

Marital Infidelity: A Sociological Approach to Its Causes and Repercussions on the Family Institution

Dr Farida Laifaoui

Morsli Abdellah University – Tipaza (Algeria),

laifaoui.farida@univ-tipaza.dz

Specialization: Sociology- Community Institutions

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Abstract:

This research examines the phenomenon of marital infidelity as a complex social issue that goes beyond its individual moral dimension to touch upon the value-based and structural foundations of the family institution. The analysis starts with the definition of the concept and the establishment of its terminological limitations, it then demonstrates the contribution of this phenomenon in certain ancient civilizations, societies, and religions, highlighting the Islamic perspective which is regarded as a normative framework that regulates the marital relationship. This research also addresses the most prominent social and psychological causes leading to marital infidelity. Ultimately, the analysis concludes by examining the negative repercussions of marital infidelity on the family's cohesion, its value-based and functional stability, and the resulting disruptions.

Keywords: Civilization; Family; Institution; Marital Infidelity; Marriage; Society

INTRODUCTION

Marital infidelity cannot be regarded as merely an individual behavioral deviation; rather, it is an indicator of imbalances that may afflict the system of relationships within the family institution, as well as transformations affecting the system of obligations and standards governing the marital life. This phenomenon has been related to differentiated social and cultural contexts throughout history, and religious and legislative attitudes toward it have varied accordingly. Hence, this study necessitates an analytical process that reveals the interaction between individual and structural factors in producing such conduct.

From this perspective, the following question may be raised:

How can different theoretical perspectives explain marital infidelity, and what impact does this phenomenon have on the performance and stability of the family institution?

The importance of this study lies in its provision of a comprehensive and critical reading of the phenomenon, highlighting the relationship between individual actions and social contexts, and clarifying the effects of marital infidelity on family cohesion and its societal function. In doing so, it contributes to enriching sociological debate and lays the groundwork for a deeper understanding of the reconstruction of family values in modern societies.

Objective of the Study:

- To analyze the concept of marital infidelity and its social and psychological dimensions within the family institution.



- To explore its causes and interpret its implications on family cohesion and its societal function.

As for the methodology of study, it employed a descriptive-analytical methodology with a civilizational and cultural comparison, in order to clarify the causes of infidelity and its repercussions on the family institution.

1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study:

In order to understand the phenomenon of marital infidelity and analyze its implications, it is necessary, at the outset, to identify the basic concepts associated with it, including:

1.1. The Linguistic Definition of the Family

From a linguistic perspective, as stated in *Lisan al-Arab*, the family of a man refers to his kin and close relatives upon whom he relies for strength. The word is derived from (bond/captivity), which denotes the various forms of natural, inescapable constraint, as in the case of physiology, where a person is captive to traits such as height, shortness, or corpulence, as well as voluntary bonds that a person willingly accepts and pursues because life without them feels threatened. This is the root from which the word family is derived.

‘Bond’ or ‘captivity’ may also be artificial, such as captivity in wars. Since the family represents a man’s kin and close relatives, the definitions of “bond” and “captivity” here imply the burden placed upon the individual, that is, responsibility (Ben Ziane, 2003-2004, p. 25). The family is also a social product that reflects the image of the society in which it exists and evolves: in a static society, the family structure mirrors that society, while in a developing or revolutionary society, the family is transformed in accordance with the pace and conditions of that development. (Boutefnouchet, 1984, p. 15)

1.1.1. The Definition of Marriage:

a) Constitutive Definition

Marriage derives from the verb "to marry" meaning to unite a man with a woman in wedlock, to mix or accompany. The term denotes the pairing of two individuals, each being the counterpart of the other and they’re referred to as a couple. The word marriage is a noun derived from the act of marrying. (Al-Munjid in Language and Media, p. 310)

b) Constructive Definition

Marriage is defined as "*a contract that renders lawful the mutual enjoyment between the contracting parties in a prescribed manner, or a contract established according to lawful means and intentional consent.*" (Kahhala, 1982, p. 21)

