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Factors affecting the tendency to marital infidelity: A grounded theory study

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Abstract

Introduction: Marital infidelity is one of the most severe problems in families and investigating the reasons for the tendency to marital infidelity can have an effective role in reducing it.

Methods: This study was conducted based on the grounded theory (GT). To this end, two types of sampling techniques were used: The multistage random cluster sampling was employed to interview 28 teachers (male and female) and the purposeful sampling was used to interview 14 experts.

Results: Based on the concepts and categories derived from the coding of the interviews, the five main individual, marital, family, spiritual, and social factors were found to be the underlying factors for the tendency to marital infidelity. Besides, 53 concepts and 14 subcategories were identified. Based on the selective coding, individual factors were identified as the central core of the study.

Conclusion: According to our findings, marital infidelity is an individual, marital, family, spiritual and social problem. Therefore, therapists are advised to consider personal, spiritual, and social causes in addition to examining family and marital factors in dealing with infidelity.

Keywords: Tendency to marital infidelity, Grounded theory, Family factors

Introduction

Family is an essential part of a society where individuals first develop their personalities and establish their own relationships with family members (1). The family has always been one of the most effective environments for one's physical and mental health. One of the factors challenging family health is called marital infidelity, which is the most important threat to marital performance, stability, and continuity (2).

Marital infidelity is an important social issue and, according to Reid, can be one of the primary causes of divorce (3). According to Allen and

Atkins, infidelity also doubles the likelihood of divorce (4). Marital infidelity is a breach of the obligation of the dual relationship that results in the formation of some degree of emotional and physical intimacy with an individual outside the relationship (5) and leads to four types of sexual, emotional, and mixed (emotional and sexual), and virtual infidelity (including telephone sex, sexual talks, and viewing porn videos) (6). Marital infidelity can have emotional consequences such as aggression, revenge, impatience, the feeling of being a victim (7), shocks, denial, and murder of a spouse or suicide in couples. According to studies, marital



infidelity is more common in men (8-10). Stefano and Oala (11) showed that 2% of men and 5% of women in the US committed marital infidelity at least once in their married life. Although monogamy and exclusive sex are cited as cultural norms, the prevalence of marital infidelity is widespread (12). Some of the factors underlying male infidelity include marital and sexual problems, variety seeking, sexual relations before marriage, abuse of multiple marriages, and temporary marriage for men, the community's permissive attitudes about male infidelity, peer influence, satellite programs, and porn videos (13).

A meta-analysis of 50 studies showed that 34% of men and 24% of women engaged in extramarital sex (14). According to a study by Clayton (15), using Twitter can be a starting point for betrayal. Studies show that infidelity is lower in religious individuals (12,16), and men are more likely to be involved in infidelity than women (12,17,18). Different models such as relationship model, courtship model, ambiguity-release model, and aroused excitement model (19) have been used to explain marital infidelity factors. Amirkhani et al. (20) found that 4% of Internet users were spreading immoral thoughts and behaviors as well as sexual abuse. In other words, social media affects individuals' mentality and their quality of life and provides the ground for the tendency to infidelity (21). According to Kamalju et al. (22), the use of cyberspace can predict marital infidelity. According to studies, people who have a more permissive attitude to extramarital relationships are likely to be more involved in these relationships (12). A study by Amirhatami (23) showed that there are significant differences between betrayers and non-betrayers in terms of personality traits (agreeableness), family process (decision making, problem-solving, coping skills, mutual cohesion and respect, communication skills, and religious beliefs), and family adjustment. Bravo and White Lumpkin (24) stated that unmet needs, empathic failure, and fatigue as the main causes of the tendency to marital infidelity. A study on the structural model of predicting marital commitment conducted by Hadi et al. (25) showed that self-

control, maladaptive schemas, approval-seeking, and emotional deprivation have a positive significant impact on marital commitment.

