Cano & O'Leary, 2000), while the relationship between the couple also suffers (Previti & Amato, 2004). Infidelity has also been associated with escalating conflicts and a propensity for violent behavior and intimate partner violence (Nemeth et al., 2012). Clinicians and counselors view it as a significant impediment and relational transgression for which couples may need therapy and counseling.

Researchers have examined and looked for reasons why people commit infidelity in light of the extensive occurrence of infidelity and its negative repercussions. According to early researchers (Glass & Wright, 1985), extradyadic relationships were formed as a result of a lack of something in primary relationships because people were not satisfied. However, later research has indicated that situational and individual factors are significant too (Allen et al., 2008; Altgelt et al., 2018; Ciarocco et al., 2012; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008). Thompson (1983) mentioned that only about twenty-five percent of the variation in infidelity was attributed to the features of primary partnerships, which could imply that apart from reasons related to the primary relationship, other factors could be influencing a person's involvement in infidelity. Omarzu et al. (2012) mentioned that infidelity was a result of one of the following factors: lack of emotional and sexual satisfaction, wanting additional emotional and sexual encounters, falling out of love with the primary partner, falling in love with the other person, wanting revenge, and due to curiosity or sensation seeking. The categories indicated that it is not always a deficit in their primary relationship but the presence of other additional aspects as well that motivated an individual towards forming extradyadic relationships. Thus, given these, reasons for infidelity need to be investigated further.

The dating episode of an individual's life may set the groundwork for many behavioral tendencies that could continue post-marriage and is an important period of adult life. According to numerous studies (e.g., Banfield & McCabe, 2001; Buunk & Bakker, 1995), a person's past of infidelity can predict their willingness or actual involvement in infidelity. As a result, people who have a history of dating infidelity may transfer such behavior over into their marriages in the future. It can also be assumed that a dating relationship is slightly different from marriage since it is easier

to leave or end one's primary relationship (Murstein, 1972), and yet, infidelity is so common even in a dating relationship (Allen & Baucom, 2004; Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2018). Given the detrimental repercussions of infidelity on the betrayed partner, the perpetrator, and their relationship in general (Hall Fincham, 2009; Warach & Josephs, 2021) this is a serious concern. Therefore, infidelity studies specifically focused on dating relationships would be beneficial. However, most of what we know is from the infidelity studies carried out in the West. In contrast to the West, Indian society is more private and subtle in its sexual expressions than the West, and strong emotions like passion are not preferred. Therefore, the experience of infidelity may also be slightly different (Inman & Sandhu, 2002; Inman & Tewari, 2003; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008). The available research on extradyadic involvement in India has been conducted with a primary focus on married individuals and couples (Jain & Sahni, 2017; Madathil & Benschhoff, 2008; Schensul et al., 2006). Therefore, the present study aims to fill this gap by investigating dating infidelity. It intends to get a complete understanding of infidelity by understanding its reasons, process, and consequences in a dating population. The current research had the following aims:

Studies on infidelity are crucial because they may shed light on intriguing reasons why people commit infidelity especially given some of the negative effects of infidelity, such as its impact on psychological health, violence, and suicide (Cano & O'Leary, 2000; Finer et al., 1999; Hall & Fincham 2009; Kaighobadi et al., 2009). Research has given a lot of attention on relationship dissatisfaction between partners and suggests that those unhappy in their relationships cheat on their partners. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge this may not always be the case. While unhappy relationships do contribute, there may be additional other factors that are

also vital. Accordingly, this study aimed to understand why people commit infidelity and gain a perspective directly from the partakers of infidelity.

It is also surprising that very few studies in the area of infidelity have focused on the question of how infidelity happens. The process of how a phenomenon happens is as important as the “why” and its outcomes. Few studies find that infidelity progresses as a process including a variety of elements, therefore it might not be enough to understand it as just a simple phenomenon with a cause and effect. Thus, the study undertaken also sought to understand the process of infidelity.

The growth of technological use, dating apps, and acceptance of casual sex have made various instances such as booty calls, one-night stands, and friends with benefits, etc., quite evident (Nair & Padmakumar, 2020; Ven & Beck, 2009). Individuals nowadays have choices to get involved in short/long term affairs, intentional/unintentional ones, serious affairs/casual sex amongst few of the many choices. According to research, knowing someone who has had extramarital sex, talking to them about it, and pondering over having an affair for a long time were some of the crucial steps to take before engaging in infidelity (Atwater, 1979). This draws attention to the idea that people's infidelity may emerge from a planned process or it may be an impulsive behavior leading to spontaneous infidelity. Therefore, the current study also aims to look into how infidelity occurs.

Gender differences were evident in different aspects of infidelity. For instance, males usually participated in sexual infidelity for reasons such as experiencing sexual variety (Prins et al., 1993) and were also more likely to engage in cheating with an extradyadic partner (Allen & Baucom, 2004; Omarzu et al., 2012). However, gender and infidelity association have to be investigated, keeping in view the narrowing differences in expected gender roles and liberal views regarding sexuality. Thus, the

study also aims to see the role of gender in different types of infidelity and reasons for infidelity. To fulfill the aims of the study, the research was carried out in two phases. The first phase was a qualitative study. A narrative inquiry was used to gain insight from the participants of infidelity who cheated on their partners. Their narratives were analyzed to know about the reasons for their involvement and the process of infidelity.

The second phase was a quantitative survey in which some additional variables along with the factors found through the first study were analyzed to gain further insight and generalize the findings regarding the infidelity reasons, gender differences, and differences between infidelity types. In addition to this, the second study also looked into the consequences of infidelity for both the cheaters and the ones who were cheated.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters. The first and current chapter, “*Introduction*”, provides an outline regarding the area of the study, the rationale for the study, and an overview of the chapters to come.

The second chapter, “*Review of Related Literature*”, will include studies that offer insight into infidelity. The chapter consists of literature regarding theories and motivational factors explaining infidelity, types of infidelity, and the process of infidelity. The review of the literature also includes the after-effects of infidelity such as the consequences that involvement in infidelity has for both the parties of the primary relationship. The chapter aims to deliver the relevant literature related to the research gap that the present study focuses on and finally concludes with the research questions and hypotheses.

The third chapter, “*Infidelity Involvement: A Narrative Study of Causes and Processes*”, has details regarding the first study. This chapter provides the details of

the qualitative study that explored the myriad reasons for engaging in infidelity. The qualitative study also tried to understand the process of infidelity and the chapter includes this. The chapter provides details regarding how the study was carried out and its results with a brief discussion.

The fourth chapter, that is “*Infidelity Explored: Motivations, Types, and Gender Dynamics*”, consists of the details of the quantitative study. The chapter provides a detailed explanation regarding the second study as to how the data was collected and the measures used to collect the data. It also lists the results of the study that were obtained after analyzing the data quantitatively. The chapter consists of an evaluation of the motivational variables, different infidelity types, outcomes of infidelity as well as gender differences.

The fifth chapter “*General Discussion*”, consists of the findings of the research as a whole i.e., a synthesis of results obtained from both the narrative inquiry and the survey. The results are discussed by answering the following questions: 1) What factors explain an individual’s involvement in infidelity? 2) Are there differences between different infidelity types? 3) What are the sequences in the process of infidelity? 4) Is the role of gender vital in various types of infidelity? 5) Are the consequences different for different infidelity instances?

The last chapter “*Conclusion, Limitations, and Implications,*” summarizes the thesis findings. Additionally covered in this chapter are the thesis's limitations and implications of the study. This chapter also provides direction and suggestions for advancing the study in the future.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Infidelity is characterized as a transgression when the individual that they are in a committed relationship with, has acted inappropriately and violated the norms in the relationship by being involved with a person outside their relationship (Drigotas, 1999). Infidelity has been used interchangeably with the words "cheating", "being unfaithful", "betrayal", or "affair", and it includes a variety of actions that violate the expectations of a romantic relationship, such as kissing, sexual intercourse, emotional connections, and online relationships with a second partner (Fincham & May, 2017). Infidelity behaviors are not approved by the committed partner and most often include some level of secrecy and deception to hide and carry out the relationship with the extradyadic partner (Duncombe & Marsden, 2004). Infidelity had been included in the sexually deviant group before the 1970s, according to Glass and Wright's (1977) research. Up until the late 1970s, there was little research done on infidelity; however, as attitudes began to change, empirical researchers started to show a greater interest in this topic. As people became aware of the prevalence of infidelity, the idea of common causes of infidelity in romantic relationships began to take shape (Drigotas & Barta, 2001).

Infidelity behaviors have been categorized into three forms by Wilson et al. (2011) - ambiguous, deceptive, and explicit. Ambiguous behaviors are actions like dancing, embracing, eating, or drinking with someone else because these actions can be seen differently by different people. Some may perceive it as being friendly while others may consider it as being unfaithful. Deceptive behaviors are behaviors such as fantasizing about someone else, flirting, or lying, and lastly, engaging in vaginal, anal, or oral sex comprise explicit behaviors (Wilson et al., 2011).

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature in the domain of infidelity. It starts with the typologies of infidelity and then provides an examination of the various reasons underpinning an individual's reasons to commit infidelity. The chapter proceeds to examine the nature of infidelity and the role of gender, education, and other socio-demographic variables that are associated with infidelity patterns. It also includes studies that look into the process of infidelity and the consequences of infidelity. Lastly, this chapter will also provide an overview of the present study, the research questions that the study aims to answer and the hypothesis formulated for the study.

Types of Infidelity

The two main types of infidelity are emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity (Berman & Frazier, 2005). Sexual infidelity is the most known type and could be referred to as participating in sexual intercourse and sexual behaviors with any person other than their partner (Buss et al., 1992; Roscoe et al., 1988; Yarab et al., 1998). Since the conventional belief system is that only partners in a committed relationship should have sexually intimate activities in most situations, sexual contact apart from the partner and behaviors such as sexual attraction, fantasies, flirting, petting, and passionately kissing are considered as partaking in infidelity (Boekhout et al., 1999; Roscoe et al., 1988; Yarab et al., 1998).

Emotional infidelity can be understood as a form of non-physical intimacy or emotional connection that could potentially develop into love outside of the primary relationship (Buss et al, 1992). Behaviors such as withholding information or lying to the primary partner and spending a lot of time communicating, all come under the category of emotional infidelity (Roscoe et al., 1988; Yarab et al., 1998). Thus, it occurs when a couple's ground rules are broken after being emotionally attached to a

third person, e.g., confiding and being vulnerable with the other person, falling in love, being devoted towards the other person, and spending money on them (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014).

Researchers have called it an “affair of the heart” (Pittman, 1989; Vaughan, 1989). When a person eagerly anticipates a friend's online presence more than all of his other friends combined or spends more time with this person or when something bothers the person, they turn to this alternative instead of their partner, for instance, are few signs of emotional cheating (Knapp & Dixon, 2013). As opposed to cases when there is minimal emotional engagement, it has been noticed that infidelity where the emotional attachment is more with the affair partner, may pose a greater threat to the primary relationship (Glass, 2003; Shackelford & Buss, 1997). In heterosexual relationships, when an individual lets someone of the opposite sex take care of emotional needs that would normally be met by their partner, they are engaging in emotional infidelity (Knapp & Dixon, 2013). This intimacy breeds emotional attachment, which in turn may result in a sexual relationship.

Reasons of Infidelity

One of the pioneering studies in the field of infidelity was carried out by Glass and Wright (1992) which studied the reasons for infidelity. Based on their study findings, they proposed a model that divided the motivational factors behind their infidelity into four basic categories – sexual, emotional intimacy, love, and extrinsic factors. Sexual factors consisted of sexual enjoyment, curiosity, novelty and variety, and sexual excitement. Emotional intimacy includes factors that appear to reflect aspects of a close friendship such as intellectual sharing, companionship, understanding, respect, and enhancing self-esteem. The love factor included getting in love and falling in love. Extrinsic factors included getting even with their partners

(revenge) and career advancement. It may be any of these factors that motivate a person to cheat.

Literature has shown many factors linked with infidelity, some of them being level of education, personality characteristics, attachment style, power, religion, and satisfaction (Zare, 2011). The numerous factors that are studied concerning extradyadic involvement may be categorized as personal/ individual or dispositional factors, relational factors, contextual or situational factors, and other factors that are related to the cheating partner.

Individual Factors

Individual characteristics and personality traits have been frequently studied to address their relationship with infidelity. Many personal characteristics such as openness, the desire to explore, a lack of self-control, and the dark triads correlate with the propensity for infidelity (March et al., 2023; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008; Jain & Sahni, 2017; Jones & Weiser, 2014). Personal factors may also exhibit influence through one's attitudes, which may indirectly impact infidelity behavior (Allen et al., 2008; Isma & Turnip, 2019). Attitudes have a very important influence as the primary means by which the intention towards infidelity is formed. These findings are not unexpected given that infidelity is related to heightened sexual excitement, which is more common among people with more liberal sexual attitudes (Haseli et al., 2019; Mark et al., 2011).

Higher sensation seeking, or the desire for unusual, intense, and diverse experiences has also been linked with infidelity (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011; Turchik & Garske, 2009). A study discovered that people's justifications for adultery frequently included sensation seeking, indicated in statements like "boredom with daily life," "seeking arousal," and "seeking enjoyment." (Yeniçeri & Kökdemir, 2006). Research

across a wide variety of populations finds that those seeking out sensations exhibit sexual risk-taking (Horvath et al., 2006; Newcomb et al., 2011). Sociosexual orientation was also found to be linked to infidelity resulting in individuals preferring varied sexual experiences (Weiser et al., 2018).

Research also finds that individuals with low self-control disposition frequently engage in infidelity among other sexual behaviors (Love, 2006). Depleted self-control in individuals affects the ability to restrain themselves sexually (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007). Therefore, a person's capacity for self-control may be crucial in situations where they have to resist the temptation to cheat (Pronk et al., 2011). In several areas of relationships, including infidelity, self-regulation has been demonstrated to be key. Ritter et al., (2010), in his study, found individuals in partnerships show less interest in attractive sexual opposites than singles when self-regulatory means are available. When their self-regulation is diminished, participants who are romantically involved nevertheless show the same interest as singles. Ciarocco et al. (2012) found that after completing assigned tasks, depleted levels of self-control made it harder to exercise self-control, which increased the likelihood of participating in adultery, such as accepting the offer of a coffee date or giving out phone numbers. According to research, executive control in people helps them resist attractive alternatives through relationship-protective responses because it directs their attention to the long-term objectives of committed relationships and suppresses any response that might conflict with those objectives (Pronk et al., 2011).

Recent studies on infidelity have also focused on attachment orientation, another important individual characteristic in romantic relationships. In general, attachment is a fundamental element that affects a person's interpersonal actions, and beliefs (Pereira et al., 2014). Furthermore, according to Fish et al. (2012), attachment

has an impact on relationship commitment, sexual fulfillment, and satisfaction in relationships, as well as the manner of communication that is used in interpersonal interactions. In adults, there are primarily two types of attachments: avoidant attachment and anxious attachment, according to (Pereira et al., 2014). To better understand adult attachment types and infidelity, Fish et al. (2012) performed a study. The findings showed that participants with high levels of anxiety and low levels of avoidance (preoccupied subtype) and those with high levels of anxiety and avoidance (fearful subtype) were more inclined towards both emotional and physical extradyadic activities. However, there were no statistically significant correlations between the frequency of extradyadic activities and avoidant attachment (dismissing subtype). On the other hand, DeWall et al. (2011) discovered that participants with avoidant attachment held more permissive attitudes about infidelity and were more inclined to participate in extradyadic behaviors. Therefore, despite research showing a link between attachment and infidelity, there are discrepancies.

The link between power and infidelity is another interesting association. Power has been operationalized in several ways. In general, it could be studied in terms of their occupation, wealth, or their ability to manage resources such as their position in a company (Lammers et al., 2009, 2010). In the context of relationships, the degree of influence that romantic partners have on one another is examined to study power (e.g., Anderson et al., 2003). Sexual behavior is greatly shaped by power. According to earlier studies, power may influence sexual behavior by triggering sexual objectives and encouraging people to work toward achieving them (Gruenfeld et al., 2008). Lammers and Maner, (2016) suggest that power would attract them to the counter-normative aspect of infidelity. According to Lammers et al. (2011) having more power increases one's probability of being involved in infidelity. Additionally,

powerful people, according to Orbuch (2011), are more prone to engage in adultery because they are more susceptible to temptation. It could also result from a desire for intimacy since these men frequently travel away from their partners (Orbuch, 2011). They also have an established feeling of immunity that leads them to believe they won't be caught cheating on their partner (Orbuch, 2011).

Relationship Factors

Aspects of the relationship themselves are also vital. The four-factor model of infidelity by Barta and Kiene (2005), proposes four factors - dissatisfaction, neglect, sex, and anger. Dissatisfaction refers to a lack of positive feelings towards the partner or the relationship. Neglect refers to when the partner mistreats or does not spend enough time together. Sex refers to being interested in variety and more sexual frequency. Anger includes the intention to punish the partner in the committed relationship, which is similar to revenge in the case of Glass and Wright's model (1992). They proposed that it was one of these four factors that serve as one of the reasons behind individuals' involvement in infidelity

The deficit theory has also attempted to comprehend extradyadic behaviors, with a focus on something lacking in the primary relationship, and supposes that some people actively engage in adultery as a result of growing dissatisfied with their current relationship (Thompson, 1983). Shaw et al. (2013) in their research, investigated reasons that led to sexual infidelity in unmarried individuals and confirmed that overall relationship satisfaction in the primary relationship does predict infidelity and is not just limited to a correlate or an aftereffect.

Romantic partners may be unhappy with their relationship or dissatisfied with just certain specific areas of the relationship. The sexual relationship with the primary partner is one such aspect of romantic relationships that is extensively researched as a

correlate of infidelity (Allen et al., 2008; Atkins et al., 2005). According to recent developments in sexual frustration theory, sexual frustration may be more nuanced than previously thought (Lankford, 2021). For instance, it is psychological with factors such as one's ego, expectations and sense of entitlement, and culture impacting it in addition to being influenced by one's sex drive and exposure to appealing stimuli (Donnelly et al., 2001; Lankford, 2021; Lankford & Silva, 2022). Thus, sexual frustration theory also offers insight into infidelity. Being sexually dissatisfied is a common reason given by individuals when enquired about their infidelity reasons (Liu, 2000; Omarzu et al., 2012; Mark et al., 2011). Others said they preferred having sex with someone new or different to having sex with their spouse because they wanted it more frequently than they did (Liu, 2000; Omarzu et al., 2012; Mark et al., 2011). In actuality, sexual frustration can affect both those who are sexually active and those who just sometimes engage in sex. This is largely due to the various forms of sexual frustration. People may become frustrated due to a) unmet sexual urges; (b) partners who are not available; or (c) dissatisfying sex experiences (Lankford, 2021). Furthermore, according to Lankford (2021), some people may engage in sexual promiscuity because they frequently look for ways to get rid of their high levels of sexual frustration. Sexual relief-seeking, along with other anti-social actions, is one of the most visible and immediate outcomes of sexual frustration and could easily lead to infidelity.

Physical and psychological aggressiveness, as well as increased negative communication, was a vital factor predicting extradyadic involvement in both men and women. This kind of interaction pattern which is mostly negative may indicate a need to establish satisfying connections through other relationships since they imply that the primary relationship is unsafe, either emotionally or physically. They could

also be a sign that these relationships are not harmonious and have become toxic, and infidelity may be a way to get away from it (Shaw et al., 2013)

Research also finds that if a partner in an exclusive relationship is unable to meet self-expansion goals through the primary relationship, they can seek self-expansion through an extradyadic relationship (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). Self-expansion model proposes that people are ultimately inspired to enhance their self via close relationships (Aron & Aron, 1986). This is through gaining new experiences and carrying out interesting activities, hobbies, and interactions with the partner. Therefore, when a relationship fails to provide enough self-expansion, it might motivate an individual to get it through outside sources and be more likely to carry out infidelity (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). The cognitive dissonance theory has also identified incompatibility within couples as one of the most prevalent reasons for infidelity, supporting this finding (Amato & Previti, 2003; Donovan & Jackson, 1990). The differences could arise due to education, economic background, religion, culture, sexual preferences, and communication styles. A literature review carried out by Haseli and colleagues (2019) also revealed that interpersonal incompatibility is linked with infidelity, and compatibility is required to sustain a long-term exclusive romantic connection.

Contextual Factors

Literature also shows evidence that one's circumstances and situational factors are relevant to infidelity. It seems to reason that such situations provide access to more prospective sex partners. An opportunity such as a place to socialize, (Lawson, 1988) or in the form of potential partners and circumstances assuring confidentiality (Greeley, 1991) leads to a likelihood of extradyadic involvement (Buunk, 1980). Urban residence (Treas & Giesen 2000), employment (Glass 2003),

and frequent traveling for work (Traeen & Stigum 1998) have all been linked to higher cheating rates. Giddens (1992) meanwhile, emphasizes alcohol-impaired judgment and sexual addiction as the irrational causes of everyday accounts of extramarital sex. Contextual influences along with intrapersonal factors might function together to maximize the risk of infidelity (Allen et al., 2008).

Occasionally, social forces impact individuals without their knowledge. Abbasi et al. (2020) investigated the infidelity of Iranian women and found that the social and cultural variables had a significant role to play in their infidelity. The use of social media presents numerous opportunities for behaviors detrimental to romantic relationships (McDaniel et al., 2017). While this was a study that investigated extramarital infidelity, it may still be applicable. The normalization and portrayal of socially inappropriate activities as acceptable may be one way through which individuals are impacted. Previous studies have shown that media use affects people's motivation, values, views of others, and conduct (Kubrak & Grebenschikova, 2018). Additionally, one factor that increases the likelihood of infidelity is the third person's attractiveness (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999).

Having an active social life, for instance hosting guests, going out, and visiting friends is associated with infidelity in the case of men (Zhang et al, 2012). This may be due to the possibilities it provides for infidelity by spending much of his free time with friends or others other than his partner. Interacting with people who cheat may also indirectly influence a person's opinion and behavior toward infidelity. Young people in college who believed that those around them had higher rates of infidelity were more supportive of infidelity and less inclined to say that faithfulness is crucial for a committed relationship (Watkins & Boon, 2016). As evidenced by research (e.g., Cialdini et al., 2006; Larimer & Neighbors, 2003; Neighbors et al., 2004), social

norms have been found to influence how people resolve self-regulated conflicts in many self-regulatory domains, particularly those that involve ethical dilemmas (e.g., drinking, gambling, stealing). Another study found that witnessing ingroup members' cheating increased participants' inclination to cheat themselves, indicating that an individual's tendency to engage in dishonest behaviors is influenced by the perceived social norms represented by others (Gino et al., 2009).

Staying away from infidelity while in a committed relationship requires relationship maintenance strategies. In a recent study, Birnbaum et al. (2022) looked at how exposure to infidelity norms might influence an individual's display of desire for different partners. The findings demonstrated that individuals were less likely to undervalue the attractiveness of potential partners and to remain devoted to their relationship after witnessing others cheating. They find that where people view infidelity to be commonplace, may provide them the rationale they need to give up relationship maintenance as a long-term priority in favor of exploring more alluring options (Birnbaum et al. 2022).

A more recent addition to the discussion of infidelity is research that evaluated infidelity during the COVID-19 pandemic that plagued the world. According to Gordon and Mitchell, COVID-19 increased the likelihood of people engaging in infidelity, especially due to the high degree of stress the epidemic caused. Decreased satisfaction (relational and sexual) as a result of these difficulties may have provided the needed justification for cheating (Shaw et al., 2013). Due to social distancing, opportunities to physically meet up with alternatives were not available. However, the use of virtual platforms and dating sites by people has become more popular and this may have been utilized to cheat through online means (Takahashi, 2020; Warren 2020).

Nature of Infidelity

Different scenarios of infidelity exist such as long-term affairs, short-lived affairs, one-night encounters, booty calls, etc. are each of these is motivated by different factors (Seltman et al, 2019). To assist counselors and couples in comprehending and addressing the complexities surrounding infidelity, Carder (2017) categorized affairs based on some very common cheating patterns. While the focus was entirely on married couples, these infidelity instances are also the ones that are seen in dating infidelity. The first category is a one-night stand characterized by a one-time brief sexual encounter devoid of emotional attachment. This is unplanned and typically unfolds suddenly, involving intense and passionate sexual activity. Perpetrators usually feel immediate remorse or regret after the experience. The second category is an entangled affair which develops gradually with time as a result of emotional attachment and vulnerability with the cheating partner. This usually goes on for longer periods and sexual activity may occur later if the infidelity continues. The third category is sexual addiction affairs where people cheat only for sexual gratification without emotional involvement and cheating may be carried out with multiple alternative partners. This is usually the case with serial cheaters. The fourth category is an add-on affair which is cheating for fulfilling some void that they feel is not being satisfied in their primary relationship. The final category is the reconnection affair where they may cheat with an old partner.

Piemonte et al. (2022) believe that someone who consciously seeks out extradyadic sex or does so regularly is held to a different standard of morality than someone who indulges in extradyadic sex because it is a seductive offer. People who are motivated to look for opportunities to violate their relationship partner's agreement go through different decision-making processes than people who never intend to

violate their relationship partner's agreement but do so when they find themselves in situations that allow for the liaison. Since individuals frequently assess other's moral character based on how they perceive their intent most would consider situation-based cheating to be less immoral than when it is planned or sought out by the perpetrator (Cushman, 2008). According to Elliott and Thrash (2002), someone who initiates infidelity is likely different from someone who is passive and tempted and accepts an offer. In addition, the psychological processes behind these actions vary and are probably influenced by circumstances in the environment (Simpson & Winterheld, 2012). Cheating on committed partners through any of the diverse infidelity forms is an act of disloyalty (Fish et al., 2012; Solomon & Teagno, 2010). Additionally, each also suggests different intra- and interpersonal processes (Girard et al., 2018). As a result, Piemonte et al. (2022) believe that a method to classify cheating would be to differentiate between planned infidelity and infidelity that is not planned. Along with infidelity instances where infidelity is a rational decision, there are other instances where infidelity is seen to be spontaneous or not much thought about. Cases of infidelity happening in alcohol-soaked environments and college campuses where a lot of sexual activity is evident are some examples.

There are several options open to someone who intentionally and consciously wants to cheat. In the era of digital media, the use of webcams, mobile devices, social media, and dating sites all provide more access to both friends and strangers (Buunk et al., 2018). There are plenty of options to look for potential companions or rekindle relationships with ex-lovers for those planning to do anything behind their partner's back. Piemonte et al. (2022) suggest that this is a different type of infidelity than when someone has no intention of cheating but does so as a result of giving in to their

urges. Therefore, the process of how infidelity happens i.e., whether it is planned or spontaneous is to be considered important when studying infidelity.

Process of Infidelity

The question of whether people's infidelity is the result of planned and thought-out behavior demands a literature study of its own. A study by Atwater (1979) highlighted that the key steps before women choose to engage in infidelity are knowing someone who has been involved in infidelity themselves, speaking with them about it, and considering the possibility of having it for a long time before actually becoming aware of it. Literature also cited that the affair partners are typically acquainted before their infidelity and happen to be friends, acquaintances, or former partners, it is only in a few cases that infidelity happens with a stranger (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999).

Allen et al. (2005) used a structure enclosing different domains across different periods organizing the variables across a temporal dimension to show the consideration that engaging in extramarital involvement is, in fact, a process. The first category of variables can be termed as Predisposing Factors. These are assumed to be present even before the extramarital involvement develops, they set the stage by increasing or decreasing the chances of Extramarital involvement taking place later (e.g., self-insecurities, job demands). Second is the approach factor. These factors may facilitate or hinder progress to an extramarital relationship, such as anger, denying risks, or reinforcement after flirting. Next comes the precipitating factors. These act as triggers, such as escalating conflict in the primary relationship and advances from others, etc., leading to the individual crossing the line and committing infidelity. After this, maintenance factors are seen. These are factors that either maintain or stop the extramarital relationship such as an increased self-esteem and a

supportive peer group etc. Then, the disclosure factors are found. They refer to factors that either increase or decrease, the risk of being caught cheating by the partner for example, guilt or fear of discovery. The last category is the response factors. It consists of factors that influence the short-term and long-term personal and partnership outcomes for the parties concerned such as reduced investment in the marriage and emotional regulation.

Jeanfreau et al. (2014) examined the process that people in committed relationships undertake when involved in infidelity with the use of a qualitative study. The finding from this study makes it clear that extramarital relationships started as a friendship, wherein they could disclose and talk about the problems with which they were dealing in their marriage and their relationship was platonic which later turned out to be a full-blown affair. Secondly, support from their friends and family turned out to be very significant in their decision and, the final component was all the attention they were getting from their affair partners which led them to be attracted towards infidelity. Thus, it was the emotional component in their affairs that connected to the sexual component. The attention they were receiving in turn strengthened the extramarital affair since their focus now had shifted from the negative aspects of marriage to the positive attention in their affairs, which led to them feeling satisfied and being even more committed to maintaining their affairs.

Another study by Olson et al. (2002) studied the emotional and relational stages that couples go through after a partner discloses an occurrence of infidelity. The first stage is an emotionally charged stage which can be called a roller coaster. Many of the negative effects of the affair were the most noticeable in this stage. This period following disclosure often included tension, frustration, anger, and conflictual feelings towards the guilty party. It also served as an eye-opener for them helping

them to understand that their relationship was in trouble already before the affair took place. The second stage was called moratorium wherein compared to the earlier stage there was lesser emotional reactivity while trying to make sense of the infidelity however there were still some emotional flare-ups now and then. It also included wanting to know the details of the affair, physical and emotional isolation, and seeking encouragement and support from others to make sense of the affair. The final stage that couples reached if they decided to work things out was that of trust building which involved re-engaging, taking responsibility, providing assurance of commitment, communicating once again, and finally forgiveness. Since the gap and alienation felt during the moratorium, couples would reengage in the stage of trust-building. During the healing process, the wounded couples had to feel remorse from the guilty spouse and apologize and accept responsibility. Communication at this point became even more important. Forgiveness was an important criterion seen in this stage that had to be practiced and mastered. All of these studies are indicative of the fact that infidelity is not just a simple cause-and-effect phenomenon, instead, it moves about as a process, involving many factors.

Infidelity and Gender

Early research claimed that the frequency of infidelity was more for men than women (Wiederman, 1997; Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Later studies seem to indicate that the gender gap in terms of the occurrence of infidelity is reducing (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Brand et al., 2007; Burdette et al., 2007). Especially now that infidelity is considered to be more than just intercourse (such as emotional connection, and kissing), women report just as many acts of infidelity as men (Allen et al., 2005; Treas & Giesen, 2000). Studies have revealed that gender however has a substantial impact on the type of infidelity each of these genders participate in and the reasons for doing

so. According to Omarzu et al., (2012), more men than women have stated desiring more sexual encounters as a motivation for having extramarital relationships. The same study also asserted that women cheated (Omarzu et al., 2012), because they yearned for more emotional closeness or connection.