1.1.2. Definition of Marriage According to Sociologists:

Sociologists define marriage as the primary and fundamental pillar upon which the family and society are built across generations. Through marriage, the individual achieves social integration within a legal and social system governed by the structure of the group and reflecting its social standards. It is the mechanism through which sexual questions are organized and the form of union between adults is defined. The social content of marriage relates to societal approval, which takes the form of a legal contract signed by the concerned parties entering into marriage. This contract also determines the social and spiritual relationship established between parents and children. (Belhadj, 2008, p. 27)



1.1.3. Definition of Infidelity (Adultery):

a) Constitutive Definition

To commit adultery. A man who commits adultery is called *adulterer*, and a woman is called *adulteress*. It refers to illicit sexual intercourse (Al-Hassan, 1981, p. 75). Sociologists also consider adultery a social taboo prohibited by all religions and rejected by society because it undermines the preservation of lineage and social order. It may result from spouses' ignorance of social customs and traditions, as such ignorance can create alienation between them, potentially leading to the involvement of a third party and thus marital infidelity (Duncan, 1916, p. 111). Infidelity is further defined as a violation of the marital law regulating the bond between spouses. It is a term used by one spouse when betrayed by the other (Question de la culture, 1995, p. 15). Marital infidelity is also described as a negative social phenomenon present in various human societies, though it differs from one society to another according to prevailing moral systems and teachings. It arises from dysfunction in the natural relationship between spouses, whether due to internal shortcomings or external cultural influences, leading to instability and potential disintegration of the family as a result of internal conflict.

It is likewise defined as “*engaging in an illegitimate relationship outside the framework of the family, through involvement with a third party, whether by the husband or the wife.*” (Sayed Ali & Ziyat, 2023, p. 65)

Thus, it encompasses any disloyal conduct liable to harm a partner, their property, honor, or life, including theft, lying, adultery, scheming, and endangering the partner's life. The term as used here refers to its common meaning, relating specifically to sexual infidelity (adultery), which creates abnormal situations that are more destructive to the personality than almost any other transgression. Whether this betrayal is transient, fleeting, or persistent and long-lasting, its implications inevitably affect both parties to the marriage contract. Marital infidelity is not limited to physical betrayal; it also includes visual infidelity through pornographic content, auditory infidelity through phone conversations, and intellectual infidelity through fantasy, speech, and verbal expression of desire. The Holy Quran warns against marital infidelity in any of its forms, as God Almighty says: {Do not approach adultery; it is an indecency and an evil way.} (The Holy Qur'an)

b) Operational Definition:

It is a behavior that violates conjugal obligations, encompassing emotional or physical relationships beyond marriage, and leads to the disruption of the family's equilibrium, cohesion, and functions within society.

2. Marital Infidelity in Ancient Civilizations

2.1. Mesopotamian Civilization:

Marriage held great importance in Sumerian civilization; they encouraged marriage and condemned celibacy. Marital infidelity was considered a crime punishable by death; Nevertheless, women caught in the act could exonerate themselves by oath.

2.2. The Assyrians:

Among the Assyrians, marital fidelity was obligatory, and infidelity was punishable by death through drowning, flogging, having one's hair pulled out, or having one's ears cut off.



The Assyrians also promoted population growth through moral codes they established, going so far as to consider abortion a serious crime punishable by death.

2.3. The Babylonians:

They specified more than 66 rulings related to protecting the family and strictly limiting the occurrence of adultery, and carrying out the punishment of drowning for its perpetrators.

2.4. The Egyptians:

Ancient Egyptian texts gave great importance to marriage. They forbade adultery and threatened their perpetrators by severe punishments. The adulterous husband faced flogging, while the adulterous wife faced mutilation of her nose. Adultery was considered one of the valid grounds for divorce, equally applicable to both men and women. In the ancient Egyptian civilization of Osiris, the deceased carried with them to the grave a document attesting to their chastity and marital fidelity, so as to receive mercy in the afterlife.

