

Rebuilding Trust; Psychological Change in Couples Who Has an Affair

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the psychological changes that can foster trust in victims of adultery. This study involved 5 research subjects, consisting of 2 male subjects and 3 female subjects. The age of the subjects ranged from 26 to 35 years. In this study, the criteria of the research subjects have been determined, including married, maximum marriage age of 5 years, a victim of infidelity but not divorced, and domiciled in the city of Makassar. The method used in this research is phenomenology with data collection techniques through observation and in-depth interview processes. The results showed the subject's process of knowing the couple's affair, the subject's reaction to knowing the partner's affair, re-trust their partner, and the subject's process of re-trusting a partner who had an affair. The conclusion obtained from the results of this study is that the process of re-trust is not an easy thing to do by the victims. This is based on several aspects that emerged from the victim and the perpetrators of the affair. They are forgiving the perpetrators, the positive and consistent changes of the perpetrators of the affair include the existence of openness, the intention to cooperate, sharing, and mutual support between partners. This research is expected to add insight and research references regarding family psychology.

Keywords: *Trust, spouse, infidelity*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a process of beautiful and sacred in the form of uniting two persons into a lawful relationship in the eyes of God and legal in the eyes of the law. Not all marriages run as expected. Various problems occur in marital relationships such as infidelity. In Indonesia, the Directorate General of the Religious Courts noted that there were 10,444 cases of infidelity in 2007, and 90% of these cases were major sources of fractures in the household [1].

Based on these data, the phenomenon of infidelity is a frequent occurrence in daily life, including in the city of Makassar. Infidelity can harm the integrity of the household, as well as on one's psychological condition, such as loss of self-esteem, respect, security, comfort, and trust [2]. In addition to having an impact on psychological and family conditions, the social environment often views infidelity as an unforgivable situation, but to reverse self-esteem, reputation and trust are not as easy as turning the palm [3].

Trust is a sacred thing for some people because trust will give a feeling of security to individuals [3].

However, when trust in a relationship is betrayed, it will cause many problems in the household. Rebuilding trust in a relationship will be difficult because victims can be traumatized. Therefore, it is not easy to accept the treatment of perpetrators of infidelity. Negash and Morgan explain that each party in every relationship feels like being trusted, betrayal committed by one party will result in a crisis of trust in the victim [3].

Based on a pilot study conducted on two subjects, it was shown that victims pessimistic about the harmony of households which have been untrusty for example. The affair committed by the couple makes the affair victim feel disappointment, betrayal, and feel that a sacred marriage vows have been harmed. The agreed marriage commitment has been violated and the views and scorns of the social environment make the victim feel ashamed of his social environment. The betrayal of trust that has been maintained has become a doubt that always arises in the minds of the victims. Hall explains that restoring trust in a partner will be difficult, because of circumstances or psychological conditions that have been fragile, knowing that the partner is having an affair [4]. This stimulates him to control his partner better so as not

to have an affair again, causing new problems, such as squabbling in the household, because each partner has their egos.

Infidelity adversely affects the survival of the household, harming both the perpetrators and victims of the affair. The thing that appears after the affair is, the victim becomes a person who has low trust in the partner, while the perpetrator of the affair feels a crisis of trust from the partner who has been cheated. This makes the victim of infidelity will always control the couple and make sure they do not have another affair. On the other hand, the offender feels that they are being too controlled so that the activities carried out always feel pressure and feel suspected.

The results of the initial interview with a subject show that mistrust can be minimized by the efforts of the perpetrators in convincing or trying to regain trust by negotiating, giving an explanation and being open about the reasons for infidelity, and promising not to repeat the same mistakes. This can make the cheated party give confidence and try to forgive. Parties who have an affair are given trust, and behavior is forgiven. This makes both parties feel better and easy to reorganize the household. This is what underlies researchers to study the phenomenon which is the trust in victims of infidelity. The focus of the problem in this study include: (1) how does the subject know the affair of a partner? (2) how does the subject react to an affair situation? (3) how does the subject process in forgiving a partner?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in Makassar City because cases of infidelity often occur in this city. The

