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Investigation of Attitude of College Youth towards Infidelity

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Abstract: *Infidelity can be considered as unfaithfulness expressed by being unreliable and cheating on the partner despite the commitment. Now days, infidelity is the most common reason for breakups in a romantic relationships. As result, it has become an important issue in psychology literature which gains the attention of researchers. Moreover, infidelity has been studied within a variety of perspectives such as gender, personality, education level etc. The idea of infidelity varies across the various cultures and also depends on the type of relationship which exists between people. The present study was conducted to understand the causal factors of infidelity and the motivational factors behind the infidelity behaviour in college youth. For the purpose of current investigation, we have made the use of Attitudes towards Infidelity Scale given by Mark Whatley (2006) on 100 college students. The findings supported the need to have an explorative understanding of social networking sites that help students engage in behaviour that may be considered infidelity. The study also found out that males have more tendencies for infidelity than females and the causal factors on infidelity are boredom, immaturity, sense of security, permissive sexual attitude and parental infidelity. It was also found that motivational factors for engaging into infidelity are search for self-esteem, higher emotional involvement, need fulfilment, self-expansion and rejection sensitivity. Thus, findings hold implications for counselling clients in a dating relationship.*

Keywords: *Infidelity, college youth, social-networking sites.*

I. INTRODUCTION

“It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.”

Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason

Infidelity is the most common reason of breakup in the dating relationships among college youth. American dating couples report a 70% of incidence of infidelity (Allen and Baucom, 2006). Infidelity can be viewed from different perspectives in this society, such as in terms of gender. It has an impact on individual s’ mental health along with termination of relationship There is high rate of infidelity in the relationship therefore there is a need for this problem to be more researched and addressed.

In this study, infidelity refers to unfaithfulness by being unreliable and cheating on the relationship partner despite the commitment to exclusiveness. Males and female college youth were assessed on their attitude towards infidelity, causal factors and motivational factors behind it.

Most of literature divided infidelity into specific categories i.e., sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, combined sexual and emotional infidelity and internet infidelity (Glass, 1985). There are gender differences in reaction to the partner’s infidelity (Shackford and Buss, 2002). Due to adaptive problem of parental uncertainty, men are more upset than women by partner s’ sexual infidelity. Also adaptive concern related to parental involvement and resources, diversion makes women feel more upset than men by a partner s’ emotional infidelity (Bus et al., 1992).

Another part of literature about sex differences and infidelity

refers to the different rates of men and women engagement in infidelity. Some researchers strongly asserts that men are more likely to engage into infidelity than women (Allen and Baucom, 2004). They have significantly more sexual partners outside of their primary relationship (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983) and have a strong desire to engage in infidelity (Prins et al.,1993), whereas some researchers assert that men and women rate of infidelity are becoming increasingly similar (Oliver and Hyde,1993) and they are not differing in terms of their behaviour (Prins et al.,1993).

According to Aron & Aron (1986) self-expansion model poists the factors that play a prominent role in the incidence of infidelity. According to this model, people are motivated to enter relationship in order to enhance self and self-efficacy. By including others in self, individuals experience their partner s’ resources, perspectives and identities as their own. Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006) found that among dating college students, the potential for self-expansion and one s’ degree of inclusion of others in the self-accounted for a large portion of the variance in susceptibility to infidelity. The model also suggests that if the primary relationship is too self-expanding and overwhelming (Mashek and Spearman, 2004), the individual may find this aversive and choose extra-dyadic relationship that provides less self-expansion and less inclusion of others.

Drigotas and Barta (2001) cited several different approaches towards understanding of motivation behind relationship infidelity. The normative approach assumes that people have a higher likelihood of committing infidelity if they are acquainted with someone who has been unfaithful. The search for self-esteem, especially in highly involved affairs

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(Allens & Rhoades, 2008) was found to motivate infidelity. Additionally, need fulfilment and self-expansion have been suggested as motivational factors for infidelity (Lewandowski and Ackerman, 2006). Infidelity motivation is also related to higher level of loneliness, rejection sensitivity and need to belong (N.D.)