Marital infidelity has become a major problem for many couples around the world. However, there is no detailed statistics on marital infidelity in Iran, which is not because infidelity is not common in the country, but may be due to the lack of attention to this phenomenon. The release of news on marital infidelity in various journals and media, increasing contact with voice counseling programs, increased number of clients referring to family courts filing for infidelity, and considering infidelity as a major cause of divorce or honor killings all shows the bitter fact that marital infidelity is secretly prevalent social problem in our society and is the basis of many irreparable tensions (4). Based on what was mentioned and given numerous causes of the tendency to marital infidelity, research on this important issue is essential. So the main question addressed in this study is: What are the factors affecting people's tendency to marital infidelity?

Methods

This study was conducted based on the grounded theory (the construction of theories through methodical gathering and analysis of data). This approach focuses on the use of data analysis through open coding (categorizing concepts within interviews and documents based on similar topics), axial coding (expanding and expanding categories to establish relationships between categories extracted through open coding), and selective coding (the process of selecting the main category, systematically linking it to other categories, and validating these relationships). The present study was conducted on two research populations: 1) All male and female and male teachers working public and private junior high schools in Tabriz (n = 3247) in 2016-2017, 2) All professionals and counseling and psychology with at least 5 years of experience in family therapy. Two types of sampling methods were used in this study: The teachers were selected through multistage cluster sampling. To this end, two high schools

(one for boys and one for girls) were selected in each of the five educational districts in Tabriz (10 high schools in total). Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers working in the selected high schools. A total number of 28 teachers stated that they committed emotional or sexual infidelity in their marital life. After eight interviews, the data reached theoretical saturation.

The participants in the second sample including the experts were selected through purposeful sampling. The interviews began with general questions about the factors affecting the tendency to marital infidelity as well as the participant's life experience. For more details and information, exploratory questions were asked such as "Can you explain more?" and "Please give an example of your own experience". Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. Prior to the interviews, some explanations were provided to the participants

about the time and location of the interview, privacy, honesty in providing information, and the significance of the study. The inclusion criteria were occupational and physical conditions, working as junior high school teachers, having a Ph.D. in psychology and counseling, and at least 5 years of experience in family counseling (for experts), and having the experience of marital infidelity. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. Data analysis was conducted after the first interview and led to the production of concepts and new questions. This process continued cyclically to the point of data saturation. The collected data were analyzed by open coding (breaking down, comparing and categorizing data), axial coding (categories extracted from the previous step were linked), and selective coding (combining categories to build the initial theoretical framework).

Table 1. The participating teachers' demographic data

Sex	Age	Education	Spouse' age	Spouse's education	Spouse's job	Length of marriage (year)	Number of children
Male	43	Bachelor	38	Bachelor	Housewife	15	3
Female	40	Master	35	Bachelor	Military officer	10	2
Male	40	Bachelor	37	Master	Housewife	11	2
Male	55	Bachelor	47	Illiterate	Housewife	27	3
Female	39	Bachelor	39	Diploma	Self-employed	14	2
Female	32	Master	42	Master	Manager	7	1
Female	28	Associate	35	Bachelor	Unemployed	9	1
Male	41	Bachelor	35	Bachelor	Housewife	16	2
Female	38	Bachelor	39	Ph.D.	Faculty member	15	1
Female	30	Ph.D. student	33	Bachelor	Employee	7	1
Female	32	Associate	41	Master	Teacher	8	1
Male	52	Bachelor	49	Bachelor	Nurse	27	3
Male	35	Bachelor	32	Bachelor	Housewife	7	1
Male	42	Associate	32	Bachelor	Housewife	15	2
Male	44	Bachelor	39	Diploma	Housewife	12	2
Male	38	Master	35	Bachelor	Housewife	8	2
Male	51	Associate	45	Illiterate	Housewife	24	3
Female	36	Bachelor	36	Associate	Self-employed	12	1
Female	32	Master	38	Master	Manager	7	2
Female	35	Bachelor	34	Bachelor	Military officer	7	2
Male	45	Bachelor	35	Bachelor	Housewife	15	2
Female	37	Bachelor	45	Ph.D.	Faculty member	14	1
Female	30	Ph.D. student	37	Bachelor	Employee	5	1
Female	33	Associate	40	Bachelor	Teacher	9	1
Male	49	Bachelor	46	Master	Nurse	25	3
Male	34	Master	31	Bachelor	Housewife	8	1
Male	41	Associate	33	Bachelor	Housewife	11	1
Male	44	Bachelor	38	Diploma	Housewife	15	2

As can be seen, the participants' age range was 28 to 55 years, their length of marriage was 5 to 25 years; 12 persons had 1 child, 11 persons had 2 children, and five persons had 3 children.

