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CAUSAL EXPLANATIONS FOR INFIDELITY OF LATVIAN RESIDENTS IN DATING AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

Abstract

Both forms of interpersonal relationship between adults: dating and marital are often practiced in the most of the modern societies. It is common, that the most of people express their beliefs that relationship partners should be faithful to each other, in both forms of the relationship, no matter whether it is dating or marital. However, sexual or romantic relationships outside of a primary marital or dating dyad occur fairly often. It is reported, that from 26% to 55% of men and 21% to 45% of women are unfaithful to their partners. This fact is often defined as an extra-dyadic involvement (EDI) or an act of infidelity. The infidelity can be devastating to both sexes and the betrayed partner normally experiences suffering, pain and many other traumatic emotions. It is often leads to break-up. The given research focuses on the causal explanations of the infidelity by Latvian residents ($N=434$) who are in dating and marital relationship with their partners. This study explored the similarities and differences in explanations for the possible reasons of infidelity. It is supposed that persons who are in the dating relationships perceive the act of infidelity in a different way than persons who are officially married. It is also proposed, that females' explanations for infidelity are close in the both groups of participants, whether males' attributions of infidelity are different. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Key words: Attributions, Causal Explanations, Infidelity, Dating and Marital Relationships

In spite of widespread beliefs that relationship partners should be faithful to each other, infidelity or relationships outside of a primary marital or dating dyad occur fairly often. A study conducted in 53 countries with nearly 17,000 participants found 63% of men and 45% of women reported that while in a romantic relationship, they had engaged in sex with another partner (Schmitt, 2003).

There are many different methodological and technical problems in understanding infidelity. Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, (2001) note, that when the relationship between potential predictors and infidelity is not assessed in a single model, important issues such as interactions among predictors, multicollinearity, and the combined influence of multiple predictors cannot be assessed.

Gender has been the most commonly studied variable in the context of infidelity. The typical finding mentioned in a number of studies has been that more men than women have engaged in infidelity (Allen, et al. 2005; Klein, 2007). It is suggested that the differences between the sexes in rates of infidelity may be decreasing.

Several studies (Schmitt, & Buss, 2000; Shackelford, Besser, & Goetz, 2008) proposed that there are some unfaithful personality predictors for men and women. Buss (2000) proposed that high narcissism, low conscientiousness and high psychotism proved to be solid predictors for marital infidelity. In the same time such personality predictors as emotional instability and quarrelsomeness often drive their partners into the arms of others. Shackelford and colleagues (2008) note, that there is surprising lack of robust and rigorous

research on this topic. However, there was a proposed support for a causal model according to which people with particularly disagreeable spouses (i.e., those low on Agreeableness) and particularly unreliable spouses (i.e., those low on Conscientiousness) are less satisfied with their marriage, leading them to estimate a higher probability of becoming extramaritally involved in the next year. Low conscientiousness and low agreeableness share the common component of impulsivity and inability to delay gratification and are robust predictors of infidelities. These findings suggest that a personality style marked by impulsivity, low dependability, and low reliability in general carries over into the sexual sphere.

There are five categories of motives for infidelity distinguished by Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, (1999). They are as follows: sexuality, emotional satisfaction, social context, attitudes-norms, and revenge-hostility. Sexuality motives include the desire for variety and dissatisfaction with the primary sexual relationship. Emotional satisfaction might imply relationship dissatisfaction, ego bolstering, and/or emotional attachment to the other person. Social contextual factors refer to opportunity and absence of the primary partner. Attitudes-norms include sexually permissive attitudes and norms. Revenge-hostility applies to infidelity that occurs in retaliation for some perceived wrong by the partner.

The number of studies determines links between people's responses towards their own or partner's infidelity and causal explanations, revealing how such extra-dyadic relations are perceived and explained (Mongeau, Halle, & Alles, 1994; Hall, & Fincham, 2006).