Many sexual behaviors are considered acceptable in the case of men but the blame goes to women because of cultural concerns and societal conventions and therefore women may not report it as much as men due to the criticism they face for the same behavior (Atkins et al., 2001; Buunk & Dijkstra, 2004; Kuroki, 2013). Research has provided support for it with the results that men seem to be more frequently engaging in extramarital relationships when compared to women (Allen et al., 2008; Glass & Wright 1992). However, women also partake in infidelity for different reasons such as falling in love or having an emotional attachment with someone other than their married partner (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Literature has also cited mate-switching as one of the reasons for women pursuing infidelity making it easier for women to look for a replacement partner while they still have the security and protection offered by their current partner.

For instance, DeSteno and Salovey (1996) in their study found that men would commonly interpret a woman's sexual infidelity as signifying emotional dishonesty as well since women are less likely to engage in sexual activity without any emotional input. Similarly, women often assume that men may engage in sexual cheating without being emotionally attached, however, if a man is emotionally involved, it would involve some sexual engagement. Women's extramarital sexual activity, according to Reiss et al. (1980), is likely to be motivated by love, whereas men's sexual activity is likely to be motivated by pleasure.

These gender differences have also been explained from the perspective of evolutionary theory. It asserts that humans are programmed to reproduce so they may successfully pass on their genes to future generations. According to research, men may be more likely than women to engage in sexual infidelity since it affords men the chance to father children who will carry their genes (Hunyady et al., 2008). Females, on the other hand, are positive that their babies carry their genes. Therefore, evidence implies that women may be more likely to commit emotional infidelity, albeit there may also be a sexual element involved (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2018).

The theory of parental investment by Trivers (1972) contends that investment in terms of time and effort for raising children is unequal for men and women. Males just need to engage in sexual activity to make the minimum investment, whereas females must undergo a nine-month pregnancy (Trivers, 1972). According to Trivers' idea, men are more likely to have extradyadic sex with a woman now and then since it boosts their chances of having more children. Females, on the other hand, are more likely to emotionally invest in an alternative since they might be able to offer much better resources (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2018). Thus, Trivers' theory presents a potential justification for why men and women commit sexual and emotional infidelity (Buss, 2006). Brand et al., (2007) in his study discovered that males reported more infidelity instances than females, as well as more sexual infidelity. The study also discovered that almost 54 percent of females cheated as a result of being dissatisfied and were inclined to leave their primary partners after cheating and start a new relationship with the person they had an affair with. On the other hand, males cheated because they were drawn to the person outside of the partnership despite having no plans to leave their committed partner. The study showed that gender variations exist in how people perceive and engage in infidelity (Brand et al., 2007).

According to studies, both men and women go through sexual frustration (Marieke et al., 2020; Messripour et al., 2016; Shahrak et al., 2021) but for men, this issue may often be more frequent or extreme (Lankford, 2021). Male sex drives are consistently higher across cultures, according to data from 53 different nations (Lippa, 2009), and a meta-analysis of 211 research including more than 600,000 participants also supports this finding (Frankenbach et al., 2022). Men also exhibit noticeably greater interest in having casual relationships with strangers (Frankenbach et al., 2022).

Comprehending how men and women perceive intimacy and sex, and what each of those interpersonal interactions means to the individuals, is a crucial component of comprehending infidelity. Infidelity has also been attributed to socialized gender roles (Williams & Kim, 2015). A cross-cultural study found that men reported a four-fold greater desire for extra sexual partners than women and they also participated more readily in the search for sexual partners (Schmitt, 2003). There are gender disparities even about how infidelity behavior is justified. Males most often justify their infidelity through sexual aspects, such as not being sexually satisfied in their relationship with their primary partner while females tend to do so through emotional aspects, such as lack of understanding (Tagler & Jeffers, 2013).

Infidelity and Education

Despite being crucial, research on the connection between infidelity and education has been ambiguous. Some studies suggest that adultery is more prevalent among those with low education, while others indicate a link between greater educational attainment and a greater chance of infidelity (Atkins et al., 2001; Traeen & Stigum, 1998; Treas & Giesen, 2000). Forste and Tanfer (1996) mentioned that dating and cohabitating women with a college degree were more likely to cheat on

their partners as compared to those who had only completed high school. On a similar note, Martins et al. (2016) in his study found that higher-educated women were three times more likely to participate in online sexual infidelity. Habibi et al. (2019) found that people with a greater level of education were more accepting of infidelity.

According to Christopher and Sprecher (2000), it is also possible that persons with the greatest and lowest levels of education and income are the most prone to commit infidelity. These impacts may also be caused by factors associated with money and education, such as excessive stress, privilege, and opportunity (Atkins et al. 2001; Treas and Giesen 2000). In contrast, few studies have shown no significant links between education and infidelity (e.g., Shaw et al., 2013; Traeen et al., 2007).

Infidelity and Other Socio-Demographic Variables

Many sociodemographic characteristics, besides gender and education, contribute to the probability of infidelity events. Due to more possibilities and more anonymity, Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008) concluded that being in a city or area with a larger population is positively connected with infidelity among both men and women. In contrast to people in cities who have more privacy, they discovered that those living in rural locations were less likely to cheat, potentially as a result of the greater likelihood of being discovered (Elmslie & Tebaldi, 2008).

Socio-economic position is also found to be linked to infidelity, with individuals having a higher socioeconomic status as more likely to cheat since wealthier people can hide it easily as well as afford the costs associated with seeing another person such as meeting them out frequently (Atkins et al., 2001). Other than this religious people are less likely to show infidelity behaviors than people who do not identify themselves with any religion, according to research by Nagurney et al.

(2019). Finally, due to the conflicting findings of age and infidelity, age has been a very unreliable predictor of infidelity (Haseli et al., 2019)

Consequences of Infidelity

Relationship transgressions are hurtful and involvement in infidelity results in consequences that hurt not only the relationship but also the partners. According to Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2018), there is a sense of loss of confidence in the relationship or partner as well as a sense of safety being taken away. Infidelity also brings some severely negative physiological and psychological effects such that the psychological impacts of infidelity might be comparable to those of criterion a trauma (death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence). Infidelity may result in PTSD symptoms at a rather high incidence and may increase the likelihood of worse psychological health, partially through post-traumatic cognitions (Roos et al., 2019). Infidelity is also frequently followed by diminished trust and poor perceptions of others (Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Sauerheber & Dique, 2016).

Ending the relationship is another typical outcome (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). Men as compared to women, are more likely to end a relationship with a partner who has committed sexual infidelity and also find it harder to forgive infidelity that is sexual. Females, on the other hand, find emotional infidelity more difficult to forgive (Shackelford et al., 2002). Additionally, research indicates that, compared to men, women are more likely to leave their partners after learning about their infidelity, irrespective of the type of involvement – sexual or emotional (Whitty, 2003).

The negative outcomes of infidelity are not limited to just the ones who feel betrayed, in fact following extradyadic behavior, cheaters may experience a variety of

emotions and feelings. Perpetrators of cheating may feel highly distressed, shameful, and guilty, have decreased well-being, and have low levels of self-forgiveness (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017). Infidelity tends to go against people's desire to be seen favorably, therefore they may also feel disturbed about their actions (Hall & Fincham, 2006).

The Present Study

The phenomenon of infidelity is common between couples in both committed dating relationships and marriage. The reason why individuals in dating couples were utilized for the study is that studies investigating infidelity in the dating population seem to be limited. The financial, legal, and societal consequences of separation like marriage do not constrain individuals in dating relationships. Despite this, individuals cheat on their partners even while dating. Few studies believe that dating relationships carry a much larger risk of infidelity than marriages do (Blow & Hartnett, 2005; McNulty & Brineman; 2007). Research has noted that if an individual has committed infidelity in a previous relationship, they are very likely to report infidelity involvement in the next relationship as well, and therefore chances are they may continue with this in their marriage as well (Banfield & McCabe, 2001; Drigotas et al., 1999; Knopp et al., 2017). What is known about infidelity is based largely on Western studies, and the studies in the Indian context have been limited to extramarital affairs (Mao & Raguram, 2009). Thus, studies utilizing Indian dating samples may be useful in uncovering information from a different perspective. Considering the adverse outcomes associated with infidelity, it becomes crucial to delve into its examination, and thus infidelity studies carried out in dating relationships are essential to gain a better understanding. Therefore, the study aims to study infidelity utilizing a dating population for the study.

This research would seek to understand the factors that relate to an individual's involvement in infidelity. Reasons for infidelity may differ greatly when those participating in infidelity themselves share their experiences. Being dissatisfied and unhappy is at most times assumed to be why people stray (Barta & Kiene, 2005). People in happy and fulfilling relationships, however, may also cheat since the option of leaving their partners while dating is easier if they are dissatisfied. It may thus be that apart from dissatisfaction, several other factors may be vital in choosing to be involved in infidelity.

Other than this, the study also aims to gain insights into the intricate process of infidelity. Building upon the findings outlined by Allen et al. (2005) it is presumed that infidelity, akin to other phenomena, follows a systematic progression, characterized by distinct components and phases. This suggests there is a pattern in how infidelity takes place. Therefore, the study aimed to explore the infidelity process by analyzing retrospective accounts of infidelity provided by the perpetrators themselves.

There are many infidelity situations such as long affairs, short-term affairs, one-night stands, booty calls, etc. The driving factors at play are different in each case (Selterman et al). Longer affairs were linked to dyadic reasons, whereas shorter affairs and lower dissolution rates were associated with situational factors. As a result, the present study also aimed to investigate the possibility that there may be certain differences depending on whether the infidelity was spontaneous in the heat of the moment or a planned and thought-out action. Therefore, the study also investigates between spontaneous infidelity and planned infidelity.

In addition to this, gender differences were also evaluated in the study. Studies find that gender is an important variable associated with infidelity (Lalasz & Weigel,

2011; Martins et al., 2016). Therefore, the current study also considered its importance and analyzed if there is a significant difference across different infidelity types based on the participant's gender.

In addition to this, the present study also examined how people's own experience with infidelity would impact their perception and other psychological variables, for instance, relationship satisfaction, need fulfillment, perceived power, and interpersonal trust among others. Being the involved partner versus being on the receiving end of infidelity influences an individual's perception of infidelity (Moreno & Kahumoku-Fessler, 2018). Therefore, the study also compared the experience of infidelity among perpetrators of infidelity, victims of infidelity, and those who had never experienced infidelity. Lastly, the outcomes of infidelity and its resolution were also studied for both the perpetrators and victims of infidelity. Knowing what consequences infidelity as a relationship transgression brings is a key element to holistically understanding infidelity.

Past studies have usually taken a period of 3 to 6 months (Banfield & McCabe, 2001) as the timeframe for which couples must be together, and therefore in our study, six months was taken as the minimum time for the length of the primary relationship. Here, the terms "victim" and "perpetrator" are used to refer to the respective parties who have engaged in adultery (Hall & Fincham, 2006). The perpetrators and victims in the study are individual cases and are not the same couple.

Research Questions

The study aims to address the following research questions: -

1. What are the reasons for an individual's involvement in infidelity?
2. How do individuals get into a transition from fidelity to getting involved in an act of infidelity?

3. What are the factors that explain an individual's infidelity, in cases of planned and spontaneous infidelity?
4. What differences are seen when participants are engaging in sexual infidelity versus emotional infidelity?
5. What is the role of gender in various types of infidelity and the process of infidelity?
6. How do individuals resolve it after the infidelity occurs?

Hypotheses

A few hypotheses were formulated which have been provided below:

H1: Participants taking part in planned infidelity would have more favorable attitudes and intentions towards infidelity in comparison to participants taking part in spontaneous infidelity.

H2: Relationship satisfaction and need fulfillment would be higher in participants reporting fidelity as compared to participants reporting infidelity.

H3: Relationship satisfaction and need fulfillment would be higher in spontaneous infidelity as compared to planned infidelity.

H4: Experience of guilt would be more prevalent in spontaneous infidelity as compared to planned infidelity.

H5: Emotional infidelity would be higher in females than males, while the prevalence of sexual infidelity would be higher in males as compared to females.

H6: Infidelity perpetrators would score higher on social media use than the fidelity group.

Two sequential studies were utilized for deeper insight and to provide answers to the below-stated research questions. Based on a qualitative methodology, the first study examined the retrospective accounts of persons who had engaged in infidelity

and made an effort to address several research questions through this analysis. This study was an investigation that delves into the infidelity experience from the partakers' perspective. Why people cheat and how they do were uncovered through the first study. This was further studied through the second research study using quantitative methods, i.e., a survey of a representative sample. The second study expanded the results of the first study with a few additional variables from the literature. It also intended to cover a few additional investigations that were not covered in study one and aimed to corroborate the results of narrative studies. It compared three groups – perpetrators and victims of infidelity and fidelity group for a better understanding of factors and their relationship between loyal and disloyal groups. The university's Ethical Review Board approved for carrying out the research.

Chapter 3

Infidelity Involvement: A Narrative Study of Causes and Processes

Infidelity has always been understood as a phenomenon that often causes distressing, personal, and relational consequences (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014; Shrout & Weigel, 2018). Many factors are at play that motivate a person to engage in infidelity than just the usually believed lack of satisfaction (Ciarocco et al., 2012; Omarzu et al., 2012; Selterman et al., 2019). It is therefore essential that attention be given to these other reasons as well when considering an individual's reasons for infidelity. Studies also suggest that most infidelity scenarios follow a general pattern. For instance, how it initially starts or how they cope with it after, and yet very little is known about the process of infidelity (Allen et al., 2005). With this as the background, the qualitative study seeks to gather an understanding of the different factors that contribute to infidelity from the standpoint of the perpetrators themselves. Furthermore, it also focuses on exploring the process of infidelity. To comprehend the experience of infidelity that is viewed as a moral transgression by many, it was essential to use a methodology that would reveal the complexity of the participant's subjective experiences as well as the history of their relationship. A narrative approach enables the blending of many viewpoints to make sense of the periods of insight, adjustment, and change in their life (Reissman, 1997). Thus, using the informant's own words, a narrative inquiry was used to explore the recounted experiences of infidelity (McLeod, 2001). Since infidelity is a non-normative experience, a narrative inquiry approach is very helpful in studying it (Reissman, 1997, 2003; Stuhlmiller, 2001).

Method

Researchers have argued that a narrative is the best way to understand life events as it draws on people's natural quality of storytelling allowing them to construe and understand eventful incidents. Scholars have therefore used it extensively, even for the study of romantic exploration (Bühler & Dunlop, 2019; Dunlop et al., 2017; Dunlop et al., 2018;). Since the present study explored the reasons that influence an individual to engage in infidelity and the process behind that, therefore, the study made use of narrative inquiry to acquire a deeper familiarity. The perpetrators of infidelity narrated their own experiences of infidelity. They described in detail their reasons for partaking in infidelity, how it started and continued, their relationship with their primary partner, and how they ended it.

Participants

All of the participants hailed from Sikkim and were involved in romantic relationships with the opposite gender. The following criteria had to be met for participants to be included in the study: a) they were perpetrators of infidelity, b) their committed relationship should have been for a minimum of six months, and c) they should have been dating and not married or divorced. A snowball sampling method was used. For identifying the first participant, a personal contact was used and subsequently, more contacts were contacted through the participants' contacts.

The sample consisted of 40 adults, out of which 21 were males and 19 were females. The participant's average age was 27.15 years. The youngest participant was 18 years and the participant with the maximum age was 36 years. The majority of the participants were Hindus ($n = 25$), a few of them were Christians ($n = 6$), and the rest of them were Muslims ($n = 3$) and Buddhists ($n = 6$). The 40 participants included 16 with a bachelor's degree, 20 with a postgraduate degree, and 4 with a PhD.

Interview Questions

To achieve the goals of the current study, a narrative inquiry was conducted through telephone interviews. Infidelity is a sensitive topic for most, hence the physical absence of the interviewer in an over-the-phone interview would make the whole process less intimidating for the participants as well as reduce social pressure (Holt., 2010; Opendakker., 2006; Vogl., 2013). In addition to this, the data collection was carried out from September 2020 to January 2022, which was when Sikkim was under lockdown once again and location constraints were there. Thus, a telephonic interview method felt more acceptable, reasonable, and safer compared to a face-to-face interview during the pandemic. The focus was on knowing their full infidelity story in detail through the narratives of the participants. Thus, there were a few questions, just to probe and guide the participants. They were asked for instance – Can you tell me about your involvement with the cheating partner and how it started? How was your primary relationship at that time? What happened after you cheated? How did you deal with it? How did cheating affect you or your relationship? etc. Based on their responses, they were further probed, to get more details.

Procedure

Ethical clearance was the first step that was taken by the University's Institutional Review Board at the start of the study. Thereafter, the participants were contacted through a phone call and asked regarding voluntary participation in the study. They were briefed about the purpose of their study and their role in it. A few questions were asked informally to find out if they fulfilled the criteria for inclusion in the study and upon showing their willingness, a time and day was fixed for the interview according to their convenience.

On the day decided by them and according to the appointment given by them, they were called and a rapport was established to make the participants feel comfortable and develop a sense of trust. At the start of the interview, permission was taken from the participants to record the audio and make use of it for research, and verbal informed consent was taken. They were also told about their right to skip any question or stop the interview mid-way if they felt uneasy and were also given the option of using aliases to keep their partner's identity hidden. For recording the data, a recording app was used on the mobile phone. The interviews were carried out in Nepali, English, and Hindi as per the participants' fluency and convenience. A few neutral questions that were not related to the analysis were included at the final stage of the interview to help the participants regain their relaxed mood, and lastly, they were thanked for their participation, cooperation, and unrestricted and sincere comments.

Data Analysis

A qualitative analysis software called Quirkos 2.4.1 was utilized to analyze the data. Soon after participant data was gathered, it was transcribed, and for a few of the cases, some sentences were first translated to English and then transcribed. The gathering of data and the transcription of the interviews into document files were done side by side. The transcripts were then input into the program.

The data analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts of interviews were read several times before codes were identified. Next, the codes were read over and over again and clubbed based on similarities. The codes emerged through the data itself while a few were similar to those from previous literature. While coding, the analysis of every cheating episode was analyzed to understand the reasons, the starting, the

developmental progress, and the end of the process. Finally, these codes were brought together under a large theme. To be certain that no codes were overlooked, the data was carefully examined and re-analyzed. The reliability of the codes was then evaluated by a second independent rater. For the reasons of infidelity, the Cohen's Kappa value was found to be 0.866, while, the percentage agreement between the two coders' coding was 95.114, whereas, for the process of infidelity the Cohen's Kappa value was determined to be 0.726, and the two coders' coding agreement was 84.35 percent. After reaching a saturation threshold, data analysis was concluded.

Results

The results of the study found some themes which were similar to earlier studies and a few were novel. There are typically four reasons given by people for their infidelity: personal, relationship, third-party, and situational reasons, with each of these categories including a variety of motivational reasons. These reasons may occur separately or simultaneously. The results also portray different processes of individuals' involvement in infidelity- one for cases of spontaneous infidelity and three processes for cases of planned cheating.

Motivational Factors for Infidelity

Personal Factors. These are those factors that are intrinsic to the individual, such as personal attributes, as well as those that have an impact on the main person directly involved in infidelity. The personal factors in the study were found to be the need for exploration, uncertainty about the one, and lack of control. People going through similar relationship circumstances may act differently with one choosing to cheat on their partner, while the other stays faithful and it is possible to attribute this difference to individual characteristics and choices.

Need for exploration. It describes a person's drive to experience a wide range of things, learn new things, and look for novelty. This includes both platonic emotional exploration and sexual exploration. For instance, a male participant of 34 years, mentions he likes exploring. He says *“I need to experiment and explore other alternatives. I know my partner in and out but it was interesting to find out what others could bring to the table, to know them both as a person and as a lover. I was committed so there was no long-term consequence to that. I had an affinity towards her emotionally, and it was on a platonic level.”* The participant further goes on to add that he was very happy and satisfied in his primary relationship. It demonstrated that infidelity is not only caused by issues in a relationship but may result from individuals' preferences, showing that even people who are happy in their relationships indulge in cheating to satiate their need for exploration.

Uncertainty about ‘the one’. This refers to feeling uncertain about the main partner and the future of the relationship despite committing to them. People may prefer to pursue other options when they are unsure if their partner is the best choice for them or "the one." They also mention that their primary relationship keeps fluctuating which makes them wonder if the relationship will last so they want to keep their options open. This group also includes the inability to select and decide on a single option when faced with several viable options. For example, a female of 24 years, who had been involved in emotional infidelity shares *“The person I was with earlier, was from a different state and a different religion. I always felt that his parents would never agree to our marriage later on. Of course, we were not getting married then but I did want to get married to him at some point, that is why he was my boyfriend. But then with this person (third person), I thought it could work out, it*

could go somewhere and that's when I kind of felt that the future could be more forward. So, he made me feel more secure about our future in the long run."

Lack of Control. This includes a lack of self-control in the individual and/or losing control which leads to them developing relationships outside the committed relationship. For instance, a male participant (24 years) who had hooked up and cheated on his partner sexually, attributes it to not being able to control himself. He quoted - *"Halfway through the movie the way she was leaning on me and our hands were brushing I knew that there might be chances but I had so much confidence in myself and in her too that I thought it was just that. I never thought my body would react or I would lose control and that I would kiss her back instead of stopping her. I think maybe it's because I am a guy, and although from my heart I love my girlfriend, we just can resist anything that is so sexually loaded and provoking."* Thus, not being able to control oneself either in that very moment or just because that is their characteristic could lead to infidelity. Participants also mentioned how meeting an extremely gorgeous and approachable person makes them more susceptible to losing control.

Relationship Factors. This refers to factors associated with the primary relationship, and it is a shared aspect of the two partners. Dissatisfaction, sexual discontentment, relationship toxicity, physical distance, neglect, incompatibility, and revenge were the relationship factors identified in this study.

Dissatisfaction. It is characterized by the individual's dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their partner's behavior or with the relationship in general. For most of the participants, the dissatisfaction was concerning a certain part of their relationship while some were unhappy with the state of their relationship as a whole. One of the participants said - *"Our relationship was for almost seven years and we*

were together since school. There used to be a lot of fights time and again. For a few days, our relationship would be good and then again it would become bad. We could not communicate properly with each other. I can't pinpoint what was the problem but I did not feel satisfied with my love life anymore and I had started to get fed up with how our relationship had turned out". This demonstrates being unhappy with the relationship is an important reason for infidelity.

Sexual Discontentment. This category refers to feeling dissatisfied due to sexual reasons. The individual feels his or her sexual needs are not getting fulfilled due to numerous factors such as sexual illness, lack of experience, etc. Apart from this, it may also occur as a result of not being satisfied with the intensity and regularity of the sexual interaction between partners. Two people in a relationship may have different sexual drives and wants and may not be able to find a way to satisfy both. A male participant, aged 33 years shared that while the sex was there, the intensity of their sexual relationship was not how he wanted it to be. He goes on to say - *"I feel that with my partner, whenever we made love or got intimate, the intensity with which my partner came towards me was not that strong, and it was always me initiating and not my partner. I mean, I have had a couple of relationships so I know what passion is. That made me feel very frustrated when it went on, you see. I just wanted the sexual fire to be alive but it was not."* This indicates that sexual discontentment may occur due to different reasons but if it continues for a while, it frustrates the person sexually.

Relationship Toxicity. This involves dysfunctional relationship habits between committed partners, such as deceit, abuse, exaggerated rage, mistrust, envy, and arguments. In a toxic relationship, the person may also experience pressure and a sense of responsibility to keep the other person happy by doing certain things despite

not wanting to do so. Participants in the study felt that it was very difficult to cope with their committed partner's actions, and felt suffocated. A female participant of 22 years, recalls, that the relationship got very toxic after some point of dating when her partner would abuse her, usually after being drunk. She quotes – *“That’s when things got really bad between us, he used to get drunk almost every night, and I had seen the same sort of things growing up, so it was just too much for me to take. He had the same pattern of getting drunk, then saying some mean things or abusing me, he would regret it the next day morning when he was normal but again, he would drink and repeat the same.”*

Physical Distance. This category refers to when the primary partners are in a long-distance relationship, living far apart due to their situations, or have to move to different places due to certain situations. In the context of the present study, being separated and in different places also led to feelings of loneliness and missing the partner. While participants said that the distance between them was a very important reason, a few mentioned that the distance was not the main issue but rather it indirectly impacted their relationship by affecting their intimacy. A male, aged 27 years says *“Exactly, so we were in a long-distance relationship, and I was in a different city, my partner was in a different city, she had a different life going on and miscommunication and then we couldn’t meet so yeah it was not going great otherwise this thing would not have happened, so yeah, we were having our difficult times”*.

Neglect. This describes a lack of meaningful time spent together, less physical intimacy, a lack of support, and a sense of being taken for granted. The partner may frequently fail to pay attention to, observe, and respond to a partner's sentiments promptly. The person could still feel alone, unhappy, or irritated even if this may or

may not have been done on purpose. In a romantic relationship, the sensation of being ignored or taken advantage of may gradually grow, but it may become more pronounced if the person begins receiving attention or importance from an outsider. For instance, a male of 25 years, mentioned that he started to feel undervalued in the relationship. He quoted *“I wanted her to spend her time with me mostly but she had her own life and her own set of people that she prioritised so this made me feel secondary. And this was not the case once or twice, on most important days, she would be with others and forget about me”*.

Incompatibility. It refers to the underlying differences between the two people that make it difficult for them to get along well. Partners in a romantic relationship may have entirely different likes, dislikes, preferences, personalities, values, and goals. Incompatibility may be the root of dissatisfaction, but the two are distinct problems—especially in the context of the current study, where incompatibility doesn't always mean a bad relationship but rather the couple's differences.

Additionally, it was observed that when partners have been together for a long period, they mature develop, and adapt, and their differences may cause them to progressively start to become incompatible. One of the males, aged 34 years, states *“Initially we look for those who are very beautiful, smart, attractive, charming but those things don't last. Even if she is not beautiful, compatibility is the most important factor. Both of them should be very friendly and very free. I was and still am very liberal in their thoughts. Even though I am an introvert I am very open-minded and like mingling up with genuine people. But my partner was very closed-minded and we had different views of love, friendship, and life in general. With work, she became even more serious, but I always remained the same and that affected us”*.

Revenge. It refers to the desire to punish their partners for cheating on them initially. This happens as a result of the primary partner committing a transgression, which in this case is infidelity that causes pain, humiliation, and suffering to the individual and they then want to get even with them. A female of 27 years, revealed that after finding out about her partner's betrayal, she was involved in sexual infidelity just for the sake of revenge. She stated - *"From my very first relationship, I had been cheated upon. But I trusted him immensely and when he did the same to me, I lost all my trust in him and his relationships. I thought he was my school friend so things would be good and there would be trust. It made me very angry and I was pissed. Why should I be the loyal one when all I am getting is betrayal? So, I also cheated on him. There was nothing emotional, I just slept with a random guy. So, it served him right"*.

Third-Party Factors. The factors involving a third party that pull an individual towards becoming close to someone outside the committed relationship and committing infidelity are referred to as third-party factors. In this study, love, self-worth validation, bonding, and attraction were the third-party factors contributing to infidelity. The third-party factors tempt the individuals since they usually receive what they were lacking in their primary relationship. Third-party factors were more effective when the primary relationship was less satisfying, but there were numerous instances where they still contributed to infidelity even in situations when the primary relationship was strong.

Love. This refers to occasions where the subject mentions falling or being in love with the involved person. Being in love with an ex and then cheating on their present boyfriend with them was common, while a few fell in love with new people they had met. A female, aged 20 years, shared that she met one of her exes, got

together with him, and cheated on her partner. She mentioned that it was something that she didn't want to do but she never got over her ex. Her partner treated her very well so ended up loving both the people in her life. She quoted "*And when I was in a relationship with the second guy, my first boyfriend told me he wanted to get back, and although I said no, I have always had a soft corner for him, that is why I cheated on my second bf with my first one*".

Self-Worth Validation. This refers to when the individual seeks external validation and the third party reinforces it. Individuals in a committed relationship may form a negative self-concept with a decrease in self-esteem when they feel that their partners are indifferent to them or neglecting them. If a third party provides them value at that moment and makes them feel important or deserving, it enables the person to mend their broken self. A third party might provide someone the sense of importance, attention, and specialness that they were not receiving from their spouse. For example, a male of 29 years said his girlfriend did not introduce him to his friends despite dating for some time because of his looks. He mentioned that he cheated because it made him feel good about himself and gain value in his own eyes as a guy worth dating. He said - "*My ability to socialize was very bad. It was only my football skills that people knew. So, it was just very weird for me when I got so much attention due to my looks. My girlfriend always taunted me for my looks and never valued me or dated me in public. And here I was, getting attention because of my athletic ability and girls liking my shy nature and praising me for my looks and flirting with me. So, all that coming from Shalini got to my head because she was super beautiful so if she liked me, it means I did look good*". The study found that the alternative made them feel important and charming and this was one very important factor, especially in cases where these individuals feel neglected by their primary partner.

Bonding. It refers to the development of a connection, a sense of intimacy, and closeness between the person and the alternative. Often, the terms bonding and love are used synonymously, but in the current study, as found through the quotes, the two are distinct since bonding is only a sense of connection and emotional attachment with the cheating partner without necessarily being in love. In the remark that follows, a male participant describes how he became attached to the third person as a result of the bond they developed over time. - *“I thought there was no harm in having casual conversations, but then slowly she started sharing her problem and I started sharing my problem. I felt a sense of support from her, we started advising each other. A feeling of belongingness came up. If she was having some problems, I would be helping her out and if I was having some emotional problems, she would at least be listening to me., Whenever we met, we chatted for a long time, at times it was about philosophy, maybe sometimes about books, and sometimes about life’s problems. Overall, it was a very pleasant feeling”*. People may bond via sharing, self-disclosure, spending time together, and receiving support when things are tough.

Attraction. This refers to certain traits in the third party that the individual finds attractive. These qualities may be physical such as - their attractiveness, and sexual appeal, and they could also be behavioural traits such as intellect, charming personality, etc. For instance, a male, aged 25 years claimed to admire the other person because she was so very straightforward and drew his attention. He said – *“I met a girl who I got attracted to because she was so good with words. It was not because she was good-looking, which of course she was. All the guys at the party had their eyes on her but I found it fascinating that she spoke about anything that came to her mind, she wasn’t afraid. She was confident and well-read”*.