Besides, 3 participants held a diploma degree, 6 had associate's degrees, 15 had bachelor's degrees, 5 had master's degrees, and 2 were Ph.D. students (Table 1).

Table 2. The participating expert's demographic data

Sex	Age	Spouse' age	Spouse's education	Spouse's job	Length of marriage (year)	Number of children
Male	40	36	Bachelor	Teacher	11	1
Male	45	33	Master	Teacher	14	1
Female	37	41	Master	Teacher	9	1
Female	49	51	Ph.D.	Faculty member	18	2
Female	38	41	Master	Teacher	9	-
Male	47	38	Bachelor	Employee	15	2
Female	41	45	Ph.D.	Faculty member	13	1
Female	47	50	Master	Employee	21	2
Female	51	52	Ph.D.	Teacher	24	1
Male	52	48	Bachelor	Nurse	25	3
Male	51	32	Master	General practitioner	23	2
Male	41	30	Bachelor	Teacher	14	1
Male	43	40	Master	Teacher	12	1
Female	39	42	Ph.D.	Faculty member	14	2

According to Table 2, the participants' age ranged from 37 to 52 years, they married for 9 to 25 years, one had no child, seven persons had 1 child, five persons had 2 children, and one had 3 children.

After analyzing the data collected from the interviews, the causes of the tendency to marital infidelity were classified into 53 concepts, 14 subcategories, and 4 main categories. After selective coding, the individual index was identified as the core of the study (Table 3).

Results

Table 3. Categories, concepts, and codes extracted through data coding

Main categories	Subcategories	Concepts	Secondary codes
Individual characteristics	Emotional maturity	Forgiveness/revenge	Successive sulks, avoiding reconciliation, spitefulness, not forgiving mistakes
		Behaving authoritatively	Mistreating the spouse, shouting at the spouse, taking authoritatively
		Seeking variety	Seeking variety in wearing clothes and sexual relations
		Seeking excitement	Emotional instability, an interest in exciting situations, an interest in meeting new families
		Responsibility	Lack of responsibility for children, lack of knowledge of spousal, parental and couple duties, lack of seriousness
		Commitment to the family	Not thinking about family, not prioritizing family, not spending time with the family
		Controlling anger	Getting angry easily, disrespectful behavior when making arguments, having disputes over trivial things
		Jealousy	Being jealous of others (who have a girlfriend or boyfriend)
		Experience of drug abuse	Using alcohol or drugs