Theoretical Framework collateral with Infidelity

Bandura s’ Social Learning theory indicated that by observing behaviours which are modelled one tends to imitate or match performances (Mihalic & Elliot, 2005). Humans learn and comprehend attitudes and behaviours as result of social interactions that they have with other people (Strong, Devault, Cohen, 2005). Bandura further stressed the importance of learning by observation of others instead of solely from oneself. As applied to our study, this theory would predict that by observing by one s’ peers and family, one would deem such actions as acceptable as well in their dating relationships.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the causal factors of infidelity amongst college youth.
2. To investigate motivational factors behind the infidelity behaviour in college youth.
3. To understand the gender difference in views towards infidelity.

III. HYPOTHESIS

1. The attitude of boys towards infidelity is more positive as compared to attitude of girls towards infidelity.
2. The social networking sites is the common medium for college youth to engage in infidelity

IV. METHODOLOGY

Sample

This study was conducted by collecting samples from universities of Delhi/ NCR. There were 50 females and 50 males college student participants. Participants’ ages ranged from 18-25 years.

Procedure

The participants were psycho educated regarding the nature, purpose and the objective of the study and informed consents were taken from them. The participants were asked to complete the Attitude towards infidelity scale for their assessment of attitude . Further, 5 girls and 5 boys were randomly selected for focused group interview and 10 questions probing their views on infidelity were asked from them.

Tools Used in Research

Attitude towards Infidelity Scale : It is an 12 item scale which was developed by Mark Whatley in 2006. The purpose of this scale is to gain the better understanding of what people think and feel about issues associated with infidelity. Selecting 1 reflects the least acceptance of infidelity and selecting a 7 reflects the greatest acceptance of infidelity.

The lower the total score (12 is the lowest possible score) the less accepting of infidelity and the higher the total score is (84 is the highest possible score) the greater there is acceptance of infidelity. A score of 48 places the individual at the midpoint between being very disapproving of infidelity and very accepting of infidelity .

Focus Group Interviews: These were conducted on 5 boys and 5 girls to investigate causal factors , motivational factors and the common medium to engage in infidelity. A set of 10 questions were asked from them and there responses were recorded.

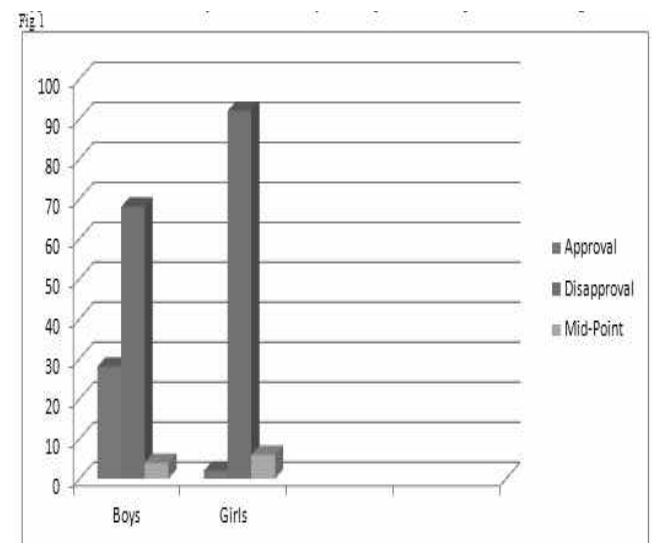
V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to investigate the following objectives:

1. To understand the causal factors of infidelity amongst college youth.
2. To investigate motivational factors behind the infidelity behaviour in college youth.
3. To understand the gender difference in views towards infidelity.

The results of the study were analyzed based on the scores on attitude towards infidelity scale and responses in focus group interview. The scores of the participants on the scale can be divided into three categories i.e. lower the total score (12 is the lowest possible score) the less accepting of infidelity; the higher the total score is (84 is highest possible score) the greater there is a acceptance of infidelity. A score of 48 places the individual at the mid-point i.e. between being very disapproving of infidelity and very accepting of infidelity.