2.5. Ancient European Civilizations:

In Sparta, celibacy was a crime punishable by deprivation of voting rights. In Rome, celibacy was prohibited and considered contrary to religious practice. Adultery was regarded as among the grievous sins, punishable by death or lifelong exile. The punishment for inducing an abortion was exile or confiscation of property. In the Aztec civilization of Central America, adultery outside the marital bond was regarded as reprehensible and punishable by death, first by strangulation, then by stoning without distinction between men and women.

2.6. Ancient Japanese Civilization:

In ancient Japan, women were known for their marital fidelity, under threat of the death penalty. If a husband caught his wife in the act of adultery, it was his right to kill her and her lover on the spot; some rulers added that the husband was, in such a case, obligated to do so. Chastity was so highly esteemed among the Japanese that some women would take their own lives when their honor was threatened.

2.7. Marriage Among the Pre-Islamic Arabs:

The Arabs held lineage in high regard, which led them to develop an accurate science for organizing families, tribes, and peoples. They encouraged early marriage, beginning at the age of sixteen for males and twelve or younger for females; a girl who reached eighteen or twenty years of age was viewed with pity. The commission of adultery between spouses was considered reprehensible, and those found guilty were subject to the most severe penalties; in some instances, the adulteress was confined to her home. (Karkouti, pp. 120–124)

2.8. In Some Societies

2.8.1. New Caledonia:

In some parts of this society, the adulterer was killed while the adulteress was exempted from death; in other parts of this country, the punishment of the adulterer fell within the rights of the family and clan, as marriage there was considered a public interest of the tribe and clan. Elsewhere, the adulterer was punished in kind, the offended husband was permitted to commit adultery with the offender's wife as a form of the law of retributive justice.



2.8.2. Brazilian Society:

One of the impediments to marriage in Brazilian society was for an adulteress to marry her partner; a woman who entered into an illegitimate sexual relationship with a man other than her husband was prohibited from marrying again.

2.8.3. French Society:

Impediments to marriage in France arose from kinship and affinity. French law prohibits marriage between close relatives, as well as between in-laws who have committed marital infidelity. (Kahhala, 1984, p. 17)

2.8.4. In Judaism:

Jewish teachings regard celibacy as a sin and oblige adherents to engage in the marriage after the age of twenty. They also consider abortion and infanticide to be crimes and acts of disbelievers. Any girl or wife who commits adultery deserves to be stoned; if a married woman is raped, her rapist must pay a financial penalty and take her as his wife for life as punishment for violating her. Those caught in the act are killed together. Anyone who falsely accuses a chaste woman receives corporal punishment and a fine. Crimes of burning are prescribed for men who lie with their father's wife or daughter-in-law, who commit adultery with their wife's daughter or son's daughter, or who commit adultery with a mother-in-law.

2.8.5. In Christianity:

Christianity does not differ from Judaism on this question, as Christ came confirming what was in the Torah. Accordingly, Christianity prohibited abortion, equating it with deliberate murder, and strongly condemned sodomy. The Bible states: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* It was also said that whoever divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce, and that divorce is only permissible in the case of sexual immorality (adultery). All sexual relations outside marriage were deemed legitimately forbidden. Adultery was made the sole justification for seeking divorce, by either husband or wife, though it was stipulated that neither party may remarry. Christianity holds that marriage is a divine institution whose bond is difficult to dissolve, and that celibacy is preferable to both marriage and adultery. (Kahhala, 1984, p. 60)

2.8.6. In Buddhism:

The punishment for an adulteress was to be thrown to dogs before the public, while her partner in the crime was to be roasted alive on a red-hot iron bed until redness. (Belhadj, 1995, p. 108)