Table 1. Results of Data Analysis

| No | Subject Initials | Age | Status | Reasons for getting married | Age of Marriage | Gender |
|----|------------------|-----|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| 1 | AT | 35 | Labor | Own desire | 3 years 7 month | Male |
| 2 | HT | 28 | Entrepreneur | Own desire | 5 years | Female |
| 3 | AY | 26 | Housewife | Own desire | 5 years | Female |
| 4 | RW | 31 | Labor | Own desire | 4 years | Male |
| 5 | MD | 35 | Entrepreneur | Own desire | 5 years | Female |

2.2. *The process of the subject knowing the couple's infidelity*

Based on the results of interviews with five research subjects, researchers obtained information that the subject's process of knowing a partner's infidelity is characterized as following :

2.2.1. *There is information about a partner affair*

selection of subjects in this study was based on several criteria, namely: (1) husband or wife who had been victims of infidelity but were not divorced, (2) Marriage age 0-5 years. Bijleveld, van der Geest, and Hendriks explained the first years in the age of marriage is a vulnerable period, because the experience with couples in fostering households is not much and the initial period of marriage is a period of adjustment. Sometimes husband and wife often experience problems at the beginning of marriage and cause conflict in the household [5]. Participants in this study amounted to 5 people. Matua suggests that in research that uses a phenomenological approach requires 3 to 10 subjects. This research is a qualitative research method using a phenomenological approach [6]. Matua also defines phenomenology as a method of describing a subject's life experience, research by narrating that experience [6]. The approach used in this study is to describe the belief in married couples who have had an affair. The main data obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with participants, and include notes or verbatim results of data collection conducted.

2.1. *Analysis Techniques*

In this study, data were analysed by using phenomenological methods. The approach is seen more in practical aspects related to research desires. The phenomenological inquiry focuses on his research questions on the structure and essence of the human experience of the symptoms that occur [7].

The results of the analysis of the data obtained show that some of the findings fund the process of re-entrusting a partner to an affair victim.

Information received, makes the subject want to know the truth of the affair partner because the source of information is the closest person to the subject. Based on the results of the analysis, two subjects found out information about the affair of a partner from a close relative. Based on the results of quotations from interviews with, the existence of information and suspicion about infidelity couples encourage subjects to know the truth of the information that is there, because the source of information is the person who they trust, such as the subject's children and relatives. This is what drives the subject to check the truth of the information.

On the first subject, information about the partner's infidelity was obtained from his relatives, and the second subject information was obtained from his child. When the subject obtained information, initially, the subject did not believe the information, but after checking by following, tracking, and spying, the subject finally found a partner having an affair. In line with this, Arnold and Boggs explained that victims of infidelity have a great curiosity about the partner's behavior, whether or not the information obtained is sought to be seen directly [8].

2.2.2. There is a change in appearance and changes in the habits of the couple

Changes in appearance and habits such as dressing up frequently, going out of the house, and lack of attention to children also underlie the subject's suspicions about partner infidelity. This was revealed by the first subject who assessed changes in the appearance and habits of the couple, so different things happened by the couple and raised the subject's suspicion. In line with this, Arnold and Boggs explained that several signs can be recognized when a partner cheats, namely: lack of attention to children, changes in behavior and habits, changes in appearance, frequent travel, high frequency of use of tools communication, and lack communication and intimacy [8].

2.2.3. Caught and saw directly the affair of a partner

The affair process is revealed, if the subject sees or catches his partner having an affair like, catching a spouse in a hotel, a coffee shop, or finding a chat or text message that is on the partner's cellphone. The subjects in this study show different ways of expressing cases of partner infidelity. Both subjects caught the couple directly together with their affair; even one of them caught his partner in the hotel together with their affair. Social media is also a place or means to communicate the perpetrators of infidelity, as happened in one of the pairs.

2.2.4. There is recognition from third parties

Recognition from a third party is also one of the reasons why the subject is aware of a partner's affair. Based on the quotations from interviews with one of the subjects, information was obtained that, a third party in the subject relationship, admitted that there was an affair between the partner and himself, even married and had children. In line with this, other subject said that a third party in his relationship acknowledged the affair between the partner and himself. Arnold and Boggs explained that after an affair has reached the type of Romantic love affair, a person will involve a deeply emotional aspect in an affair relationship and the couple involved will think of marrying the affair partner [8].