DeGenova and Rice (2005) highlighted several experimental functions of dating relationships for youth, such as exploring gender roles, aspects of self-identity, and sexuality, noted the lack of clear "rules" for dating in contemporary culture, and described the divergent priorities college students have for dating versus marriage. While getting married typically involves a significant commitment to the relationship from both partners (Kline et al., 2004), dating relationships often have lower levels of commitment (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2004), and dating men may even deceive partners about their levels of commitment to the relationship (Tooke & Camire, 1991).

On the other hand, Roscoe, Cavanaugh, and Kennedy (1988) noted similarities in behaviors seen in dating and marital relationships and stated that "in many respects dating is preparation for marriage, and may lead to the establishment of behavioral patterns which will be maintained in marriage" (p. 37). Sexually permissive attitudes and attachment styles that involve anxiety over abandonment may predict likelihood of engaging in dating infidelity McAnulty & Brineman (2007).

The objective of the given study is to figure out if there are any differences on causal explanations for infidelity between persons in different type of the relationship (dating or

marital). Two major aspects of the researched problem have been considered in this study: (a) causal attributions towards women's infidelity, and (b) causal attributions of infidelity men's infidelity. Taking into account the possible gender differences in perception of and explanations for infidelity, the causal explanations for infidelity of the male and female participants were compared separately from each other.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 434 Latvian residents (148 males, 34.91%; 286 females, 65.9%). The mean age was 29.90 ($SD = 9.80$) ranging from 18 to 56. The participants were people of different education and occupation living in Latvian cities and countryside. The sample consisted of 278 (64.1%) married residents and 156 (35.9%) residents reported to be in dating relationship.

Procedure

All participants were asked to fill out the Infidelity Questionnaire (INFQ) consisted of 24 items, which they had to assess with 5-point scale to indicate the importance of a given cause (1 = *not important at all*, 5 = *very important*).

Instrumentation

The modified Infidelity Questionnaire (INFQ) developed by Yeniçeri & Kökdemir (2006) was used in this study. It was adapted for Latvian and Russian sample. The modification of this questionnaire allowed combining INFQ-W and INFQ-M forms into one form used by both sexes in order to get responses concerning as to attributions of infidelity towards respondents' gender group (i.e. in-group attributions) as well as attributions towards the partner's gender group (i.e. out-group attributions). The questionnaire consists of six components: (a) legitimacy, which implies the effect of "revenge". This component seems to state that the partner in the relationship deserves to be cheated; (b) seduction, which implies the effect of a "third person"; (c) normalization, which underlines concept that infidelity is a normal act; (d) sexuality, referring to the quality of the sexual relationship between a person and his or her partner; (e) social background, describing the cultural peculiarities and circumstances in which the relationship with partner was established; and (f) sensation seeking, corresponding to person's activity in seeking for sensual experience.

Design

This study used a 2 (sex of participant: male, female) \times 2 (type of the relationship) \times 2 (in-group attributions and out-group attributions) independent groups factorial design.

RESULTS

Because of the significant gender differences confirmed in the previous studies (Ruza & Ruza, 2011), two separate comparisons along (INFQ) components were made in the given study. The first comparison involved the female participants who reported themselves to be in marital or dating relationship.

Independent Sample t-test was used in order to confirm the difference. The mean (*M*) and Standard Deviation (*SD*) values of each INFQ component relevant to each group of participants are presented in the Table 1.

1. Table *Differences in causal attributions towards women's and men's infidelity of married females and those, who are in dating relationship*

<i>Component</i>	<i>Type of the relationship</i>	<i>Women's infidelity</i>			<i>Men's infidelity</i>		
		<i>(M)</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>t-test</i>	<i>(M)</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>t-test</i>
Legitimacy	Married	14,97	3,826	-1.570	15,74	3,394	-.200
	Dating	15,67	3,562		15,82	3,511	
Seduction	Married	10,03	3,642	-.431	13,99	3,753	.780
	Dating	10,21	3,331		13,66	3,081	
Normalization	Married	9,35	3,413	.063	11,49	3,626	1.596
	Dating	9,33	3,172		10,80	3,556	
Sexuality	Married	13,10	3,631	-1.161	15,92	2,960	-.438
	Dating	13,58	3,002		16,07	2,715	
Social Background	Married	11,09	3,631	-3.029**	12,45	3,961	-2,561**
	Dating	12,36	3,243		13,53	3,174	
Sensation Seeking	Married	12,13	3,837	-.617	14,95	3,310	1.043
	Dating	12,41	3,409		14,52	3,420	