		Support	Spouse emotional support, spouse patience, spouse financial support
		Attractiveness	The importance of being attractive to the opposite sex, using your attractiveness to show off, being unattractive to your spouse unlike early life
	Cognitive maturity	Goal setting	Setting clear goals for living together and agreeing on them
		Self-confidence	Undermining one's individuality and independence, inability to say no
		Rational thinking	Dealing logically with life affairs, accepting individual differences, not involving the mind in unimportant things, avoiding making judgment and despotism
	Intimacy	Emotional intimacy	Lack of verbal and practical affection and feelings, lack of peace with the spouse, lack of persistence in expressing love
		Physical intimacy	Not kissing, hugging, and cuddling the spouse
		Communication intimacy	The use of bad language and words in marital relations
		Empathetic intimacy	Not respecting the spouse's opinions and not understanding his/her internal world
		Lying/honesty	Untruthfulness, cheating on the spouse, dishonesty, doubt, lack of adherence to marital commitment and couple secrets
Marital characteristics	Encouragement	Support	Not trying to meet the needs of the spouse, lack of support and empathy with the spouse
		Acceptance	Trying to change and blame the spouse, not understanding the spouse's sensitivities
		Appreciation	Disregard for specific days such as wedding day, birthday, etc., not paying attention to duties, not giving a gift, and not giving a word of thanks to the spouse
	Marital satisfaction	Compatibility	Disagreement over interacting with others and rearing children, lack of agreement before marriage
		Expectations	Non-fulfillment of expectations of the spouse, having irrational expectations
		The spouse's mental problems	Inability to express one's feelings and discouraging the spouse, having neurological problems
		The spouse's physical problems	The spouse' physical inability and improper physical and bodily appearance
		Re-experiencing intimacy	An individual's attempt to re-experience early life intimacy
		Sexual satisfaction	Non-fulfillment of sexual needs, lack of freshness in sex, lack of sex play and jokes, lack of balance between sexual expectations and spouse power, lack of love during sex, inappropriate intercourse, selfishness in sex, previous experience of real and internet sex, masturbation
		Flexibility	Not giving up one's demands, not balancing relationships with single friends, lack of flexibility in gender roles, stubbornness
		Cooperation	Lack of participation in housework, lack of consultation with the spouse
		Similarity of couples	Educational disparity, intellectual competence, culture, political and religious views of couples, differences in values and understanding, the importance of the spouse to work, materiel properties, and appearance, high age difference, and reciprocal transfer in couple relationships
	Quality of life	Happiness	Not having fun, variety, jokes, and laughter, not traveling, not trying to please the spouse
		Security	Lack of security (mental/physical) when dealing with a spouse
		Eating eagerly	Eating quickly and eagerly, inability to delay the desire to eat
Financial position		The husband's inability to provide for life, lack of effort to solve economic problems, lack of transparency in income and expenses, lack of financial ability	

		Depression	The monotony of life, introversion, avoidance of travel, lack of talk with the spouse, lack of purpose, no plans for the future
		Development/burnout	Expressing negative spouse characteristics, not helping to fix spouse shortcomings, not caring about spouse development
	Positive interaction	Communication patterns	Talking with sarcasm, disapproval of spouse comments, respectful conversation with the spouse, insulting spouse's values
		Communication skills	Unrealistic attention to the spouse, not giving feedback to each other, not listening, choosing the wrong time and place for conversation, not having a heartfelt conversation
	Distinctiveness	Dispute resolution	Not settling disputes peacefully, not apologizing
		Personal independence	The spouse's lack of financial independence, lack of freedom of expression, the pursuit of personal interests, forced marriage
Family characteristics	Extensive and supportive relations	Privacy	Not keeping marital privacy from others, recounting common life issues to others
		Communication with main families	Quality of communication with the spouse's family, disapproval of marriage from the main families, excessive attention to one's main family
	Main family doctrines	Intergenerational transmission	Incorrect spousal family training, history of infidelity in main families
Spiritual characteristics	Religiosity	Parenting	Parenting disharmony, severe attention to children and forgetting spouse, infertility problems
		Religious beliefs	Lack of faith in God, disregard for permitted and forbidden actions, disbelief in God's observance of deeds, materialism
Social characteristics	Social conditions	Religious actions	Not settling liabilities, not keeping chastity, not following conscience, not thinking about existence, not wearing the hijab, not praying
		Working relations	Working relations, having good social relations, maintaining social working relationships outside the workplace, being a friend with people engaging in marital infidelity
	Cyberspace	Excessive and inappropriate use of telegram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, etc.	
	Emotional relations	Experience watching porn movies, using anti filters, watching Jam, Farsi One, and other TV channels (with sexual content)	
	Social conditions	Emotional attachment to friends, having illegitimate fun with friends	
	Application of cultures and traditions	Local games (local engagement)	Sexually aroused in the street, on television, etc., clothing, the use of sexually stimulating perfumes, the community's permissive approach to infidelity, violating social norms
			Not using traditional and local games, loss of indigenous culture and traditions at ceremonies

Individual characteristics

Emotional maturity: It includes forgiveness, anger, excitement seeking, diversity seeking, responsibility, jealousy, and the spouse's authoritative behaviors. According to one of the participants, "A characteristic that makes couples disposed to infidelity is the sense of responsibility,

that is, the husband has to strive to make a living and support the family financially. The wife must be able to plan the family's expenditure by taking into account the husband's income. The couples' indifference to their marital obligations makes them more responsible for people outside the family" (Expert 9).