Here, people are being drawn to a third party without receiving any care or support or growing deep feelings for them, in contrast to the earlier factors of love, bonding, and self-worth validation. It usually happens fast, as in "at first sight," and it usually disappears soon as well.

Situational Factors. This includes the outside-of-the-perpetrator contextual variables about the external environment that cannot be controlled by the perpetrator- life events, triggers, and opportunities were the situational factors found in the study.

Life Events. This refers to situations or events that occurred in the individuals' lives that made them vulnerable and more likely to cheat on their partners. For example, a female of 23 years shared that she had a difficult period when she and her father, both had major surgeries within two months. This was a period of stress and anxiety for her but her partner was absent. She said – *“My knee surgery happened, he (ex-bf) was at his home, which is around five hours from Siliguri. So, my surgery has happened, and he could not come, it is fine. But I will at least expect a video call or a call saying good luck but he was very busy. That time, the whole two months were very difficult for me. It just made it very easy for me to cheat due to what I was going through”*.

Triggers. It describes any occurrence, circumstance, or cause that induces someone to cheat. Although triggers can be anything and are not only restricted to substances like alcohol, cannabis, or drugs, in this study, alcohol was the most significant and often mentioned trigger. Participants, for example, reported being in an intoxicated state which acted as the trigger. For instance - *“So a guy friend helped me and took me. I went and when I came out he was still standing there. He suddenly kissed me, and I was so drunk I did not resist him. I kissed him back too. And we made out. The next day, it felt like I dream, I remembered just bits of the earlier day. My*

best friend had seen us making out and I felt so guilty then. Something that I would never do I did and just because I was so high” (Female, 27 years).

Opportunity. It refers to the alternative being available at the right time or the alternative serving as a distraction and just involving in cheating due to the opportunity being present. A male participant shared that his involvement with a girl was merely to take his mind away from his partner. He said, - *“I was missing my partner, she was not beside me so I found someone else to divert my mind and my heart. She was like a distraction for me”*. Another male participant accepted that he cheated simply because the situation they were in brought about the opportunity to do so. One of the quotes that indicates this is - *“It was a nice trip. I had come on a solo trip and she too. We knew, whatever happens, would just stay between the two of us”*. This quotation suggests that one major factor contributing to people's decision to cheat is the availability of opportunities for cheating. While several factors may work in tandem with the opportunity to be involved with a third party, it has also been observed that in certain instances, an individual may cheat simply because they have the chance.

Process of Infidelity

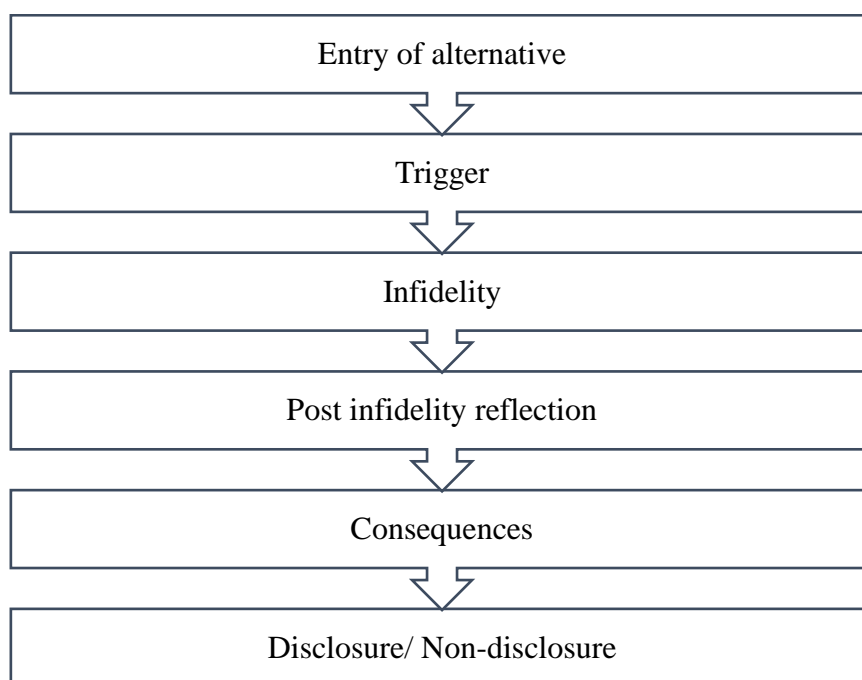
The infidelity process that unfolded from the participants' narratives depended on how the infidelity instances took place. Based on the rich narratives provided by the perpetrators themselves, it was found that the process was different for spontaneous infidelity and planned infidelity. Spontaneous infidelity can be categorized as consisting of infidelity scenarios where the participants a) believed the short timeframe available was not enough to consider and think things through and, as a result, were unable to consider the ramifications of their choices. These incidents were cases of infidelity where people acted spontaneously and without planning, for

instance, say, infidelity through sexual activity as an act of passion when intoxicated. On the other hand, planned infidelity could be considered as those infidelity scenarios wherein the perpetrators a) believed they could control and direct the situation according to their wishes if they so desired, b) it occurs over a period that gives them enough time to think and act, and c) consequences of their extradyadic behaviour could be foreseen. These infidelity processes and their sequential components have been laid down below.

Spontaneous Infidelity. Spontaneous infidelity incidents served as the framework for the first process (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Process of Spontaneous Infidelity



Here, the process starts with the alternative person's entry, which can be understood as meeting the alternative for the first time getting in touch with them., or just noticing and being aware of them and their presence in one's life. It has been noted that in cases of spontaneous infidelity, the process almost usually begins with

the introduction of the partner and even though other significant relationship or person-related elements may have been present, they were not as vital. For instance, a female, aged 27 years, mentioned having met the person at a party. She says *“I met him at my friend’s party. I had seen him before, hanging around in the cafeteria with Anshika. But this time he approached me and talked to me”*. A few others also mentioned that it was a first-time meeting with the alternative, typically during a party or function.

The trigger is the next step in the process that prompts a person to commit cheating. Triggers could be objects or events in the person’s life, such as being intoxicated after substance use, or emotional arousal after a fight. Being intoxicated was one of the most commonly mentioned triggers that participants talked about in this study. A female mentioned - *“We were drinking beer, and we ended up drinking too much, maybe because I was hurting and I just wanted to drink it all away. I didn’t realize when we drank a bit too much, and then we were just sitting and he abruptly kissed me. It all happened so fast. I was drunk, my head was buzzing. I felt so heated up. In the situation, it just didn’t stop and I could not stop him. He kept on going ahead and making out and had I been sober, something like this would have never even started”*. This is the most important step in the infidelity process, in this context here, since the time was very less for individuals to think and make rational decisions. The presence of the trigger, made them feel charged up, and as a result, they involved in infidelity in the heated moment.

The act of betrayal, or the act by which the person commits infidelity, is the third phase in the process. Infidelity could be sexual, emotional, or a combination of the two, however, all the participants who were involved in spontaneous infidelity mentioned only sexual activities that were impulsive and happened in the spur of the

moment without any emotional attachment. A female, aged 25 years, shares that this led to sexual acts with the alternative. She says - *“One thing led to another. I was so sloshed when this happened. We ended up sleeping together”*.

This brings about a period of introspection known as post-infidelity reflection. At this stage, the perpetrators reflect on their cheating and process everything that has transpired. A female, 25 years of age, shared what was going on in her mind after the infidelity incident saying - *“Once it all happened, I got some time to breathe. I had time to process it. All that time, I had people around me so I could not think of it. But when I started going through what had happened, I had all sorts of thoughts in my mind. I knew I did not want to lose my partner also”*.

Following their infidelity, there are noteworthy repercussions that the person faces. These have been referred to as consequences in the current study. In this study, participants identified guilt and regret as the primary effects of their infidelity event, however, they may also experience other feelings such as shame, etc. For instance, a female participant, aged 27 years mentioned her experience of guilt, in the following quote - *“After that incident, I felt very guilty. My partner loves me very dearly, so he would be very hurt if he ever found out. If I had been in another situation, I think I would have stopped the guy, but the scenario itself was so heated up, you know, that it just happened”*.

The disclosure/nondisclosure phase comes next. At this point, the person either chooses to tell the faithful partner about their betrayal or to keep it a secret. Only a few participants told their partners about their infidelity, whereas the majority of them preferred not to. Since most of them in this context had cheated in the heat of the moment, they wanted to continue their relationships like before. So, they preferred not to disclose their betrayal. A female participant, aged 23 years, shared that she

initially wanted to tell her boyfriend about the truth, but after some thought, she decided against it because she felt the relationship would be impacted. She shared “*At first, I wanted to tell him because of the guilt I had, but he would have broken up with me. Even if he did not break up, he would never trust me the same. So, I let it be. So, he never found out after that I was a little cautious that, okay, I can cheat in certain situations so better not to be in such situations. I don't even go to parties*”.

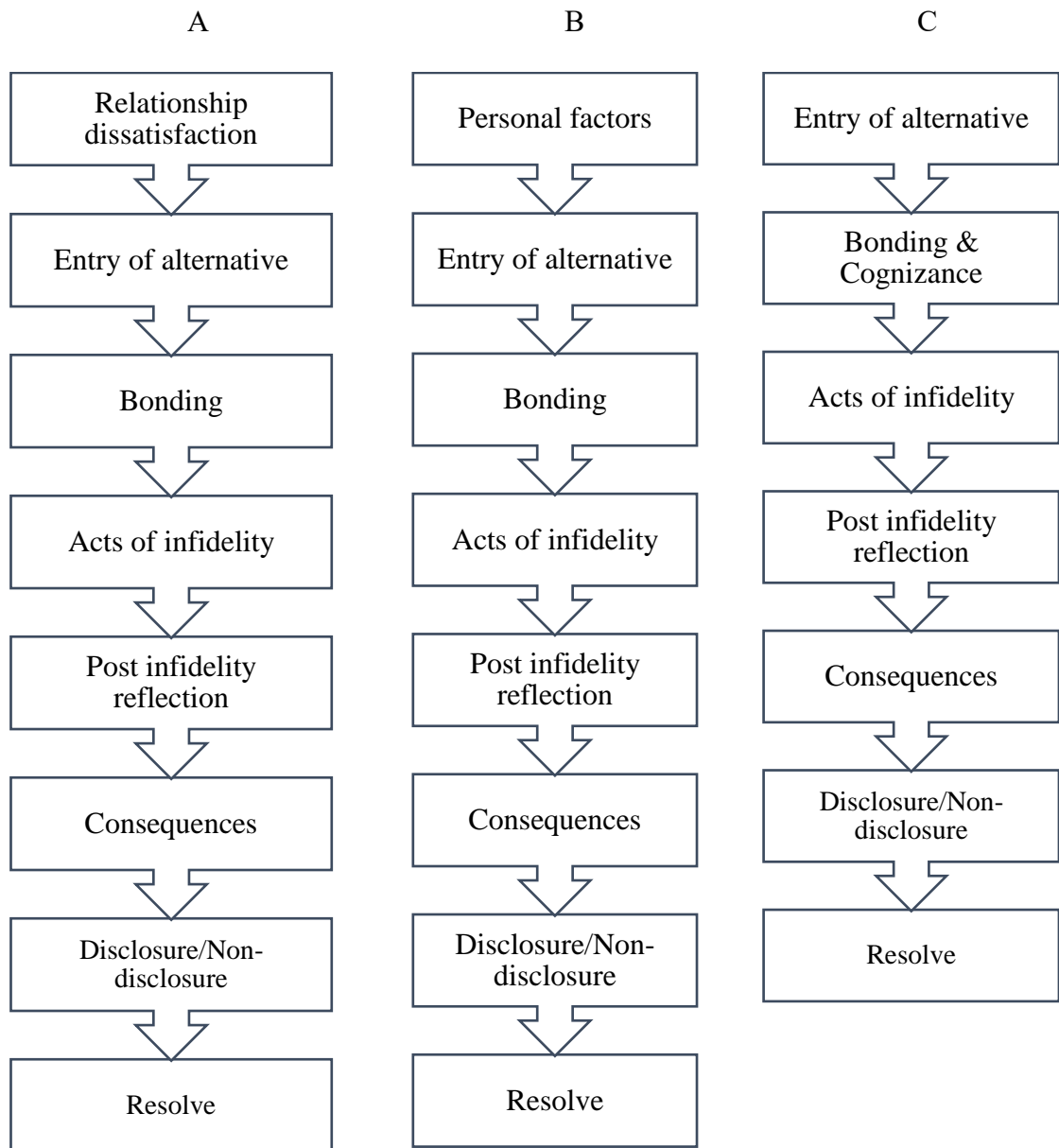
The process is completed when the person resolves the adultery by either leaving their committed relationship with their primary partner or keeping it going. For instance, a female aged 27 years, said that she continued the relationship with her partner just as it was before. She said- “*I can't change whatever happened, so I thought let things just be. It took some time but I forgot about it. After all, it was just some minutes of pleasure, you can let go of dal because you have biryani. Biryani is just a festival food. I made sure something like that never happened again, so I cut off that guy because maybe if I met him again someday, chances could be there, but apart from that it is just like before. If he had found out then things would have been very different. I am glad he didn't*”.

Planned Infidelity. The process of how infidelity happens is slightly different for planned infidelity scenarios as compared to when infidelity is spontaneous, although in both cases, the elements are quite similar. The process in this case may start in either of the three ways as given in (Figure 3.2). The process of infidelity in a planned infidelity scenario begins either with relationship dissatisfaction, personal factors, or the entry of the alternative.

Personal factors such as a desire to explore and relationship dissatisfaction, both act as risk factors that predispose the individual to a likelihood of infidelity. In most of the planned infidelity cases, the process started with these.

Figure 3.2

Process of Planned Infidelity



A female participant, aged 27 years, shared that the quality of her relationship had degraded. She said - *“When I first met AA, I was in a bad situation, my relationship wasn’t going well with my committed partner, but even then, my intention wasn’t to be involved with him. My partner and I were going through a rough patch some time ago where we hadn’t spoken to each other for around ten days and we*

were fighting all the time. I was very unhappy with our relationship and him. We could not even have a normal conversation without an argument. So, it felt like our relationship was already doomed". While a male participant aged 33 years, spoke of his nature to explore. He mentioned that he was very open to new experiences and inquisitive. He said - *"My partner was very intellectually and sexually compatible with me, everything was just great with her. But then I am very open to the idea of these things. So, it always made me curious how being with another person would feed and try out different sexual fantasies like BDSM. This is not just about sex, you know. I always want to try out new things and different experiences in life, for everything"*. This quote is also indicative that one's characteristics set the stage as risk factors. In a few cases, the starting of the infidelity process is slightly different even though the later stages are the same. Here, the entry of the alternative is itself the start of the infidelity process.

The entry of an alternative refers to the perpetrator being introduced to the third person. The meeting with the alternative turns out to be good and they may be charmed and attracted. It was also seen that if they were already friends or acquaintances, this was the stage where they would start to notice and pay attention to each other and/or become aware of their existence in their lives. A female participant, aged 23 years, had mentioned how she came in touch with the alternative saying, *"So near my pg, there was a shop in the building where I used to stay. He was a wholesaler. I had seen him outside his shop a few times but never talked. But then one day, a guy friend introduced me to him and I started talking to him and then we also exchanged numbers"*.

This leads to the next stage in the process – bonding. Here, at certain times bonding with the alternative person and cognizance about feeling for their primary

partner may happen simultaneously. Bonding in this study refers to the forming of an emotional connection, a sense of closeness, more frequent interactions, sexual or physical attraction, and feeling comfortable with the alternative. A male participant said that from knowing each other and being friends, the closeness of his relationship with the alternative advanced. He quoted – *“3 pm to 6 pm became our time, we used to go for a walk, chat, then what happened was she started getting close to me after a few weeks. I found out she was married but her husband used to work in the rails so he came back after two years but again after a month he left. So even I felt comfortable sharing my relationship problems with her. It was a time when we would both share what was worrying us without any judgment”*. Discussing and disclosing their respective problems, spending time, and having conversations together makes them feel closer to the person. For some participants, it led to sexual attraction. Before they might not have paid much attention to the flaws in their relationship, but after meeting the alternative they start to compare the two. They feel closer to the alternative partner as their discontent with their current relationship grows, and vice versa. Their perspective on their relationship shifts, and they begin to see it more unfavorably. This encourages them to go to the next step.

The next step in the process was engaging in infidelity behaviour. While the study started with emotional and sexual infidelity, the participants in the study mentioned involvement in three types of infidelity - emotional, emotional-sexual, and sexual infidelity. Participants occasionally didn't understand that their behaviours were slowly leading towards infidelity since it was without any sexual participation such as emotional connection and falling in love, until, they were too attached and developed feelings for the alternative. A female, aged 22 years, shared details regarding her emotional infidelity. She confided that no sexual activity took place

between them, yet she accepted it was cheating. She also shared she didn't realize she was cheating on her partner until she developed deep feelings for him. She also said- "*My partner asked me to stop talking to him, I said I would not repeat it. I would not do anything to hurt him but, I couldn't stop so I just hid it.*" It demonstrates that she kept talking to the other partner secretly because her boyfriend objected to it. As a result, the attachment she had to this individual was so strong that it had to be kept a secret from her boyfriend as well.

A stage of post-infidelity reflection follows. At this point, the person understands the seriousness of the issue and reflects on what they did. While some participants attempted to get over it by defending their conduct and attributing their infidelity to specific causes, others sought to comprehend how and why it all occurred and attempted to label their emotions. For instance, a female, aged 27 years shared what was running in her mind after her infidelity. She said - "*I came home after meeting him. It came to my mind that what happened was wrong. I thought it was not like I did not love my partner. I loved him immensely because he was my first love. I knew then that what I had felt for that person was just attraction and attachment and it was not love*".

Then comes the next stage – consequences, when the person deals with the consequences of his/her act. The study found that most perpetrators reported guilt as the outcome of their cheating. A few also mentioned regret, while just a single person mentioned shame. A female participant of 24 years recalls carrying the guilt for a long time even after ending the relationship and the guilt only ceased to exist once the partner had finally moved on. To quote - "*There was guilt for a very long time until recently when I got to know that the person got engaged to be married to someone*

else". There were also positive consequences such as emotional independence and improvement in the primary relationship, however, this was only the case for some.

The next phase of the infidelity process is disclosure/non-disclosure. The offenders may tell their partners about their infidelity or keep it a secret from them. It has been discovered that a variety of variables including the type of cheating, the seriousness of the affair, the possibility of being found out, or their feelings toward their committed relationship, all impact their decision about whether or not to disclose. A small percentage of interviewees explicitly said that their partner asked them after finding out about their cheating from other sources and they had to tell the truth. A male participant, aged 25 years, shared that he never disclosed his infidelity to his partner since he loved her despite the infidelity. He said "*I never told my partner about what happened between us. My relationship with this other girl was very short, like a month only. Why would I tell my girlfriend about it? And I loved her, I know I cheated on her but still. In fact, she never found also till our breakup*".

Finally, the last stage in the infidelity process is when individuals resolve the infidelity by deciding about their relationship. The participants either end the primary relationship or continue with it. How the participants resolve the situation here depends to a huge extent on the earlier stages. In cases where the infidelity had been disclosed to the partners, the future of the relationship was decided by the non-involved partner as well. A few participants mentioned that post infidelity they worked on improving their primary relationships.

Differences between Infidelity Types

The narratives from the participants revealed that their involvement with an extradyadic partner outside the primary relationship was of three types – sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, and emotional-sexual infidelity. Sexual infidelity is

comprised of sexual actions with an alternative partner without any emotional attachment whatsoever. A male, aged 27 years, reveals about his one-night stand, which was entirely sexual. He said *“We used to work late nights, and it was just a momentary mistake that happened because of the sexual tension between us. There were no strings attached. We had sex once in the office and that’s it. We never did it again. It was just plain sex.”* Emotional infidelity on the other hand was just the opposite, with participants cheating emotionally but without any sexual acts. A female participant, aged 22 years, shared about being aware of her infidelity which was purely emotional infidelity. She said *“We had reached a stage where we could not go a day without talking to each other. There was nothing physical. No meeting, no kissing, in fact nothing. I didn’t cheat sexually on my boyfriend but it was emotional and it was cheating. I liked this person the way he cared for me and did things for me. And I felt for him.”* Emotional-sexual infidelity consisted of a mix of both. Participants shared emotional attachment and intimacy along with enacting sexual acts. *“At first, it was just innocent flirting. We grew closer with time and I felt safe with him. The kind of emotional closeness I felt with him, I did not feel with my partner also. Then once when we were alone, he kissed me and caressed me and things soon escalated. By the time, I wanted to end the relationship it was too late. We had already been intimate and I was in love”.*

For each of these three infidelity types, participants mentioned certain reasons that led them to be involved in it. Sexual discontentment, the need for exploration, revenge, and triggers were reasons that led to involvement in sexual infidelity. On the other hand, reasons cited for emotional infidelity were mostly relationship toxicity and uncertainty about the one. Finally, those who had cheated on their partners by being involved in emotional-sexual infidelity – a mix of emotional and sexual

infidelity behaviours reported different factors. They mentioned all the third-party factors of being in love with the alternative, self-worth validation, attraction, and bonding. They also cited that relationship dissatisfaction, relationship toxicity, physical distance, and neglect along with self-control and life events very vital reasons that led to their infidelity involvement.

Gender Perspectives

Post-infidelity perpetrators at times would provide self-justification for their actions mostly to reduce their personal negative experiences. The study also found that there were differences in how both genders justified their actions. It was found that male perpetrators justified their infidelity with sexual reasons such as the partner not being open enough to try out sexual fantasies or sexual tension. For instance, a male participant of 29 years mentioned that he felt better after he told himself that it was sex and not something he could control because that's how men are. He said "I would have stayed away. But the situation is so sexually loaded and provoking. I am a man, that's how we are. She was straight up coming onto me. As guys, we like sex. Anything else I could have resisted."

At the same time, females in the study mostly justified their infidelity with emotion-related aspects by providing reasons such as lack of emotional support, being in love, being cheated by their partner first, etc. For instance, a female participant, aged 27 years, said "*I felt bad at first, then I thought that if he valued me, and loved me, even I would not have done all this. He cheated first and hurt me every day*".

Discussion

The present study was aimed at exploring what are the factors that play a part in involvement in the cheating process of infidelity. Previous studies have mostly focused on married couples and extramarital infidelity. Dating is an important

transition stage before moving to marriage and the reasons for infidelity in today's scenario could be slightly different. The study also evaluated the process of involvement in infidelity. The results as found in the present study have been discussed below.

Reasons for Involvement in Infidelity

The results found multiple factors which have been organized into four broader factors – personal, situational, relationship, and third party. In most cases, few of these reasons were together present and some factors on their own were also influential in prompting a person to engage in infidelity.

Past studies have also noted the importance of dispositional factors in understanding infidelity as well as the possibility that these factors might be used to determine their attitude towards infidelity, which in turn can serve as a major guiding force for infidelity (Allen et al., 2008; Isma & Turnip, 2019). Personal variables can either have a direct impact on an individual's involvement in infidelity, such as their sexual preferences, or they might have an indirect effect by making the individual more susceptible under particular favourable circumstances. Similar to the present findings previous research has also discovered a favourable association between infidelity and traits like openness, the desire to explore, and a lack of self-control (Jain & Sahni, 2017; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008). It should be emphasized that participants who stated the desire to explore frequently also shared that they were unable to restrain themselves. Due to their inability to resist temptation, individuals with poor self-control and self-regulatory abilities are more likely to engage in a variety of sexual behaviors, including infidelity (Ciarocco et al., 2012; Pronk et al, 2011; Love, 2006).

An unexpected finding of the current study was that being unsure about the partner and feeling uncertain of their relationship leading to marriage also encouraged people to cheat with a substitute. Uncertainty is produced in interpersonal relationships by three connected but separate sources, namely the self, the partner, and the relationship, and people are driven to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). The context could be of importance here. Collectivist cultures prefer a pragmatic approach to relationships (Madathil & Benschhoff, 2008). Dating is frequently seen as a stepping stone before marriage and, there is a misplaced assurance that the person you date will be the one you eventually marry in the Indian context, especially for people in their late twenties and thirties, and a lot of emphasis is placed on security, stability and certainty. Not being able to imagine a future with their partners or in their current relationship, therefore, could drive their attention toward more beneficial and realistic alternatives.

The study also points out that relationship issues are a major contributing element to infidelity as the answer to why people get involved outside of their committed relationships is because they are dissatisfied with their primary partners. Prior research has underlined this by confirming that people try to fulfill their needs through partnerships, failing which they may seek fulfillment elsewhere (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Jeanfreau et al., 2014; Norona et al., 2018; Omarzu et al., 2012). Resentment and dissatisfaction between partners are brought on by several factors, including poor communication and unfulfilled emotional demands. There is evidence that extradyadic interactions are related to unhappiness and issues in the main partnership (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). Similarly, theories that embrace being dissatisfied, neglect, sex, and wrath as motives for adultery include those provided in the four-factor model for infidelity by Barta and Kiene (2005). Studies also suggest

that one of the major reasons for people cheating is due to sexual aspects (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Omarzu et al., 2012).

Unhealthy patterns in relationships have always been harmful, and the present study demonstrates that they also have an impact on couples who are dating (Maphosa et al., 2017). It's also likely that individuals in our present study who were in toxic relationships also engaged in adultery as a coping mechanism. Participants recognized engaging in adultery as a strategy for escaping their ongoing troubles, according to a previous qualitative study by Scheeren and Apellániz (2018). Physical distance was one interesting factor that also emerged from the study. Living apart provides additional possibilities to engage with other suitable alternatives, which increases the likelihood of having secondary partners especially if they are already dissatisfied (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983). Due to the options and chances, it presents for other people to get closer, being apart might even indirectly promote infidelity instead of simply directly doing so (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983). Being apart and missing the primary partner contributed to emotions of loneliness in the context of the current study. Loneliness and infidelity have been demonstrated to be positively correlated (Isanejad & Bagheri, 2018). Feeling neglected by their primary partner is another prevalent factor seen in the study which can also be found in Barta and Keine's (2005) infidelity model. Additional studies have also revealed that neglect and a lack of attentiveness are significant contributors to adultery (Jeanfreau et al., 2014).

Another element identified in the present study was incompatibility which has been linked to infidelity in previous studies as well (Haseli et al., 2019). However, in the context of the current study, these differences between the partners happen with time as one of the partners matures and change and as a result of one's differences, they also begin to progressively become incompatible. Wanting to get even with their

partners or taking revenge was another common factor that has been mentioned in previous literature as well (Drigotas et al., 1999).

The next category that was considered to be vital for infidelity is third-party factors. The resources offered by the alternative likely filled the void that was lacking in their primary relationship. Pioneering work in this area by Glass and Wright (1992) also cited love as one of the most important driving factors behind infidelity. Scholars have highlighted the role that neglect plays in infidelity, thus it is likely that those who feel this way may seek out and end up cheating if they obtain attention from other sources. In dating relationships, gaining attention may become more crucial since individuals often date to find care, support, and affection and if those things are lacking, there is a greater likelihood that they may go for them elsewhere. They may likely bond via interaction, disclosure of problems and life situations, and spending time with each other, as well as through offering and receiving support when things are tough, further making them feel closer to the alternative. Feeling attracted is one additional factor why some may get involved in extradyadic relationships. Attraction to the other person has often been cited as a reason for infidelity (Feldman and Cauffman, 1999). It could be that when people find certain aspects of an alternative very attractive such as their looks or personal nature, they may be drawn toward them.

Literature from previous studies (Scheeren et al., 2018) has also designated contextual factors in support of infidelity. An interesting finding from the study was people also mentioned events in their lives and being intoxicated accountable for them wanting to cheat. People often feel vulnerable during certain phases of their lives and this may influence their decision. A person's emotional state affects people's tendency to indulge in regretful sexual conduct (Mark et al., 2011). Additionally, the influence of alcohol or drugs on an individual is such that it may reduce their inhibitions and

increase risk-taking which could lead to sexual behaviors such as infidelity (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999; Norona et al., 2018). Finally, having the chance to engage in extradyadic activities also serves as motivation by itself. While, opportunities such as days spent traveling for work to simply being a case of one person working while the other partner is at home could serve further as additional reasons for those who already wish to cheat as well as for those who are already aggravated by their relationship factors (Atkins et al., 2001; Crouch & Dickes, 2016).

According to the study's findings, individuals are involved in three types of infidelity that can be distinguished: emotional infidelity, which consists solely of emotional acts, sexual infidelity which is comprised of sexual actions, and emotional-sexual infidelity which involves both sexual and emotional involvement. It is possible that emotional infidelity could be the ultimate aim for seeking love, support, care, etc, and what started as merely emotional infidelity could have later developed into emotional-sexual infidelity for the individual, but they ended it before that could have happened. Emotional and sexual cheating can happen separately or at the same time (Guitar et al., 2016). The present study discovered that the reasons behind each of these three types of infidelity were different.

Dispositional need to explore was found to be a reason for their sexual infidelity. Individual's exploratory nature in general may also seep into their relationships. Wanting to explore sexually and try out different sexual experiences may motivate people to try it out when they come across like-minded people. Feeling sexually discontent was also reported to be a reason for sexual cheating. Unfulfilled sexual cravings, unavailable partners, or unsatisfactory sexual performance can all lead to sexual frustration (Lankford, 2021). Interestingly, the results of the current study indicate that sexually active individuals also experienced sexual dissatisfaction.

Lankford (2021) suggests that having frequent sex could be a sign of increased sexual irritation that the person is trying to release. Sexual infidelity may have resulted from their attempt to find sexual solace to ease their sexual frustration (Lankford, 2021). Numerous studies have previously indicated that a key contributing factor to their sexual infidelity was their sexual dissatisfaction (Liu, 2000; Mark et al., 2011; Omarzu et al., 2012). Revenge was also a reason for sexual infidelity. A person's desire for vengeance is a reaction to unfair treatment and an attempt to exact retribution and ensure that the offender receives what they deserve (Gollwitzer & Denzler, 2009). In the study, perpetrators who mentioned a revenge motive were victims of their partner's adultery. Thus, this very desire for vengeance drives them towards sexual infidelity. The presence of a trigger was also a vital reason for being involved in sexual infidelity.

On the other hand, factors such as uncertainty about the partner and relationship, unhealthy and toxic relationship, physical distance and feeling neglected by their partner were crucial reasons for people's emotional infidelity. Reasons such as developing an emotional bond, receiving love and self-worth validation from the alternative partner bonding were cited mostly by participants engaging in emotional infidelity. These factors are not mutually exclusive and usually occur side by side for people to cheat emotionally. According to Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006), a crucial element in pursuing romantic relationships is meeting different needs, including emotional ones like intimacy and companionship. Hence, these needs must be addressed. Not getting what they need through their commitments spurs them towards infidelity (Le & Agnew, 2001; Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006).