** $p > .01$

The results showed the only one significant difference ($p > .01$) between groups in 'Social Background' component. In both cases explaining as women's as well as men's infidelity reasons, the 'Social Background' component was reported to be much more reasonable cause for infidelity for female participants who reported themselves to be in dating relationship than those who are married.

The second comparison involved the male participants who reported themselves to be in marital or dating relationship. The mean (*M*) and Standard Deviation (*SD*) values of each INFQ component relevant to each group of participants are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Differences in causal attributions towards women's and men's infidelity of married males and those, who are in dating relationship

Component	Type of the relationship	Women's infidelity			Men's infidelity		
		(M)	(SD)	t-test	(M)	(SD)	t-test
Legitimacy	Married	14,07	3,969	-.901	14,99	3,761	-.014
	Dating	14,70	3,609		15,00	3,416	
Seduction	Married	13,02	3,713	.196	13,89	4,252	-.810
	Dating	12,88	4,031		14,49	3,725	
Normalization	Married	11,71	3,668	-.563	10,65	4,243	-1.516
	Dating	12,09	3,829		11,79	3,967	
Sexuality	Married	13,26	3,320	-.479	14,61	3,381	-1.976*
	Dating	13,53	2,898		15,79	3,098	
Social Background	Married	11,49	3,519	-1.800	11,91	3,910	-2,050**
	Dating	12,63	3,471		13,53	3,535	
Sensation Seeking	Married	13,30	3,498	-.77	14,12	3,666	-.165
	Dating	13,26	3,619		14,23	3,585	

* $p > .05$

** $p > .01$

The results indicated no significant differences in any INFQ component between groups of participants in causal explanations for women's infidelity. However, there were determined the significant differences between groups in 'Sexuality' component ($p > .05$) and in 'Social Background' component ($p > .01$) in causal explanations for men's infidelity. In both cases the 'Sexuality' and 'Social Background' components were reported to be much more reasonable causes for infidelity for those male participants who reported to be in dating relationship than those who reported to be married.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to represent how persons involved in the different type of the relationship perceive and explain the possible reasons for women's and men's infidelity. The general people's belief that relationship partners should be faithful to each other, in both forms of the relationship, no matter whether it is dating or marital could be also a possible explanation why males and females involved in the different types of the relationship tend to provide very close explanations for infidelity reasons. The only exception emerged in both samples was 'Social Background' component, which consisted of such indicators as "marrying young", "having an arranged marriage", "growing up in a conservative culture", and "having few romantic relationships during adolescence", which seemed to be much more

reasonable causes for infidelity for those participants who reported to be in dating relationship. The results are partly consistent with Yenerci & Kokdemir (2006) original study proposed that if this freedom is restricted for any reason such as social background, culture, or physical environment, men are expected to be unfaithful when they are able to have a romantic relationship.

The current study is limited in several ways that suggest directions for future work. One limitation pertains to the sample, which was chosen from a single culture and a relatively restricted age range. Though the age of the participants was ranging from 18 to 56, the most of participants were undergraduate and postgraduate students of Latvian Colleges and Universities, so the number of persons who are older than 30 was not enough in order to represent the real population of Latvia. It is possible that the current studies missed some important reasons of infidelity that might be more likely to occur in older persons, who might be more experienced in the domains of perceiving and committing infidelity.

Another limitation of this research is a methodological one. Participants were instructed to fill out 24 items of INFQ, which were classified into six components. However, analyzing the verbal responses of the most of participants, following this study, there emerged many other possible reasons of infidelity, out of INFQ items.

Therefore, an important direction for future work could be developing an instrument measuring causal explanations for infidelity taking into account the specific features and peculiarities more relevant to the modern Latvian Society.

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