2.8.7. Marital Infidelity in Islam:

In Islam, marital infidelity is defined as the crime of unlawful sexual intercourse once committed, and its punishment is flogging or stoning: the unmarried adulterer receives one hundred lashes, while the married adulterer, whether man or woman, is stoned to death (Said, p. 24). Islam considers marital infidelity among the gravest of prohibitions and the major sins. It has forbidden adultery and warned against approaching what may lead to it. God Almighty says: {Do not approach adultery; it is an indecency and an evil way} (The Holy Qur'an). The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: {the adulterer, at the time he is committing adultery, is not a believer} (Prophetic Hadith). The punishment for both the adulterer and adulteress is one



hundred lashes for each one, or stoning in accordance to Allah's words: {the adulteress and the adulterer: whip each one of them a hundred lashes. And let no pity towards them overcome you regarding Allah's Law} (The Holy Qur'an). In Islam, marriage is a source of tranquility for the soul, a comfort for the heart, a stabilizer of conscience, and a coexistence between man and woman grounded in affection and mercy. It is a spiritual bond before it is a material one. Islamic law places great importance on marital compatibility, laying down conditions to ensure that the relationship rests on firm foundations, not transient ones, yet a noble human bond built on the most exalted values, the strongest pillars, and the most honorable principles, keeping it far from all that would cause it to crack, fracture, or collapse (Hasaballah, 1971, p. 30). Allah has urged this in order to preserve dignity, protect the self, purify lineages, and safeguard Muslim society. The punishment for the married adulterer and adulteress is death by stoning.

3. Causes of Marital Infidelity:

3.1. Weak Religious and Moral Restraint:

A spouse who is not steeped in religious culture is capable of any behavior toward the other; for such a person, marital infidelity is conduct carried out without guilt or shame, and is not considered a prohibition.

3.2. Marital Coldness:

When the conjugal relationship grows cold and the love, romance, and attentiveness fade, when the wife neglects her husband's need for tenderness, love, care, and affection, and refuses to listen when he shares his problems. The husband feels unwanted and unneeded and seeks another. Conjugal life may also descend into a routine devoid of novelty, with the wife assuming that after childbirth the relationship has reached a stage of maturity that requires no further effort.

3.3. Life and Work Pressures:

The absence of affectionate expression between spouses, words of love, admiration, and appreciation lead each to seek a new partner who compensates for this deficit in the relationship.

3.4. Sexual Incompatibility:

Sexual compatibility between partners is of great importance. When a husband's desire is strong but the wife is indifferent, sexual incompatibility may arise and the wife's disregard for her husband's needs may drive him to infidelity to satisfy his growing instinctual urges. Spouses who engaged in unlawful sexual relationships before marriage find it easier to return to such behavior, especially in an environment characterized by poor marital compatibility.

3.5. Family Disputes:

A husband may turn to infidelity as a result of quarrels and conflicts within the family, seeking a woman who offers him warmth and tenderness.

3.6. Wife's Neglect of Her Appearance:

Some women, after childbirth and preoccupied with caring for the children and managing the household, neglect their appearance, hygiene, and grooming, assuming that their husband no longer cares about these matters.

3.7. The Spread of Modern Media:

The rapid evolution of media and its negative use have contributed to the spread of marital infidelity on both sides. Viewing pornographic films, explicit clips, and indecent satellite



channels easily accessible online as well as forming online social media friendships, have all paved the way for marital infidelity.

3.8. Psychological and Emotional Factors:

Numerous disturbances experienced in childhood such as emotional repression and emotional deprivation make it difficult for a person to achieve harmony in relationships with those around them. When marriage fails to satisfy their emotional needs, they fill the void with a new partner, falling into infidelity without reflection (Madoui, 2023, p. 178). Dr. Nabila Sabonji, a specialist in social psychology, states that infidelity is a feeling rooted in the depths of the self, a state resulting from dissatisfaction, lack of affection, or a sense of marginalization. It may also be an attempt to assert one's existence or reclaim self-esteem; its primary drivers are sexual repression, emotional dysfunction, or a flawed sense of self. Some problems stem from psychological instability and internal conflicts that manifest as suspicion, distrust, and spreading doubt, all of which threaten the marital relationship and may lead to infidelity (Ahla Montada, 2012). Therefore, if an individual is not balanced intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally, they will often provoke conflicts such as those related to harassment, mutual disrespect, and tense environments caused by selfishness, arrogance, and other actions that threaten the stability of the family. (Taheri, 1997, p. 119)

