

# SEX TABOOS, SEXUAL SATISFACTION AND INFIDELITY IN MARRIED MEN<sup>1</sup>

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have examined the taboo surrounding sex,<sup>2</sup> which has led to consideration of how it should be classified legally. Some cultures continue to view specific sexual behaviors and displays as unacceptable. Human sexuality is a powerful energy that may be innate and reflects a deep, basic desire. Although human sexual behavior is natural, talking about sex-related topics has always been frowned upon and met with social disapproval. People are forced to make references to sexual notions in one form or another because of censorship and social

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<sup>2</sup> E. Veer & M. Golf-Papez, *Physically Freeing: Breaking Taboos Through Online Displays Of The Sexual Self*, 34 JOURNAL OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT 1105 (2018) (*see infra*).

guilt around them, or precisely because of these circumstances. This highlights the conflicting character of taboo,<sup>3</sup> which forces people to either follow or disregard norms of society, because having sex is both humiliating and appealing, both forbidden and encouraging. The very high degree of synonymy in the vocabulary around genitalia and reproduction reflects the ambivalence surrounding sexual taboos. This fact lends credence to Kate Burridge's<sup>4</sup> theory that taboos foster the creation of words by suggesting that the stronger the taboo, the more productive language development.

In a married life, sexual interactions are just as important emotionally and physically as family ties.<sup>5</sup> In these partnerships, intimacy is a strong symbol of love and an essential measure of closeness.<sup>6</sup> Men's in particular emphasis on sexual interactions is a means of communication and expression for a range of

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<sup>3</sup> Elicer Crespo-Fernández, 'Taboos In Speaking Of Sex And Sexuality,' (Keith Allan, ed.) THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF TABOO WORDS AND LANGUAGE (2018).

<sup>4</sup> Keith Allan & Kate Burridge, FORBIDDEN WORDS. TABOO AND THE CENSORING OF LANGUAGE (2007).

<sup>5</sup> See Moore v. City of East Cleveland, 431 U.S. 494 (1977).

<sup>6</sup> Cleveland, 431 U.S. 494.

emotions, including closeness, love, rage, and violence.<sup>7</sup> Although sexual orientation may be a constant throughout life, each person's experience with it may be distinct, private, and involves their own ideas and emotions. It is critical to concentrate on married life and carry out research focused at improving couples' relationships since problems in relationships might result in family breakdowns with ramifications for society and families.<sup>8</sup>

Infidelity is defined as a violation of an assumed or expressed contract between couples regarding emotional and/or sexual exclusivity.<sup>9</sup> It is having intimate interactions in secret with a second partner, breaching the exclusivity of relationships including marriage. This frequently leads to severe suffering, mistrust, and uncertainty.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, it is widely

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<sup>7</sup> H. Shareh & T. Tavakoli, *The Relationship Between Religious Orientation And Sexual Self-Efficacy With Infidelity: The Mediating Role Of Attachment*, 10 RESEARCH IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING 89 (2021).

<sup>8</sup> S. Kordbache & M. Arefi, *The Role Of Family Communication Patterns And Sexual Quality In Predicting Attitudes Toward Marital Infidelity In Women In Isfahan*, 2 JOURNAL OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNITY HEALTH 199 (2018).

<sup>9</sup> See *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. \_\_\_ (2015).

<sup>10</sup> C. Calvillo, M.D.M. Sánchez-Fuentes, & J.C. Sierra, *An Explanatory Model Of Sexual Satisfaction In Adults With A Same-Sex Partner: An*

acknowledged that adultery poses a serious risk to the stability, effectiveness, and tolerance of partner relationships and is a major contributing factor to divorce and related health issues. Here 34% of men and 24% of women reported having committed adultery at some point in their lives, according to a 2007 meta-analysis of 50 research.<sup>11</sup>

According to Veer and Papez,<sup>12</sup> certain cultures have more lenient views on sex and sexual representation, while others have strong taboos and body stigma. L. Gurrieri, J. Brace-Govan, and H. Cherrier<sup>13</sup> explore the taboo around the overt display of violent and sexually explicit content in advertising and its ramifications. A.S. Rome and A. Lambert<sup>14</sup>

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*Analysis Based On Gender Differences*, 17 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH 3393 (2020).