Finally, where emotional-sexual infidelity was concerned, it was a result of many reasons. Lack of self-control, relationship toxicity, physical distance, important

life events that affect their emotional state, attraction, falling in love, and developing a close bond were all reasons why participants were involved in emotional-sexual infidelity. There were a few reasons that were considered important by participants and vital in irrespective of the type of infidelity. For instance, dissatisfaction, incompatibility, life events, and opportunities were also prominent reasons to all types of infidelity.

Process of Infidelity

The stages in the infidelity process consist of risk factors, entry of alternatives, triggers, bonding, cognizance, disclosure/non-disclosure, post-infidelity reflection, consequences, and resolution. The sequence differed slightly depending on the form of infidelity.

Spontaneous Infidelity. In infidelity instances that were spontaneous, the first stage usually started with meeting the alternative, while certain relationship factors could have existed, they did not interfere in this matter, and being introduced to the alternative in a conducive environment, usually a party or a secluded environment is what gives a start to the infidelity about to come. The existence of triggers is the second and the most crucial phase in the spontaneous infidelity process. Being intoxicated after drinking alcohol, was the most mentioned trigger and intoxication has been frequently cited as leading to infidelity (Allen et al., 2005). Next is the occurrence of infidelity which were all sexual acts. It can be understood that cheating which is usually a result of triggers and because of the environment would mostly be sexual acts that occur in the heat of the moment. The next stage of post-infidelity reflection is an attempt to make sense of all that happened which leads to the next stage – consequences of their infidelity. Brief infidelity cases influenced by situational elements result in a person feeling a lot of guilt (Selterman et al., 2021). This partly

could be because the majority of individuals were aware of the good treatment they received from their primary partners and believed that their cheating was unjustified. While some people could feel better with time, few of them are unable to get past it and struggle to overcome their guilt. The participants nearly always felt guilty as soon as they came to their senses, which may be partly because they realized that drinking made them lose their self-control more readily than they would have otherwise. When perpetrators reach the stage of disclosure/ non-disclosure, a driving force behind this choice is guilt, fear of their partner finding out through other sources, and fear of losing their primary partner. Finally, the individual tries to resolve the infidelity, and how individuals choose to resolve the infidelity is up to the perpetrator but a part of it also depends on whether the faithful partner will be prepared to pardon them once they learn about it. People are less likely to end their primary relationship if the infidelity was provoked by the situation (Selterman et al., 2021).

Planned Infidelity. The first stage is the sense of unhappiness that exists in the primary relationship due to factors, such as challenging periods with their partners, an increase in arguments, or living in separate areas, while for others it is the presence of some personal dispositions. Both of these predispose the perpetrator and although these risk factors just by themselves might not have led to infidelity, it was a step that made them more aware of the attention that followed from the alternatives. Allen et al. (2005) in their review also accepted predisposing factors as one of the dimensions. Similar to the present study findings, previous studies agree that risk factors such as being dissatisfied in the primary relationship drive people's interest in cheating. (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Hackathorn et al., 2011; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008). Few other studies accompanied by the findings from the present study find

personal risk factors such as personality characteristics associated with infidelity (Orzeck & Lung, 2005; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008).

In some rare cases, it is only after meeting someone that their infidelity process starts. This is mostly due to the strong physical attraction felt toward the person they just met. In the planned infidelity process, most of the alternatives are friends or people they already know while cheating with a stranger is only for a few (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999; Jeanfreau et al. 2014).

Spending time, sharing personal secrets, and growing attraction all bring the cheating parties together as their bond starts to grow. At the same time, they also start to perceive their primary relationship negatively. This could be because they become much more conscious of the issues and neglect in their primary relationship as a result of this as a result, they make comparisons and their perception of their relationship alters negatively. This encourages them to engage in infidelity. Unlike spontaneous infidelity which consisted of sexual infidelity, planned infidelity consisted of a variety of infidelity behaviors which were sexual or emotional, or both. Post-infidelity, they assess and try to understand why they cheated, while a few may give self-justification for their behavior. This could be partly to maintain their self-image since most people like to see themselves as morally right, and committing infidelity would mean shaking up this core belief. Their evaluation of their actions may also have an impact on whether they feel guilt, regret, etc. The perpetrators have the option to tell their primary partners about it or hide it from them. Depending on the state of the relationship at that particular time might also be a decisive factor as to whether or not a person chooses to tell their partner about it. People who are having relationship issues are more likely to come clean (Selterman et al., 2021). Many a time people correctly recognize infidelity even though it might not be disclosed (Hughes &

Harrison, 2017; Lambert et al., 2014). In such cases, the cheated partners might themselves enquire about it.

In line with the present study, previous studies have agreed that most cheaters suffer feelings of shame and guilt for their betrayal, (Hall & Fincham, 2009). Along with it, the beneficial effects of infidelity, although limited to a few were emotional independence and improvement of the primary relationship. A similar finding comparable to this one was highlighted by Feldman and Cauffman (1999) who reported that perpetrators of infidelity experienced positive emotions.

The perpetrators choose to resolve their infidelity by continuing or exiting the primary relationship. In a few cases, the committed couples maintained their relationship for a short while even after the infidelity was disclosed, but they subsequently had to end the relationship because of frequent arguments and growing resentment. This may be due to a delay in traumatic reaction after experiencing infidelity where negative feelings may remerge much later for the one who was cheated in the relationship and may not as simply be solved as the couple thought (Lusterman, 2005). The knowledge that the love remains between the partners despite the infidelity may serve as a persuasive incentive to remain and repair the relationship. So, it stands to reason that rather than simply the individual, how the situation is resolved at this stage also depends on the state of the relationship, the love between the partners, as well as the faithful partner's choice.

While the processes are similar, the way they start is slightly different. When the infidelity processes it can be made out that the way they start is slightly different. It becomes clear that the existence of triggers was the most notable characteristic of spontaneous infidelity, which is practically missing in planned cheating. It is crucial to note that just because someone commits spontaneous infidelity, it does not always

suggest that they are free of relationship issues or other risk factors. It does not, however, cause infidelity at that particular time. It is also clear that as soon as someone commits an act of spontaneous infidelity when they come to their senses and realize what has happened, they immediately suffer the emotional fallout. They were the ones who felt more guilty and shameful as compared to planned infidelity perpetrators. In contrast to impulsive infidelity, participants of planned infidelity were more likely to confess their infidelity. Finally, since infidelity may occur in different ways for different people, therefore it can also be claimed that these processes are not completely rigid and even though the infidelity procedures in these two situations are different, they nonetheless share significant similarities.

Chapter 4

Infidelity Explored: Motivations, Types, and Gender Dynamics

The Narrative Inquiry discussed in the previous chapter investigated the reasons for infidelity involvement from the perspective of the perpetrators themselves. The findings revealed reasons for infidelity broadly categorized into personal, relationship, third-party, and situational factors. Each of these factors has its role to play. Further, it also explored the process of infidelity and the study found four frameworks for the infidelity process – one for spur-of-the-moment infidelity and three for planned infidelity instances.

The present chapter attempts to employ the findings from the previous study and use them as a base for further exploration. This chapter consists of the details of the survey study. The survey was carried out through both online and offline modes. In addition to examining some other variables related to infidelity in addition to those already disclosed by the earlier study, it also aims to confirm the findings of the narrative inquiry on a larger sample. The study carried out in this chapter also covers a few issues that could not be adequately addressed by the narrative inquiry, such as determining whether there are gender differences in various forms of infidelity. The research contrasts the viewpoints of people who have committed and suffered from adultery, as well as those who have never engaged in any form of infidelity. The study also investigates if a person's prior instances of infidelity are associated with certain variables. Furthermore, it also examined the effects of infidelity on both people who commit adultery and those who are the targets of it.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 622 participants from Sikkim, aged 18 to 39 years (overall $M_{age} = 24.46$; $SD_{age} = 4.259$). Out of the 622 participants, 407 participants were between 18 to 25 years while 215 participants were between 26 to 39 years of age. It included 245 males ($M_{age} = 24.91$, $SD_{age} = 4.67$) and 377 females ($M_{age} = 24.17$, $SD_{age} = 3.94$). Participants in the research voluntarily gave their consent to participate, for which prior ethical approval was taken. The sample consisted of self-reported perpetrators ($n = 196$), victims ($n = 200$) of infidelity, and the fidelity group ($n = 226$) i.e., those who had never cheated on their partners or been cheated by others. Amongst all the participants, 357 participants were qualified with a graduation degree or less and 265 participants had a post-graduation degree or further qualification.

The participants were included in the study based on certain criteria. For the perpetrators and victims taken in the study, it was as follows: - they should have been in a committed relationship for a minimum of at least six months during the infidelity incident; the relationship should be that of a dating relationship and they should not be married or divorced at the time of the infidelity incident; they must be an adult; the romantic relationship should be heterosexual. For the fidelity group of participants, the inclusion criteria were similar, however since they had never experienced infidelity in any form, their present relationship at the time of the study should have been at least six months or more.

Among the perpetrator participants, 96 participants admitted being involved in sexual infidelity, 60 participants had been involved in emotional infidelity while for 40 participants it was emotional-sexual infidelity. Of these, 147 participants

mentioned their infidelity as spontaneous, and only 49 categorized it as planned. Out of the victims of infidelity, 27 of them had been subjected to sexual infidelity, 102 went through emotional infidelity and 71 went through emotional-sexual infidelity. Out of the total, 81 victims perceived their partner's infidelity to be spontaneous and 119 mentioned it to be planned infidelity.

Measures

The survey consisted of several measures, most of which were standardized scales along with a few single-item measures. Three sets of questionnaires were prepared for the three groups – perpetrators, victims, and fidelity group. The survey also consisted of a demographic form. The measures used in the survey are given below.

Sociodemographic Details. The first portion of the survey consisted of questions regarding the personal information of the participants such as their gender, age, area of residence, and educational qualification.

Infidelity. Researchers have utilized single items for studying various aspects of infidelity (Sabini & Green, 2004). In a similar manner, this measure was utilized in the questionnaire given to the perpetrators and victims. Participants who were perpetrators were asked to specify the type of infidelity (sexual/emotional/mix of both) they were involved in with the alternative person while the victims were asked to indicate the type of infidelity that they were a victim of by their partners (sexual/emotional/mix of both). Both of these groups were also asked about the process of infidelity that they engaged in or were a victim of (spontaneous/ planned).

Socialization. This was measured using three self-made items that assessed how frequently the participants socialize and meet other people. This was asked to all the three groups (perpetrators, victims, and fidelity). An example item was as follows:

“How often do you go to movies, parties, trips, office events, etc.?” The responses could be marked on a five-point scale – not at all (1) to very often (5.) The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was found to be .74 for the items.

Power. This was measured using the personal sense of power scale by Anderson et al. (2012) and was included for all the three groups in the study. It consisted of eight items that asked whether or not they felt powerful enough to influence their partner in a romantic relationship, for instance, “I could get him/her to listen to what I say”. Participants responded on a five-point scale. The Cronbach alpha in the present study was found to be .77.

Additionally, a single item was also included that asked them overall who held more power in the relationship between them and their partner. They were asked to respond by choosing one of the following responses – I had more power, My partner had more power, We both shared equal power.

Relationship Satisfaction. This was measured using the Relationship Assessment Scale by Hendrick et al. (1988). This measure was present in all the three questionnaires provided to the three groups. This scale has seven items that measure general relationship satisfaction. The participants had to respond using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more satisfaction in their relationships. An example item from this scale is “How good was your relationship compared to most?”. This scale obtained a Cronbach value of .83.

Need Fulfillment. Drigotas and Rusbult (1992) agreed that romantic relationships strive to fulfill five needs – intimacy needs, companionship needs, security needs, emotional involvement needs, and sexual needs. Therefore, the current study evaluated how much each of the five needs are met in a romantic relationship for perpetrators, victims and fidelity participants. The study used a need fulfillment

measure with five items, a single item measuring each need. This was measured for all the three groups. The measure was utilized from a previous study which asked the participants to rate their need fulfillment by their committed partner using a seven-point scale (Le & Agnew, 2001). Cronbach's alpha was found to be .85.

Trust. The Trust in Interpersonal Relationships scale by Larzelere and Huston, (1980) was used to assess the level of trust that participants placed in their partners. It comprises eight items. This measure was also given to all the three groups. Participants on the scale indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale. An example of an item is as follows - "I felt that I could trust my partner completely". Higher scores indicated a higher level of trust. The α in the present study was .82.

Attitude Towards Infidelity. The Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale by Whatley (2008) was used to assess the attitudes that individuals held regarding infidelity. This scale consists of twelve items. This measure was given to all three groups for their ongoing relationship at the time of the survey. It was included in the survey to see if their past infidelity experiences – either as victims as perpetrators or not having experienced infidelity at all, had an association in their present relationship. Participants had to answer using a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicated having more favourable attitudes toward infidelity. An example item from the scale was as follows: "Being unfaithful never hurt anyone". The α for the measure was found to be .78.

Perceived Behavioral Control. Perceived behavioral control in the context of the present study referred to the ease with which they believed they could carry out cheating. This was measured using three self-made items. This measure was also included for all three groups and those who had a relationship at the moment of the

study were asked to answer it. Participants had to respond using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). An example of an item is “If I want, I can attract anyone towards me”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .81 in the study.

Subjective Norms. For the measurement of subjective norms, three self-made items were used for all three groups in their ongoing relationship. However, due to a low Cronbach’s coefficient, only a single item could be used in the analysis. These items asked about how supportive or unsupportive their close ones would be with infidelity. The respondents had to answer on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The final item was as follows “Most people whose opinion matters to me, would not abandon me for my unfaithfulness”.

Infidelity Intention. The Intention Towards Infidelity scale developed by Jones et al. (2011) was used to evaluate the likelihood of engaging in infidelity which consists of seven items. This measure was also included in the questionnaire for all the three groups with regard to their ongoing relationship. The α coefficient of the scale was .76. Items had to be responded to on a Likert scale, ranging from not at all likely (1) to very likely (5), with higher scores for a responder indicating higher intent to cheat. An example of an item from the measure is “How likely would you be to lie to a partner about being unfaithful”.

Self-Control. The Brief Self-Control Scale consisting of 13 items (Tangney, et al., 2004) was utilized to assess participants' level of self-control in general. This was measured for all the people in a relationship at the time of the study in all the three groups. An example of an item, is, “I refuse things that are bad for me”. Higher scores indicated higher self-control. Along with this, three items were added that measured self-control specifically concerning romantic cheating and these items were

reversed. An example item was “I feel tempted when I see an attractive person”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the measures were .76 and .78 respectively.

Loneliness. The UCLA loneliness scale (Russell et al., 1978) has been used for studying loneliness concerning infidelity and relationship-related areas. Similarly, four items were used to assess feelings of loneliness among participants. This was also given to all the three groups for their current relationship. The participants were asked to answer on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always). An example of an item is “I often feel left out”. The Cronbach’s value was found to be .69.

Social Media. The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS), developed by Andreassen et al. (2012) was used. The scale consists of six items and for the present study, the term Facebook was replaced with the word “social media sites”. This was measured for all the participants. Participants were asked to respond to statements using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often). An example item is “I spend time thinking about social media or planned use of social media”. The Cronbach’s α value was .81.

Infidelity Reasons. Based on the reasons for infidelity that were derived from the qualitative study in the previous chapter, the survey used single items to ask the probable reasons for infidelity. Therefore, seventeen single items were provided and the participants were instructed “There are many reasons that people express for their infidelity, some of which are given below. Please think of your committed relationship with your partner and tell how much these reasons were responsible for you/your partner’s infidelity”. These were also asked to the fidelity group with the following instructions - "There are many reasons that people express for their infidelity, some of which are given below. According to you, how much do you think these reasons are responsible for a person’s infidelity”. They were asked to answer on

a scale of 1 to 3 (1 = not likely; 2 = somewhat likely and 3 = very likely)". The items measure relationship factors, personal factors, third-party factors, and situational factors as reasons for infidelity.

Guilt. The state shame and guilt scale by Marschall et al. (1994) was used to assess the guilt felt by participants who had cheated on their partners. This scale was therefore used only for perpetrators. The scale consists of five items each, for measuring two subscales - shame and guilt, however, only five items designated for the subcategory of guilt were used in the present study. The scale was slightly modified to suit the study and participants were asked to express their feelings post-infidelity using a five-point Likert scale where higher scores indicated more guilt. The α value in this study was found to be .93. An example item is "I felt bad about what I had done".

Regret. To measure regret, the decision regret scale (Brehaut et al., 2003) was adapted and utilized for infidelity scenarios. This measure was included only for the perpetrators. The participants were asked to take into consideration their involvement in infidelity and rate the regret experienced on a scale of 1 to 5. The higher the score, the more the regret. An item, for instance, is "I feel bad about something I have done". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .79.

Motivation after Infidelity Experience. The 18-item Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) was used for victims of infidelity to assess their thoughts and feelings toward their partner who cheated (McCullough et al., 2006). It has three subscales currently, but in the study, items belonging to two subscales - the avoidance subscale and the revenge subscale were used. An example of an item is "I avoided him/her". The α values for the subscales were .84 and .68 respectively.

Distress. To measure distress experienced by victims after finding out about their partner's infidelity, the Breakup Distress scale (Field et al., 2009) was used and the word breakup was replaced with betrayal. While the scale has sixteen items, in the study eight items that were suitable for present work were used. Participants were provided with statements indicating how hurtful they felt and participants had to respond on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more distress. An example of an item from the scale is "I thought about my partner cheating on me so much that it was hard for me to do things I normally do". In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .81.

Process. A single-item measure was used to assess the process that emerged from the results of the previous study. The participants were given the process of infidelity in the form of sequences as obtained from the first study and respondents were asked to choose one of the sequences, that they felt correctly depicted how infidelity happens.

Relationship-Related Questions. Few single items were used to ask regarding their relationships such as the length of their affair, duration of their committed relationship during the affair, and their continuation of the relationship post-infidelity. A single-item measure was used to ask about their present relationship status: single or in a relationship. Additionally, a single item also inquired if they were the reacher (who reaches to get a partner outside his/her league) or the settler (the person who has settled for a partner below his/her league) in the relationship.

Procedure

Information regarding the study, in brief, was shared on social media sites, posted in university groups, and spread verbally. Interested people were provided with the option to contact the researcher for further details and participation, while a few

others provided their contact details and email ID instead so that they could be contacted by the researcher. The participants were then reached out and briefed about the purpose of the study and the research in brief. They were told about their role in it and what was expected of them. In addition to this, they were also that they could skip certain questions or stop filling up the survey if they did not wish to continue. A few participants had some queries, which were answered.

Once they were ready to participate, a few questions were asked informally to determine if they fulfilled all the criteria for inclusion in the study. To allow the respondents to answer freely and feel comfortable, they were provided with the option to fill up the questions online through Google Forms or offline using pen and paper questionnaires provided to them. Three different sets of questionnaires were prepared for perpetrators, victims and the fidelity group. Through google forms, the questions were set in a way such that they were asked if they were perpetrators, victims or maintained fidelity and depending on their responses, they were automatically taken to the pre-set questions meant for that category. Those had filled up offline were asked of their role in infidelity and handed out questionnaires accordingly. Written informed consent was also given out in the same form along with the questionnaires. Most participants responded within two to three days, a few of the participants asked for a week due to their busy schedules. A few of them failed to respond in the stipulated time so they were reached out and reminded. Out of 662 people who received the questionnaires, including online and offline means, 641 participants responded. After receiving responses, they were thanked for their cooperation and participation.

Data Analysis

For analyzing the data, SPSS software was used. The data from all the participants was entered into SPSS. The data was cleaned and a few of the participant's data was removed to ensure that there were no duplicates or incomplete data. Missing values in data were less than 2 percent, therefore, they were replaced by the mean of that particular group (perpetrator, victim and fidelity) for which it was missing. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for all the scales used in the study to check for their internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for all the variables was in the acceptable range except for the subscales measuring attachment style which was found to be below .60 and therefore was not included in the analysis.

A few of the scales had reverse items and for those items, reverse coding was done. The items were then summed to derive a total score for each of the scales, excluding the single-item measures. Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationship between the variables overall and to understand the association between the variables for each of the groups. Thereafter, MANOVA, logistic regression, t-test, and chi-square were carried out to check for significant differences across different groups.

Results

The overall correlational analysis, descriptive statistics for the variables, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measured variables have been provided in Table 4.1. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for the same variables for each of the subgroups i.e., perpetrators, victims, and fidelity group has been given in Table 4.2.

As we can see from table 4.1 and 4.2, perceived sense of power in the relationship shows a significant positive correlation with relationship satisfaction, need fulfillment, and trust, overall as well as for each of the groups. Similarly,

relationship satisfaction was also found to be positively correlated with need fulfillment and trust overall as well in the groups. Additionally, in the perpetrators, relationship satisfaction also depicted a positive association with guilt and regret, and for victims, it was negatively correlated with avoidance motivation post-transgression. Overall, need fulfillment was positively correlated with trust and in the case of perpetrators, it was also positively correlated to guilt and regret.

In the case of perpetrators, trust shared a positive relationship with guilt and regret, whereas, for victims, trust was negatively correlated with avoidance motivation post-transgression and revenge motivation post-transgression. Lastly for perpetrators, guilt and regret were positively correlated with each other, and for victims, avoidance motivation post-transgression was positively correlated with revenge motivation post-transgression.

Results of Pearson's correlation for the other variables for participants in relationship, overall and separately for the groups have been provided in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 respectively. These variables were measured for perpetrators, victims, and fidelity group but for their present relationship at the time of the study and therefore have been presented in a separate table.

Attitude towards infidelity overall as well as in the case of perpetrators showed a positive correlation with perceived behavioral control and intention towards infidelity and a negative correlation with self-control specific. For victims, attitude towards infidelity was positively correlated with intention towards infidelity and negatively correlated with self-control specific. Further, in the fidelity group, attitude towards infidelity is positively correlated with perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and intention towards infidelity and negatively correlated with self-control specific.

Overall, as well as for the fidelity group, perceived behavioral control was positively associated with the subjective norm, intention towards infidelity, and loneliness and negatively with self-control specific. In the case of perpetrators, it was only correlated with subjective norms and intention towards infidelity while for victims, it was positively correlated only with intention towards infidelity, and a negative correlation was found with self-control specific. The results also show a positive correlation between subjective norm and intention towards infidelity and a negative correlation between subjective norm and self-control specific when compared overall and for the fidelity group. However, in the case of perpetrators, the subjective norm was found to be negatively associated with self-control in general and self-control specific towards infidelity, while for victims, the subjective norm was negatively associated only with self-control specific.

Results further show that overall, intention towards infidelity is negatively correlated with self-control general and self-control specific and positively correlated with loneliness and social media use. In the case of perpetrators, intention towards infidelity is negatively correlated with self-control in general and self-control towards infidelity, while, for victims, intention towards infidelity shows a negative correlation with self-control specific and a positive correlation with loneliness. In the fidelity group, intention towards infidelity and self-control specific were negatively correlated with each other.

Overall, self-control, in general, was positively correlated with self-control specific and negatively correlated with loneliness and social media use. There was a positive correlation between self-control general and self-control specific and a negative correlation between self-control general and loneliness among perpetrators. Among victims, there was a negative correlation between self-control in general and

loneliness. However, in the fidelity group, self-control in general was associated negatively with loneliness and social media. Overall self-control specific shows a negative correlation with loneliness and social media, however, when looked into the groups separately, self-control specific was only correlated with loneliness for all three groups. Lastly, loneliness was positively correlated with social media overall as well as for all the three groups.

Table 4.1*Descriptive and Correlation Coefficients of Measured Variables*

Variable	N	M	SD	α	SOC	PSP	RS	NF	T	G	R	MPT: A	MPT: R	D
SOC	622	8.76	2.40	.74	1									
PSP	622	24.86	5.13	.77	.010	1								
RS	622	24.14	5.93	.83	-.029	.519**	1							
NF	622	20.42	6.58	.85	-.043	.470**	.652**	1						
T	622	24.69	6.57	.82	-.005	.644**	.595**	.465**	1					
G	196	19.45	5.90	.93	.009	.207**	.444**	.366**	.203**	1				
R	196	17.17	4.70	.79	.047	.140*	.426**	.370**	.149*	.639**	1			
MPT: A	200	25.80	6.26	.84	-.024	-.224**	-.232**	-.124	-.268**	-	-	1		
MPT: R	200	12.45	3.83	.68	.025	-.052	-.136	-.009	-.140*	-	-	.350**	1	
D	200	24.19	5.36	.81	-.070	-.133	.008	.076	-.054	-	-	.001	.065	1

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; G = Guilt; R = Regret; MPT: A = Motivation Post Transgression: Avoidance; MPT: R = Motivation Post Transgression: Revenge; D = Distress. Guilt and regret are measured only for perpetrators, therefore N = 196; Motivation post transgression – Avoidance, Motivation post transgression – revenge and distress was measured only for victims, therefore, N = 200

Table 4.2*Descriptives and Correlation Coefficients of Variables for the Groups (Perpetrators, Victims, and Fidelity Group)*

Variable	Role	M	SD	SOC	PSP	RS	NF	T
Socialization	Perpetrator	9.18	2.62	1				
	Victim	8.88	2.22					
	Fidelity	8.28	2.28					
Perceived Sense of Power	Perpetrator	24.46	5.16	-.058	1			
	Victim	23.13	5.08	.020				
	Fidelity	26.74	4.50	.200**				
Relationship Satisfaction	Perpetrator	22.88	5.81	-.015	.475**	1		
	Victim	22.30	5.76	-.011	.452**			
	Fidelity	26.86	5.16	.096	.479**			
Need Fulfilment	Perpetrator	18.41	7.35	-.008	.427**	.756**	1	
	Victim	19.41	6.17	-.090	.476**	.458**		
	Fidelity	23.06	5.25	-.123	.392**	.621**		
Trust	Perpetrator	23.55	5.93	-.009	.589**	.439**	.388**	1
	Victim	21.48	5.64	.019	.613**	.508**	.379**	
	Fidelity	28.52	5.94	.170*	.601**	.628**	.452**	

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense Of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; n for perpetrator = 196; n for victim = 200; n for fidelity = 226.

Table 4.3*Descriptive and Correlation Coefficients of Variables for Participants' Present Relationship*

Variable	M	SD	α	ATI	PBC	SN	ITI	SCG	SCS	LON	SM
Attitude Towards Infidelity	24.05	7.09	.78	1							
Perceived Behavioural Control	7.14	2.81	.81	.211**	1						
Subjective Norm	2.81	1.24	-	.110	.343**	1					
Intention Towards Infidelity	15.74	7.33	.76	.527**	.402**	.229**	1				
Self-Control General	38.32	7.32	.76	-.099	-.111	-.076	-.208**	1			
Self-Control Specific	9.90	2.79	.78	-.279**	-.282**	-.252**	-.442**	.227**	1		
Loneliness	10.74	2.90	.69	.077	.139*	-.007	.215**	-.278**	-.238*	1	
Social Media Use	16.07	5.25	.81	.052	.088	-.019	.119*	-.242**	-.182**	.293**	1

Note: ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use; This particular data was taken only from participants who were in a relationship at the time of the study, therefore, N = 303.

Table 4.4*Descriptives and Correlation Coefficients of Variables for Participants' Present Relationship (Perpetrators, Victims, and Fidelity group)*

Variable	Role	M	SD	ATI	PBC	SN	ITI	SCG	SCS	LON	SM
	Perpetrator	26.27	8.52	1							
Attitude Towards Infidelity	Victim	22.88	6.22								
	Fidelity	23.43	6.29								
Perceived Behavioural Control	Perpetrator	8.02	2.85	.287**	1						
	Victim	6.90	2.39	.001							
	Fidelity	6.72	2.97	.200*							
Subjective Norm	Perpetrator	3.05	1.28	.087	.290**	1					
	Victim	2.63	1.18	-.150	.199						
	Fidelity	2.79	1.24	.263**	.439**						
Intention Towards Infidelity	Perpetrator	18.48	8.75	.477**	.413**	.149	1				
	Victim	14.99	6.17	.457**	.274**	.132					
	Fidelity	14.41	6.60	.578**	.404**	.328**					

	Perpetrator	36.81	7.07	-.028	-.070	-.287**	-.215*				
Self-Control General	Victim	38.92	7.48	-.090	-.163	.031	-.185	1			
	Fidelity	38.89	7.27	-.110	-.052	.023	-.163				
	Perpetrator	9.15	2.98	-.246*	-.128	-.223*	-.445**	.364**	1		
Self-Control Specific	Victim	10.68	2.30	-.306**	-.363**	-.204*	-.511**	.200			
	Fidelity	9.80	2.86	-.231*	-.308**	-.256**	-.372**	.117			
	Perpetrator	11.45	2.82	-.125	-.110	-.049	.050	-.161	-.247*	1	
Loneliness	Victim	10.92	3.14	.186	.175	-.108	.359**	-.302**	-.237*		
	Fidelity	10.11	2.64	.112	.221*	.119	.174	-.306**	-.240**		
	Perpetrator	17.71	5.57	.061	.037	-.096	.190	-.245*	-.141	.282**	1
Social Media Use	Victim	15.55	4.82	.165	.021	-.046	.044	-.194	-.194	.261*	
	Fidelity	15.34	5.14	-.141	.080	.003	.014	-.229*	-.152	.279**	

Note: ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use; n for perpetrator = 85; n for victim = 96; n for fidelity = 122

The data for the study was gathered utilizing a combination of online and offline surveys. To ascertain potential disparities between these distinct modes of data collection, a t-test analysis was administered. The variables that were measured across all three groups (perpetrators, victims, and the fidelity group) were used for this analysis. As detailed in Table 4.5, the outcomes reveal that within the examined sample, no statistically significant disparities were identified in the data stemming from the dual modes of data collection except in the case of socialization. Therefore, the online data has been regarded as dependable for subsequent analysis.

The data presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 illustrates the differences between the groups, (perpetrators, victims, and fidelity) across various variables. A statistically significant difference was observed in the socialization variable, with the perpetrator group ($M = 9.18$) exhibiting the highest levels of socialization and being significantly different from the fidelity group ($M = 8.28$). In terms of perceived power, a significant difference was observed among the three groups. The fidelity group reported the highest perceived sense of power ($M = 26.74$), followed by the perpetrator group ($M = 24.46$), while the victim group reported the lowest sense of perceived power ($M = 23.13$).