3.9. Low Cultural Level and Educational Disparity Between Spouses:

In such cases, the wife functions only as a caregiver, not as a true-life companion. This reflects a poor initial choice, which is the wrong starting point for a life that should be stable and enduring for marriage is, by its nature, a bond from life to death, as marriage is not approved in Islam if it is to be limited in time. If either party overlooks the apparent flaws of the other at the outset, these flaws may later crack the foundation of conjugal life or lead it down the path of temptation due to cultural incompatibility, among other reasons. As has been noted, "*Wide disparities in cultural and educational level can destabilize marital life and stir up conflict between the spouses.*" (Abdelaziz, 1972, p. 32)

3.10. Forced Marriage:

Whether a woman or a man is compelled to marry someone they do not desire due to certain customs and traditions, and where one spouse believes in superstitions the other does not, conflict within the home becomes inevitable. (Taheri, 1997, p. 117)

3.11. Psychological Isolation:

This involves a feeling of emotional loneliness, self-centeredness, and an unwillingness to interact with the surrounding environment. The lack of psychological security in married life may cause one or both spouses to seek outside the marital home a person who can satisfy their need for safety. (Al-Issawi, p. 65)

3.12. Bad Habits:

The existence of bad habits in one or both spouses such as a quick temper or neglect of duties affects marital interaction and may drive the offended party to seek a new partner who offers them comfort and peace of mind.

3.13. The Economic Factor:

Most conflicts between spouses have financial backgrounds such as spending on luxuries, especially where the husband has a small monthly income and a small job. Thus, the couple



may not be able to achieve financial balance, which may lead to conflicts. As a result, the couple may experience fear, anxiety, and aggression, which may lead to infidelity among the couples. Another thing that needs to be taken into consideration is the following: *“Some men, once they become wealthy, may first think of taking another woman. In certain cases, men may indulge in illicit relations and be unfaithful to their wives due to the idea of having relations with another woman.”* In this regard, Dr. Karima Saychi, a specialist in sociology, explains that *“according to social studies, women practice marital infidelity due to financial reasons.”* (Ayna, 2004)

3.14. The Social Factor:

Ignorance of social customs and traditions leads to disputes between spouses. For example, if a husband notices that his wife reveals the household's secrets, he becomes angry and quarrels with her, which may drive him to seek another woman who possesses what his wife lacks.

3.15. Mixed-Gender Settings at Work and Social Events:

Working alongside women exposes a man to the possibility of establishing relationships outside the bounds of marriage; some provocatively dressed women draw a man's attention and make him dissatisfied with his wife. In the midst of such temptations, the man may take an unlawful route, leading him to betray his wife. Men are not alone in this, married women, upon entering the work environment, also form new relationships with men that may expose them to temptation and lead to marital infidelity. (Zakaria, 1951, p. 170)

4. Theoretical Frameworks Explaining Marital Infidelity

4.1. Social Exchange Theory:

This theory holds that individuals enter into affiliative relationships when the rewards of those relationships exceed their costs. If the rewards represented by activities and engagements that fulfill individual needs outweigh the effort, discomfort, and difficulty involved, then behavioral forms such as love, friendship, belonging, social interaction, marital and familial relations are all assessed according to this principle. The theory suggests that the resulting gain derived from interaction influences the nature of emotions between spouses: positive emotions arise when the gain from interaction takes the form of a reward, while negative emotions arise when it takes the form of a cost. Positive interaction, built on love, empathy, and understanding, leads to harmony and compatibility between spouses; negative interaction based on fear and tension leads to further animosity and aversion (Al-Anzi, p. 26). Based on this analysis, marital infidelity behaviors may emerge in a spouse who experiences a conjugal relationship in which the negatives outweigh the positives i.e., where the losses (material or moral) exceed the gains. Consequently, infidelity manifests as a reaction to or compensation for this sense of loss, embodied in a relationship with another woman that provides the material or moral rewards he failed to find or has lost in his marriage.