<sup>11</sup> A. Haseli, M. Shariati, A.M. Nazari, A. Keramat, & M.H. Emamian, *Infidelity And Its Associated Factors: A Systematic Review*, 16 THE JOURNAL OF SEXUAL MEDICINE 1155 (2019).

<sup>12</sup> Veer & Golf-Papez, *Physically Freeing: Breaking Taboos Through Online Displays Of The Sexual Self* (2018).

<sup>13</sup> L. Gurrieri, J. Brace-Govan, H. Cherrier, *Controversial Advertising: Transgressing The Taboo Of Gender Based Violence*, 50 EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF MARKETING 1448 (2016).

<sup>14</sup> A.S. Rome & A. Lambert, *(Wo) Men On Top? Postfeminist Contradictions In Young Women's Sexual Narratives*, 20 MARKETING THEORY 501 (2020).

investigate the taboo associated with sex education in India. E. Veer and M. Papez<sup>15</sup> put it simply when they said that taboos are cultural creations that are firmly ingrained in society and history. Comprehending the social norms and historical foundations around the public exhibition of sexuality is necessary for understanding the taboo surrounding the presentation of one's sexual identity. To preserve cultural norms and avoid perceived contamination or pollution, self-presentation is restricted in many societies.

According to A. Haseli, et al.<sup>16</sup> there is a strong association between low infidelity and high sexual satisfaction. Individual well-being (such as pleasure, arousal, and sexual excitement) and dyadic processes (such as intimacy and emotional expression) are two important factors that impact sexual satisfaction.<sup>17</sup> People who are much less excited about being in romantic partnerships may try to increase their level of happiness by entering into new relationships outside of

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<sup>15</sup> Veer & Golf-Papez, *Physically Freeing: Breaking Taboos Through Online Displays Of The Sexual Self* (2018).

<sup>16</sup> Haseli, et al., 16 THE JOURNAL OF SEXUAL MEDICINE 1155..

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*.

marriage. Furthermore, experiencing a significant decline in intimacy can be upsetting, leading some people to look for extramarital relationships to satisfy an emotional hole left by their previous relationship.<sup>18</sup> Gender and adultery have been found to be correlated, with men being more prone than women to commit infidelity.<sup>19</sup> The acceptability of male infidelity and the tendency to hold women accountable for comparable actions are both influenced by cultural and societal norms.<sup>20</sup>

People are often less willing to acknowledge actions that go against societal norms. Given the social backlash women frequently experience for engaging in the same behavior as males, it is possible that women are more likely than men to underreport infidelity in this situation.<sup>21</sup> E. Toplu and F.D. Fincham's study

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<sup>18</sup> Y. Zhang, X. Wang, & S. Pan, *Prevalence And Patterns Of Extramarital Sex Among Chinese Men And Women: 2000-2015*, 58 THE JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH 41 (2021).

<sup>19</sup> J. Arantes, F. Barros, & H.M. Oliveira, *Extradyadic Behaviors And Gender: How Do They Relate With Sexual Desire, Relationship Quality, And Attractiveness*, 10 FRONTIERS IN PSYCHOLOGY 2554 (2020).

<sup>20</sup> Haseli, et al., 16 THE JOURNAL OF SEXUAL MEDICINE 1155.

<sup>21</sup> M.L.B.M. Alves, *Physical Attractiveness: Sexual Satisfaction, Promiscuity and Infidelity* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidade do Minho (Portugal)) (2018).

found a favorable correlation between views towards adultery and past experiences of infidelity.<sup>22</sup> Attitudes have a major impact on infidelity behavior and are crucial in determining the intention to commit adultery.<sup>23</sup> These findings are not surprising considering that people who have more open-minded sexual views—which are linked to a greater inclination for sexual stimulation—also typically have higher rates of infidelity.<sup>24</sup> G. Karantzas<sup>25</sup> wrote that one study found lack of communication, unsatisfied sexual activities, stress, sexual dysfunction, and lack of emotional intimacy were directly linked with infidelity in men.