Family commitment: Couples who have a tendency to marital infidelity are indifferent to their family members and spouse and do not put them on the top of their priority list. *“Anyone who pays more attention to his/her friends rather than their family members and tends to take single trips is making a big mistake”* (Participant 23).

Anger control: Spouses who cannot control their anger have a low tolerance when they are angry and express their anger in an inappropriate manner, and this alienates them gradually.

“People who betray their spouse treat them so badly and aggressively, and there is no emotion left between them. I always recommend people not to use bad words because they will turn into catchphrases” (Participant 2).

Cognitive maturity: When couples are not cognitively mature, they are mistaken in their analysis of each other's position, and this estranges them. Cognitive maturity includes goal setting, self-confidence, and logical thinking. Low cognitive development of spouses leads to misunderstanding and increases their disagreements. *“In a good relationship, the parties should not talk about the bad things happened between them in the past but they are required to deal with the issues logically. Talking about the past would make couples frustrated. When I talked about the past, my spouse opposed it and got on my nerve”* (Participant 7).

Intimacy: Intimacy is an important indicator of marital relationships. The absence of intimacy (closeness to the spouse, sharing of values and ideas, shared activities, sexual relationships, understanding each other, and emotional behaviors such as caring) all indicate a lack of intimacy between the spouses. *“My spouse and I have never listened carefully to each other as if we were not tolerating each other at all. This happens often. That is, we talk to each other using specific literature and sentences. I feel like I need someone to talk to”* (Participant 15).

Encouragement: Encouragement includes support, acceptance, and appreciation for the spouse that, if not present in life, can initiate the search for encouragement outside the home and in others. If spouses do not support each other in the face of pressures and difficulties in life and

do not enjoy the full support of their spouse in family, educational, and social matters, they will get bored and lose interest in each other. *“Encouragement and helping each other to make progress is very important. Something I never felt. Whenever I said I wanted to continue my studies, my husband said it's of no use. My husband never supported me. But my boyfriend always encouraged me when I talked to him”* (Participant 20).

Marital satisfaction: Marital satisfaction will be low for couples with low adjustment and participation and also the couples who have irrational expectations and are not flexible in their desires. *“I think one of the things that can qualify for marital life is to pay more attention to marital issues. Really, couples need to spend time on this”* (Expert 2).

Quality of life: Low quality of life originates from lack of happiness, poor financial position, and also worn-out relationships. Families with such problems do not experience many positive emotions. *“Financial matters are not completely transparent in our life. We don't know how much we earn and how much we have to spend. Once I was desperately in need of money and asked my husband, but he didn't give me any money. I had to get some from one of my close relatives. And then I started daydreaming about getting into a relationship with him”* (Participant 7).

Positive interaction: Spouses' communication skills are the key to their adaptation and satisfaction, helping to resolve many misunderstandings and tensions. *“Habits such as talking ironically, rejecting spouse's opinions, unwillingness to listen to the spouse's opinions, disrespecting the spouse's values, not paying attention to fairness in marital relationships, not giving each other feedback, not listening, using derogatory words, not having a friendly conversations are all the things that increase people's tendency to infidelity”* (Experts 2, 5, 6, 13, 14).

Distinctiveness: If an individual does not preserve his or her individual identity while taking into consideration the needs of the other party and the requirements of the common life, he/she will be a low degree of distinctiveness. *“My spouse has taken away my independence. For*

example, I wish I could have time to spend with my friends” (Participant 10).

Extensive and supportive relationships: The relationship with the spouse’s family is a major part of the couple’s relationship. Problematic marital relationships lead to disrupting the relationship with the spouse’s family. “My spouse does not value my family and always avoids them. He/she only cares for his/her own family” (Participant 17).

The main family’s doctrine: Studies show that the future behavior of individuals in life is typical of and characterized by their parents’ behavior (26). Couples with problems in their marital relationships lack proper training and learn negative patterns. “Most people inherit different patterns of behavior from their main families. If there is infidelity in a family, the risk of infidelity increases in children” (Expert 9).