4.2. Psychoanalytic Theory:

Psychoanalytic theory offers an interpretation of marital infidelity through its model of personality structure: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. The Id represents the primitive aspect of the personality, governed by the pleasure principle. The Ego coordinates between the Id's demands and the reality in which the individual lives. The Superego comprises the ideal self



and the conscience. The ideal self-corresponds to the child's conception of what parents consider good and moral. Parents transmit their standards and values of chastity and purity to the child by encouraging conforming behavior. The conscience is the process of judging one's experiences and actions by comparing them against the standards of the ideal self. This is due to the fact that the standards of conscience play a role in the development of the social habits that an individual is socialized to. They are gradually formed through identification, which is the assimilation of the characteristics of one person into one's own. When a person introduces the characteristics of a family member and adopts more of that model's traits, they acquire a familial behavioral pattern (Hall & Lindzey, p. 227). Accordingly, psychoanalytic theory explains marital infidelity based on the automatic controls that govern the development of an individual's moral regulation from early childhood, represented in the formation of the ideal self (the superego) and the development of conscience. This means that psychoanalytic theory interprets a husband's infidelity as stemming from a problem in the process of identification during his early childhood years. In other words, he did not properly identify with the same-sex parent and internalize that parent's values, standards, and behavioral patterns. Thus, the issue of marital infidelity is viewed as a problem in the formation of the individual's conscience.

4.3. Theory of the Role

The role's theory is among the most prominent theories to have focused directly on the psychosocial structure of the family and conjugal relations between partners, employing concepts such as role conflict, role behavior, role ambiguity, and role expectations. In this regard, the researchers note that the concept of role's expectations is crucial. If the role is understood as a social function and human behavior that conforms to approval standards and relies on the individual's status or social situation within a given relational system (Al-Hanafî, n.d), then role's expectations indicate the anecdotes by which individuals anticipate others' behavior.

Role, therefore, is the sum of the expectations of the individual performing the role, which is the individual's conception of the content of the role, which is based upon the personality and characteristics of the individual performing the role. It also includes the expectations of the group about the individual who performs the role, i.e., the behavior of the individual who performs the role. Accordingly, applied to marriage and family, it is obvious that the two partners, along with certain ideas concerning the spouses' role in the new situation, bring with them particular expectations regarding the other person's role. For instance, in the new marital relationship, the husband may bring with him particular ideas regarding his role as a husband, as well as particular expectations regarding the wife's role. Similarly, the wife may bring particular ideas regarding her role, as well as particular expectations regarding the husband's role. Due to the discrepancy between what is expected to be and what actually is in the reality of the situation, conflicts are bound to ensue. The wife may think of herself as extremely competent and cooperative, and that she behaves towards her husband as a loving friend. Nevertheless, the husband may think otherwise about the wife. Therefore, the idea of sanctions comes into the picture, which means the rewards or punishments given by a spouse to another based on the level of success or failure to achieve the expectations. If the husband's conduct meets his wife's role expectations, she will respond positively, expressing emotions and



goodwill. But if his performance of the role does not match her expectations, she will most likely impose negative sanctions such as quarrelling, withdrawal of affection, and irritability. (Al-Khouli, p. 266)