Results also indicate that there was a significant difference in relationship satisfaction among the groups, with participants from the fidelity group reporting significantly higher levels of satisfaction ($M = 26.86$) compared to the perpetrator ($M = 22.88$) and victim ($M = 22.30$) groups, although the difference between the latter two was not significant. Similarly, a significant difference was observed in the need fulfillment variable, with the fidelity group ($M = 23.06$) scoring the highest compared to the other two groups. Significant differences were also found in trust where the fidelity group ($M = 28.52$) had the most trust in their partners, followed by the

perpetrators ($M = 23.55$) and lastly by the victims ($M = 21.48$) who trusted their partners, the least.

There were significant group differences in the perceptions of the factors that lead to infidelity based on whether they were perpetrators themselves, victims, or had never experienced infidelity i.e., the fidelity group. The fidelity group most strongly ($M = 14.65$) believed relationship factors to be an important reason for infidelity as compared to the perpetrators ($M = 12.50$) and victims ($M = 12.74$). Similarly, both the victims ($M = 8.23$) and fidelity ($M = 8.28$) groups believed personal factors as the reason for infidelity while the perpetrators' ($M = 7.59$) outlook differed significantly from the two groups. Significant group differences were also found for third-party factors. The victim ($M = 8.20$) and fidelity groups ($M = 8.52$) perceived third-party factors to be a reason for infidelity more as compared to the perpetrator group ($M = 7.51$). A statistically significant difference was found concerning situational factors between the perpetrators ($M = 6.04$) and the victims ($M = 5.58$).

As seen in Table 4.7, a significant difference was found in attitude towards infidelity based on the group, wherein perpetrators ($M = 26.27$) as expected, scored significantly higher as compared to victims ($M = 22.87$) and fidelity group ($M = 23.43$). Perpetrators ($M = 8.02$) also scored significantly higher on perceived behavioral control as compared to victims ($M = 6.90$) and fidelity group ($M = 6.72$) as well. There was no statistically significant difference between the groups in subjective norm although perpetrators had the highest mean value ($M = 3.05$). As can be observed from Table 4.7, perpetrators ($M = 18.48$) scored the highest in intentions towards infidelity and significantly differed to the other two groups. There was no significant difference in self-control general among the groups. However, there was a significant difference in the case of self-control specific among the groups.

Perpetrators scored the lowest ($M = 9.15$) and the victims scored the highest ($M = 10.68$). Results also show significant differences in loneliness between perpetrators ($M = 11.45$) and the fidelity group ($M = 10.11$) while the victims ($M = 10.92$) did not differ from both the groups. Finally, the use of social media was significantly more by the perpetrators than the other two groups.

Table 4.5

Analysis Results for Difference Between Online and Offline Survey Methods

Variable	Online			Offline			t	p	d
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Socialization	517	8.64	2.213	105	9.33	3.131	-2.700	.007	0.255
Perceived Sense of Power	517	24.81	5.117	105	25.13	5.191	-.595	.552	0.062
Trust	517	24.70	6.482	105	24.64	7.000	.091	.928	0.009
Relationship Satisfaction	517	24.11	5.968	105	24.30	5.769	-.291	.771	0.032
Need Fulfilment	517	20.54	6.498	105	19.83	6.970	1.010	.313	0.105

Note: N = 622; df = 620.

Table 4.6*Group Differences Between Perpetrators, Victims, and Fidelity Members Among Different Variables*

Variable	Perpetrator		Victim		Fidelity		F	p	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Socialization	9.18 ^a	2.62	8.88 ^a	2.22	8.28 ^b	2.28	7.913	<.001	.025
Perceived Sense of Power	24.46 ^a	5.16	23.13 ^b	5.08	26.74 ^c	4.50	29.758	<.001	.088
Relationship Satisfaction	22.88 ^a	5.81	22.30 ^a	5.76	26.86 ^b	5.16	42.966	<.001	.122
Need Fulfilment	18.41 ^a	7.35	19.40 ^a	6.17	23.06 ^b	5.25	32.805	<.001	.096
Trust	23.55 ^a	5.93	21.48 ^b	5.64	28.52 ^c	5.95	82.473	<.001	.210
Relationship Factors	12.50 ^a	3.51	12.74 ^a	3.22	14.65 ^b	3.40	26.253	<.001	.078
Personal Factors	5.63 ^a	1.67	6.21 ^b	1.59	6.17 ^b	1.64	7.880	<.001	.025
Third party Factors	7.51 ^a	2.66	8.20 ^b	2.34	8.52 ^b	2.17	9.724	<.001	.030
Situational Factors	6.04 ^a	1.53	5.58 ^b	1.56	5.89 ^{ab}	1.64	4.408	.013	.014

Note: N = 622; n for perpetrator = 196; n for victim = 200; n for fidelity = 226

Table 4.7*Group Difference for Rest of the Variables Between Perpetrators, Victims, and Fidelity Members*

Variable	Perpetrator		Victim		Fidelity		F	p	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Attitude Towards Infidelity	26.27 ^a	8.52	22.87 ^b	6.22	23.43 ^b	6.29	6.167	.002	.039
Perceived Behavioural Control	8.02 ^a	2.85	6.90 ^b	2.39	6.72 ^b	2.97	6.123	.002	.039
Subjective Norm	3.05 ^a	1.28	2.62 ^a	1.18	2.79 ^a	1.24	2.669	.071	.017
Intention Towards Infidelity	18.48 ^a	8.75	14.99 ^b	6.17	14.41 ^b	6.60	8.905	.001	.056
Self-Control General	36.81 ^a	7.07	38.92 ^a	7.48	38.89 ^a	7.27	2.525	.082	.017
Self-Control Specific	9.15 ^a	2.98	10.68 ^b	2.30	9.80 ^{ab}	2.86	7.150	.001	.045
Loneliness	11.45 ^a	2.82	10.92 ^{ab}	3.14	10.11 ^b	2.64	5.713	.004	.037
Social Media Use	17.71 ^a	5.57	15.55 ^b	4.82	15.34 ^b	5.14	5.943	.003	.038

Note: N = 303, n for perpetrator = 85; n for victim = 96; n for fidelity = 122

Table 4.8 provides the results of logistic regression for chances to be involved in infidelity. Results found gender, trust, and situational factors were significant positive predictors of perpetrating infidelity. Need fulfillment, personal and third-party factors on the other hand was a significant negative predictor of perpetrating infidelity. The odds of being a perpetrator were 1.982 times higher for males compared to females, with a significant effect ($B = 0.684$, $Wald = 8.409$, $df = 1$, $p = .004$). A one-unit increase in need fulfillment was associated with a 6.6% decrease in the odds of being an infidelity perpetrator, and the effect was statistically significant ($B = -0.069$, $Wald = 9.183$, $df = 1$, $p = .002$). The odds of being a perpetrator were 1.446 times higher for each unit increase in situational factors, and the effect was statistically significant ($B = 0.369$, $Wald = 19.145$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$).

Table 4.9 provides the results of logistic regression for fidelity. Results found that among all the variables included, gender and socialization showed a significant negative association with fidelity. Gender showed a significant negative association with participation in fidelity. For each one-unit increase in socialization, the odds of fidelity decreased by 19.3%, and the effect was highly significant ($B = -0.215$, $Wald = 16.634$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $Exp(B) = 0.807$, 95% CI [0.728, 0.895]). A one-unit increase in need fulfillment was associated with an 8.8% increase in the odds of fidelity, and the effect was statistically significant ($B = 0.085$, $Wald = 9.670$, $df = 1$, $p = .002$, $Exp(B) = 1.088$, 95% CI [1.032, 1.148]). The odds of fidelity increased by 9.7% for each one-unit increase in trust, and the effect was statistically significant ($B = 0.092$, $Wald = 10.747$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$, $Exp(B) = 1.097$, 95% CI [1.038, 1.159]). For each one-unit increase in relationship factors, the odds of increased by 25.0%, and the effect was highly significant ($B = 0.223$, $Wald = 26.262$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $Exp(B) = 1.250$, 95% CI [1.148, 1.362]). The odds of fidelity decreased by 32.8% for each one-

unit increase in situational factors, and the effect was highly significant ($B = -0.398$, $Wald = 18.308$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $Exp(B) = 0.672$, 95% CI [0.560, 0.806]).

Table 4.8

Logistic Regression Results for Participation in Infidelity Between Perpetrators and Victims

Predictor Variable	B	SE	Wald X ²	p	Exp(B)	CI	
						LL	UL
Age	-.291	.258	1.270	.260	.747	.450	1.240
Gender	.684	.236	8.409	.004	1.982	1.248	3.147
Education	-.069	.245	.078	.780	.934	.577	1.510
Residence	-.342	.277	1.525	.217	.710	.413	1.223
Socialization	.052	.047	1.211	.271	1.054	.960	1.156
Perceived sense of power	.040	.029	1.980	.159	1.041	.984	1.101
Relationship satisfaction	-.001	.028	.001	.979	.999	.947	1.055
Need Fulfillment	-.069	.023	9.183	.002	.934	.893	.976
Trust	.066	.025	6.663	.010	1.068	1.016	1.122
Relationship factors	.011	.039	.084	.772	1.011	.937	1.091
Personal factors	-.269	.079	11.751	.001	.764	.655	.891
Third-party factors	-.123	.052	5.510	.019	.885	.799	.980
Situational factors	.369	.084	19.145	<.001	1.446	1.226	1.705

Note: Age: 18 to 25 years = 1, 26 to 40 years = 0; Gender: Male = 1, Female = 0; Education: Post Graduation and more = 1, graduation and less = 0; Location: Urban = 1; Rural = 0. N = 396.

Table 4.9

Logistic Regression Results of Perpetrators and Fidelity Group for Likelihood of Being Loyal

Predictor Variable	B	SE	Wald	p	Exp(B)	CI	
			X ²			LL	UL
Age	.216	.277	.608	.436	1.241	.721	2.136
Gender	-.610	.256	5.669	.017	.543	.329	.898
Education	-.288	.271	1.128	.288	.750	.441	1.275
Residence	.447	.287	2.417	.120	1.563	.890	2.745
Socialization	-.215	.053	16.634	.000	.807	.728	.895
Perceived sense of power	-.033	.035	.893	.345	.968	.904	1.036
Relationship satisfaction	.050	.033	2.258	.133	1.051	.985	1.122
Need fulfilment	.085	.027	9.670	.002	1.088	1.032	1.148
Trust	.092	.028	10.747	.001	1.097	1.038	1.159
Relationship factors	.223	.044	26.262	.000	1.250	1.148	1.362
Personal factors	.045	.089	.260	.610	1.046	.880	1.244
Third-party factors	.110	.061	3.233	.072	1.116	.990	1.258
Situational factors	-.398	.093	18.308	.000	.672	.560	.806

Note: Age: 18 to 25 years = 1, 26 to 40 years = 0; Gender : Male = 1, Female = 0; Education: Post Graduation and more = 1, graduation and less = 0; Location: Urban = 1; Rural = 0. N = 622

Table 4.10*Logistic Regression Results of Victims and Fidelity Group*

Predictor Variable	B	SE	Wald X ²	P	Exp(B)	CI	
						LL	UL
Age	.296	.295	1.006	.316	1.345	.754	2.399
Gender	.015	.267	.003	.956	1.015	.601	1.715
Education	.441	.280	2.488	.115	1.554	.899	2.688
Residence	-.131	.305	.186	.667	.877	.482	1.594
Socialization	.202	.057	12.655	.000	1.224	1.095	1.368
Perceived sense of power	-.022	.036	.373	.541	.978	.913	1.049
Relationship satisfaction	-.044	.030	2.143	.143	.957	.903	1.015
Need Fulfilment	-.015	.027	.286	.592	.986	.934	1.039
Trust	-.155	.029	28.473	.000	.856	.809	.906
Relationship Factors	-.182	.041	19.484	.000	.834	.769	.904
Personal Factors	.034	.083	.170	.680	1.035	.879	1.219
Third-Party Factors	.012	.063	.034	.855	1.012	.894	1.145
Situational Factors	-.050	.090	.313	.576	.951	.798	1.134

Note: Age: 18 to 25 years = 1, 26 to 40 years = 0; Gender : Male = 1, Female = 0; Education: Post Graduation and more = 1, graduation and less = 0; Location: Urban = 1; Rural = 0. N = 426.

Table 4.10 provides the results of logistic regression for the likelihood of being a victim. Socialization was found to be a positive predictor of being a victim. Trust and relationship factors on the other hand were negative predictors for victims indicating that an decrease in these variables predicted an increase in the likelihood of being a victim.

The findings showcased in Table 4.11 show that a noteworthy association exists between infidelity type and gender. Males exhibited a greater inclination towards engaging in sexual infidelity in comparison to females. Conversely, females were more involved in emotional infidelity than males. Even in the case of emotional-sexual infidelity, it was found to be more prevalent among females as opposed to males. However, no gender difference was apparent in the infidelity process.

Table 4.11

Chi-Square for Infidelity Type and the Infidelity Process by Gender

	Category	Overall	Female		Male		X ²
			f	%	f	%	
Infidelity Type	Sexual	96	33	34.4%	63	65.6%	19.657***
	Emotional	60	39	65.0%	21	35.0%	
	Sexual Emotional	40	27	67.5%	13	32.5%	
Infidelity Process	Spontaneous	147	73	49.7%	74	50.3%	.743
	Planned	49	26	53.1%	23	46.9%	

Note: N = 196

Table 4.12 shows the group difference in infidelity type and infidelity process due to educational qualification. The number of people involved in various infidelity types differed by educational qualification. People with higher educational qualifications such as a postgraduate degree and further qualifications were more likely to be involved in sexual infidelity than those who were graduates or less. On the other hand, people with graduation or less were more involved in emotional as well as emotional-sexual infidelity than the higher educated group. An analysis was also

carried out to evaluate if there were significant differences due to age and residence and no significant results were found therefore these results have not been included here.

Table 4.12

Chi-Square for Infidelity Type and the Process by Education

Category		Overall	Postgraduate		Graduate		X ²
			and more		and below		
			f	%	f	%	
Infidelity Type	Sexual	96	51	53.1%	45	46.9%	9.391**
	Emotional	60	17	28.3%	43	71.7%	
	Emotional-Sexual	40	19	47.5%	21	52.5%	
Infidelity Process	Spontaneous	147	70	47.6%	77	52.4%	2.487
	Planned	49	17	34.7%	32	65.3%	

Note: N = 196

Table 4.13 presents the gender differences in perpetrators. Male perpetrators (M = 23.83) reported significantly higher levels of relationship satisfaction and need fulfillment (M = 19.46) than females (M^{RS} = 21.96; M^{NF} = 17.37) in their relationships where they engaged in cheating. No significant gender differences were found in the case of perpetrators for the variables that were measured for their ongoing relationship.

Table 4.13*Gender Differences Between Perpetrators Across Different Variables*

Variable	Female		Male		t	p	Df	CI		d
	M	SD	M	SD				LL	UL	
SOC	8.87	2.522	9.51	2.697	-1.707	.089	194	-1.372,	.099	0.245
PSP	24.89	5.157	24.02	5.148	1.180	.240	194	-583,	2.320	0.168
RS	21.96	5.542	23.82	5.948	-2.272	.024	194	-3.484,	-.246	0.323
NF	17.37	7.630	19.46	6.931	-2.006	.046	194	-4.145,	-.035	0.286
T	23.71	6.029	23.39	5.859	.371	.711	194	-1.360,	1.991	0.054
RF	12.78	3.376	12.22	3.644	1.119	.265	194	-.428,	1.551	0.159
PF	5.55	1.757	5.71	1.574	-.696	.487	194	-.636,	.304	0.014
TPF	7.85	2.638	7.16	2.652	1.812	.071	194	-.060,	1.427	0.261
SF	6.04	1.653	6.04	1.399	-.004	.997	194	-.433,	.431	0.000
G	18.85	6.288	20.07	5.447	-1.455	.147	194	-2.882,	.435	0.207
R	16.77	4.544	17.58	4.847	-1.207	.229	194	-2.133,	.514	0.172
ATI	26.51	9.179	25.88	7.435	.331	.742	83	-3.181,	4.450	0.075
PBC	8.04	2.773	8.00	3.016	.059	.953	83	-1.239,	1.314	0.014
SN	3.06	1.134	3.03	1.513	.088	.930	83	-.548,	.599	0.022
ITI	18.85	8.841	17.88	8.698	.495	.622	83	-2.939,	4.887	0.111
SCG	37.17	6.305	36.22	8.253	.599	.551	83	-2.208,	4.111	0.129
SCS	9.04	2.766	9.34	3.337	-.457	.649	83	-1.638,	1.026	0.098
LON	11.02	2.925	12.16	2.516	-1.828	.071	83	-2.375,	.100	0.418
SM	17.72	5.930	17.69	5.019	.023	.981	83	-2.467,	2.526	0.005

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; RF = Relationship Factors; PF = Personal Factors; TPF = Third-Party Factors; SF = Situational Factors; G= Guilt; R=Regret; n for females = 99; n for males = 97; These initial variables were measured for all the perpetrators, therefore N = 196. ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use; n for females = 53; n for males = 32; These group of variables was measured for perpetrators who were in a relationship at the time of the study, therefore, N = 85.

Table 4.14*Gender Differences Between Victims Across Different Variables*

Variable	Female		Male		t	p	Df	CI		d
	M	SD	M	SD				LL	UL	
SOC	8.77	2.055	9.09	2.520	-.951	.343	198	-.970,	.339	0.139
PSP	23.35	4.699	22.71	5.767	.847	.398	198	-.854,	2.139	0.122
RS	21.56	5.800	23.74	5.446	-2.564	.011	198	-3.847,	-.502	0.388
NF	19.20	6.107	19.79	6.314	-.639	.523	198	-2.408,	1.229	0.095
Trust	21.72	5.436	21.01	6.026	.837	.404	198	-.956,	2.366	0.124
RF	12.97	3.229	12.31	3.192	1.376	.170	198	-.286,	1.608	0.206
PF	6.23	1.623	6.16	1.522	.276	.783	198	-.402,	.533	0.044
TPF	8.12	2.502	8.35	1.983	-.664	.508	198	-.920,	.457	0.102
SF	5.41	1.528	5.91	1.572	-2.183	.030	198	-.957,	-.048	0.323
MPT: A	26.49	6.017	24.46	6.458	2.200	.029	198	.211,	3.862	0.325
MPT: R	12.61	3.806	12.15	3.884	.802	.423	198	-.669,	1.587	0.120
D	23.94	5.474	24.68	5.150	-.920	.359	198	-2.317,	.843	0.139
ATI	22.65	6.102	23.52	6.634	-.601	.549	94	-3.754,	2.010	0.137
PBC	6.62	2.381	7.68	2.286	-1.934	.056	94	-2.149,	.028	0.454
SN	2.58	1.179	2.76	1.200	-.633	.509	94	-.729,	.364	0.151
ITI	15.04	6.228	14.84	6.128	.140	.889	94	-2.662,	3.066	0.032
SCG	38.52	7.077	40.04	8.576	-.872	.385	94	-4.977,	1.939	0.244
SCS	11.01	2.011	9.72	2.72	2.488	.015	94	.262,	2.327	0.442
LON	11.01	3.105	10.64	3.303	.510	.612	94	-1.084,	1.832	0.115
SM	15.93	4.764	14.48	4.900	1.299	.197	94	-.766,	3.666	0.300

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; RF = Relationship Factors; PF = Personal Factors; TPF = Third-Party Factors; SF = Situational Factors; MPT: A = Motivation Post Transgression: Avoidance; MPT: R = Motivation Post Transgression: Revenge; D = Distress; n for females = 132; n for males = 68; These initial variables were measured for all the victims, therefore N = 200. ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use; n for females = 71; n for males = 25; These group of variables was measured for victims who were in a relationship at the time of the study, therefore, N = 96

Table 4.14 presents the gender differences in victims for different variables in their relationship. Additionally, male victims ($M = 23.74$) were more satisfied in their relationships as compared to female victims ($M = 21.56$). While no gender differences were notable for the other factors of infidelity, in the case of situational factors, male victims ($M = 5.91$) more often than females ($M = 5.41$) believed it to be a likely reason leading to infidelity. Female victims ($M = 26.49$) were more likely to want to avoid their partner after being cheated on as compared to male victims ($M = 24.46$). Gender differences in the case of victims were not substantial except for self-control specific, where females ($M = 11.01$) scored higher in their ongoing relationship than male victims. ($M = 9.72$)

Table 4.15 provides the group differences in the variables between planned infidelity and spontaneous infidelity perpetrators. Since interaction effects were checked through MANOVA, this table and the upcoming tables report F values. It depicts that those involved in planned infidelity ($M = 10.04$) socialized more than those involved in spontaneous infidelity ($M = 8.90$). Interestingly, it was also found that planned infidelity perpetrators ($M = 25.20$) trusted their partners on whom they cheated significantly more as compared to the trust that spontaneous infidelity perpetrators ($M = 23.00$) had in their partners. It was also evident from the results that the spontaneous infidelity perpetrators ($M = 20.33$) felt significantly higher guilt than planned infidelity cheaters ($M = 16.84$). Results also show that there is a statistically significant difference in some variables for their present relationship. Perpetrators of planned infidelity ($M = 33.95$) scored higher as compared to spontaneous infidelity perpetrators ($M = 23.91$) in their attitude towards infidelity. Also, planned infidelity perpetrators ($M = 24.20$) scored significantly higher on intention towards infidelity than spontaneous infidelity perpetrators ($M = 16.72$) in their current relationship.

Table 4.15*Differences in Variables Among Perpetrators Due to the Infidelity Process*

Variables	Spontaneous			Planned			F	p	η^2
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
SOC	147	8.90	2.44	49	10.04	2.99	7.950	.005	.040
PSP	147	24.61	4.69	49	24.02	6.39	1.043	.308	.005
RS	147	23.22	5.43	49	21.88	6.79	.497	.482	.003
NF	147	18.58	7.37	49	17.90	7.33	.000	.998	.000
T	147	23.00	5.80	49	25.20	6.07	5.057	.026	.026
RF	147	12.26	3.64	49	13.22	3.03	.268	.605	.001
PF	147	5.61	1.594	49	5.69	1.884	.131	.718	.001
TPF	147	7.18	2.57	49	8.49	2.70	1.846	.176	.010
SF	147	6.13	1.40	49	5.78	1.86	.700	.404	.004
G	147	20.33	5.500	49	16.84	6.345	7.669	.006	.039
R	147	17.63	4.586	49	15.78	4.819	3.551	.061	.018
ATI	65	23.91	6.545	20	33.95	9.784	24.672	<.001	.236
PBC	65	7.72	2.798	20	9.00	2.865	3.756	.056	.045
SN	65	3.02	1.317	20	3.15	1.182	.216	.643	.003
ITI	65	16.72	8.200	20	24.20	8.180	9.804	.002	.110
SCG	65	36.75	6.636	20	37.00	8.516	.049	.825	.001
SCS	65	9.46	2.905	20	8.15	3.066	1.120	.293	.014
LON	65	11.43	2.675	20	11.50	3.317	.185	.668	.002
SM	65	17.17	5.346	20	19.45	6.074	2.312	.132	.028

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; RF = Relationship factors; PF = Personal Factors; TPF = Third-Party Factors; SF = Situational Factors; G= Guilt; R=Regret; These are measured for all the perpetrators, therefore, N = 196. ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use; These variables are measured for perpetrators who are in a relationship at the time of the study, therefore, N = 85.

Table 4.16*Differences in Variables Among Perpetrators Due to Infidelity Type*

Variable	Sexual			Emotional			Emotional-Sexual			F	p	η^2
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
SOC	96	9.46	2.82	60	9.20	2.54	40	8.50	2.12	2.447	.089	.025
PSP	96	24.37	5.24	60	24.72	4.46	40	24.28	6.00	.690	.503	.007
RS	96	23.82	5.60	60	21.87	5.88	40	22.15	5.96	.190	.827	.002
NF	96	19.33	7.07	60	16.78	7.33	40	18.63	7.81	1.181	.309	.012
T	96	23.22	6.23	60	24.12	5.51	40	23.50	5.90	.177	.838	.002
RF	96	11.29	3.84	60	13.67	2.97	40	13.65	2.32	1.992	.139	.021
PF	96	6.22	2.433	60	8.57	2.382	40	9.03	2.019	3.298	.039	.034
TPF	96	6.22a	2.43	60	8.57b	2.38	40	9.03b	2.02	15.453	<.001	.140
SF	96	6.10ab	1.24	60	5.58a	1.74	40	6.58b	1.65	5.306	.006	.053
G	96	21.29	4.505	60	17.82	6.910	40	17.50	6.021	.649	.524	.007
R	96	18.11	4.073	60	15.77	5.570	40	17.00	4.237	.638	.529	.007
ATI	36	24.36	7.392	27	27.04	9.905	22	28.45	8.128	0.13	.987	.000
PBC	36	8.11	3.050	27	7.37	2.339	22	8.68	3.030	1.853	.164	.045
SN	36	3.19	1.451	27	2.74	1.163	22	3.18	1.097	.582	.561	.015
ITI	36	14.56	6.421	27	20.48	8.220	22	22.45	10.280	2.419	.096	.058
SCG	36	36.89	7.222	27	37.93	5.622	22	35.32	8.357	.411	.665	.010
SCS	36	10.31 ^{ab}	2.926	27	8.93 ^{ab}	2.510	22	7.55 ^c	2.890	9.215	.000	.189
LON	36	11.50	2.926	27	11.56	2.577	22	11.23	2.975	.218	.805	.005
SM	36	16.78	5.519	27	19.70	5.143	22	16.77	5.765	.798	.454	.020

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; RF = Relationship Factors; PF = Personal Factors; TPF = Third-Party Factors; SF = Situational Factors; G= Guilt; R=Regret; N= 196
ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use; These variables are measured only for perpetrators who are in a relationship at the time of the study, therefore, N = 85.

As can be seen from Table 4.16, there are significant group differences between perpetrators of different infidelity types. Perpetrators of emotional-sexual infidelity significantly differed from those participating in sexual infidelity as they scored their infidelity as a likely result of personal factors and third-party factors. Perpetrators of emotional-sexual infidelity also reported situational factors as a likely reason for their infidelity in contrast to those engaged in emotional infidelity. Additionally, the significant interaction effect between the infidelity process and type of infidelity was statistically significant on the combined variables, $F(22, 360)$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .117$, Wilks' $\lambda = 2.160$. The interaction effect was significant for needs $F(2, 190) = 3.398$, $p = .035$, partial $\eta^2 = .035$, relationship factors $F(2, 190) = 4.049$, $p = 0.019$, partial $\eta^2 = .041$, personal factors $F(2, 190) = 5.009$, $p = 0.008$, partial $\eta^2 = .050$ and guilt $F(2, 190) = 3.873$, $p = 0.022$, partial $\eta^2 = .039$.

For the variables that were evaluated for perpetrators' current relationship it was found that there was a statistically significant interaction effect between the infidelity process and type of infidelity on the combined variables, $F(16, 144) = 2.306$, $p = .005$; Wilks' $\lambda = .634$. The interaction effect was significant on attitude towards infidelity $F(2, 79) = 3.537$, $p = .034$ and self-control specific $F(2, 79) = 3.761$, $p = .028$.

Table 4.17 and Table 4.18 provide the group differences for victims between different infidelity processes and infidelity types. Those who were victims of spontaneous infidelity scored higher on socialization and relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, victims of planned infidelity ($M = 26.75$) reported significantly higher avoidance motivation post-transgression as compared to those who were victims of spontaneous infidelity ($M = 24.41$). A statistically significant interaction effect between the infidelity process and type of infidelity was found on the combined

dependent variables, $F(24, 366) = 1.827$, $p = .011$; Wilks' $\lambda = .798$. There was a significant interaction effect between the infidelity process and type of infidelity on socialization $F(2, 194) = 5.424$, $p = .005$. There was no significant difference on any variable between victims of different types of infidelity.

Table 4.17

Differences in Variables Among Victims due to the Infidelity Process

Variable	Spontaneous			Planned			F	p	η^2
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
SOC	81	9.07	2.296	119	8.75	2.172	6.661	.011	.033
PSP	81	23.59	5.408	119	22.82	4.845	.618	.433	.003
RS	81	23.02	5.367	119	21.81	5.988	4.799	.030	.024
NF	81	20.19	5.940	119	18.87	6.289	3.776	.053	.019
T	81	21.99	5.481	119	21.13	5.740	1.358	.245	.007
RF	81	12.36	3.359	119	13.01	3.115	1.241	.267	.006
PF	81	6.11	1.581	119	6.27	1.593	.049	.824	.000
TPF	81	8.19	2.409	119	8.21	2.295	.315	.575	.002
SF	81	5.65	1.567	119	5.53	1.556	2.065	.152	.011
MPT: A	81	24.41	6.457	119	26.75	5.968	8.499	.004	.042
MPT: R	81	12.48	3.377	119	12.43	4.122	.479	.490	.002
D	81	24.09	5.464	119	24.26	5.318	.690	.407	.004

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; RF = Relationship factors; PF = Personal Factors; TPF = Third party factors; SF = Situational factors; MPT: A = Motivation post transgression: Avoidance; MPT: R = Motivation Post Transgression: Revenge; D = Distress.

Table 4.18*Differences in Variables Among Victims due to Infidelity Type*

Variable	Sexual			Emotional			Emotional-Sexual			F	p	η^2
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
SOC	27	9.15	2.583	102	8.91	2.256	71	8.73	2.042	1.026	.360	.010
PSP	27	24.48	5.338	102	23.02	5.111	71	22.77	4.929	1.077	.343	.011
RS	27	22.56	4.956	102	22.44	5.869	71	22.00	5.950	.187	.829	.002
NF	27	19.89	6.369	102	19.08	6.316	71	19.69	5.934	.619	.540	.006
T	27	23.19	6.800	102	21.71	5.612	71	20.51	5.059	2.339	.099	.024
RF	27	12.89	2.501	102	12.70	3.208	71	12.76	3.515	.082	.921	.001
PF	27	6.15	1.292	102	6.01	1.703	71	6.51	1.482	2.632	.074	.026
TPF	27	8.30	2.350	102	8.12	2.471	71	8.28	2.153	.462	.631	.005
SF	27	5.63	1.471	102	5.52	1.559	71	5.65	1.604	.404	.668	.004
MPT: A	27	26.56	6.664	102	25.16	6.080	71	26.44	6.355	.767	.466	.008
MPT: R	27	12.89	3.896	102	12.23	3.501	71	12.61	4.264	.716	.490	.007
D	27	24.11	5.886	102	23.37	5.321	71	25.39	5.064	2.736	.067	.027

Note: SOC = Socialization; PSP = Perceived Sense of Power; RS = Relationship Satisfaction; NF= Need Fulfilment; T = Trust; RF = Relationship Factors; PF = Personal Factors; TPF = Third party factors; SF = Situational Factors; MPT: A = Motivation Post Transgression: Avoidance; MPT: R = Motivation Post Transgression: Revenge; D = Distress.