Hypothesis 1: The attitude of boys towards infidelity is more



Comparison of Scores of Boys and Girls on the Scale

Fig. 2

Group	Sample Size	Mean	Standard-Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean	t-ratio
Boys	50	39.2	15.80	2.23	2.814
Girls	50	32.20	9.94	1.41	

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According to Table No.1 and Table No.2 : “The attitude of boys towards infidelity is more positive as compared to attitude of girls towards infidelity”. This is clear from above data that boys have more positive attitude towards infidelity as compared to girls as it was found that 68% of boys disapproved infidelity, 28% of boys approved infidelity and 4% were between being very disapproving of infidelity and very accepting of infidelity. In cases of girls, it was found that 92% of the girls disapproved infidelity, whereas 2 % approved infidelity and 6% were between being very disapproving of infidelity and very accepting of infidelity. Thus, the discrepancy of the scores approved that boys were more inclined to indulge into infidelity if an opportunity arises than women who consider it as an taboo and would decline the indulgence in any form of infidelity when in a committed relationship.

The t –ratio for the means of scores was calculated and was found to be 2.8104 which was higher than the critical value i.e. 1.98 at 98 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance. Thus, there is a significant difference between attitude of the boys and girls towards infidelity. Thereby it proves that boys are more inclined towards engaging into infidelity as compared to girls.

Hypothesis II : The social networking sites is the common medium for college youth to engage in infidelity

Based on the focus group interview that was conducted on 5 girls and 5 boys, intense discussion on factors underlying infidelity, gender differences in infidelity and also strong mediums to infidelity was generated.

It was found that social-networking sites are the common medium for youth to engage in infidelity. It was also found that social networking sites such as facebook, orkut, hi5, twitter to be the most common medium to engage into infidelity, which ultimately impairs one s’ romantic relationship and makes life miserable. Flirty messages, photographs and other personal information one shares on social-networking sites can be used as proof of infidelity. The most common motivational factors for youth to engage into infidelity were easy accessibility, affordability , anonymity, escape from stressors, self esteem, higher emotional involvement, need-fulfilment, self –expansion, rejection sensitivity, revenge against one s’ partner, gain respect, and recognition, to relieve boredom.

Participants stated that anonymity is comforting factor for indulgence into practises outside committed relationship, they stated that it is comfortable to verbally fabricate fake emotions and also draw emotional warmth out of relationships on social-networking sites.

It was found that causal factors for engaging into infidelity were parental infidelity, boredom, immaturity, lack of satisfaction, curiosity, fun-seeking, exploring sexual orientation, seeking variety, sense of security, permissive sexual attitude and lack of communication.

A study was conducted to examine the attitude of college students towards infidelity and behaviour in online relationship. It was found that females are more likely to rate online relationship activities, especially sexually related ones such as engaging in hot chat sessions and sexual relationships as infidelity (Wang & Hsung, 2008).

A study examined how respondents experienced sexual and emotional infidelity. It was found that online infidelity was not only characterized by sexual components but also by emotional components. It was also found that respondents were more concerned about the emotional relationship leading to face to face meeting, more than sexual relationship leading to face to face meeting (Henline & Lamke, 2003).

Whitty (2005) performed a study exploring internet infidelity and jealousy in the couple relationship. It was found that involved partner experienced guilt about the affair, less time spent with their offline (the uninvolved) partner, shame, loss of self-esteem for offline partner. Trust was broken as the result of the online relationship. Moreover, participants reported that internet infidelity was in their opinion a real form of cheating and that its effects can have significant consequences for a couple or family offline. More importantly, participants had a tendency to weigh emotional and sexual betrayal equally, implying that internet infidelity may result in different consequences than those from traditional affairs.

One study found that Latin adolescents who were high viewers of either Spanish-language television adhered to more gender role attitudes, with no statically significant association for males (Rivandeneira and Ward, 2005). This finding suggests that the way in which telenovelas depict female character s’ experience with infidelity may reinforce female viewer s’ notion of marianismo, including their perception of how they should react if faced with the possibility of engaging in infidelity.

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