2.3. The subject's reaction is to know the affair of a partner.

Based on the results of the data analysis, revealed some reactions were shown by the subject after learning of a partner's affair. The incident of partner infidelity makes the victim feel the impact, such as disappointment shown with anger, annoyance, and sadness. Spouse infidelity that occurs can have the effect of losing the trust of the victim of the affair to the perpetrator; distrust is shown by negative reactions as a form of disappointment.

Research subjects or victims of infidelity in this study were disappointed with their partner's actions that triggered the victims' emotions. In this case, the trust, attention, and affection given have been betrayed. During interview process, two respondents showed negative reactions such as issuing harsh words, even about to hit the couple. The subject is aware of his actions, but this happens because he refuses to be a victim of partner affair and the form of a deep disappointment. In line with this, Arnold and Boggs explained that victims of partner affair did not accept themselves being cheated, gave questions about the clarity that made their partners cheat, and experienced feelings of extreme anger, condemnation and frequent crying. The extreme anger can lead to physical violence against a partner [8].

In addition to showing expressions of disappointment with anger or sadness, partner infidelity encourages the subject's reaction to control the couple better. This action arises because the result of the trust that has been given has been betrayed and the subject does not want it to be repeated. The four subjects after venting their emotions, the subject becomes an individual who likes to control a partner that is marked by, checking cellphones, copying messages (SMS), spying, prohibiting frequent associations, and asking couples to promise not to commit adultery again. In line with this, Arnold and Boggs explained that, after individuals become victims of infidelity, they will stimulate themselves to control better their partners. This can be done by always checking or wanting to know what their partners are doing [8]. The reaction occurs due to the loss of subject confidence because of cheated.

The impact of the betrayed trust in this matter regarding the affair of a partner can lead to loss and reduction of the subject's trust in the partner. All subjects said that with a partner's infidelity resulted in the loss of their trust in the couple. One of subjects said that he would never trust his partner again for fear of becoming a victim a second time. In line with this, Roberson et al. explained that if one partner does not have trust in the partner, conflicts will often arise in the marriage relationship. It can occur if one partner violates the trust that has been given, then insecurity will arise and easily hurt [9]. This causes the marriage that has been built can be threatened.

2.4. The process of the subject forgives a partner

Based on the results of data analysis, revealed a variety of factors that arise in the process of the subject forgiving the couple who had an affair. These include the existence of apologies and remorse from the perpetrators of the affair, thinking about the future of the child, the intention of the subject to maintain the household, the influence of beliefs and spiritual values held, and still the amount of love for couples.

Apology and remorse on the part of the cheater push the subject to forgive the cheater. Four subjects in this research said their apologies and regrets, which were shown by persuading and mocking, and convincing the subject to gain subject forgiveness and trust. In line with this, McCullough explained that apology (sincere) or showed deep regret could be a factor that has the potential to influence victims to forgive [10].

Thinking about the child's future is also taken into consideration by the subject in determining whether to continue a relationship or divorce with a partner. The subject recognizes that divorce will harm the child, as the future of the child and the child still need both parents. Based on quotes from interviews with research subjects, information is obtained that thinking about the child's future, can make the subject not in a hurry in deciding to end a relationship.

Besides, the intention to maintain the household arises in the process of forgiving a partner who has an affair and can encourage forgiveness of the perpetrators of an affair. In line with this, McCullough explained that there are four reasons why someone forgives in an interpersonal relationship [10]. First, couples who want to forgive have high motivation to maintain relationships. Second, in close relationships, there is a long-term orientation in valuing their relationship. Third, there is an inter-partner interest. Fourth, there is a collectivity orientation that wants the parties involved to behave in a way that benefits them.

The beliefs held by the subject of research regarding the values taught by the religion professed, applied in everyday life, and become a benchmark in acting and addressing the problems faced. According to the results of interviews with three subjects, the subject believes that the problems that occur in domestic life are a trial of the Almighty; apart from that, the first subject believes that divorce is a matter that is hated by religion. Similarly, Mahoney explained that the religious values adopted by a person could increase individual life satisfaction and positive affect to prevent conflicts between individuals that are manifested in the form of forgiveness [11].

