




The Lived Experiences of Middle-Aged Couples Engaged in Infidelity: A Grounded Theory Study

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Habib Hadianfard  Affiliation: Professor, Department of Psychology, Shiraz University, Iran hadianfd@shirazu.ac.ir	Reviewer 1: Parvaneh Mohammadkhani  Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Rehabilitation Sciences and Social Health, Tehran, Iran. Email: Pa.mohammadkhani@uswr.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Abolghasem Khoshkanesh  Assistant Professor, Counseling Department, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran. Email: akhoshkonesh@sbu.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sentence “Infidelity has long been considered one of the most disruptive events in marital and intimate relationships...” is strong but overly general. You might enhance the scholarly depth by integrating prevalence data or citing meta-analyses to ground this claim statistically.

When discussing midlife crises (“Midlife has been described as a stage marked by identity re-evaluation and renewed desires for intimacy...”), the argument could be strengthened by connecting midlife development theory (e.g., Eriksonian stages) to infidelity.

The phrase “Grounded theory is particularly useful for exploring areas where little prior research exists” could be supported with references to qualitative methodology literature to justify why it was the best fit here.

The inclusion/exclusion criteria are clear, but the justification for limiting the age range to 40–65 years is not elaborated. Please explain why this range best captures “middle-aged” couples in the Iranian cultural context.

The sentence “Semi-structured interviews...were chosen because they allow participants to narrate their lived experiences...” is clear, but more detail about the average length and number of interviews per participant would enhance methodological transparency.

While you mention Strauss and Corbin's coding paradigm, the explanation could be more robust if you provide a brief example of how one raw quote was transformed into open, axial, and then selective coding. This would illustrate analytic rigor.

The limitations section notes self-report bias, but you should also acknowledge potential researcher bias, especially given the cultural sensitivity of infidelity in Iran. Discussing reflexivity more explicitly would strengthen trustworthiness.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the statement "The psychological and relational consequences of infidelity are often devastating...", the range of consequences is listed, but there is no mention of resilience or post-traumatic growth. A balanced presentation of both destructive and adaptive outcomes would increase nuance.

The section on healing from infidelity is well supported, but you might deepen it by linking the stages of recovery you list ("acknowledgment, confrontation, renegotiation") to established couple therapy frameworks for consistency.

The opening of the discussion restates results clearly. However, integrating direct comparisons with grounded theory studies from non-Iranian contexts would enrich the global relevance of your findings.

In "The dual emotional experience of infidelity—pleasure mixed with guilt...", the link to ambivalence is insightful. Yet, expanding on how this ambivalence influences decision-making in marital therapy would make the practical implications clearer.

While you mention schema therapy and ACT, the discussion would benefit from critically reflecting on which therapeutic frameworks are most culturally congruent for Iranian couples.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.