Table 4.19 and Table 4.20 show the differences for victims due to the infidelity process and infidelity type for all the variables in their present relationship. There were no significant differences based on the process of infidelity. However, it was noted that sexual infidelity victims scored significantly higher on perceived behavioral control. No significant interaction effect of the infidelity process and type of infidelity was found.

Table 4.19*Differences in the Rest of the Variables Among Victims due to the Infidelity Process*

Variables	Spontaneous			Planned			F	p	η^2
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
ATI	34	23.53	4.273	62	22.52	7.073	.026	.873	.000
PBC	34	6.18	2.289	62	7.29	2.370	1.675	.199	.018
SN	34	2.65	1.178	62	2.61	1.192	.005	.946	.000
ITI	34	16.03	5.942	62	14.42	6.266	.436	.511	.005
SCG	34	40.09	7.077	62	38.27	7.670	1.042	.310	.011
SCS	34	10.82	2.007	62	10.60	2.453	.191	.663	.002
LON	34	11.18	2.316	62	10.77	3.527	.044	.833	.000
SM	34	16.53	4.620	62	15.02	4.874	1.507	.223	.016

Note: ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use;

Table 4.20*Differences in the rest of the Variables Among Victims due to Infidelity Type*

Variable	Sexual			Emotional			Emotional-Sexual			F	p	η^2
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
ATI	11	21.36	7.978	53	23.26	5.001	32	22.75a	7.418	.618	.541	.014
PBC	11	8.18	3.281	53	6.45	2.333	32	7.19	1.975	3.235	.044	.067
SN	11	3.09	1.300	53	2.47	1.170	32	2.72	1.143	1.078	.345	.023
ITI	11	17.18	7.012	53	14.49	5.079	32	15.06	7.444	.685	.507	.015
SCG	11	34.73	8.380	53	39.13	6.566	32	40.00	8.301	2.129	.125	.045
SCS	11	9.82	2.994	53	10.87	2.094	32	10.66	2.364	.815	.446	.018
LON	11	10.91	2.948	53	10.74	3.323	32	11.22	2.970	.019	.981	.000
SM	11	15.82	4.916	53	14.87	4.455	32	16.59	5.297	.529	.591	.012

Note: ATI = Attitude Towards Infidelity; PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; SN= Subjective Norm; ITI= Intention Towards Infidelity; SCG = Self-Control General; SCS= Self-Control Specific; LON= Loneliness; SM= Social Media Use.

Results provided in Table 4.21, show that there are significant differences in the perception of how infidelity happens based on the role of the participant.

Perpetrators were more likely to believe that their infidelity was spontaneous, while victims, on the other hand, felt they were a victim of planned infidelity.

Table 4.21

Chi-square for the Infidelity Process by the Role of the Participant

	Category	Overall	Spontaneous		Planned		X ²
		N	f	%	f	%	
Role	Perpetrator	196	147	75%	49	25%	48.236***
	Victim	200	81	40.5%	119	59.5%	

As shown by Table 4.22, the perception of the type of infidelity the participants experienced differed significantly based on their role in the infidelity experience. Perpetrators reported that most of them were involved in sexual infidelity, followed by emotional infidelity, and lastly by emotional-sexual infidelity. Whereas, victims reported they were mostly cheated by their partners through emotional infidelity, then emotional-sexual infidelity, and lastly by sexual infidelity.

Table 4.22

Chi-square for the Infidelity Type by the Role of the Participant

	Category	Overall	Sexual		Emotional		Emotional-Sexual		X ²
		N	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Role	Perpetrator	196	96	49%	60	30.6%	40	20.4%	58.219***
	Victim	200	27	13.5%	102	51%	71	35.5%	

The infidelity process that had emerged from the respondents' narratives was given to the participants in the survey study. Results provided in Table 4.23 show that female perpetrators report that their infidelity followed a sequence where they had risk factors present before they cheated mainly in the form of problems and dissatisfaction in the primary relationship, they get introduced to the alternative, they then start to get attracted to the alternative or form a bond and involve in an infidelity behavior which may be emotional, sexual or both. On the other hand, males who had cheated on their partners generally perceived that there were no prior risk factors, rather they were triggered into infidelity at that particular moment, where they came across an alternative, and certain situational triggers such as being drunk, led to their infidelity.

Table 4.23

Chi-square for the Sequence of Infidelity and Perpetrators' Gender

	Overall	1		2		3		4		X ²
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Female	99	34	34.3%	20	20.2%	18	18.2%	27	27.3%	18.824***
Male	97	15	15.5%	15	15.5%	12	12.4%	55	56.7%	

Note: N = 196; 1 = Risk factors- Entry of alternative – Bonding- Infidelity; 2 = Personal factors - Entry of alternative – Bonding- Infidelity; 3 = Entry of alternative – Dissatisfaction with the primary relationship and bonding with the alternative – Infidelity; 4 = Entry of alternative – Trigger – Infidelity

Results as provided in Table 4.24 also show that those who had chosen spontaneous infidelity as their infidelity process mostly agreed on the lack of predisposing factors in their process of how infidelity happened and were led by the entry of an alternative followed by triggers and their involvement in infidelity. While,

those who said their infidelity was of the category of planned infidelity as their own, reported that risk factors set the path for infidelity to occur along with the entry of the alternative and bonding with the alternative as an important sequence in the process of how infidelity takes place.

Table 4.24

Chi-square for the Sequence of Infidelity and Perpetrators' Infidelity Type

	Overall	1		2		3		4		X ²
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Spontaneous	147	27	18.4%	26	17.7%	19	12.9%	75	51.0%	24.388***
Planned	49	22	44.9%	9	18.4%	11	22.4%	7	14.3%	

Note: N = 196; 1 = Risk factors- Entry of alternative – Bonding- Infidelity; 2 = Personal factors - Entry of alternative – Bonding- Infidelity; 3 = Entry of alternative – Dissatisfaction with the primary relationship and bonding with the alternative – Infidelity; 4 = Entry of alternative – Trigger – Infidelity

Discussion

Infidelity is considered to be a severe and damaging transgression and yet it continues to be a prevalent challenge for people in romantic relationships. People's past experiences at times shape and influence their current and future behaviors. On a similar note, studies find that people with past experiences with infidelity view and understand infidelity differently depending on whether they were the involved partner or the non-involved partner (Moreno & Kahumoku-Fessler, 2018; Nagurney et al., 2019). Keeping this in mind, the results in the present chapter, presented the results separately for a few variables that measured their current relationship after the infidelity experience. Therefore, the results as discussed below are for the particular relationship when infidelity was experienced along with some variables that were

evaluated for their current relationship. A detailed discussion of the results will follow in the next chapter however a brief discussion has been provided below.

Results found that perpetrators of infidelity socialized much more during their relationship in comparison to the victims or those who were faithful. Interestingly, it was also seen that those involved in planned infidelity were the ones who socialized more than perpetrators of spontaneous infidelity. Frequently meeting up with friends and reference groups often bring about a certain influence on one's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Megens & Weerman 2012; Ragan 2014;) Therefore, it may be possible that one may have friends or acquaintances who hold positive beliefs about extradyadic behavior and those involved in infidelity frequently socialized and so, their own actions may also have been affected. Furthermore, socialization also brings opportunities to be involved with an alternative such as meeting new people and partying with old acquaintances or new ones.

Results in the study found that perpetrators perceived themselves to hold more power in their relationship when they cheated as compared to victims who scored lowest on the perceived sense of power. Feeling powerful evokes a sense of confidence and could result in sexual overperception (Gonzaga et al., 2008; Kunstman & Maner, 2011; Lammers et al., 2011) and perpetrators may have felt bold and confident enough to cheat on their partners. Studies also agree that the effect of power is such that it is associated with counter-normative behavior and may allow people to feel disinhibited (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky et al., 2003; Guinote, 2007; Keltner et al., 2003). It is however interesting that faithful people also perceived themselves to hold a lot of power. It could be expected therefore that feeling powerful by itself may not be enough however it could serve as a vital factor for those already influenced by other factors.

The present study findings also depict that those who maintained fidelity in their relationships were the most satisfied and cited having most of their needs met by their partners. Being satisfied and happy with their partners would be one reason why individuals would choose to be loyal (Emmers et al., 2010). Previous studies mention relationship dissatisfaction to be associated with infidelity (Zapien, 2016). The study found that while both the perpetrators and victims were significantly less satisfied than the fidelity group there was not much difference amongst the two groups themselves. It was however notable that gender was an influential factor. Despite their involvement in infidelity, male perpetrators were more satisfied in their relationship overall as compared to females who cheated. Males hardly partake in infidelity with a desire to end their relationships and start another (Wypler, 2016). Males, involved in infidelity therefore may not be dissatisfied or relationship dissatisfaction may not be the vital reason for them partaking in infidelity.

Another finding of the current study was the difference in the perspective of perpetrators, victims, and faithful ones. Those who had never experienced infidelity believed relationship factors, personal factors, and third-party factors were all reasons that made an individual more likely to cheat on their partners. The ones who had cheated, however, reported situational factors as the most likely reason that leads to infidelity. In fact, among the three groups, the perpetrators were the ones to believe that personal factors were the least likely to lead to infidelity. This in part could be because individuals are inclined to point their behavior to situational circumstances and credit the actions of others to dispositional features, more so when the actions are negative (Jones & Nisbett, 1987). While, victims, on the other hand, attributed personal factors and third-party factors as vital factors that lead to infidelity. The attribution of infidelity differs when it is other versus their involvement. A study

found that individuals were more likely to attribute their infidelity as innate, intentional, and controllable as compared to others' participation in infidelity (Thompson & O'Sullivan, 2017). The fidelity group believed relationship factors to be influential for people's involvement in infidelity while both perpetrators and victims in comparison, did not deem it to be an important reason that led to their infidelity experience.

Another finding is that individuals' role in experiences with infidelity i.e., whether they were cheaters themselves or on the receiving end of infidelity or have been a part of faithful relationships might influence their outlook and behavior in their current and future relationships as well. Results found that perpetrators held the most positive attitudes regarding infidelity, in fact, they also scored highest on perceived behavioral control and intention towards infidelity and had the least amount of self-control specifically towards infidelity behaviors. Those who were engaged in planned infidelity had more favorable attitudes and intentions toward infidelity. In line with cognitive dissonance theory, prior infidelity also predicts more accepting attitudes about infidelity, which is also what the study results showed (Foster & Misra, 2013; Jackman, 2015; Sharpe et al., 2013; Solstad & Mucic, 1999; Wiederman, 1997). Additionally, they also scored high on loneliness and used social media extensively. Victims, on the other hand, reported having a lot of self-control towards infidelity in their recent relationship as well and this in part could be due to their past experiences, as someone who has experienced the hurt after being cheated, they would view cheating even more negatively.

Another interesting finding was the significant role of gender and education in the type of infidelity. Males were found to be more involved in sexual infidelity whereas females were involved in emotional infidelity and emotional-sexual

infidelity. The findings were consistent with prior studies (Glass & Wright, 1985; McAlister et al., 2005; Martins et al., 2016). Those with higher education were involved in sexual infidelity, whereas those who had a graduation degree or less were engaged in emotional and emotional-sexual infidelity. (Atkins et al., Treas & Giesen, 2000; Martins et al., 2016)

Results showed there were some differences in the consequences of infidelity as well. Cheating on their partner in the heat of the moment and spontaneously without enough time to think leads to more guilt as compared to planned infidelity. A study that utilized hypothetical situations to study guilt described that more guilt was experienced in cases of unintentional infidelity and vice versa (Mongeau et al., 1994). Female victims as compared to males avoided their cheating partners more after the infidelity incident. The present study findings, together with the previous study have been discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

General Discussion

This study set out to better understand the phenomena of infidelity in a dating relationship. The thesis aimed to provide answers to questions, such as - 1) What factors explain an individual's involvement in infidelity? 2) Are there differences between different infidelity types? 3) What is the process of infidelity? 4) Is there a role of gender in various types of infidelity? 5) Are the consequences different for different infidelity instances? 6) Are there any significant differences in their present relationship between those who have experienced infidelity and those who have not? To provide answers to these questions, two studies were conducted by the researcher. A narrative inquiry was used for the first study, and a survey method was used for the second study. In the preceding two chapters, the findings of both studies have been provided along with a concise explanation. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the overall findings in detail as per the research questions.

Factors Contributing to Infidelity

An initial objective of this research was to evaluate factors associated with involvement in infidelity in a dating relationship. The narrative inquiry found reasons why people are involved in infidelity from the perspective of the perpetrators themselves. The survey study looked into a few additional variables along with the ones that were revealed from the narrative inquiry and investigated these among three groups – perpetrators of infidelity, victims of infidelity, and fidelity group (those who had never experienced infidelity directly, neither as victim nor as perpetrator) for a better comparative understanding. The study also evaluated if there were any differences among all these variables between perpetrators of spontaneous and planned infidelity.

The narrative inquiry discovered that people engaged in infidelity due to factors that were personal, relationship, situational, or third-party oriented. Dispositional or individual-related factors have been considered important in infidelity research (March et al., 2023; Jones & Weiser, 2014). The study finds that people's need for exploration is a reason why many cheat. Those with an inbuilt curiosity to explore more might wish to experiment with various sexual encounters, socialize with strangers, have fantasies, etc. Sensation-seeking was a common factor in people's reason for cheating (Yeniçeri & Kökdemir, 2006). Wanting to experience uncommon, intense, and varied experiences, has also been associated with infidelity (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011; Turchik & Garske, 2009). Studies reveal that people with higher sensation seeking also take sexual risks (Horvath et al., 2006; Newcomb et al., 2011). Lack of self-control is another important reason why people cheat. Individuals exhibiting inadequate self-control tendencies often participate in infidelity and other sexual practices (Love, 2006). Individuals with inherently low self-control and momentarily diminished self-regulation experience difficulties in restraining their sexual impulses (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007). Therefore, the findings of this investigation indicate a comparable result.

An interesting result of the study was that people also cheat when they are uncertain about their partner. Individuals often have a concept of how their partner and their perfect relationship should be – “the one” for them and they want to end up with “the one” meant for them. At times, they may also become unsure whether they have a future with their dating partners leading to marriage. This is unique and in contrast with the Western studies where dating is an experience in itself and it may or may not lead to marriage. Collectivistic cultures favor a practical approach to relationships (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). In the Indian scenario, marriages were

mostly carried out through families, and being in love was not a deciding factor. With changing times, many couples now, prioritize love as a factor before marriage however, certainty may still be vital to them. Dating is usually perceived as something that leads to marriage, mostly with parents' approval, and stability and predictability are valued. Uncertainty, be it due to themselves, their partner or the relationship may make them want to reduce it (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). It may be that, as a result of this, they end up cheating since they are not sure if their relationship will last with their current partners, and therefore attention shifts to more practical options.

Relational factors also serve as important reasons why people cheat and results obtained from both the studies assert this. The study finds that perpetrators of infidelity reported lower relationship satisfaction and low need fulfillment as compared to the fidelity group. Earlier studies confirm that being dissatisfied with the partner or the relationship as a whole is linked to involvement in infidelity (Mark et al., 2011; Silva et al., 2017). Not having their needs met by their committed partner is another reason why people cheat (Allen & Rhoades, 2008). This was an important finding of the present study as well, with perpetrators of infidelity reporting low need fulfillment as compared to the fidelity group. The deficit model (Thompson, 1983) could explain people's involvement in infidelity as a result of their primary relationship being deficient. It should be clarified that it may not always be necessary for a partner to satisfy all their needs. However, individuals may prioritize different needs at different times, for instance, some may be in relationships solely for emotional needs such as getting emotional support and companionship, while others may rank their sexual needs higher. Failure to have these needs met by the primary partner which is crucial for the individual may drive them to look for it outside as

found in previous studies as well (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Jeanfreau et al., 2014; Norona et al., 2018; Omarzu et al., 2012). Thus, the second hypothesis that had been provided stating that relationship satisfaction and need fulfillment would be higher in participants reporting fidelity as compared to participants reporting infidelity has been supported by the results.

Feeling neglected in the primary relationship and by their committed partners was also cited as a vital reason for involvement in infidelity. Infidelity is significantly influenced by neglect and inattention (Jeanfreau et al., 2014). Neglect is a significant concern according to Barta and Kiene's (2005) four-factor model of infidelity as well. Failure to have their needs met, individuals look for it elsewhere (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Jeanfreau et al., 2014; Norona et al., 2018; Omarzu et al., 2012). Apart from this, physical distance and relationship toxicity have a role to play in why people cheat. It is possible that being in different places or far away from their primary partners such as in long-distance dating relationships, individuals may experience loneliness and even engage in behaviors like drinking to cope with it (Waterman et al., 2017). This might cause relationship discontentment and increase the likelihood of infidelity by aggravating existing relationship problems. Infidelity may therefore have been a way for the perpetrators to escape from their toxic situation or forget their relationship problems for the moment (Scheeren et al., 2018). Drigotas et al. (1999), also used the investment model to explain infidelity in romantic partnerships. Following this model, people are more prone to cheat if they feel as though there is not enough effort, time, or money being put into their existing relationship (Drigotas et al., 1999), this could be one reason why infidelity becomes a common issue in a dating relationship.

Interestingly, people assume that “opposites attract”. However, in reality, being completely different may not be what keeps people happy after the initial phase of attraction passes. Being incompatible with their partners is a reason for cheating as revealed by the perpetrators themselves. Prior research has also connected infidelity and incompatibility (Haseli et al., 2019). This conclusion is also supported by the cognitive dissonance theory, which asserts incompatibility within partners is one of the most common causes of infidelity (Amato & Previti, 2003; Donovan & Jackson, 1990). Different religious beliefs, interests, life goals, cultural practices, sexual preferences, and communication styles can all contribute to incompatibilities and conflicts between partners (Rambuyon & Domondon, 2021; Ridley et al., 2001). These conflicts may lead to further problems in the relationship. An article in The Indian Express shared results of a survey that found a majority of young Indians considered two attributes i.e., compatibility and mutual interest as very important in their partners. Compatibility, including sexual aspects, is being prioritized (ET Bureau, 2021).

Revenge was also influential for people’s participation in infidelity since they wanted to get back at their primary partner for cheating on them first. Prior studies also mention this (Barta & Keine, 2005; Jeanfreau et al., 2014). In the present study, it was mostly a reason given by females involved in sexual infidelity. They mentioned that they wanted to punish their partner for cheating on them first and so cheating on them in return was their way of getting back at them. Revenge as a reason, was more prominent in sexual infidelity. Interestingly, March et al. (2023) in a recent study have used the terminology of romantic revenge and provided a term for it- malevolent infidelity. It is defined as an act of vengeance aimed at inflicting an emotional or reputational cost on one's primary romantic partner. This study also found gender was

an important factor in malevolent infidelity, with women being more likely than males to commit this type of infidelity (March et al., 2023). Our research results align with it, it was women participants in our study that mostly attributed their infidelity to revenge as a motive.

The findings in this study posit certain important factors are related to the alternative or third-party factors that also serve as reasons for why people cheat. Omarzu et al. (2012) point to infidelity as being motivated by wanting or desiring additional aspects (such as longing for more emotional closeness or falling in love). Walker and Brown (2013) identified motivating elements that either encourage or restrict persons from having an affair. Individuals who maintained fidelity needed to preserve security which served as the sole deterrent to having an affair. However, cheaters identified the "away motives" and "towards motives". This "towards motive" drew people to a desired circumstance that helped to draw them "away" from their already unsatisfied conditions with their spouses. This is the same pattern that people follow when they go towards "deviant sexual arousal" and "away" from circumstances where their sexual demands are not being satisfied (Marshall, 1989, 2010). Receiving attention could be more important for individuals in dating relationships because people date in search of affection, support, and care; Thus, it is likely that if these things aren't provided, there's a higher chance they'll go for them elsewhere. They may form a bond with the third party through close interaction, sharing of issues and their personal life situations, spending time together, and giving and getting support during difficult times, which will bring them even closer. Receiving special treatment and attention from a third party may increase their self-esteem or make them feel confident about themselves, in a way that validates their self-worth and thus helps these individuals rebuild their self and be more inclined

towards the cheating person. Third-party factors therefore become important reasons for why people cheat.

The study findings also point out the importance of contextual factors in advancing infidelity. One noteworthy discovery from the research was that participants also cited personal experiences and being under the influence of alcohol as reasons for their desire to cheat. Individuals become vulnerable when they go through emotional or stressful changes which may have an impact on the choices they make. People's propensity to engage in regrettable sexual behavior is influenced by their mood, both positively and negatively (Mark et al., 2011). Although mood and emotion are personal traits, they also rely on the situation and might serve as infidelity triggers in some cases. In line with this finding, alcohol and drugs have been found to lower inhibitions and promote risk-taking sexual behaviors such as infidelity (Norona et al., 2018). Romantic relationships are social structures and do not exist in isolation. As a result, external influences probably have a comparable impact on their functioning as do internal factors. As noted by Traeen and Stirum (1998) and Treas and Giesen (2000), some contextual factors can increase the likelihood of infidelity by, among other things, making alternative partners more accessible or making it easier to keep secrets from the primary partner. The study also points to a similar finding that having opportunities available to cheat proves to be a vital reason. Although relationship, personal, situational, and third-party factors have been described individually here, it is unlikely that participants would feel that distinction. Each of these factors therefore may have an impact on the others.

The study also found that infidelity perpetrators socialized much more frequently as compared to the victims and fidelity groups. Hanging out with friends and acquaintances frequently could be an easy way to come across alternatives as well

as become aware of options in the market. Studies also find social interactions with friends and valued close ones regularly can have an impact on a person's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Megens & Weerman 2012; Ragan 2014). The study further shows that perpetrators perceived that had more power in their relationships than victims in their respective relationships. When a person perceives themselves to be powerful would mean they feel they could manipulate their partners and can get away with behaviors that would otherwise be negatively viewed. This result largely backs the findings of earlier research in this field that links power with counter-normative behavior (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky et al., 2003; Guinote, 2007; Keltner et al., 2003). Feeling powerful also makes a person feel confident (Fast et al., 2012) and more likely to act out rather than just ponder over what they wish to do (Magee et al., 2007).

Interestingly, the fidelity group perceived themselves as having the most power. Additional studies find having power magnifies reactions that are consistent with a person's personality (Chen et al., 2001; Weick & Guinote, 2008). In another light, Overbeck and Droutman, (2013) assert that the self-anchoring aspect of power is such that the experience of power transforms people in ways that could be both negative and positive as well by bringing out a person's innate characteristics. In other words, if people are morally oriented, having power may help them make moral decisions. It could therefore be that power may not be the direct reason but it rather strengthens an individual's will to act in a certain way. So, an intention to be faithful or unfaithful may be influenced by a sense of how powerful they feel.

Planned and Spontaneous Infidelity

Differences in relationship satisfaction and need fulfillment were not significantly evident between planned infidelity and spontaneous infidelity. Therefore,

the third hypothesis stating relationship satisfaction and need fulfillment would be higher in spontaneous infidelity as compared to planned infidelity is not supported by the results. It could be that similar relationship problems may exist for both forms of infidelity. However, it is the presence of other factors that work in sync with it that give way to planned or spontaneous infidelity. Upon investigation, the present study also discovered that those who had been involved in planned infidelity socialized relatively more. It is possible that when an individual socializes and hangs out with different people they may come across more acceptance and liberal ideas regarding infidelity especially if the person is already dissatisfied, unhappy, or intends to cheat. It could also be that since planned infidelity requires some thought to it they may socialize more to be more aware of the alternative options around them.

Interestingly, another finding is that cheaters whose infidelity was spontaneous also trusted their partners less. A likely reason could be that their own experience of infidelity brings a sense of realization that in certain weak moments, infidelity can happen. It is possible that they attribute the same experience to their partners and therefore become distrustful of them as well. From the narratives, it was also evident that one major difference between planned and spontaneous infidelity was the presence of situational factors such as emotionally arousing events or intoxications that tempted the person into a heat-of-the-moment act which was more often not as impactful in cases of planned infidelity, while personal factors and relationship oriented aspects were mentioned as being vital when people involved in planned infidelity scenarios.

When we evaluate the perpetrators based on their infidelity process, we further find that the differences in attitudes and intentions are significantly different among planned infidelity cheaters and spontaneous infidelity cheaters. Those who perceived

their infidelity to be the result of a thought-out process had a more positive attitude and greater intentions towards infidelity. Wiederman (1997) points out that it is unclear if it is because they have cheated that they are more accepting of infidelity or if it is that they were more tolerant towards adultery and that is why they cheated on their relationships. Additionally, Hall and Fincham (2009) also believe that cheaters may modify their attitudes towards adultery to defend their infidelity. According to studies, attitudes frequently influence the desire to cheat (Buunk & Bakker, 1995; Drake & McCabe, 2000). It is possible, therefore, that under the enabling circumstances and with opportunities available, this leads to infidelity. The first hypothesis stating that participants taking part in planned infidelity would have more favorable attitudes and intentions toward infidelity in comparison to participants taking part in spontaneous infidelity is supported by the results.

Differences between Infidelity Types

Initially, the study expected to find reports of sexual and emotional infidelity since the demarcation between the two is clear. However, the narrative inquiry found participants involved in sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, and emotional-sexual infidelity. The participants also had a clear understanding with a fixed demarcation for what each of these meant. Therefore, in the second study, we used all three forms of infidelity.

An interesting finding of the study is that the type of infidelity people engaged in was a result of certain factors that they perceived played a vital role in their extradyadic involvement. These factors varied across the types of infidelity. The results from the narrative inquiry and the survey are slightly different here. Infidelity perpetrators after retrospection on their infidelity mentioned that it was the need for exploration along with sexual dissatisfaction that was an important reason for their

sexual infidelity. In addition to this, the need for revenge and being intoxicated were important points that were prevalent in sexual infidelity. Similarly, it was found that third-party factors such as neglect led them towards emotional infidelity but not situational factors. This was probably because, the care, attention, and love from the alternative served to be a crucial factor for their emotional infidelity.

Interestingly, those who were involved in infidelity that was both sexual and emotional accepted that their infidelity was because of a mix of many factors at play including personal, situational, third-party party, and relationship factors. Being in love with the alternative, self-worth validation, attraction, bonding, relationship dissatisfaction, relationship toxicity, physical distance, neglect, self-control, and life events were all vital reasons for being involved in emotional-sexual infidelity.

Results of the survey found that the perception of why people cheat was different depending on whether they were infidelity perpetrators, victims, or the fidelity group. Infidelity perpetrators compared to the other two groups marked the lowest on personal factors as a reason for their infidelity. This indicated that they did not believe that their personal characteristics could have been an aspect that led to their infidelity. On the other hand, they were the ones to score situational factors as the most likely reason for their infidelity. Infidelity committed by oneself is less likely to be attributed to dispositional, intentional, and controllable factors (Thompson & O'Sullivan, 2017).

Process of Infidelity

The findings from both the studies in this research showed that the process of infidelity varies depending on the infidelity instance. If the infidelity on the part of the perpetrator was in a fleeting moment of weakness, overcome by passion, and lack of consciousness or due to very little time to make any logical decision it could be

categorized as spontaneous infidelity. Individuals in these situations usually end up cheating after they meet someone in a triggering scenario. While these triggers could be drugs or heightened emotions such as after a big fight, etc., the interviewees in the study mostly mentioned being intoxicated after drinking alcohol. Allen et al. (2005) also showed the role of alcohol consumption in cheating activity. Infidelity has been common in parties and discotheques overflowing with liquor and other intoxicating substances. It is important to mention here that it does not mean that they are devoid of relationship problems or other factors, which may put them at risk of being involved. However, it is not what leads to infidelity at that moment. After coming back to their senses post-infidelity, they realize what has happened, and start to feel the emotional consequences instantly soon after. They may or may not tell their partners about this. A major reason for this could be that they didn't intend to cheat and so feared losing their partners over their one-time mistake. They may resolve the issue with their partner by continuing/ending the relationship and at times may become even more careful to prevent such incidents again in the future.

Instances of infidelity where individuals have time to think about their actions or make a logical decision have been considered planned infidelity and as such the process is slightly different from how infidelity takes place. Certain vital risk factors exist which could be personal factors, relationship-related factors, or both such as being dissatisfied with the sexual participation of the primary partner while having a desire to try out different fantasies. These risk by themselves may be harmless but what happens later provide the way for infidelity. They come across alternatives at this point who may be strangers but mostly are friends or acquaintances that they may be meeting again. They start to like the person more or an attraction develops and the comparison with the present relationship or partner starts. Our findings align with

Atwater's (1979) study, which underscores the importance of emotional and interpersonal connections or experiencing sexual attraction with alternative partners prior to involvement in infidelity before engaging in infidelity. They start to see their partner's shortcomings more clearly. Individuals may be aware of the problems in their relationship or their incompatibility with their partner, etc. but choose to ignore it. It is with the growing bonding or attraction towards the alternative and the decreasing satisfaction with their partner, that they start to compare and become aware of it. Research has identified that the interplay between dissatisfaction within the present relationship and the favorable attention bestowed by the affair partner constitutes a significant determinant in the manifestation of infidelity (Jeanfreau et al., 2014). They become involved with the alternative and then reflect on their actions post-infidelity and decide whether or not to tell their partners about their actions. They might come clean themselves or hide it or their partners may find out about it from somewhere else. The emotional consequences they feel such as guilt and regret are then resolved at times by ending the relationship, continuing and mending, and through self-justification of why they did what they did. Individuals experiencing relationship difficulties are more inclined to confess their unfaithfulness compared to those who are content (Selterman et al., 2021).

If the infidelity is disclosed, then both the partners in the primary relationship have a role to play in this last phase. Olson et al. (2002) find that after the infidelity is disclosed, the couple may experience a tumultuous period of intense emotions, which is then followed by a phase of contemplation where they attempt to comprehend the act of infidelity. Ultimately, they enter a phase focused on rebuilding trust. A joint decision regarding how they want to go forward is made. While these four processes were slightly different, however, several aspects were similar. Allen et al. (2005) in

his study has organized different domains together to portray the process of infidelity, and a few elements that emerged were similar to what the narratives discovered in the present study.

Consequences and Resolving

The aftereffects of infidelity differ for perpetrators and the victims of infidelity. Studies have found that cheaters go through decreased well-being, guilt, and shame and have a hard time forgiving themselves after cheating (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017). This research, found guilt and regret to be the two main experiences that individuals went through after cheating on their partners. While guilt and regret did not differ significantly depending on the type of infidelity, however, there were differences based on the infidelity process. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis stating that experience of guilt would be more prevalent in spontaneous infidelity as compared to planned infidelity was supported. Guilt was more for those who ended up cheating in a weak moment without much time to think, for instance, those who cheated at parties in a drunk state in comparison to planned cheating. This was found to be the case in both studies.