Another factor that drives the subject to forgive the perpetrators of infidelity is because of a sense of love for a partner is able to encourage someone to forgive the

partner's mistakes. Love makes the subject afraid of losing his partner. Based on the results of interviews with the existence of affection and love, it motivates the subject to forgive and maintain his partner, as stated by more than one subjects. In line with this, McCullough described feelings of pity, compassion, and love for the offending party can overcome negative things and the judgment of the guilty person [10].

2.5. The process of the subject of trusting back a partner who had an affair

The process of being able to trust is not easy. Asking for forgiveness requires some aspects that emerge from the perpetrator consistently so that the victim can judge whether or not to trust the perpetrator again. Forgiveness of the subject is not enough as a basis for the subject to trust the partner, but requires consistent positive changes in the process of trusting, including 1). A partner's openness. 2). The intention to cooperate and support each other. 3). The existence of a promise or commitment of the spouse.

2.5.1. The subject has forgiven the perpetrator of the affair

The process of apology from the perpetrator and the victim has forgiven the perpetrator, will build the trust of the victim to the perpetrators of the affair. Based on the results of interviews with all subjects, the researcher obtained information that the submission of an apology as an offender's request to be forgiven and trusted, which was marked by remorse, positive and consistent attitude or behavior changes were able to encourage the victim to trust the coverage of an affair. In line with this, McCullough explained that distrust in relationships results in the impossibility of forgiveness. In other words in the process of forgiving, it requires trust, and states that forgiveness can cause a person to be motivated to overcome mistrust. This will lead in reversing the harmony of a relationship [10].

2.5.2. Positive and consistent changes on the part of the offender.

There are positive and consistent changes on the part of the offender. This exists in the form of aspects of the openness of the spouse, the intention to cooperate, and the determination of the promise or commitment of the spouse. Spouse's openness as the offender who has committed an affair makes the subject as a victim will observe or assess the openness. It is then giving confidence back to the offender. Openness between partners, which is marked by the process of exchanging information about the whereabouts of the spouse. The information even includes transparency about salaries and everything that is done by the spouse. This encourages the creation of a partner's trust. In line with

this Grotevant and McRoy explained that openness is one component of trust, which includes sharing information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and reactions to issues that occur [12].

3. RESULTS

Based on the description that has been explained by the researchers from the data of interviews with research subjects, the findings of the analysis results in the form of a chart can be shown as follows:

