

# What is linked to Infidelity?

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**Abstract.** A happy and long-lasting marriage is what many people wish for. However, some marriages are less ideal than we hope, and one of the reasons is because of infidelity or the appearance of the third person. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between attachment anxiety and infidelity. The definition of infidelity is the violation of relationship norms that involve having extramarital sex with someone other than the marriage partner. People with higher attachment anxiety can experience infidelity. This quantitative research involved married individuals who had been married for 1 to 5 years (N = 128, Boys = 49, Girls = 79) is conducted using an online survey using a self-reported online questionnaire that measured attachment anxiety and infidelity. The results found a significant correlation between attachment anxiety and infidelity ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Marriage; Attachment Anxiety; Infidelity

## 1 Introduction

Marriage is one of the most memorable moments for everyone. Besides, marriage is a unique experience that helps individuals discover the meaning of love and happiness. Married persons often reported being happier and more satisfied than those who are unmarried or divorced because they have someone to share, support, company, and depend on [14]. Therefore, marriage is an essential element in a person's life since it brings two people together to share their ability and skills to fulfill each other needs [13].

In 2020, there were around 1.792.548 marriages in Indonesia [2]. Broadly speaking, most people wish for a happy and long-lasting marriage. However, some conditions can pose a threat to the stability of marriage such as infidelity or the presence of a third person. According to previous study [1], *infidelity* is common in a marriage. Findings showed that one of the problems in a relationship is commonly infidelity or unfaithfulness.

Infidelity can have serious negative consequences such as increased risk of mental health problems, particularly depression/anxiety and PTSD, divorce, violence, and exposure to sexual transmitted diseases [3]. Not only does infidelity lead to mental health and well-being for those involved, but it can also have destructive effects on children, family members, and friends [15].

Infidelity is defined as any secret emotional involvement with another person (Online or in person), which can be seen through holding hands, cuddling, kissing or having sex [3]. Previous study defined infidelity as extramarital sex that involves sexual inclusivity with one person within a committed relationship [1]. Sex is considered one of the protective factors that can prevent infidelity [4]. Sexual satisfaction is one way to show intimacy and closeness. Furthermore, someone with attachment anxiety sees sex as a positive tool to fulfill the need for love and security [10].

In married couples, attachment anxiety can predict engaging in acts of infidelity [8]. Past work has explored the relationship between attachment anxiety and infidelity. The results showed that there is a positive correlation between infidelity and attachment anxiety [5,11,12] which means someone with higher attachment anxiety, is linked to a greater likelihood of engaging in infidelity. Attachment anxiety is characterized by the concern about abandonment, which makes them seek intimacy and cling to their partner to make them feel loved, which causes them to seek more attention from another partner.

Besides, attachment anxiety can affect relationships because those with attachment anxiety want their partner to care, show affection, and provide protection. They are afraid that their partner will abandon them at any time. Therefore, most of the time, they will often look for attention through jealousy and anger or by expressing sadness, anxiety, fear, and embarrassment. Individuals with attachment anxiety often doubt their partners and are acutely aware of the signs of unavailability of the partner, making it difficult to get close to their partner. In addition, individuals with attachment anxiety usually only care about their own needs [9-10] and report lower satisfaction, closeness, and pessimism about the future of the relationship [9].

Understanding how attachment anxiety affects relationships is important for a happy marriage as individuals may otherwise continue to experience relationship difficulties, leading to higher rates of divorce or mental health issues. Therefore, in the present study, we aim to explore the relationship between attachment anxiety and infidelity since someone with higher attachment anxiety feels that their intimacy is not yet fulfilled by their partner, thus putting marriage at risk by seeking assurance from another.

## 2. Method

### *Participant*

The sample size for this study was determined using the G\*Power application, involving a minimum of 55 participants. The method used to collect the respondents was *purposive sampling with the criteria being* married for 1 – 5 years. Participants ( $N = 128$ ) were collected using a self-reported online questionnaire about attachment anxiety and infidelity using Google Forms.

### Instrument

#### Infidelity

Participants completed a questionnaire about infidelity behavior [13] cited by Sakman, Urganci, and Sevi [12] which measured six extradyadic behaviors with 6 items. Participants were asked to respond on a Guttman scale (1 = yes, 0 = No.). Some examples of the questions are, “Did you

go on a date with another person?” and “Did you kiss another person?”

#### Attachment Anxiety

Attachment anxiety was measured using the Experiences in Close Relationships scale-short form (ECR-S) [15]. The measurement consisted of 6 items, with a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with items such as “I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.” In this study, the reliability of the scale with Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is 0.62

#### Procedure

Participants were asked to fill out a self-reported online questionnaire through Google Forms about attachment anxiety and infidelity. Participants would have access to the questionnaires after agreeing to the consent form and meeting the criteria of being married for 1 – 5 years.

#### Data Analysis

We conducted a correlational study to describe the correlation between attachment anxiety and infidelity. The data were collected and analyzed using SPSS.

### 3. Result

#### Participant’s characteristics

The total of the participants 128 respondents (61.7% female and 38.3% male) were married for 1 – 5 years, with the majority is 5 years

**Table 1.** The age of the marriage

Age of Marriage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	12	9.4
2	28	21.9
3	26	20.3
4	16	12.5
5	46	35.9
Total	128	100

#### Data analysis

We conducted a bivariate correlation to explore the correlation between attachment anxiety and infidelity. The findings are presented in Table 2, which showed a significant positive correlation between attachment anxiety and infidelity ( $p < 0,05$ ), which means the lower the attachment anxiety, the lower the infidelity.

We also conducted a chi-square test to explore the association between gender and infidelity. According to Table 3, males reported higher rates of infidelity compared to females.

**Table 2.** Correlation between attachment anxiety and infidelity

No	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1	Attachment Anxiety	18.086	4.052	1	
2	Infidelity	1.344	2.263	0.174	1

**Table 3.** Association between gender and Infidelity

Gender	Infidelity						Total	
	Low		Middle		High			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	24	49	10	20.4	15	30.6	49	100
Female	63	79.7	8	10.1	8	10.1	79	100
<b>Total</b>	87	68	18	14.1	23	18	128	100

#### 4. Discussion

Marriage is the fundamental source of happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction for the majority of people [14]. The first five years are a critical period for every couple. The aim of this present study is to explore the relationship between attachment anxiety and infidelity. Several studies have shown attachment anxiety associated with infidelity [8,11,12]. This is crucial to understand how attachment style can affect various aspects of human life, especially relationships. Attachment anxiety can predict infidelity in marriage [8,11]. Individuals with higher attachment anxiety tend not to trust their partner, do not feel loved, often feel insecure, crave constant attention and assurance, therefore leading to insecurity when the partner is not available. The feeling of being abandoned, may lead them to seek validation and more emotional reassurance from another person thus potentially leading to infidelity.

In addition, males have a greater tendency towards infidelity; this was consistent with previous studies [3,6] which show males reported a higher level of infidelity as compared to females, the numbers of males involved in extradyadic sexual activities was higher than females [7].

However, this study has several limitations that further researchers should take note of. First, the majority of the respondents were female, which could affect the analysis. Second, the infidelity behavior scale mainly consisted of favorable questions, leading most respondents to answer “no” to the questions. Future researchers should also consider cultural factors.

#### 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it was reported that infidelity was associated with attachment anxiety, it was turned out as predicted as previous research on infidelity and attachment anxiety has found consistent results [8, 11, 12].

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