An interesting finding from the results of the qualitative study was that along with these two experiences, self-justification was done by cheaters, especially in the cases of planned infidelity. According to Walker and Brown's research (2012), faithful people perceive guilt as a very negative emotion that they want to avoid and this also prevents them from having an affair. Cheaters, on the other hand, are able to reduce guilt as well as empathy by downplaying the negative impact of their infidelity behavior and rationalizing their behavior (Olthof et al., 2000).

The majority of individuals perceive themselves as faithful and good people and infidelity typically contradicts their self-perception (Foster & Misra, 2013).

Following instances of hurting or betraying their partner, they employ excuses and minimization techniques to bridge the dissonance between their self-beliefs, values, and their actual behavior (Scott, 2018). Justification serves the purpose of rendering actions appear rational or logical (Warner, 2001). Given the emotional bonds and moral commitments inherent in committed partnerships, contradicting this might not feel right (Fishbane, 2023). Consequently, to alleviate cognitive dissonance, individuals justify hurtful acts as justifying becomes necessary when one's internal standards are betrayed (Knapp, 2015; Warner, 2001). Therefore, the justification could have been a means on the part of the perpetrator to reduce negative feelings. A notable point is that sexual infidelity was usually justified with sexual reasons such as the partner not being open enough to try out sexual fantasies, while emotional infidelity was defended by citing reasons such as lack of emotional support or being in love.

Interestingly, apart from the negative consequences of infidelity, the study found that there were also a few positive outcomes. These were positive in the sense that they benefitted the perpetrators and the relationship in some way. Feeling a sense of emotional independence and an increase in confidence were positive outcomes for the perpetrator, while one consequence that had a relational impact was the primary relationship becoming better than it was before infidelity. Few studies that have looked into people who were cheated have found that healing from infidelity and experiencing positive results can happen for victims (Laaser et al. 2017; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). O'Connor and Canevello (2019), similarly discovered that posttraumatic growth after infidelity happens through a process of deliberate rumination that helps them move forward and define their future partner preferences. We found slightly similar results in the case of perpetrators as well. Perpetrators'

infidelity experiences make them more aware; they start to feel less dependent on their primary partner to have their needs met and thus feel emotionally independent.

Gender and Infidelity

The study aimed to see if gender had any role to play in infidelity type and the process. A major finding of the study was that more men as compared to women participated in sexual infidelity, whereas women were more involved in emotional infidelity. Thus, the fifth hypothesis stating that emotional infidelity would be higher in females than males, while the prevalence of sexual infidelity would be higher in males as compared to females was accepted. The study findings are in line with previous studies from the literature (Glass & Wright, 1985; Mc Alister et al, 2005; Martins et al., 2016).

A noteworthy discovery from the present study was that women demonstrated greater participation in emotional-sexual infidelity as well when compared to men. The motivating factors underlying their infidelity may be different for both genders and this may also be why both genders may be more involved in certain infidelity types. Omarzu et al., (2012) in their study asserted that men mostly mentioned wanting to try out different sexual experiences as their motive for infidelity, while women said it was more of emotional support and connection for them. Research has highlighted this gender discrepancy wherein women are inclined towards emotional infidelity seeking an intimate bond or fulfilling the emotional void with their cheating partners, in contrast to men who predominantly engage in infidelity for sexual reasons (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Jeanfreau et al., 2014).

Female respondents in the qualitative study revealed that what started as an emotional affair slowly led to sexual involvement. It could be possible that the greater involvement of women in emotional-sexual infidelity could be because women prefer

engaging in sexual activity with at least some emotional participation (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). The social norms for women tend to be more conservative than for men. This is also very much the case in the Indian society. Extradyadic sexual behaviors while being in a committed partnership are looked down upon and morally judged, often more so than emotional extradyadic behavior. Therefore, people may not want to take it upon themselves. It could be a reason why men participate in sexual infidelity or at least report their sexual infidelity more freely than women. On the other hand, having an emotional side to justify their infidelity may make it seem slightly less judgmental and acceptable for women and this may explain more of their involvement in emotional and sexual-emotional infidelity.

Few studies believed that men were more likely to be involved in infidelity (Allen et al., 2008; Glass & Wright 1992) and that the gap between the sexes seems to be decreasing (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Burdette et al., 2007). It could be that since the definition of infidelity has become more inclusive and shifted from just sexual intercourse to a myriad set of behaviors, both genders are now aware and more accepting of their infidelity behavior. However, it is interesting to note that in Indian society, there is a disparity. While both genders may participate in it, it may still be the case that the gender ratio may differ for different types of infidelity. Extradyadic involvements that are purely sexual are more often indulged in by men while women also cheat but with an emotional side to it.

It was also the case that female victims were more motivated to avoid their transgressing partner as compared to male victims. This may be because how men and women deal with betrayal could be different. Men may show more aggressive tendencies to being betrayed while women may deal with emotional closure and avoidance. Similarly, those who believed they had been victims of planned cheating

also avoided their partners significantly more than those who were victims of spontaneous cheating.

Other Important Findings

The present study also came up with the finding that perpetrators of infidelity scored the highest for attitude towards infidelity, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, infidelity intentions, loneliness, and social media use. These factors may have contributed to being involved in infidelity or the other way around that people's experience with infidelity has impacted these later. According to some researchers, transgressors are more tolerant of infidelity than those who have been faithful (Tagler & Jeffers, 2013). Studies reveal that attitudes often predict intention towards infidelity (Buunk & Bakker, 1995; Drake & McCabe, 2000), while other scholars establish that the likelihood of infidelity increases when one becomes certain of their ability to attract alternatives (Lammers et al., 2011). Previous works find people more likely to commit infidelity if they perceive others would support it and would do the same if they had the chance (Banfield & McCabe, 2001; Buunk & Bakker, 1995; Drake & McCabe, 2000; Thompson, 1984). The findings of Birnbaum et al. (2021) suggest that people may take up social information by seeing others and this may serve as cues to what is considered appropriate. Just like other phenomena (such as obesity or divorce), people may also pick up infidelity through one's social ties. It is important to realize that even after being in situations where infidelity is common, people may not always cheat. However, these environments can provide the motivation required to resolve the ethical dissonance (Barkan et al., 2015) between upholding moral principles and giving in to temporary temptations in a way that encourages infidelity in case a person is already inclined to cheat or if opportunities are available (Birnbaum et al., 2021).

The sixth hypothesis stating that infidelity perpetrators would score higher on social media use than the fidelity group was accepted. The study results found social media use scores were noticeably higher for those who cheated along with loneliness scores. Loneliness was found to be positively associated with social media use. Probably, people who commit infidelity as a result of problems in their primary relationship may also turn to social media as a remedy. In a previous qualitative study, Scheeren and Apellániz (2018) found that participants considered engaging in adultery as a way to get away from their persistent issues. Utilizing social media, even without participation with a cheating partner has the potential to create conflicts in relationships (McDaniel et al., 2017). A seemingly casual social media friendship can evolve into more intimate interaction as well (Abbasi, & Alghamdi, 2017).

In a similar vein, using the Internet as a means of escaping from unsatisfying relationships has become convenient (Young, 1999). This may be one likely factor in the increased use of social media by those who commit infidelities. People may feel lonely despite being in relationships. Thus, it may also be possible that perpetrators cheat to alleviate feelings of loneliness. The role of loneliness has been influential in infidelity (Isanejad & Bagheri, 2018; Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015) also report that loneliness and infidelity have a positive relationship.

Another finding in this research that was found to be relevant in both the studies explaining infidelity is the factor of interpersonal trust. Participants mentioned a lack of interpersonal trust in their narratives, this was in most cases because their partners had initially cheated on them and their infidelity was a tit-for-tat response. This was also mostly the case for those participants who felt that their relationship had started to become toxic. The quantitative study also showed that both perpetrators and victims trusted their partners comparatively less than fidelity respondents.

Chapter 6

Conclusion, Limitations, and Implications

In the intricate tapestry of life, romantic relationships stand as a captivating and essential chapter. Within the realm of companionship, couples navigate challenges and struggles, forging a profound connection. During this phase, certain transgressions take place. Among them, infidelity is one such transgression that emerges as a poignant disruption, testing the resilience of both individuals and the intricate fabric of their shared bond. The present thesis explores infidelity in dating relationships among young Indian adults. The study aimed to understand the reasons for involvement in infidelity in a dating relationship. The study found personal factors, relationship factors, third-party factors, and situational factors, which usually worked together for people choosing to engage in infidelity. The personal factors that were found vital from the perpetrators' retrospective accounts were the need for exploration, uncertainty about the one, and lack of control. The study reveals a noteworthy finding that individuals tend to engage in cheating when uncertain about their relationship's future. Unlike Western perspectives, where dating may or may not lead to marriage, individuals in collectivistic cultures often view dating as a path to matrimony, emphasizing stability and predictability. The uncertainty about the longevity of their current relationship leads them to consider more practical options, contributing to a higher likelihood of cheating. The relationship factors that served as reasons for infidelity were dissatisfaction, sexual discontentment, relationship toxicity, physical distance, neglect, incompatibility, and revenge. The third-party factors related to the alternative that led to infidelity were love, self-worth validation,

bonding, and attraction. The identified situational factors were life events, triggers, and opportunities.

The study also explored the process of infidelity. It revealed the infidelity process varies depending on whether the infidelity instances are spontaneous, passionate acts that are carried out in the heat of the moment or whether they are infidelity behaviors that are planned and occur with some thought and in a time frame to make decisions. Spontaneous infidelity scenarios follow a process that have a trigger as the most important element. The guilt and regret are more intense and immediate. In the process of planned infidelity, risk factors that are relationship-related or due to personal aspects are prominent and serve as the starting point. Justification, along with the other consequences is a vital element in the planned infidelity process. Few other elements coincide among the processes but the major difference lies in how they start.

The study made a comparison between three groups – perpetrators of infidelity, victims of infidelity, and the ones who had never experienced infidelity in any form. This sought to assess the group differences for the relationship where infidelity occurred in variables such as socialization, relationship satisfaction, trust, and need fulfillment among various other variables based on their role in the infidelity experience. The study highlights that individuals involved in infidelity exhibit a significantly higher frequency of socialization compared to those in faithful relationships or those who have experienced infidelity as victims. The findings underscore the distinct socializing patterns of individuals engaged in infidelity, shedding light on the role of social networks in shaping relationship dynamics. Remarkably, the fidelity group perceived themselves as wielding the greatest power in their relationships. Overbeck and Droutman (2013) argue that the self-anchoring

nature of power transforms individuals, revealing both positive and negative facets of their innate characteristics. Consequently, it appears that power, as perceived by individuals, plays a role in shaping their commitment to fidelity or infidelity.

Perpetrators attributed their infidelity to situational factors more than the other two groups. It was also seen that the fidelity group was the most satisfied in their relationship and perceived their needs to be the most fulfilled in comparison. The study also checked if their experience with infidelity whether they were the cheaters or whether they were on the receiving end of cheating or had never experienced infidelity showed differences in their present relationship. It found that the role they played in their previous relationship about infidelity showed group differences in their existing relationship. Those who had been infidelity perpetrators held positive attitudes towards infidelity, higher perceived behavioral control towards infidelity behavior, higher infidelity intention, and more social media usage in their present relationship as compared to those who had been cheated or had never experienced infidelity.

The study further examined gender differences in infidelity. It was found that the participation of men was significantly more in cases of sexual infidelity, while women were more in cases of emotional and emotional-sexual infidelity. It was also noticed that women cited revenge as an important reason for their infidelity which was not the case for men. Additionally, it was also found that in general, the likelihood of cheating was increased for men. Further, the reasons were different with women giving more emotion-based reasons for their cheating while the motivation behind men's infidelity was emotional. Interestingly the study also discovered that with higher education, the likelihood of sexual infidelity was there, however those

with a graduation or less qualification there was more involvement in emotional or emotional-sexual infidelity.

In the study, guilt and regret were identified as the main emotions following cheating, with guilt being more prevalent in spontaneous infidelity compared to planned infidelity. Self-justification was common, especially in cases of planned infidelity, for rationalizing their behavior. A few unexpected positive outcomes for perpetrators include a sense of emotional independence and increased confidence, with some relationships also improving post-infidelity.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current work combines two sub-studies for a thorough understanding of infidelity, however, the generalizability of the results and the study itself has certain limitations which have been mentioned here and may be helpful for similar research in the future.

Due to the correlational nature of the current study and since it was conducted at a single point, it was not feasible to ascertain whether any of these variables cause infidelity. Future studies can be carried out using longitudinal studies to gain more insight over a longer period.

Given that the study's main objective was to include both cheaters and their victims as well as people who had never experienced infidelity in a relationship. Each of the infidelity types had a small and uneven number of participants. Therefore, the uneven distribution of respondent numbers between groups could have an impact on the pattern of results. Future research may focus on a particular type and then compare victims and perpetrators of that infidelity type.

An additional limitation is that the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic which limited the participants' participation. In addition, the study had to

rely on social media sites and groups to spread the word initially about the research being carried out, it could have restricted the number of interested candidates only to those who are technologically adept.

The participants had to choose their infidelity type and the process of how infidelity happened. The interpretation of participants could lead to some subjectivity on this. However, the researchers made an effort to overcome this drawback by defining what each infidelity type consists of along with the infidelity process. Future researchers can consider finding out from the participants how infidelity is defined by them and how they classify and differentiate among each infidelity type.

Being limited to respondents from Sikkim, the results from the present study may not apply to other parts of India, where cultural scenarios and dating scenarios may not be as open. A comparative study with participants from different states of India may be carried out.

A few variables such as religiosity and morality may affect how one perceives infidelity due to notions of right and wrong. This study did not take into consideration these two, however, it would be useful to incorporate this in future studies.

The data was collected only from people involved in opposite-gender relationships. People who are in same-gender relationships and cohabitating while dating may go through these experiences differently. This can be further studied in the future.

The first study in this research was limited to the infidelity perpetrators. The victim's experience has not been understood. Further studies can utilize both victims and perpetrators to understand their perspectives and infidelity experiences.

Finally, the data in the second study i.e., the survey, was collected from both the victims and perpetrators, however, it was not from couples but rather from

individuals. Therefore, it could not give a complete dyadic understanding. This can be corrected in the future, by taking couples in which one is the victim and the other is the perpetrator.

Implications

The main aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of infidelity and its associated factors and its process. The findings of this investigation complemented those of earlier studies. At the same time, this study also strengthens the idea that infidelity, in the dating relationship is not just a result of being unhappy in the primary relationship. Rather, it is the addition of other factors along with relationship satisfaction that led to participating in infidelity.

Since people sympathize with the victims and because cheating on a loved one is morally wrong, it can be difficult for the transgressor to share their emotional experiences. This creates a dilemma because they feel so ashamed of their actions. In some, it may also negatively affect their future relationships by creating a repetitive pattern. This study can assist in understanding the consequences that these perpetrators face. Counselors would also be better able to offer assistance and practical solutions to both the perpetrator and victim if they are aware of the factors contributing. This would help them maintain an impartial perspective rather than being influenced by moral judgments.

Understanding the process and reasons behind infidelity can enhance therapy approaches, fostering more effective interventions. It would be of help to identify and provide third-party assistance when individuals are still in the early stages of the infidelity process. The study findings can be used to develop targeted counseling therapies for planned and spontaneous infidelity aimed at providing help to couples or individuals who seek help. On an individual level, the study would aid in recognizing

the factors that contribute to infidelity, allowing individuals to address potential issues early, and fostering stronger bonds.

Conclusion

Most romantic partners are intolerant when it comes to extradyadic relationships and expect their partners to be committed to them completely. Despite this, individuals may engage in infidelity, endangering the relationship as well as sabotaging both personal and partner's wellbeing. The present study looked into the reasons and how it happened. The self-reported reason why people commit infidelity in dating can be broadly categorized into four factors – personal factors, relationship factors, third-party factors, and situational factors. Though the results mostly show similarities between the reasons for infidelity in marriage and dating, however, it is found that few factors are more common and plausible in the case of dating. The analysis also found that there is a difference as to which of these factors leads to emotional infidelity, sexual infidelity, and emotional-sexual infidelity. While, sexual reasons, the desire to explore, and triggers were found to be the most reported causes of sexual infidelity, reasons like relationship toxicity and lack of surety mostly led to instances of emotional infidelity. Finally, emotional-sexual infidelity was carried out due to myriad reasons involving individuals being in love, attraction, and bonding with the third partner and receiving support, dissatisfaction, toxic relationship, distance, neglect, low self-control, and the emotional state during the time.

Results, although, shows a general pattern of how the different process of infidelity unfolds but the major difference in the process arises due to the nature of the infidelity depending on whether it is something that can be categorized as spontaneous or planned. While there is the notion that infidelity has adverse effects on the relationship and may lead to problems between the couples, it was noticed from

the present study that existing problems between the couples and in the relationship may themselves be the first step towards infidelity rather than being just the end product. Individuals after engaging in infidelity might exit or continue the primary relationship but the weight of the decision rests on the state of the relationship, the partner's willingness to forgive them, and the reason why they committed infidelity in the first place.

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APPENDIX

Information and Consent Form

Dear Participant,

I am Parvati Varma, pursuing PhD from Sikkim University, Gangtok. The title of my Ph.D. Research is “Cheating in Dating: Examining the Nature and Process of Infidelity in Dating Relationships”. I am collecting data from the individuals who have/are dating. The aim of my study is to know - How infidelity is looked upon by society? What factors play a role in individuals engaging in the process of infidelity? What are its different types and how do individuals resolve it, etc.? With this survey, we are looking for the answers to these questions. The study includes questions related to satisfaction in relationships, consequences of infidelity, attitudes toward infidelity, etc.

The information taken during the study will be used purely for academic purposes and the information provided by the participants will be kept confidential. I therefore request you to kindly participate in the study and help me in my research. Before you give your consent, I would request you to kindly read your rights as a participant.

As a participant in this study, you have the right to

- Take time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the researcher.
- Refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
- Not answer any question, which you don't want to answer or are not comfortable with.
- Know what the study is trying to find out and what you will be asked to do if you are participating in the study.
- Know who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
- Know the results of the study, if interested.
- Receive a copy of the consent form that you will sign if required.
- Ask any questions you may have regarding the study from the researcher if needed.

I would request you to complete the survey in its entirety and to provide your genuine and honest response to every question.

Informed consent: As a participant, you have the right to have read and understood the description of this research project. On this basis, I agree to take part. I understand that my participation in this study is anonymous. I consent to the publication of the grouped results of my responses on the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time.

Would you like to participate in the survey? Yes _____ No_____

Signature

Date:

Personal Information

Name (OPTIONAL):

Email address:

Age:

Gender (Please tick): Male _____ Female _____ Other _____

Educational Qualification (Please tick): _____ Matriculation,
 _____ Senior Secondary,
 _____ Graduation,
 _____ Post Graduation,
 _____ PhD or Post Doctorate

Locality (Please tick): Urban _____ Rural _____

Are you currently in any relationship? Yes _____ No _____

	Not at all	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
How often do you hang out with friends?					
How often do you go to movies, parties, trips, office events, etc.?					
How often do you participate in socialization activities?					

Section A

The details for most of the scales provided below are omitted considering the copyright constraints. The scales were however given as such.

A1: Attitude towards infidelity scale by Whatley (2006).

A2: To measure perceived behavioral control and subjective norms, the items are given below along with the instructions

Please read each statement carefully, and respond by using the following 5-point scale:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can easily hide my affairs from my partner.					
If I want, I can attract anyone towards me.					
If I try, I can easily make others fall for me.					
Most people close to me do not think infidelity is wrong.					
People who are important to me care about being loyal to their partners.					
Most people whose opinion matters to me, would not abandon me for my unfaithfulness.					

A3: *Intentions towards infidelity scale by Jones et al (2010).*

A4: *Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998).*

A5: *To measure self-control, the brief self-control scale (Tangney, et al., 2004) was used, along with three self-made items.*

A6: *The UCLA loneliness scale (Russell et al., 1978).*

A7: *The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS), developed by Andreassen et al (2012) was adapted.*

Section B

B1: Have you ever cheated on your partner or have been cheated on by your partner?

Yes _____

No _____

B2: Please specify which was it (Tick Any One)

I have cheated _____ My partner cheated on me _____

Both (I have been cheated and I have also cheated on others) _____

B3: Please specify the nature of cheating (Tick any one):

Emotional Cheating (It consisted of only emotional bonding and attachment) _

Sexual Cheating (It consisted of only sexual and physical intimacy) ____

Emotional–Sexual (It had both sexual as well as emotional components/ Mix of both) ____

B4: According to you, which of these better explains how it happened? It was

Spontaneous/In the spur of the moment ____

Planned/Had time to think about it ____

B5: What was the consequence of it?

1. We broke up.
2. We continued the relationship for a short time after the cheating incident.
3. We are still together.

Duration of relationship with that partner (In months) _____

How long did the affair with the other person continue? _____

Section C

C1: Relationship Assessment Scale by Hendrick et al. (1988)

C2: Rate the extent to which the committed partner at that time was able to fulfil each of these needs, on a scale of 0 to 6.

Needs	0 Not at all fulfilled by my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6 Completely fulfilled by my partner
Companionship Needs							
Sexual Needs							
Emotional Involvement Needs							
Security Needs							
Intimacy Needs							

C3: The Trust in Interpersonal Relationships scale by Larzelere and Huston, (1980)

C4: Personal sense of power scale by Anderson et al. (2012)

Section D

D1: There are many reasons that people express for their infidelity, some of them are given below. Please think of your committed relationship with your partner and tell how much these reasons were responsible for your/partner's infidelity. Answer the following questions on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 = not likely; 2 = somewhat likely and 3 = very likely)

	1	2	3
Relationship toxicity (e.g. lies, abuse, excessive anger, distrust, jealousy, fights, etc.)			
Relationship dissatisfaction (unfulfilled need(s) or unsatisfied as a whole with their relationship)			
Sexual discontentment (not being satisfied with the intensity and frequency of the sexual relationship)			
Physical distance (being in different places or moving to different places and having a distance relationship)			
Being neglected (e.g. missing the lack of attention, support, time, or appreciation that individuals expect from a relationship)			
Incompatibility (differences amongst each other's characteristics in terms of likes, dislikes, preferences, personal nature, and values)			
Revenge (to get back at their partners for cheating them in the first place)			
Need for exploration (e.g. seeking varied experience, trying new things, discover more, widen the horizon)			
Lack of self-control			
Lack of surety (feeling unsure about the relationship, the future of the relationship, or about the partner)			
Attraction (feeling attracted because of physical characteristics and nature in general, such as the attractiveness, sexual appeal, or personal characteristics of the other person)			
Self-Worth validation (felt important, attended and seen because of the other person)			
Bonding (formation of a bond, feeling of closeness, and intimacy between you and the alternative)			
Love (started having a feeling or loving the alternative)			

Life event (instances or events that were happening in your life that make made you vulnerable and more susceptible to commit infidelity)			
Trigger (any event, situation, or reason that pushes the individual to take the final step towards infidelity, e.g. alcohol, environment)			
Opportunity (coming across an opportunity for infidelity or the alternative serving as a distraction and being a simple case of availability at the correct time)			

D2: Infidelity generally happens in the form of a process. Think of the instance when infidelity happened and mark which sequence did it follow.

_____ a. I was dissatisfied with my partner/relationship. b. The third person came into my life. c. We started bonding and grew close. d. I cheated, sexually or emotionally, or both.

_____ a. The third person came to my life. b. I get influenced by alcohol/location/weed/ other intoxicants. c. I cheated, sexually or emotionally or both.

_____ a. I met the third person. b. I was dissatisfied with my partner/relationship and on the other hand, I had developed a bond with the third person. C. The individual cheats on the partner sexually, emotionally, or both.

_____ a. I had the desire to explore/attachment issues/ other personal factors. b. Then I came across the third person. c. We started bonding and grew close. d. I cheated, sexually or emotionally, or both.

D3: State shame and guilt scale by Marschall et al. (1994)

D4: Decision regret scale (Brehaut et al., 2003)

D5: Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) by McCullough et al. (2006)

D6: Breakup Distress scale (Field et al., 2009)

Section E

E1: How common is infidelity in present society? (Please tick)

Very Rare _____ Rare _____ Occasional _____

Frequent _____ Very Frequent _____

E2: Many individuals and relationships suffer due to cheating incidents, according to you, what can a couple do to prevent such incidents in their relationship?

Thank you for your participation

Why Did I Cheat on My Partner? Mapping the Motives of Infidelity in Dating Relationships Through the Perpetrators

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Abstract

Despite having an easy option to end the relationship and start a new one, many individuals betray their dating partner. In order to understand why, the present study explored the reasons for infidelity in dating relationships. Forty heterosexual adult participants (21 males and 19 females; $M_{age} = 27.15$) who had themselves engaged in infidelity participated in the study. The participants were recruited through the snowball sampling method. The study followed narrative methodology, where the perpetrators themselves narrated their cheating stories. The content analysis of narratives was done using Quirkos software. The findings reported numerous motivational factors contributing to infidelity in dating, which were clubbed into four factors: personal, relationship, third-party, and situational factors. Though many motives of infidelity in dating are similar to married individuals, only certain aspects are specific to a dating relationship, such as uncertainty about 'the one' revenge. The study not only shows the importance of personal, situational, and relationship factors but also stresses on third-party-factors, like love, attraction. The results show these reasons/factors may present alone to make individuals cheat or could present in combination or even in sequence. The results of the study can be useful in understanding and helping the dating couples going through such issues.

Keywords

infidelity, dating infidelity, romantic cheating, reasons for infidelity, third-party factor

Infidelity has been a prevalent feature in literature and art well before our modern period. There are different views about what the word infidelity entails, ranging from simple acts such as petting and kissing to having sexual intercourse at the most (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). What would be seen as an act of infidelity relies on the form of partnership between individuals, however, most scholars commonly believe infidelity is a hidden and forbidden relationship that violates the agreement that no one other than their partner meets the needs of an individual (Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Mao & Raguram, 2009). Incidence of infidelity contributed to the insight that there are certain prevalent factors for why infidelity happens in exclusive relationships. Most studies support the notion of individuals engaging in infidelity when something is lacking in their primary partnership (Glass & Wright, 1985). However, contradictory findings (Thompson, 1983) have shown that just 25% of the variation in infidelity was attributed to the features in primary partnerships, thus, relationship satisfaction tends to be a major criterion for infidelity only for just certain pairs. Understanding infidelity through its root causes and therefore curbing it could significantly improve individuals' overall well-being as a result of positive relationships. Having a clear view of the factors influencing a person's decision to take part in

extradyadic relationships would mean a logical comprehension of infidelity which would be otherwise seen as just an immoral act. Therefore, the question remains as to what factors are vital for people to indulge in alternative options outside of their dating relationship.

Motivational Factors for Infidelity

Glass and Wright's study (1992) was among the first to explore motivational factors that led to infidelity and described four basic categories that prompted a person—sexual factors, emotional intimacy, love, and extrinsic factors. Many previous studies have also regarded individual or dispositional factors as vital to understanding infidelity as well as that personal

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factors can serve as an important predictor of the attitude they have towards infidelity serving as the motivational factor for participating in infidelity (Allen et al., 2008; Isma & Turnip, 2019). Features such as an individual's liberal political and religious views (Hackathorn et al., 2011), self-regulation (Ciarocco et al., 2012), and personality characteristics (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008) have all been linked to infidelity. Sociosexual orientation was also found to be linked to infidelity as a result of individuals preferring varied sexual experiences (Weiser et al., 2018). Research in the sexual domain has also shown that individuals with dispositional low self-control have a greater tendency to engage in a variety of sexual behaviors one of them being infidelity (Love, 2006). Research has also shown that men seem to be more frequently engaging in infidelity as compared to women (Allen et al., 2008).

While other studies, since then, have looked into infidelity and found relationship factors as equally vital since a primary reason for people's involvement in infidelity has to do with their primary partners and/or relationships (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Norona et al., 2018; Omarzu et al., 2012). Dissatisfaction and problems in the primary relationship were found to be associated with extradyadic relationships (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). Likewise, models such as the four-factor model for infidelity presented by Barta and Kiene (2005), accept dissatisfaction, neglect, sex, and anger as reasons to explain why people participate in infidelity. Physical proximity between partners can also play an important role in fueling the act of infidelity, for example, couples who live separately have more opportunities to find potential alternatives and therefore, are more likely to have secondary sex partners (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). While another study with female participants (Jeanfreau et al., 2014) looked into their involvement in an extramarital affair and found that the absence of spending quality time and attention were both influential in their participation with a third person. Moreover, a person who learns about their partner's infidelity might respond with tit-for-tat infidelity behaviors and may be motivated to indulge in infidelity due to anger at their partner's actions (Hackathorn & Ashdown, 2021).

Apart from the relationship factors, individuals may also gravitate towards infidelity on the basis of certain factors that are attributable to the cheating partner. Omarzu et al. (2012) for instance when looking into general categories of motivation for engaging in an extramarital relationship, came up with eight categories of motivation. The categories indicate that it might not always be a deficit in their primary relationship but also wanting or desiring additional aspects that motivated an individual towards forming extradyadic relationships, such as desiring additional emotional connection and falling in love with the third person.

Contextual or situational factors are also the prime reason for individuals' contribution to infidelity. The opportunity has been mentioned as being an important factor that leads to a likelihood of extradyadic involvement (Buunk, 1980). Such as a place to socialize outside the company, can very well provide an

opportunity for infidelity (Lawson, 1988). Additionally, opportunities in the form of potential partners, or circumstances assuring confidentiality can facilitate extramarital sex if their partner cannot find out (Greeley, 1991). Giddens meanwhile (1992) emphasizes alcohol-impaired judgment and sexual addiction as the irrational causes of everyday accounts of extramarital sex. Contextual influences (stress for example relationship qualities such as communication and adjustment) along with intrapersonal factors (such as mental health and religiosity) might function together to maximize the risk of infidelity (Allen et al., 2008).

Present Study

A fundamental requisite of most romantic relationships is exclusivity and the expectation that nearly all emotional and physical requirements would be met solely by their relationship partner, despite this known detail, people still choose to get involved outside their relationships. Studies have reported that infidelity is prevalent among dating couples (Allen & Baucom, 2004; Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2018), in fact, studies hint that the prevalence of infidelity may be even higher in dating relationships (Allen & Baucom, 2006; Hall & Fincham, 2009). This is somewhat worrying, given the negative effects of infidelity impacting both the betrayed partner and the perpetrator as well as their relationship (Hall & Fincham, 2009; Warach & Josephs, 2021).

