

INFIDEL BEHAVIOUR: INVOLVED PERSONALITY

ASPECTE ALE PERSONALITĂȚII IMPLICATE ÎN COMPORTAMENTUL INFIDEL

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Abstract: The study presents the analysis of infidelity, its causes and effects on the marital relationship; we capture those traits of personality that make a person become infidel. To do so, we take into account both the consequences of infidelity and the feelings the hurt person experiences, such as uncertainty and confusion. The total number of the subjects of this study is 80, of which 40 women and 40 men. The subjects we tested, aged 20-25 and 35-50, were selected taking into account the way they got married; we only tested one partner of each couple. Thus, of the 40 women, 20 are aged 20-25, while the other 20 are aged 35-50. The structure of the male sample was identical. There are, in the sample of men and women aged 20-25, 10 people from undergraduate families attending the course, of the Agricultural and Veterinary University of the Banat, Timișoara. After making a synthesis of the theoretical aspects, we can say that both men and women tend to become infidel. The reasons for infidelity are: the tension within the couple, indifference, ignoring the other's wishes and desires, limiting to unpleasant talks detrimental to humorous ones, etc. Infidelity has always important consequences – sometimes even capital ones – for the infidel himself or herself, for his/her partner, and for his/her group. Such a situation shakes self-confidence and makes everybody ask himself or herself questions.

Rezumat: Studiul analizează fenomenul infidelității, cauzele și efectele acesteia asupra relației maritale, fiind surprinse acele trăsături de personalitate care „predispun” o persoană spre manifestarea unui comportament infidel. În acest sens, sunt luate în considerare atât consecințele infidelității, cât și stările trăite de persoana trădată, cum ar fi incertitudinea, confuzia. Numărul total al subiecților acestui studiu este 80, din care 40 de persoane de sex feminin și 40 de persoane de sex masculin. Participanții testați, cu vârste cuprinse între 20-25 de ani și 35-50 de ani, au fost selectați ținându-se cont de criteriul implicării acestora într-o căsătorie; a fost testat doar un partener din cadrul unui cuplu. Astfel, dintre cele 40 de femei, 20 au vârsta cuprinsă între 20-25 de ani, iar celelalte 20 între 35-50 de ani. Structura eșantionului masculin este identică cu cea a femeilor. În subeșantionul cuprins între 20-25 de ani, câte 10 persoane fac parte din familii studențești de la facultăți din cadrul USAMVB, Timișoara. Sintetizând aspectele teoretice, se apreciază că atât bărbații, cât și femeile manifestă tendințe spre infidelitate. Motivele apariției infidelității sunt reprezentate de atmosfera tensionată din cadrul cuplului, indiferența, ignorarea dorințelor partenerului, limitarea la discuții neplăcute în detrimentul umorului etc. Apariția infidelității are întotdeauna importante consecințe, uneori capitale, pentru infidelul însuși, pentru partenerul său și pentru anturaj. Un asemenea eveniment zdruncină reperele și credințele fiecăruia și-i determină să-și pună întrebări.

Key words: personality, traits of personality, infidel behaviour

Cuvinte cheie: personalitate, trăsături de personalitate, comportament infidel.

INTRODUCTION

A very controversial topic in psychology is marital infidelity: it needs studying both the consequences of infidelity on the crisis the couple is going through, and the feelings of the betrayed person, i.e. uncertainty and confusion, making such a behaviour sometimes

unexplainable. They even got to the conclusion that infidelity would be hereditary, as the instinct of defence is. Buss and Wright (1989) start from the premise that it is in our genes and that it is passed on from generation to generation (in Ciupercă, 1999).

Leleu (2003) identifies the following causes of infidelity:

- *Lack of satisfaction*

The infidel considers that his/her partner does not meet his/her legitimate needs; after having waited for a while, he addresses somebody from outside the couple. Here there are two situations: either the infidel's needs are normal and the partner's answer is really insufficient, or the infidel's needs are very high and the partner's answer is relatively insufficient. In either case, there is a gap between the expectancies of the infidel and what his/her partner has to give. Here rises the question: How is it that there was no sigh of the gap so far, from the very beginning of the relationship? Maybe there was a gap, but the supra-valorising and lover projection processes might have covered it. Or maybe it developed gradually, each of the partners evolving in a divergent way both psychically and sexually; used feelings and desires, for instance, could have affected one of the partners more than the other one.

- *Excessive affective needs not satisfied*

It is the case of a man whose needs are huge, even insatiable. He must be loved with fervour and without mistake; he also needs to be permanently reassured. His partner is trying hard during the years of grace. Then she cracks, not because she is giving too much, but because she is giving without any durable results. When the crisis occurs, and particularly at the end of the fusion, the man feels abandoned, tries to make his partner turn again into some kind of mother, but though she loves him, she wants to become autonomous. Thus, the man starts looking for a supplement of tenderness and narcissism outside the couple.

- *Sexual needs not satisfied*

Several cases are to be presented here:

- *a strong libido*: Certain persons have important sexual needs, as they purely and simply devour, without having anything to do with nymphomania. Their partners, though loving to be pleased, cannot always please them, which make the latter look for other partners.