Partners who commit infidelity sometimes feel discrepancy between their suggested behavior and the real self. The previous study is based on the cognitive

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<sup>22</sup> E. Toplu-Demirtaş & F.D. Fincham, *Dating Infidelity In Turkish Couples: The Role Of Attitudes And Intentions*, 55 THE JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH 252 (2018).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> G. Karantzas, *It's Not Just Sex: Why People Have Affairs, And How To Deal With Them*, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/its-not-just-sex-why-people-have-affairs-and-how-to-deal-with-them-92354>.

dissonance theory<sup>26</sup> which lists that incompatibility in a relationship is one of the main reasons why infidelity occurs. Conflict between two cognitions resulted in dissonance that further developed uncomfortable feelings in both physical and psychological ways. Individuals used different behavioral strategies to reduce this discomfort. Delimitedly, Robert Trivers's parental investment theory postulated that spouses experience significantly more difficulties when one of the partners commits sexual infidelity. The main cause of this is the possibility of paternity ambiguity, which means that the partner could have to devote a lot of time and energy to raise a child who is not his, biologically related. The partner faces greater difficulties when it comes to emotional infidelity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> E. Aronson, *The Evolution Of Cognitive Dissonance Theory: A Personal Appraisal*, THE SCIENCE OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE (2011).

<sup>27</sup> F. Pazhoohi, *Parental Investment Theory*, eBooks (2022) at 137–159.



### A. Research question

To what extent sex taboos and sexual satisfaction associated with infidelity among married men in Pakistani society.

### B. Objectives

- To identify the relationship among sex taboos, sexual satisfaction and infidelity in married men.
- To test psychological issue related differences in infidelity.
- To measure type of marriage differences in infidelity.

### C. Hypothesis

- There is likely to be significant positive relationship between sex taboos and infidelity and negative relationship between sexual satisfaction and infidelity in married men.
- There are likely to be differences between having psychological issues and not having psychological issues in infidelity.

- There are likely to be type of marriage differences in infidelity in married men.

## II. METHOD

### A. Research Design and Participants

This study is quantitative-based correlational research design and 340 married men were recruited by using purposive sampling from Lahore, Pakistan. Survey method was employed to collect data and all the participants were Muslims with age range 25 years and above.

Table 1  
*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristics	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>
Age	33.87(4.26)	
Education		
Postgraduate and above		132(38.8)
Undergraduate		109(32.1)
Below Undergraduate		99(29.1)
Profession		
Government		37(10.9)
Private		214(62.9)
Self		81(23.8)
Not applicable		8(2.4)
Family System		
Nuclear		160(47.1)
Joint		180(52.9)
Residence		
On Rent		146(42.9)
Own House		194(57.1)
Any Psychological Issue		
Yes		152(44.7)
No		188(55.3)
Your Type of Marriage		
Arranged		128(37.6)
By Choice		115(33.8)
Mix		97(28.6)
Duration of Marriage		
Less than 5 Years		242(71.2)
6-10 Years		79(23.2)
10 Years and Above		19(5.6)

## B. Assessment Measures

### 1. Consent Form

Written consent was taken on the form attached with the rest of the measures.

### 2. Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic information included age, education, profession, duration of marriage, family type, type of marriage, etc.

### 3. Perceived Sex Taboo Scale<sup>28</sup>

This scale was used to measure prevailing sex taboo in Pakistani society that effect marital relationship of partners. This scale consisted of total 33 items and two subscales (lack of communication 16 items and lack of sexual satisfaction 17 items). Cronbach's alpha value for perceived sex taboo along with its subscales ranged from .97 to .99.

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<sup>28</sup> Arif, Tariq, & Huda, *Development of Perceived Sex Taboos Scale* (2023).