4.4. Theory of the Needs

Abraham Maslow, the pioneer of this theory, clarified that in all behavior an individual pursues a goal that he hopes will satisfy his needs. The theory holds that needs must be satisfied from the base of the pyramid upward to its apex, self-actualization arranged in the following sequence: physiological needs including food, water, sleep; safety needs containing the desire for security and the avoidance of anxiety and tension; belonging needs including the need for love, affection, and acceptance from others within society; esteem needs as the desire to occupy important social positions, being respected, feeling confident, and acquiring power and authority; lastly, the need for self-actualization which is represented in the desire to employ one's capacities and skills in achieving one's goals. The fundamental principle of this theory is that once a need is satisfied, it loses its urgency and the next need begins to emerge as the primary driver of behavior, taking into account that needs renew themselves and are only partially satisfied, driving the individual to return repeatedly to satisfy them. (Hassan, 2014, p. 169)

Regarding the theory of needs, and underscoring the importance of satisfying the need for love, marital infidelity occurs due to the emotional deprivation of the spouse and the frustration of their need for love from their partner. Thus, they deviate in their behavior in search of another outlet to satisfy this need, expressing it through one of the forms of marital infidelity.

5. Manifestations of Marital Instability

5.1. Conflict:

Tension and discord of a broadly reciprocal nature between the two parties, which may remain latent and not manifest in equal measure, gradually becoming the beginning of a phase of disintegration and estrangement between the spouses.

5.2. Desertion of the Marital Bed:

A form of punishment employed by one spouse against the other, permitted by Islamic law as a disciplinary mechanism to be graduated within the framework of conjugal correction, functioning as a behavioral regulator aimed at achieving stability.

5.3. Abandonment of the Marital Home:

One spouse leaves the conjugal home and takes refuge with family or friends; this abandonment may be temporary or permanent.

5.4. Threats:

One party threatens the other in order to obtain rights or demands, using intimidation to secure their needs.

6. Dimensions Affecting Marital Stability

6.1. Pattern of Residence:

Intensive studies have demonstrated that living within an extended family is one of the factors affecting marital stability. The new family enters into the environment of the extended family and constitutes a minor unit alongside other units, influencing the dynamics of



interaction and the resulting tensions and quarrels. This may result numerous manifestations of instability, including desertion, marital infidelity, separation, and divorce.

6.2. Early Marriage:

It is one of the significant factors leading to instability. Families rush to marry off young men or women at an early age without taking consideration into the consequences; insufficient familiarity with the experiences of married life undermines the stability and continuity of the marriage, which may lead to infidelity. (Alyaa, pp. 86–87)

6.3. Insufficient Contribution to Household Provision and Income

6.3.1. The Wife:

When the wife earns her own income from work outside the home, this has a dual impact on marital stability, as her engagement to work leads to shortcomings in fulfilling duties toward her husband and family prompting the husband to resist and seek an alternative source of emotional support.

6.4. Marital Fidelity:

Fidelity is the essential pillar of marital stability and contentment, while marital infidelity entails all manifestations of emotional gratification sought outside the bounds of marriage. (Youssef , 1994, p. 125)

7. Negative effects of Marital Infidelity on the Family and Society

7.1. Homicide:

We find it when the infidelity is on both parts, marital infidelity is a matter closely tied to honor in Arab societies. A husband may kill his wife upon discovering her infidelity, and a wife may kill her husband upon discovering his. The act of killing may extend to the third party on whose account the betrayal occurred. The family may thereby lose one of its members, resulting in the destruction of the household. Marital infidelity pursues conjugal life with its consequences, potentially leading to honor killings. (Mohamed Bayoumi, 2002, p. 104)

7.2. Divorce and Separation:

In many cases, infidelity by either spouse leads to divorce; the wife may resort to judicial divorce, the family disintegrates, and the children are left adrift. Adultery and infertility are the two primary causes most widely cited as grounds for divorce. (Zakaria, 1978, p. 170)

7.3. Disrupted Upbringing and Risk of Deviance in Children:

The family is the source of security and stability, yet it may at times be the source of problems that lead to children's psychological disturbance and behavioral deviance, as there is a documented relationship between the family environment and the behavioral patterns exhibited by its members. (Faraj Ibrahim Al-Masmari , 2012, p. 30)

7.3. Loss of Trust:

When trust is lost within a family, it leads to a loss of equilibrium. The sense of suspicion remains a constant companion of the betrayed party even after building a new family, becoming a complex. Trust is an indispensable element for a healthy marriage and its enduring continuation, free from suspicion, the searching of a partner's belongings, and interrogation about the places visited and the people encountered.