Parenting: Compatible couples choose the right way for parenting and work well together. “My husband is indifferent to the kids. When he comes home he only listens to the news, and this makes me angry” (Participant 22). “All my wife’s life is dedicated to the kids. She doesn’t care for me. She doesn’t love me at all. She has completely forgotten me” (Participant 8).

Religiosity: Religiosity involves religious beliefs and religious practices. “Religious beliefs are important factors that can prevent people from engaging in infidelity. Of course, religious beliefs are different and more effective than religious practices” (Expert 2).

Social relationships: Rational social relationships are a necessity of life, but such relationships are preferred over the family and the spouse, many problems arise. “Human beings need social relations, but these relations should not replace the family. I cared deeply about social relations and was indifferent to my spouse” (Participant 14).

Culture and traditions: The culture and traditions in each community that helps the members of the community and families adhere to the different values. “The failure to adhere to indigenous cultures and traditions within the family gives rise to a kind of cultural dissimilation and an increased interest in other cultures and a greater

tendency to imitate other cultures. And this is one of the instances of non-adherence to values” (Expert 12).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors contributing to the tendency to marital infidelity. The reasons behind the tendency to marital infidelity were divided into five main categories: Individual characteristics, marital characteristics, family characteristics, social characteristics, and spiritual characteristics. According to our findings, individual factors are one of the important reasons for the tendency to marital infidelity, including having a great interest in excitement and new things, lack of intimacy between couples, lack of or excessive self-confidence, eating eagerly, drug abuse, low commitment to the family, striving to be look attractive outside, and the absence of responsibility. This finding is in line with the previous studies (Karami et al. (5); Amirhatami (23); Fathi et al. (13); Zare (27)). Certainly, these personality traits are reflected in different aspects of life and relationships among people. Many psychologists and family therapists also consider individual traits to be a factor in the success or failure of marriage and commitment to the spouse (28). Therapists, as well as the general public, regard individual factors as one of the factors driving individuals to infidelity (29). Bahraini also showed that the average intimacy in traditional marriages was significantly higher than in modern marriages, and the average tendency to infidelity in traditional marriages was lower (30). Studies on marital relationships have also pointed to the role of personality traits such as patience (31), attachment styles and intimacy (32), responsibility and forgiveness (33), commitment and loyalty to the spouse (31) in the proper formation of marriage. The results of a survey by Robert (34) also showed that the spouse’s personality and their living conditions are the most important factors affecting their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in marital life. This finding can justified with reference to the fact that when one’s couple’s personality traits are very different from another’s so that one spouse

is exposed to repeated abuse and affirmative behavior of the other, the individual's commitment and family values fade and this reduces the sense of responsibility and induce the individual to meet their own needs outside the family.

Marital factors involved in the tendency to marital infidelity include spousal support, low distinctiveness, marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, the quality of life, happiness, depression, involvement in extramarital affairs, inappropriate communication patterns, and constructive interaction with the spouse. This finding is in line with the results of the studies conducted by Modarresi (35), Amirhatami (23), and Karami et al. (5). A study by Behdost (36) showed that there was a significant difference in communication patterns (reciprocally constructive, expecting-avoiding, and mutual avoidance) between betrayed and normal women. Accordingly, expecting-avoiding and mutual avoidance patterns were shown to have a role in the tendency to marital infidelity. Alishahy (37) also found that the most important factor in sexual infidelity is aloofness, the lack of love and intimacy, and low marital satisfaction. In another study, Faridi (38) also showed that emotional dissatisfaction and sexual needs were correlated with marital infidelity. There was also no relationship between economic factors and marital infidelity, which is inconsistent with the findings of the present study. Karami et al (5) showed that participation seeking, responsibility, and legalism were correlated with the tendency to marital infidelity. The self-development model assumes that individuals are motivated towards a goal that promotes them through intimate relationships and in search of new experiences, resources, skills, and insights (39). According to this model, people cannot develop themselves because of marital problems and thus are more likely to engage in extramarital relations. In support of this model, Thompson (40) identifies emotional, sexual, and communication relationships as three major causes of problems and a tendency for extramarital relationships. Spouses who are emotionally rejected, frustrated, defenseless,

and disrespectful and have no sexual or marital satisfaction are more likely to engage in infidelity.