- *a low sexuality*: There are also persons whose sexual possibilities are obstructed and have, therefore, difficulties in satisfying his/her partner whose demands are, nevertheless, reasonable. It can be a matter of temper, as certain persons are not inclined to sexuality. Or it may be the consequence of some disease. The disorders that can affect sexual life are numerous: sexual disorders (impotence, precocious ejaculation, anorgasmia, anafrodisia – the lack of desire), local diseases (either gynaecological or urological), neurological diseases (paralysis), heart condition (heart failure), toxic condition (drinking, smoking, drug abuse), mental disorders (neurosis and psychosis), idiopathic complications (certain drugs and some tranquilisers, antidepressives, blood-pressure regulators, etc. can diminish sexual desire and trouble erection); and last, but no least, with time and because of daily cohabitation, sexual desire may diminish. The partner whose sexuality is normal is frustrated, and this frustration can cause neurotic disorders (anxiety, depression, etc.), but psycho-somatic troubles can also occur (ulcer, high-blood pressure, etc.). Some of these frustrated partners purely and simply give up any sexual life, choosing a life full of sacrifice, improperly lived and paid off with numerous psychic and somatic disorders; some others seek refuge in extra-marital relationships.

- *Childhood-rooted cause (the Oedipal triangle):*

There are cases in which infidelity is nothing but a performance directed by the figure 3. This is where the first love is located: the child who wants the parent of the opposite sex finds himself or herself face to face with a couple, but his/her precocious experience leaving traces in his/her subconscious for ever, making them to enter a triangular relationship. For

example, in the case of a woman that has a lover, if she is married, the affective triangular relationship is made up of her, her husband, and the lover, her husband is the father's image. If she is not married, she will make it so that she gets involved with a married man to get the same combination. It is thus that women and men relive the pains and ambiguity of their childhood, together with its accompanying fantasies and desires. For example, if a man that falls in love with a married woman, she finds the sufferings of her first years of life, associated with her desire to have a mother and a strong hate for her father. We could ask ourselves: How can somebody face suffering in such a way? The explanation is that there is an impeccable psychic mechanism: repetition of the suffering. Subconsciously, the remembrance of a masochistic pleasure felt in a painful situation enhances us to search for analogous situations. Sometimes, the subconscious is even more subtle: a woman has a married man for a lover, but what makes her sad is, in fact, her lover's wife, which she assimilated with her mother. The goal of the game is to ask her lover to leave his partner, as she had hoped to see her father leave her mother for her as a child.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The goal of the research is to study infidelity, its causes and effects on the marital couple, as well as the traits of personality associated to infidel behaviour. To do so, we suggest the following *general objectives* and *working hypotheses*:

Table 1.

General objectives and working hypotheses – infidelity causes

No.	General objectives	Working hypotheses
1	Identifying and assessing the relationships between infidel behaviour and marital satisfaction indices, on one hand, and infidel behaviour and certain aspects of personality, on the other hand.	Infidel behaviour within the couple is strictly related to marital satisfaction, partner's assessment, self-esteem, and anxiety
2	Identifying and quantifying differences at the level of infidel behaviour	Traits of personality as relatively stable structures are related to infidel behaviour features
3	Identifying and measuring aspects of infidel behaviour depending on age	Age induces significant differences in the infidel behaviour
4	Developing a psychological image of personality in men and women ranking high in infidel behaviour	In infidel behaviour, there are some significant differences depending on sex

Research instruments

Measuring research hypotheses was done using the following psychological instruments: the Scale for assessing partners and marital satisfaction, the Rosenberg Scale for measuring self-esteem, the Questionnaire for assessing infidel behaviour, the Freiburg personality inventory (F.P.I.) the G form, Big-Five and S.T.A.I., X-2 (a questionnaire to assess anxiety).

In this paper we only detail the fourth hypothesis testing significant differences concerning infidel behaviour depending on age.

As a result of statistic processing of raw data concerning infidel behaviour depending on age, we see that women (aged 20-25) have a stronger tendency to be infidel than men (aged 20-25).

Figure 1 shows that women aged 20-25 tend more to be infidel than women aged 35-

50. Such differences related to age can be explained by the fact that women aged 20-25 and married have better opportunities to escape their marriage because of either their emotional immaturity or of their need for new sensations, for adventure (of any kind) characteristic to their age. Men aged 35-50 tend more to be infidel than men aged 20-25.