#### 4. The New Sexual Satisfaction Scale<sup>29</sup>

This scale was developed to assess sexual satisfaction of partners and used for both clinical and no-clinical samples. This scale included two subscales each with ten items and measured on 5-point Likert scale (not at all satisfied (1) – extremely satisfied (5)). The ego centered scale included item 1-10 and the partner and activity centered scale included item 11-20. The new sexual satisfaction scale along with its subscale indicated Cronbach's alpha value between .90 and .94.

#### 5. Intention towards Infidelity Scale<sup>30</sup>

This scale was used to measure intimacy in term of faithfulness and romance in partners and it consisted of seven items on a Likert scale ranging from -3 (not at all likely) to +3 (Extremely likely). Cronbach's alpha value for intention to infidelity ranged from .70-.81.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Development of Perceived Sex Taboos Scale*, 4 JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL & APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY 365.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, et al., *Intentions Towards Infidelity Scale* (2010).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

### C. Procedure and Data Analysis

Prior to data collection permission from authors was taken to use scales in this study. Since this topic is quite sensitive instructions were given carefully to participant along with questionnaire. Participants signed written inform consent before filling questionnaire and their information was kept confidential and anonymous. All the ethics for conducting research were followed in this study. After data collection, data were entered in SPSS in the form of codes and further analysis was run to measure relationship between study variables. To measure relationship between variables Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed, for differences Independent Sample t-test and ANOVA, for prediction regression analysis was used I this study.

### III. RESULTS

Sex taboo and thinking of partner about their relationship with each other have great importance in

believing, trusting and relying on each other and making their sexual life happy and healthy.

Table 2

*Psychometric Properties of Sex Taboo, Sexual Satisfaction and Infidelity in Married Men.*

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Sex Taboo	107.85	45.42	33-165	.99
Lack of Communication	32.56	13.51	16-80	.97
Lack of Sexual Satisfaction	75.29	32.07	17-85	.99
Sexual Satisfaction	76.10	12.05	80-240	.71
Egocentric Sexual Satisfaction	38.17	6.64	20-60	.52
Partner and Activity Centered	37.93	6.76	40-120	.54
Infidelity	29.87	10.36	8-47	.88

In Table Two, reliability of the study variables was checked in order to justify the use of these scales on the targeted sample. Results indicated that sex taboo scale along with its subscales (Lack of Communication and Lack of Sexual Satisfaction) was found to have good Cronbach's alpha value ranging from .97 to .99.

Sexual satisfaction scale overall showed Cronbach's alpha value of .77 and for its subscale the value ranging from .52 and .55 which is moderate. Infidelity scale was found to have good Cronbach's alpha value of .88 in married men.



**Table 3**  
*Correlation Among Descriptive Variables and Sex Taboos, Sexual Satisfaction and Infidelity in Married Men (N = 340)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	–	.02	.18***	.18**	-.14**	.02	.01	.009	.005	-.007
2. Monthly Income		–	-.07	-.07	.008	.05	.03	.04	-.004	.01
3. Any Psychological Issue			–	.09	-.02	-.04	.009	-.02	-.02	-.01
4. No. of Children				–	-.10	-.00	.10	.08	-.05	-.03
5. Rate on Religious Scale					–	-.09	-.05	-.05	.01	-.006
6. Infidelity						–	.58***	.56***	-.55***	-.53***
7.LOC							–	.95***	-.56***	-.55***
8.LOSS								–	-.56***	-.54***
9.Egocentric									–	.61***
10. P and A										–

*Note:* LOC = Lack of Communication, LOSS = Lack of Sexual Satisfaction, P and A= Partner and Activity Centered, \*  $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Relationship between study variables was measured and explained in Table Three. Age, education, psychological issues, no. of children and religious values showed non-significant relationship with infidelity in married men. Infidelity was found to have significant positive relationship with lack of communication ( $r = .58^{***}$ ), lack of sexual satisfaction ( $r = .56^{***}$ ) and negative relationship with egocentric sexual satisfaction ( $r = -.55^{***}$ ), partner and activity centered sexual satisfaction ( $r = -.53^{***}$ ). In other words men with sex taboo have high infidelity rate. Communicational gaps, pauses, incompatibility in sexual relationship increase their infidelity whereas egocentric sexual satisfaction and partner centered sexual satisfaction decrease the level of infidelity in married men.