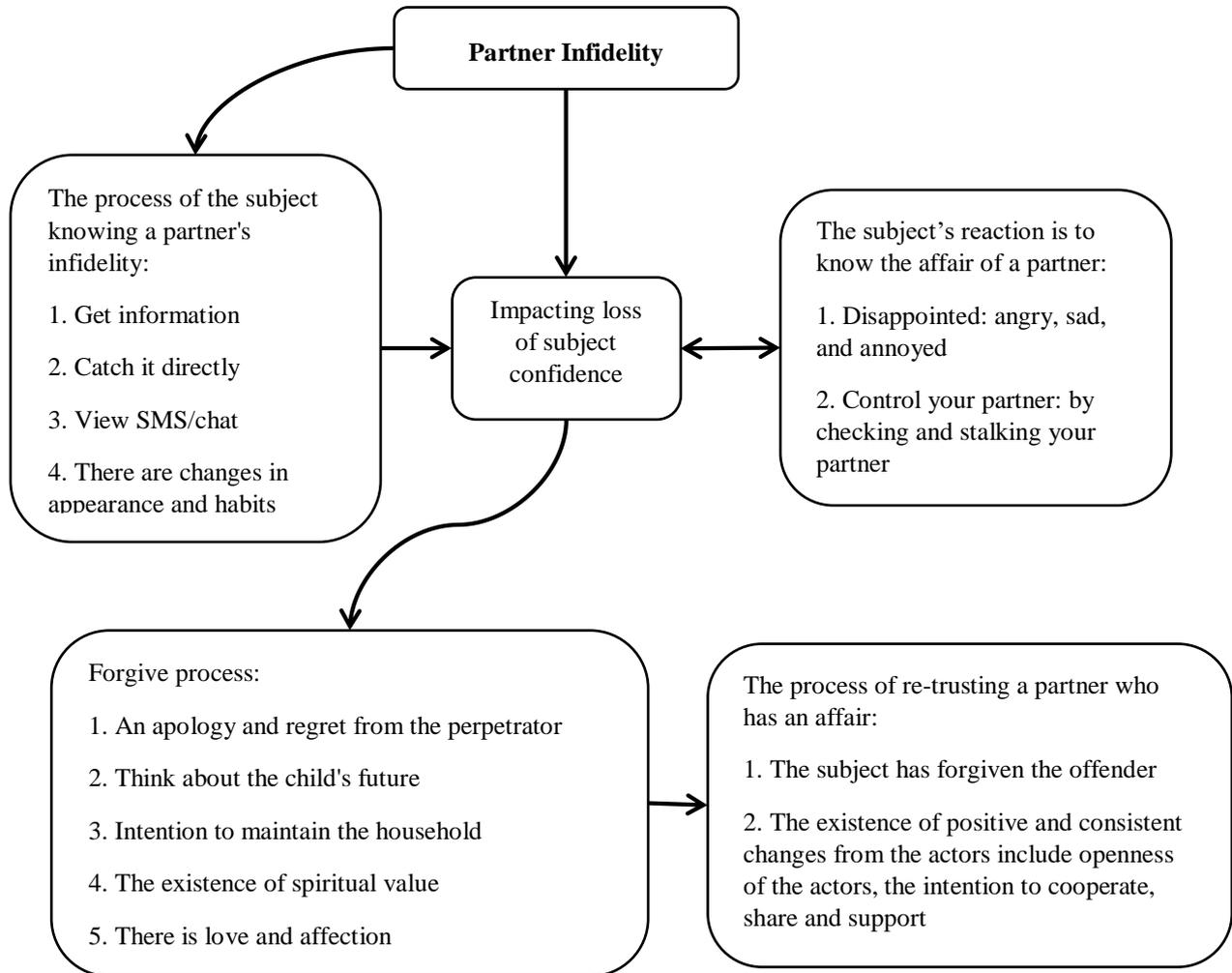


Figure 1 Research findings

Based on the chart, it is shown that infidelity affects the loss of trust of couples who act as victims. The process of victims knowing of partner infidelity, including information about partner infidelity, catching people directly, changes in the appearance and habits of couples. After the subject or victim of infidelity knows the affair of a partner, the subject will react negatively because he is disappointed to be a victim of infidelity and the trust which has been given has been betrayed. Negative reactions shown by the victim are disappointed which is characterized by anger, sadness, and annoyance. Furthermore, controlling a partner, such as checking a cellphone and trailing a partner.

The process of subject forgiving a partner, influenced by several reasons or factors. They are the existence of apologies and regrets from the offender, thinking about the child's future, the intention to maintain the household, and the existence of spiritual values, as well as love and

affection. The process of being able to trust and be trusted again is marked by the existence of forgiveness from the subject, but forgiveness is not enough to be the basis for the subject to re-trust the partner but requires consistent positive changes in the process of trusting, including 1) a partner's openness 2) the intention to cooperate and support each other 3) the existence of a promise or commitment of the spouse.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained in this study, it can be concluded that marriage is something sacred in the form of uniting two beings into a lawful relationship in the eyes of God and legal in the eyes of the law. Not all marriages go as expected as various problems may occur in marital relationships, for example, infidelity.

A couple's infidelity results in a loss of trust on the part of the victim and the perpetrator of the affair. In building trust after an affair, there needs to be a reciprocal relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. This is because trust is something that is complex, various aspects of behaviors that arise from both sides. Victims of infidelity show reactions such as, disappointed, angry, and even control the spouse. It arises because of disappointment or refusal to become victims of infidelity; the process of trusting again is influenced by forgiveness.

Forgiveness factors obtained in this study consisted of, the existence of apologies and guilt on the perpetrators of infidelity, thinking about the future of children, the intention to maintain the household, spiritual values, the existence of love and affection. After the factors that encourage the victim to forgive the perpetrators of the affair appear, then the victim will assess or evaluate whether there are positive changes that are consistent with the perpetrators. The victims will provide justice in the form of whether or not the perpetrators deserve to be trusted again.

The process of re-trusting a partner who had an affair, marked by the emergence of several aspects or factors in the process such as the victim has forgiven the perpetrators, positive, positive changes that are characterized by the openness, the intention to cooperate, share and support between partners.

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