Family factors involved in marital infidelity include the main family doctrines, parenting, and relationship with main families. This finding is in line with the views of Schmidt (41) who believe that people are inclined to infidelity so when their families are involved in marital infidelity. According to Dinero et al. (42) having a child is a kind of human investment inducing the commitment to the family. The presence of children in the family, due to the child-parent relationship between family members, can be a deterrent to the tendency to marital infidelity. These factors are also related to family members' relationships with each other and parental teachings. Accordingly, it can be suggested that if a person has learned immoral things from his or her family, he or she will exhibit inappropriate behaviors, leading to ongoing discomfort with the spouse, a decrease in the quality of life, and the tendency to marital infidelity.

Spiritual factors involved in individuals' tendency to marital infidelity include religious practices and religious beliefs. Religious beliefs are a more important factor in predicting marital infidelity. This finding is in line with the observations made by Amirhatami (23). Similarly, a study by Karimipour (43) showed that couples' strong religious beliefs are effective in increasing marital commitment and decreasing extramarital relationships. A person who has deeply held religious beliefs has a great deal of faith in God as the observant of his/her behaviors and these beliefs are deterrent to marital infidelity.

The social causes of the tendency to marital infidelity also include real and virtual social relationships and also the use of indigenous cultures and traditions, as evidenced in other studies Fathi et al. (13); Amirkhani et al., (20); Ajam (21); Kamalju et al. (22). Ramezani (44) showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of social network membership and attitude to infidelity with the dimensions of marital frustration. Of the dimensions of social network membership,

social aspects and attitudes to infidelity can predict marital frustration. In another study, Faridi (38) showed that marital infidelity is associated with social media use and low religiosity. Accordingly, it can be suggested that a person using satellite channels with sexual content begins to have different (mostly sexual) fantasies about his or her relationship with people who are seen in cyberspace or satellite shows. This is what causes seeking sexual diversity and ultimately more people's tendency to interact with others and engage in marital infidelity.

Conclusion

The results of the present study showed that the factors underlying the tendency to marital infidelity can be classified into five individual, couple, family, social, and spiritual factors. In all of these indicators, the individual factors are involved. Accordingly, providing training to manage individual characteristics such as emotions, types of intimacy, and rational thinking, as well as considering pre-marital issues and how to raise children can prevent marital infidelity. Strengthening domestic television networks, valuing and expanding indigenous and local occupations, and planning to strengthen religious beliefs can act as barriers to the tendency to marital infidelity. On the other hand, it is important to note that our social conditions are constantly changing as communications and the media are increasingly expanding. Although the introduction of communication and mass media as factors paving the way for marital infidelity is a major mistake, one cannot neglect their facilitating role and opportunities created by them because social media can play a decisive role in creating opportunities for training and awareness-raising activities. One of the limitations of the study was that, because of the immoral aspects of infidelity, some participants might tend to disguise the facts. Also because of the unfortunate legal and social consequences of infidelity disclosure and the taboo of having sex in our community, people are not willing to talk about such issues and we had to omit some words with sexual

connotations. Therefore, caution should be exercised when making reference to the findings reported in this study.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are provided based on the findings of the study:

1. Holding workshops to promote excitement-seeking management, conjugal skills, religious beliefs, sexuality, and raising awareness of each other's needs
2. Requiring couples to receive pre-marriage counseling and providing their families with the necessary information about the consequences of forced marriages
3. Increasing couples' awareness of the consequences of marital infidelity through brochures and the media

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Conflicts of Interest

In this agreement, the author of the article states that in connection with the publication of the presented article, he has completely avoided publishing ethics, including plagiarism, misconduct, forgery of data, or double sending and publishing. There are no commercial benefits to this, and the authors have not received any money for their work. The author also states that this work has not been previously published elsewhere and has not been submitted to another journal at the same time. This article is taken from the doctoral dissertation in the field of counseling.

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