Table 4

*Independent Sample t-test to Determined Psychological Issue Differences in Married Men (N= 340)*

Variables	No		Yes		t(338)	p	Cohen's d
	n= 188		n= 152				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Infidelity	30.29	10.84	29.37	9.78	.814	.416	0.088

Findings in Table Four revealed that there were non-significant differences exists between having psychological issues and not having psychological issues ( $t = .81, p >.05$ ).

Table 5

*One-Way Analysis of Variance for Determining Type of Marriage Differences in Infidelity among Married Men (df =2, 337)*

Variables	Arranged		By Choice		Mix		F	$\eta^2$
	(n=128)		(n=115)		(n=97)			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Infidelity	30.41	10.38	30.26	10.45	28.73	10.30	.842	0.004

In Table Five there were found non-significant differences in marriage type in infidelity. Men with both arrange love and mix marriages had same level of infidelity regarding sexual life ( $F = .84, p > .05$ ).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Sex taboo and thinking of partner and about their relationship with each other have great importance in believing, trusting, and relying on each other and making their sexual life happy and healthy. The finding of this study claimed that men with sex taboo have high infidelity rate. Communicational gaps, pauses, and incompatibility in the sexual relationship increase their infidelity whereas egocentric sexual satisfaction and partner centered sexual satisfaction decrease the level of infidelity in married men. Haseli et al.<sup>32</sup> found a strong association between low infidelity and high sexual satisfaction. Toplu and Fincham's<sup>33</sup> study findings were aligned with this study as they stated a favorable correlation between views towards adultery

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<sup>32</sup> Haseli, et al., 16 THE JOURNAL OF SEXUAL MEDICINE 1155.

<sup>33</sup> Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, *Dating Infidelity In Turkish Couples*.

and past experiences of infidelity. This study found that infidelity has a significant positive relationship with lack of communication and lack of sexual/intimacy satisfaction in married men. These findings were supported by literature as Karantzas<sup>34</sup> wrote that one study found lack of communication, unsatisfied sexual activities, stress, sexual dysfunction, and lack of emotional intimacy were directly linked with infidelity in men.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to identify the relationship of study variables. Based on this study sex taboos were positive linked with infidelity among married men. In other words, men who adhere to more conservative sexual norms and faced restriction, taboos in their sexual relationship with spouse were more likely to engage in infidelity. This study highlighted the importance of sex taboos and its relationship with infidelity in Pakistani culture. On the

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<sup>34</sup> Karantzas, *It's Not Just Sex*.

contrary a negative relationship of sexual satisfaction and infidelity indicated that men with a higher level of sexual satisfaction in their relationship with a spouse were less likely to engage in infidelity. Type of marriage whether arranged, love, or a mix, did not have significant impact on the likelihood of engaging in infidelity among married men.

#### A. Limitations and Suggestions

Gathering data from a large sample was quite tough because of the sensitivity of the topic and participants who represent the set criteria. Due to little research and a research gap on sex taboos, it was not easy to set the sample criteria for data collection. Results might be affected by subjective bias because participants felt it quite uncomfortable and difficult to share one's personal preference and information about one's sexual relationship. Future researches should focus on the factors linked with sex taboo and infidelity and comparison studies should be conducted to measure differences across different cultures. Researcher should add people who witness infidelity in society.

This study only collected data from married men to enhance the accuracy of findings. Married women should be added in future studies. Further studies are required to identify potential interventions to promote and support marital fidelity and relationship satisfaction.

### B. Implications

This study added information in the previous literature and provide dimensions for further research where a researcher can control different psychosocial factors and measure their effect on sex taboos and infidelity. This study might provide useful information to counselors and psychologists to improve a partner's relationship satisfaction and how to reduce infidelity by controlling negative factors (identifies in this study). These findings are of great importance to the practice of therapists in Pakistan. Findings of this study can be used in developing a sense of strong emotional connection with a partner. Findings of this study can be used for awareness purposes for both educated and ignorant couples.