7.4. Loss of Emotional and Psychological Equilibrium:

The effects of infidelity deprivation, oppression, injustice, severe tension and anxiety, complex reactions, and strained psychological states are reflected upon both the unfaithful party and the one who has suffered betrayal, caused intense psychological pressure and had a most serious impact on health and the body. (Ben Souilah, 2024)

7.5. Family Disintegration and the Spread of Animosity:

The effects of infidelity are not confined to the immediate family but extend to relatives, sometimes causing social scandal and affecting family relations for future generations.

7.6. Imitation and Simulation:

In some cases, a daughter may imitate her mother in engaging in illicit relationships if she discovers her mother was involved in an illegitimate affair; a son may similarly follow the same behavior if he discovers his father was unfaithful. (Tadjin, 2025, pp. 66–67)

7.7. God's Wrath and Lack of Success:

Marital infidelity incurs God's wrath, and both parties experience a lack of success in their daily lives; blessings in the home diminish, leading to punishment in the hereafter.

7.8. Neglect of Conjugal and Family Responsibilities:

Infidelity results in the neglect of many obligations toward the spouse, the children, and their upbringing. (Ben Khalifa & Laraba, 2022, p. 99)

7.9. Marital Silence or Muteness:

A state in which both spouses cease to interact, unable to express their feelings either verbally or nonverbally leading to emotional separation. (Khreissa, 2023, pp. 1332–1333)

- The loss of family security and peace of mind.
- The disintegration of families, the destitution of children, and the spread of animosity and hatred between families.
- Moral chaos and the accompanying spread of immorality in society.
- The spread of disease: sexual infidelity may escalate from virtual to physical/sexual betrayal, thereby facilitating the transmission of diseases.
- The emergence of adultery, prostitution, sexual immorality, and sexually transmitted diseases in society. (Mohamed, 2001, p. 32)

7.10. Psychological Disorders:

Marital infidelity leads to psychological disorders that may reach the point of insanity. Many individuals who have been subjected to marital infidelity are psychologically unprepared to confront the difficult changes in their lives, and consequently develop psychological or mental disorders.

7.11. Differences in Age:

A significant age gap between spouses leads to the collapse of conjugal life. A large age difference places them in two different generations with divergent ways of thinking, feelings, interests, energies, and reactions in marital interactions. This increases the likelihood of boredom, discord, and lack of harmony between an older husband and a younger wife, potentially leading to infidelity, and vice versa.



7.12. Educational Level:

Zakaria El Berri notes that it may be desirable for educational levels to be similar, as this can be a factor of homogeneity. Nevertheless, when a man feels educationally superior to his wife, or a woman feels the same way, incompatibility ensues. The educational gap creates two intellectually distinct classes, and such differences can over time affect the marital relationship negatively and contribute to infidelity. (Ahsan, p. 24)

II. Conclusion

The topic of marital infidelity is common in various societies. It has several reasons and motives, as well as a range of effects on both spouses and children on one hand, and on the family structure and kinship relations on the other. This study shows that marital infidelity is a complex phenomenon that goes beyond the individual and is influenced by the surrounding social and cultural environment. The analysis indicates that infidelity behavior develops through continuous interaction between personal factors and societal roles, and its repercussions extend beyond the marital relationship to affect the entire family system. Thus, understanding this phenomenon provides a clearer perspective on the challenges facing contemporary families, therefore, researchers and specialists can suggest methods to address it and mitigate its impact on the stability of the family institution and society at large.

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