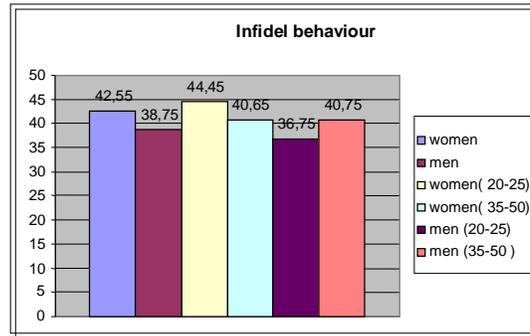


Figure 1. Infidel behaviour depending on age

There is also the possibility for the married women within this range of age to become infidel just because they got married too early and thus have no opportunity to experience other partnerships. Thus, though in women of this range of age there is a relatively good marital satisfaction (Figure 2), the reason for infidelity can be curiosity, desire for adventure, or sociability. We can see a relatively low marital satisfaction in men aged 35-50 compared to men aged 20-25: the lack of satisfaction within the marital couple or low level of desire can also lead to adultery. Men's infidelity within this age range can be considered as a form of aggressiveness directed towards the partner that caused him frustration during long periods of time, thus provoking marital dissatisfaction.

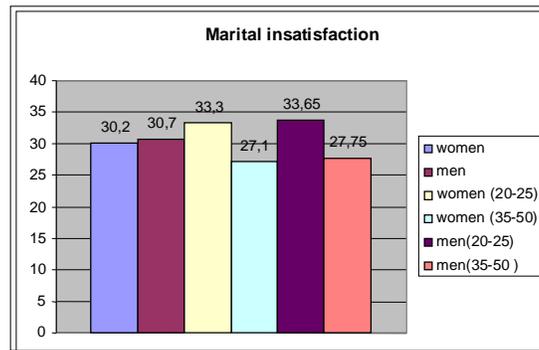


Figure 2. Level of marital satisfaction depending on age

We can also see a stronger tendency to sociability (Figure 3) in women aged 20-25. Taking into account this aspect, infidelity in women aged 20-25 can also be more influenced by their higher degree of sociability. The need for and the tendency to establish contacts, the search for contacts, friendly attitude, quick inter-personal relationships, vivacity, enterprising spirit, activism, communicativeness, and the presence of spirit, i.e. those aspects characterising sociability in women aged 20-25 can influence the appearance of infidel behaviour.

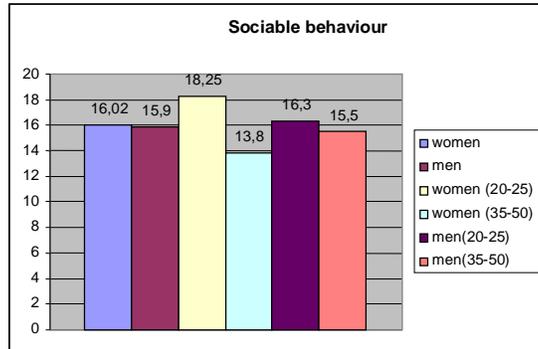


Figure 3. Sociable behaviour depending on age

This sociability doubled by tensions, conflicts, and lack of satisfaction within a marital couple can lead to the appearance of adultery, as women thus search to relief the tension in her marital relationship.

Another possible explanation of infidelity in women and men aged 20-25 is their involvement in social life, their social activism, compared to men and women over 50, where there is retirement and, implicitly, social retirement of the person.

Aggressive behaviour can be influenced by a series of personal and situational factors. Among personal factors, together with personality, sex plays an important role in aggressive behaviour. This is also an important source of differences among individuals in aggressive behaviour. While socialising, boys are more encouraged, either directly or in a more subtle manner, to be aggressive, dominating, authoritarian (starting from the simple choice of his toys by his parents to the compulsory making up of emotions associated with shame), while the girls are constantly discouraged to do so. The size of the gap in aggressive behaviour between the sexes also varied depending on the kind of aggressiveness. Aggressive attitudes and physical abuse are more common in men than in women, but women are equally inclined to be aggressive, it is true, verbally, in similar contexts. Redefining sex roles led to the eradication of constraints that inhibited women's aggressiveness, leading to a high delinquency rate among them.

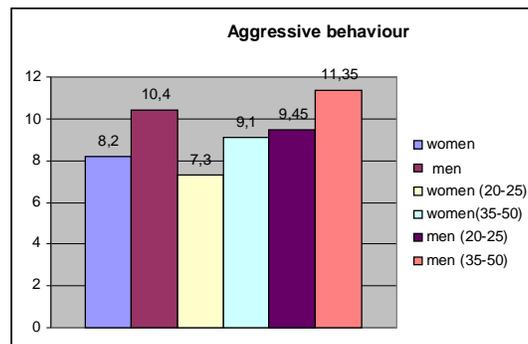


Figure 4. Aggressive behaviour depending on age

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at capturing the existence of a relationship between the level of marital satisfaction, assessment of the partner, self-esteem, anxiety, and the tendency of married people to become infidel.

As a result, we could reach the following conclusions:

- anxious partners that hardly adapt to marital relationship tend more to become infidel, as they search for the wanted adaptation outside their marriage;
- persons tending to infidel behaviour tend more to be aggressive than people committed to the couple;
- depending on sex, there is a higher tendency in women to be infidel than in men;
- depending on age, women aged 20-25 tend more to be infidel than men aged 20-25;
- infidels are apparently social persons, but their involvement with other persons is but a “self-defence reaction” against anxiety and emotional instability;
- persons tending to be infidel are less sincere than persons tending to be committed;
- infidel behaviour persons are perceived as lacking morality.

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