It is during the period of dating that the individual learns more about how to behave in romantic relationships. In some ways, dating has been perceived to be training for marriage, and the groundwork for many behavioral tendencies that may be shown later in marriage may be set during this time. Roscoe et al. (1988) and Thompson (1984) also pointed out that the reasons for unfaithfulness and the dating relationship patterns are very similar to married people. Drigotas et al. (1999) also stated that individuals could carry over infidelity in their marriages in the future from infidelity in dating relationships. Therefore, a proper understanding of infidelity by looking at the various reasons that drive a person towards infidelity is necessary, especially from the perspective of the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, Blow and Hartnett's (2005) methodological review study on infidelity in committed relationships talked about a lack of diversity in the literature and found out that most studies are restricted to married people and potential studies are required which would include coexistence, dating, homosexuals, etc. Drigotas et al. (1999) similarly noted that previous studies ignore the existence of infidelity among dating couples by putting much of their focus only on married couples. Also, researchers such as Berscheid et al. (1971) and Murstein (1972) discussed the differences between marriage and dating relationships. The very basic difference between marriage and dating relationships lies in their seriousness (Murstein, 1972). While a dating relationship is an initial stage, marriage comes much later. The interpersonal attraction in the initial stage is guided more by physical

attributes. It is only when people seek a serious relationship (marriage) that they start focusing on other important attributes of their partner other than physical beauty (Murstein, 1972). Moreover, the ending or exit option in dating is less complicated, despite that many people get romantically involved with others before ending their present dating relationship. Clearly, marriage and dating relationships are quite different and this aspect is taken into care by the present study by investigating infidelity with the use of individuals in dating relationships. Therefore, the present study aims to analyze the different factors leading to infidelity among the dating population.

Methodology

The present study is a narrative inquiry to look into the reasons for infidelity. For the purpose of this study, infidelity is referred to as “engaging in any form of emotional or sexual behavior outside the primary relationship which would be considered as crossing the boundaries.” Moreover, a dating relationship is “an established relationship between two mutually consenting individuals wherein it is understood that the two of them are committed and seeing each other romantically.”

Participants

For the study, a total of 40 participants (21 males and 19 females) between the age of 18 and 36 years were taken with the average age being 27.15 years. Participants were from India and were involved in infidelity in their heterosexual relationships. The data was collected between October 2020 and January 2021. The snowball sampling was used wherein the first few participants were identified through the researcher’s personal contact and then participants’ contacts were used to get further participants. The selection criteria for the participants entailed that (a) the participants should be themselves the perpetrator of infidelity and (b) the individuals should have been in a committed relationship for a minimum of 6 months during the time of their infidelity incident. Ethical approval for the study was taken from the ethical review board. Informed consent was taken from each participant for the data collection, recording, and data use for research purposes and publications.

Narrative Interview

The narratives of the cheating incidents were collected through the interview method. Storytelling comes naturally as we use it to make sense of important incidents in our lives (Adler et al., 2016; McAdams, 2001). Therefore, the use of narratives for studying infidelity was chosen since it provides detailed and in-depth first-hand data. Telephonic interviews were preferred for data collection in this study for two reasons. Firstly, many researchers have noted that for sensitive/personal topics, a telephonic conversation could be a better option than an in-person interview since a person feel less conscious in the physical absence of the interviewer. Secondly, due to the ongoing

pandemic, for safety as well as for the purpose of feasibility, the telephonic interview was chosen over the traditional interview method. Although the interview was unstructured, there were still a few guiding questions around which the whole narrative investigation was focused. Some of the key questions were as follows—Can you tell me the instance where you got involved with someone else while being in a committed relationship? How did that happen? How was your relationship with the committed partner at that time? What led you to involve with another person, etc.? Based on their responses, probes were used, if and when required.

Procedure

Prior permission was taken from the participants after an explanation of the purpose of the study. A convenient time and date were fixed for the telephonic interview. The interviews were taken in Nepali, English, and Hindi languages as per the convenience of the participant. Initial rapport was built with the participants to provide them with a sense of confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed about the interview and their rights during the interview. The informed consent was taken verbally and recorded in the recorder. Once they felt comfortable about talking, the questions were asked about their relationship and the infidelity experience. They were further probed as per their answers and the requirement of the study. In the end, to bring the participants at ease and to their relaxed state, a few additional questions such as the occurrence of infidelity in present society, their perception of infidelity, and their present relationship, were asked, however, these were not included in the analysis. The interviews durations were around 30–35 minutes on average. For recording the data, a recording app was used on the mobile phone, and prior permission from the participant was taken for this regard before starting the interview. In the end, participants were thanked for their participation, however, they did not receive any monetary or non-monetary compensation for their participation.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Quirkos 2.4.1. The interview recordings were transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts were then imported into the software. Then, the thematic analysis of the Interview was carried out, wherein the transcript was read and then re-read to derive codes. These codes were then grouped together under certain themes on the basis of their similarities and what themes they represented and then themes were clubbed into major factors according to their nature. The reliability of the codes was then evaluated by a second independent rater. Cohen’s Kappa analysis was used for calculating the intercoder reliability, which was found to be 0.866, while, the percentage agreement between the two coders’ coding was 95.114%.

Table 1. Factors, Reasons, and Their Brief Description.

Factors	Reasons	Description
Personal factors	Need for exploration	Need to seek out varied experiences, try out new things, discover more, and widen one's horizons. This is inclusive of both sexual and emotional exploration.
	Uncertainty about 'the one'	Feeling unsure about the future of the relationship despite being committed to the primary partner. This also involves not being able to decide between choices or choosing and sticking to one choice.
	Lack of control	Lack of relational self-control in the individual or losing control when meeting an attractive third-party.
Relationship factors	Dissatisfaction	Not being satisfied with their relationship as a whole or with their partner and/or dissatisfaction in certain arenas.
	Sexual discontentment	Refers to the lack of sexual fulfillment and sexual dissatisfaction due to reasons such as sexual illness, lack of experience, etc. It also implies not being content with the intensity and frequency of the sexual relationship between committed partners.
	Relationship toxicity	A pattern of unhealthy relationship behaviors between committed partners inclusive of regular lies, abuse, excessive anger, distrust, jealousy, and fights.
	Physical distance	Being in different places or moving to different places and having a long-distance relationship between the committed partners.
	Neglect	A sense of being neglected and ignored arises due to a lack of attention, support, time, or appreciation that individuals expect from a relationship. Committed partners may miss out on things that matter to the individual. A feeling of being taken for granted or not special anymore.
	Incompatibility Revenge	Differences between partners in terms of likes, dislikes, preferences, personal nature, values, etc. Wanting to get back at their partners for cheating on them in the first place.
Third-party factors	Love	Refers to instances where the individual mentions falling in love or still being in love with the involved person.
	Self-worth validation	Third-party treats the individual as important and considers what they feel and makes them feel attended, noticed, and special. It occurs mainly with those, whose self was damaged in their primary relationship and a third person's behavior helps in repairing the damaged self.
	Bonding	Formation of a bond, feeling of closeness, and intimacy between the individual and the alternative. Getting close over time due to common interests, hobbies, worldviews, values, etc.
	Attraction	Being attracted to the alternative due to their physical characteristics and/or their nature in general. In contrast to bonding, attraction towards someone is a faster and short-lived situation and not depended on the support/care they receive from the third person.
Situational factors	Life events	Instances or events that were happening in the lives of the individuals that put them in a bad state of mind and made them vulnerable and susceptible to committing infidelity.
	Triggers	Refers to any event, situation, or reason that pushes the individual to take the final step towards infidelity such as being intoxicated.
	Opportunity	Coming across an opportunity for infidelity or the alternative serving as a distraction and being a simple case of availability at the correct time.

Results

The data analysis of the participants' narratives has shown many reasons for their betrayal, varying from their personal traits to situational factors. Based on the nature of those reasons, we have clubbed them into four broad factors, namely—personal factors, relationship factors, third-party factors, and situational factors. Each of these factors may present alone or occur simultaneously with others to let a partner involve in infidelity. In the following section, factors along with their reason are examined in detail (a brief description is given in Table 1).

Personal Factors

Personal factors refer to those factors that are inherent in the individual such as personal qualities of the individual as well as factors that affect the primary individual directly involved

in infidelity such as losing self-control. Personal or dispositional factors may directly influence a person's participation in infidelity for example due to their sexual interests, or may indirectly by making the person more susceptible when under favorable certain situations. Personal factors in the current study comprise of need for exploration, lack of surety, and lack of control.

Need for Exploration. It refers to an individual's need to seek out varied experiences, try out new things, discover more, and widen his/ her horizons. This is inclusive of exploration both in sexual terms as well as emotionally seeking out in a platonic way. For instance, a male participant of 28 years, mentions he likes exploring and has been intimate with one of his exes. He says "*So, yeah, in the current relationship I am, I am giving my hundred percent to her, and I love her with all of my heart. So, the other person who I would say I am involved with is one of my ex-partners, she's in Sikkim only right now,*

she's married but when we meet, we kind of like to sleep together, at least like the last couple of times. It's nothing serious, it's just like no strings attached to sleeping together. She is okay with it and so I am, it is mutually consenting. Not like I am in love or something, it's just that I am open to these ideas and like exploring." This shows that it is not always problems in the relationship leading to infidelity but also personal nature wherein happily committed people also enjoy being involved with secondary partners to satisfy their urge for exploration.

Uncertainty about 'The One'. This category refers to feeling unsure despite being committed to the primary partner and the future of the relationship. When people do not feel confident or sure that their partner is the right person for them or 'the one', they sometimes prefer to explore more to be sure. This category also involves not being able to decide between alternative choices or choose and stick to one choice. For example, a male of 34 years, who had been involved in emotional infidelity shares "People have got different temperaments. I like someone, they have some qualities, I like someone else, they have got some other qualities, so it is like indecision, which one I like." He further adds "Because there are so many choices available, it happens because of fickle-mindedness also, we see someone, we get attracted to them and then we see someone else and we get attracted to them, it's quite natural also."

Lack of Control. Lack of self-control in the individual and/or losing control which leads to them developing relationships outside the committed relationship. For instance, a male participant who had hooked up with one of his ex-partners quoted "Even at that time, I knew what I was doing, from inside I knew everything, that I was doing wrong but still, I couldn't control myself because I was feeling good." Thus, it can be understood that not being able to control themselves either in that very moment or as a trait could very well lead to infidelity. Participants have also reported that they become more vulnerable to losing control when they meet a very attractive yet approachable third person.

Relationship Factors

It refers to factors that are related to the committed partners and their relationship. Unlike the personal factor, relationship factors represent a joint aspect of the two partners. The relationship factors that cropped up in the present study were dissatisfaction, sexual discontentment, relationship toxicity, physical distance, neglect, incompatibility, and revenge.

Dissatisfaction. It involves the individual not being satisfied with their relationship and committed partner. This represents a general discontent that grows over the period because of small-small matters or due to some major issues between them. One of the participants quoted "There was a communication gap....I felt communication became a very important

factor you know cause when you want to share something and the person is not there, what is the point of keeping the person, if I want to tell it very rudely, that will be the thing you know." This shows a dissatisfaction that had risen in his relationship due to the unavailability of his partner and the growing communication gap can lead to infidelity.

Sexual Discontentment. It refers to the lack of sexual fulfillment or sexual dissatisfaction due to various reasons like sexual illness, lack of experience, etc., also implying not being content with the intensity and frequency of the sexual relationship between committed partners. For example, a male of 30 years, expresses that not getting the required amount of sex, forces a person to cheat—"It is one of the reasons, what I have realized is that even if a person doesn't want to cheat, a man or a woman, it is not about sexual dissatisfaction, it is about not having sex at all, and this is stemming from a relationship which is very active in nature. It's just like having food, if you don't have food properly for a month what will happen so it's like that."

Relationship Toxicity. This includes patterns of unhealthy relationships between committed partners which is inclusive of lies, abuse, excessive anger, distrust, jealousy, and fights. Moreover, the individual may also feel a sense of obligation and pressure in a toxic relationship. A female participant of 27 years, recalls, that she tried to stay committed, however, her partner cheated on her, despite this, she continued the relationship, but it started to get very toxic. She quotes—"So, I tried, to be in a relationship and even though there was no trust, I tried from my side. Then once we broke up after his cheating, I tried to handle it with partying and alcohol. Even then after we got back, I think I wouldn't have cheated had he told me the truth about all of it but then he lied to me and physically abused me." It is also possible that participants in our current study who were in a toxic relationship were also involved in infidelity as a way of escape. A male aged 29 years, who had emotionally engaged with another girl, mentioned that it was very difficult to cope with his committed partner's actions, and felt suffocated.

Physical Distance. This includes being in different places or moving to different places and having a distance relationship between the committed partners. For instance, a male, aged 24 years says "Everything can't happen over the phone or text messages sometimes I think if we got a chance to meet once in a week that would also have been enough." This quote also explains that being in different places or far away also means less sexual interaction. Therefore, being in separate places could even indirectly fuel infidelity if not just directly. Participants have mentioned that due to work or education, many a time they have to live in different places where they cannot meet each other regularly. Though, due to mobile and social media, they can call and see their partners any time, however, that does not fulfill their physical or emotional

needs. This sometimes led to being involved with a third person either at a weak moment or over a period of time.

Neglect. It refers to the lack of attention, support, time, or appreciation that individuals get from a relationship, and may lead to the individual feeling ignored or neglected. The committed partner may miss out on things that matter to the individual, which may make them feel neglected. For instance, a female (23 years) shared that her committed partner had ended up forgetting their four-year anniversary and being in a distance relationship, she was really looking forward to it. She said—*“I thought it’s been 4 years, it’s good, and then I called him, called him many times he didn’t pick up. I thought come on man other times you don’t pay attention, it’s fine, at least on today, be conscious tonight, call me back, or at least drop a message.”* The feeling of being neglected or taken for granted may develop over a period of time in a dating individual, however, it may become more evident when the individual started getting attention or importance from a third person. Hence, this supportive treatment from the third person may attract the individual toward that person.

Incompatibility. It refers to the differences amongst each other’s characteristics in terms of likes, dislikes, preferences, personal nature, and values. Incompatibility could lead to dissatisfaction, however, they are different factors, especially in the context of the present study since incompatibility would not necessarily mean a bad relationship, merely the differences between partners. One of the females, aged 21 years, states *“It was kind of too much, like bit too much good guy, he doesn’t drink, he doesn’t smoke and I am like actually quite different from him and our vibes don’t match much.”* In the above quote, she talks about the differences in their personality and why she looked toward others. As individuals, grow and change, they may also start to become incompatible gradually due to one’s differences.

Revenge. It refers to wanting to get back at their partners for cheating them in the first place. They justified their act since their partners were the ones who first involved in cheating, and their cheating was merely an act of revenge. A female of 28 years, revealed that after finding out about her partner’s betrayal, she felt it was justified that she does the same to him and therefore got involved with an alternative merely for the sake of revenge, although she didn’t have any feelings towards that person. She stated *“It was like, I knew my partner was cheating on me, so I wanted to do the same. It was just that you know and then, later on, I felt like, I was just using that person because I was never in love with that person the person that I cheated with but also I continued it just because my partner was cheating and I wanted to do the same to him.”*

Third-Party Factors

It refers to all the aspects that are related to the third person which encourages the individual to be involved with the person and engage in infidelity. A probable reason why third-party factors were found to be important in leading to infidelity could be, that the resources provided by the alternative, filled the void that was lacking in their primary relationship. Analysis has shown that generally, the third-party factors worked more when the primary relationship was not very fulfilling, however, there were many cases where third-party factor led to infidelity despite having a healthy primary relationship. Third-party factors that lead to infidelity consist of love, rebuilding self, bonding, and attraction.

Love. This refers to instances where the individual talks about falling in love or still being in love with an old friend or ex-partner. A female, aged 21 years, who had cheated on her boyfriend with one of her ex-boyfriends, recalls being in love, with him. She quotes *“It seems that the guy I talked about, whom I got really serious with, I had not gotten over him. It seems like I was still, I am still in the phase that I am recovering.”* While another female of 25 years of age, accepted being in love with both partners when asked to describe her relationship with the third person. One of the statements that depict this is as follows—*“It is difficult to put it into labels or put it into words, what it is. And I mean I had never imagined myself to be someone who would love or be in a relationship with two people but this is it.”* Though feeling of love for a third person is more common when there is not everything is fine, however, it is possible that without any problem in a dating relationship, a partner may fall for the other.

Self-Worth Validation. When in a primary romantic relationship, individuals start feeling ignored or neglected and the partner’s treatment towards them becomes indifferent or insensitive, individuals may grow a negative self-concept or lose their self-esteem. At that time, if a third person gives importance and makes them feel special or worthy, it helps the individual to rebuild their shattered self. That is a third person makes the individual feel important, noticed, and special, which the individual was not getting from his/her partner. For example, a female of 29 years said the following regarding the third person *“This person used to notice all the small things and remembered them so it made me feel good that she paid so much attention to me.”* Receiving attention and importance from a third person is one of the ways in which people moved from being just friends to having an affair. Probably, being special or important plays a vital role in dating relationships because many a time people date for getting care, support, and affection, and if that itself is missing then there are more chances that they will seek it somewhere else.

Bonding. It refers to the formation of a bond, a feeling of closeness, and intimacy between the individual and the alternative. Many times bonding and love are used interchangeably,

however in the present study, as revealed by the quotes, the two are different since bonding is regarded as just a feeling of connection and emotional attachment without necessarily falling in love with the cheating partner. Communication, self-disclosure, spending time together, and providing support during difficult times are some ways in which people bond. A male participant spoke of how he formed an attachment with the third person as a result of shared activities in the following quote—*“I became really close with him, more like we would eat together, have coffee together on breaks, would help each other out with the training assignments and stuff like that.”*

Attraction. It refers to the characteristics of the third person that attracts the individual—physical characteristics and their nature in general. Individuals may be fascinated by the attractiveness, sexual appeal, or personal characteristics of the cheating partner. For instance, a male of 24 years mentioned liking the other person because she was so appealing physically—*“I met her and it was infatuation, physical attraction, she was like a bomb, so hot and the way she dressed up, she ignited something, it was not love, but physical attraction and after that kiss we had I was enjoying that moment for a certain period.”* This was indicative of him liking the cheating partner due to her qualities which further, may have pulled him towards the other person. In contrast to love, bonding, and rebuilding self, here individuals are being attracted towards a third person without getting any care or support or developing a bond or a serious feeling for the person. Most of the time it happens quickly, like at first sight, and generally fades too quickly as well.

Situational Factors

It includes external factors related to the context or external environment, which are beyond the control of the perpetrator. Situational factors in the present study comprised life events, triggers, and opportunities.

Life Events. This refers to instances or events that were happening in the lives of the partners that put them in a bad state of mind and made them vulnerable and more susceptible to committing infidelity. For example, a female of 23 years, mentions her father’s accident that left her feeling worried and emotionally very vulnerable, and this event was one turning point in her life where she felt her committed partner was not as much available to her as he should have been. That time she received solace from someone else, which led her to involved with the other boy. While another female, aged 27 years, mentions that a major fight with her partner was very consequential, in her participation in infidelity, in the following quote—*“One day I had a fight with my partner and so I called up the guy and started talking to him mainly out of anger that was there towards my committed partner.”*

Triggers. It refers to any event, situation, or reason that pushes the individual to take a step toward infidelity. Although triggers

can be anything and are not limited to alcohol, weed, drugs, etc., however, in this study alcohol was the most important reported trigger. Participants for example reported being drunk and in an intoxicated state which acted as the trigger, *“That day for a change, when we were drinking beer, we ended up drinking too much, maybe because I was hurting and I just wanted to drink it all away. I didn’t realize when we drank a bit too much and then we were just sitting and he abruptly kissed me and things happened and I just got intimate with him”* (Female, 24 years). In some cases it could be emotional intoxication, which means due to extreme emotions or moods, a person may involve in sexual or emotional infidelity with an available alternative. For instance, a male participant of 36 years mentions how he was in a positive emotional state when returning back home together due to the good time he had at the party with the third person, which influenced him a bit more in the direction of infidelity—*“It was a first time where we were meeting wherein both of us were in an inebriated state, and we had a very good time in the office wherein we danced a lot, it was around 2 am when we left the party, a few people came and asked if we were a couple or they said that you are a good couple this that so we went back in that state of euphoria.”*

Opportunity. It refers to coming across an opportunity for infidelity or the alternative partner serving as a distraction and being a simple case of availability at the correct time. A male participant, aged 29 years when talking about his involvement with a girl accepted that his involvement with her was motivated because the opportunity was available to him and he utilized this to his advantage. His quote goes like *“We were in the hills and you know like it’s on a solo trip so we got the feeling that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas thing and we are gonna go off to our respective places after this so there was a platform of opportunities present to me and of course, I started to justify my will to be attracted to her and everything.”* This quote is indicative that having an opportunity to cheat is one important reason why people actually cheat. Though it is possible that many factors play simultaneously along with the opportunity to involve with a third person, such as lack of control, unsure relationship future, etc., however, in some cases, it was also found that an individual may involve in infidelity merely because he/she had an opportunity.

Discussion

The present study was aimed at exploring what are the factors that play a part in involvement in the cheating process of infidelity. The initial studies mostly focused on married couples and extramarital infidelity. Dating is an important transition before marriage and the reasons for infidelity in today’s scenario could be different. The results found multiple factors, which have been organized into four broader factors—personal, situational, relationship, and third-party factors.

Past studies have also noted the importance of dispositional factors in understanding infidelity as well as the possibility that

these factors might be used to determine their attitude towards infidelity, which in turn can serve as a major guiding force for infidelity (Allen et al., 2008; Isma & Turnip, 2019). Personal variables can either have a direct impact on an individual's involvement in infidelity, such as their sexual preferences, or they might have an indirect effect by making the individual more susceptible under particular favorable circumstances. Similar to the present findings previous research has also discovered a favorable association between infidelity and traits like openness, the desire to explore, and a lack of self-control (Jain & Sahni, 2017; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008). It should be emphasized that participants who stated the desire to explore frequently also shared that they were unable to restrain themselves. Due to their inability to resist temptation, individuals with poor self-control and self-regulatory abilities are more likely to engage in a variety of sexual behaviors, including infidelity (Ciarocco et al., 2012; Love, 2006; Pronk et al., 2011).

An unexpected finding of the current study was that being unsure about the partner and feeling uncertain of their relationship leading to marriage also encouraged people to cheat with a substitute. Uncertainty is produced in interpersonal relationships by three connected but separate sources, namely the self, the partner, and the relationship, and people are driven to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity (Berger & Calabrese, 1974; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). The context could be of importance here. Collectivist cultures prefer a pragmatic approach to relationships (Madathil & Benschhoff, 2008). Dating is frequently seen as a stepping stone before marriage and, there is a misplaced assurance that the person you date would be the one you eventually marry in the Indian context, especially for people in their late twenties and thirties, and a lot of emphasis is placed on security, stability and certainty. Not being able to imagine a future with their partners or in their current relationship, therefore, could drive their attention toward more beneficial and realistic alternatives.

The study also points out that relationship issues are a major contributing element to infidelity as the answer to why people get involved outside of their committed relationships is because they are dissatisfied with their primary partners. Prior research has underlined this by confirming that people try to fulfill their needs through partnerships, failing which they may seek fulfillment elsewhere (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Jeanfreau et al., 2014; Norona et al., 2018; Omarzu et al., 2012). Resentment and dissatisfaction between partners are brought on by a number of factors, including poor communication and unfulfilled emotional demands. There is evidence that extradyadic interactions are related to unhappiness and issues in the main partnership (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). Similarly, theories that embrace unhappiness, neglect, sex, and wrath as motives for adultery include those provided in the four-factor model for infidelity by Barta and Kiene (2005). Studies also suggest that one of the major reasons for people cheating is due to sexual aspects (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Omarzu et al., 2012).

Unhealthy patterns in relationships have always been harmful, and the present study demonstrates that they also

have an impact on couples who are dating (Maphosa et al., 2017). It's also likely that individuals in our present study who were in toxic relationships also engaged in adultery as a coping mechanism. Participants recognized engaging in adultery as a strategy for escaping their ongoing troubles, according to a previous qualitative study by Scheeren et al. (2018). Physical distance was one interesting factor that also emerged from the study. Living apart provides additional possibilities to engage with other suitable alternatives, which increases the likelihood of having secondary partners especially if they are already dissatisfied (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Due to the options and chances it presents for other people to get closer, being apart might even indirectly promote infidelity instead of simply directly doing so (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Being apart and missing the primary partner contributed to emotions of loneliness in the context of the current study. Loneliness and infidelity have been demonstrated to be positively correlated (Isanejad & Bagheri, 2018). Feeling neglected by their primary partner is another factor that is prevalent seen in the study which can also be found in Barta and Kiene's (2005) infidelity model. Additional studies have also revealed that neglect and a lack of attentiveness are significant contributors to adultery (Jeanfreau et al., 2014).

Another element identified in the study was incompatibility which has been linked to infidelity in previous studies as well (Haseli et al., 2019). However, in the context of the current study, these differences between the partners happen with time as one of the partners matures and change and as a result of one's differences, they also begin to progressively become incompatible. Wanting to get even with their partners or taking revenge was another common factor that has been mentioned in previous literature as well (Drigotas et al., 1999).

The next category that was considered to be vital for infidelity is third-party factors. It is likely that the resources offered by the alternative filled the void that was lacking in their primary relationship. Pioneering work in this area by Glass and Wright (1992) also cited love as one of the most important driving factors behind infidelity. Scholars have highlighted the role that neglect plays in infidelity, thus it is likely that those who feel this way may seek out and end up cheating if they obtain care from other sources. In dating relationships, gaining attention may become more crucial since individuals often date to find care, support, and affection and if those things are lacking, there is a greater likelihood that they may go for them elsewhere. It is likely that they may bond via interaction, disclosure of problems and life situations, and spending time with each other, as well as through offering and receiving support when things are tough, further making them feel closer to the alternative. Attention, special treatment, or care received from a third person may help individuals to heal their damaged self caused by their primary partner or relationship. Therefore, rebuilding the self is one major reason why an individual reclined towards a third person. Rebuilding self, bonding, and love have some overlapping, however, they are different from each other. While attention is showing care and support from a third person and most of the time that is a one-way process.

However, bonding is more about the development of trust, connection, and intimacy between two individuals. Here both parties started developing a feeling of closeness and most of the time bonding leads to emotional infidelity first and then sexual. Moreover, love is a more intense feeling, which could be one-sided or both-sided, here it is possible that the individual has not developed any bond or received any special attention or support but he/she still fell in love with someone. It is uncontrollable and to some extent illogical as well, as some participants have mentioned that it was difficult for them to understand why they fall for a third person while there was nothing wrong in their romantic relationship. However, it is possible these three, can be the reason for infidelity in a sequence, i.e., attention led to bonding and bonding led to love. Yet it is possible that these three can exist alone or in a separable manner.

Feeling attracted is one additional factor why some may get involved in extradyadic relationships. Attraction to the other person has often been cited as a reason for infidelity (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999). It could be that when people find certain aspects of an alternative very attractive such as their looks or personal nature they may be drawn towards them. While in other reasons under the third-party category, individuals get support and care from a third person, however, in the case of attraction, the individuals are the ones who are at the giving end not the receiving end. Moreover, unlike, love, rebuilding self, and bonding, attraction mostly led to sexual infidelity. In other words, it is a feeling of infatuation towards a third-party. The results of the study also suggested that while for other factors under the third-party category, relationship factors such as dissatisfaction, neglect, and long-distance may play a starting point, however, in the case of attraction, relationship factors mostly do not exist.

Literature from previous studies (Scheeren et al., 2018) has also designated contextual factors in support of infidelity. An interesting finding from the study was people also mentioned events in their lives and being intoxicated accountable for them wanting to cheat. People often feel vulnerable during certain phases of their lives and this may influence their decision. Additionally, the influence of alcohol or drugs on an individual is such that it may reduce their inhibitions and increase risk-taking which could lead to sexual behaviors such as infidelity (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999; Norona et al., 2018). A person's mood—negative as well as positive affects people's tendency to indulge in regretful sexual conduct (Mark et al., 2011). Though mood or emotion is a personal characteristic, however, these moods or emotions are depended on the context and they basically work as the trigger for infidelity in some instances. Finally, having the chance to engage in extradyadic activities also serves as motivation by itself. While, opportunities such as days spent traveling for work to simply being a case of one person working while the other partner is at home could serve further as additional reasons for those who already wish to cheat as well as for those who are already aggravated by their relationship factors (Atkins et al., 2001; Crouch & Dickes, 2016).

Limitations and Future Directions

The data were collected solely from the perpetrators of infidelity, therefore, it is possible that only limited personal factors have emerged and more external factors were mentioned, including situation, relationship quality, and third-party characteristics. Therefore, future investigators can include both the perpetrator and the victim so that both their perceptions and experiences can be evaluated and get a better understanding. Another limitation of the present study was focused only on dating couples, hence, similarities and differences between marital infidelity and dating infidelity could not be explored. Future studies may include perpetrators of both kinds of relationships and compare them to get a better comprehensive understanding of infidelity. Finally, the study was carried out during the pandemic and therefore telephonic interviews were carried out to gather the narratives. This could have restricted the data that could have otherwise been gathered, since participants might have left out some information, as well as the data, relied on self-reports by the participants, keeping this in mind, other methods should also be considered in future studies.

Implications

It is generally deemed that a person's involvement with a third-party outside of their primary relationship is due to a single factor such as dissatisfaction or weak moral values, studies like the present one would give an insight into the multiple reasons behind the nature of infidelity. Couples striving to make their relationship work after an episode of infidelity also will benefit if awareness exists about the root causes of it. One important assumption is also that sexual involvement will mostly be accompanied by emotional attachment, however with the changing scenario, a breakdown of infidelity as purely sexual, emotional, or a mix of both will make it easier for investigating it as well as for curbing it. Dating and romantic relationships are an integral part of most people's lives and are often linked to one's self-esteem, happiness, and well-being in general, however, most studies pay attention to the married population but the dating population is equally important since it is a crucial stage that most individuals go through and therefore studies with regard to this are very essential. Past literature has focused a lot on individual factors or relationship factors by itself, however as brought to light by the current study, a phenomenon like infidelity which has so much moral and societal judgment attached to it is not motivated by just one factor, but multiple factors, which often might be occurring simultaneously. This study, therefore, will bring people to the realization that more multifactorial approaches are further needed to study infidelity.

Authors' Note

The study is a part of the Ph.D. thesis of Ms. Parvati Varma, Department of Psychology, Sikkim University, India.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethical approval

The study was conducted after approval and ethical clearance was received from the institutional ethical committee.


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Informed consent

Informed consent for data collection and for the use of data for academic/research publication purposes was taken from all the participants prior to the interview.

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