Illicit affairs: Examining the association between types of infidelity and IPV in men and women

by

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and infidelity are common issues that negatively impact many individuals' health and relationships. There remains a lack of research examining the association between types of IPV perpetration and victimization and infidelity perpetration and victimization for men and women. Therefore, the current study seeks to answer the following question: Is there a relationship between different types of IPV perpetration and victimization (physical, sexual, psychological, and severe), including minimization and blaming victimization, and infidelity perpetration and victimization for men and women? Our results yielded significant results; namely, women indicated they were more likely to perpetrate severe IPV when infidelity victimization was present, while this finding was not significant for men. In addition, men indicated they were more likely to experience psychological IPV victimization, minimizing victimization, and blaming victimization, as well as perpetrate psychological IPV when infidelity perpetration was present. Our results provide insights into various associations between types of IPV and infidelity perpetration and victimization in intimate partnerships, highlighting the importance of clinicians assessing for infidelity and IPV in relationships and providing helpful tools such as mindfulness and timeouts to prevent further IPV victimization.

Table of Contents

List of Tables v
Chapter 1 - Introduction 1
Chapter 2 - Literature Review 2
Intimate Partner Violence 2
Infidelity 4
Infidelity and Gender 5
Infidelity and IPV 6
Theoretical Framework 8
The Current Study 10
Chapter 3 - Methods 11
Procedures 11
Participants 11
Measures 12
Analysis Plan 14
Chapter 4 - Results 16
Infidelity Victimization in Current Relationship Prevalence 17
Infidelity Perpetration in Current Relationship Prevalence 18
Chi-Squared Analyses for All Participants 21
Chi-Squared Analyses for Men 23
Chi-Squared Analyses for Women 25
Chapter 5 - Discussion 26
Clinical Implications 31
Limitations and Future Research 32
Conclusion 36
References 37

List of Tables

Table 1. Frequencies of Infidelity Victimization Current Relationship (*n* = 1,262) 16
Table 2. Frequencies of Infidelity Perpetration Current Relationship (n = 1,262) 18
Table 3. Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Prevalence of IPV and Infidelity for Men and Women in Current Relationship (n = 1,262) 20
Table 4. Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Prevalence of IPV and Infidelity for Men in Current Relationship 22
Table 5. Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Prevalence of IPV and Infidelity for Women in Current Relationship 24

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a widely known, detrimental health issue negatively impacting perpetrators and victims of violence on an individual, community, and economic level (Peterson et al., 2018; Wong & Mellor, 2014). Another pervasive issue commonly experienced in relationships is the act of infidelity, often associated with increased marital distress, conflict, relationship termination, depression, and anxiety (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Hall & Ficham, 2006; Warach & Josephs, 2021). It has been observed in previous studies that IPV and infidelity are associated, indicating there likely exists a relationship between the two (Keilholtz et al., 2023; Spencer et al., 2020).

Although the association between IPV and infidelity has been observed, it has not been thoroughly examined. Further, relevant research on the topic has mainly examined relationship jealousy and perceived, rather than actual/confirmed, infidelity (i.e., non-involved partner has proof of partner's infidelity, whether from seeing text messages, nude photos exchanged, or the involved partner confirming; Hellmuth et al., 2013; Kaighobadi et al., 2008; Nemeth et al., 2012; Pichon et al., 2020). In line with this, no current studies exist that examine different types of confirmed infidelity (i.e., emotional, online, sexual) and its association with various types of IPV perpetration and victimization (e.g., physical, sexual, psychological). Due to this gap in literature, the current study aims to examine the association between various types of actual infidelity and IPV perpetration and victimization separately for both men and women. Moreover, the current study poses the following research question: (1) Is there an association between different types of infidelity (a brief emotional affair, a one-time sexual encounter, and a serious physical affair) and different types of IPV (physical, sexual, and psychological) for men and women?

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Intimate Partner Violence

IPV is a pervasive health issue pertaining to the physical, sexual, and/or psychological harm inflicted by a previous or current partner. Experiencing physical violence (e.g., slapped, choked, beaten) from an intimate partner is reported in slightly more than 2 in 5 women and more than 2 in 5 men in the United States (US) according to the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (Leemis et al., 2022). In addition to physical violence, sexual violence (i.e., forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sexual act without their consent) is commonly examined in partnerships, noting that almost 1 in 5 women in the US and 1 in 13 men experience sexual IPV victimization in their lifetime (Leemis et al., 2022). Additionally, psychological/emotional IPV victimization (i.e., verbal and non-verbal communication from a partner with the intent to harm and exert control over the other) is commonly reported, with about 50% of men and women experiencing it in their lifetime (Carney & Barner, 2012; Leemis et al., 2022). It is important to note that often these types of IPV co-occur in intimate partnerships, as extant literature has shown (Krebs et al., 2011). IPV is widespread, as it has a negative impact on both victims and perpetrators, their families, communities, and the economy (Duvvury et al., 2013; Peterson et al.,2018; Wong & Mellor, 2014;).

The physical effects of IPV can be long- and/or short-lasting and have negative impacts on health in many ways. For example, these negative physical impacts of IPV can result in death, injury, disability, pregnancy loss, chronic illness, and more (Wong & Mellor, 2014). In addition to physical consequences of IPV, there are severe mental health consequences such as

depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, attempted suicide, panic attacks, generalized anxiety disorder, and more (Gleason, 1993; Roberts et al., 2006). IPV also negatively impacts individuals' social and economic systems (Duvvury et al., 2013; Wong & Mellor, 2014). In 2012, the annual cost of IPV was $103,767 per female victim and $23,414 per male victim (Peterson et al., 2018). Economically, the population burden of IPV was $3.6 trillion in 2014 (Pearson et al., 2018). More specifically, this burden encompassed medical costs (59% of total costs), lost productivity among victims and perpetrators (37%), criminal justice activities (2%), and other costs (2%; Peterson et a., 2018). It remains apparent that IPV is costly for both individuals and their economic systems.

The effects of IPV are detrimental to an individual's physical and mental health, their families and communities, and the economic system. Certain factors, also known as risk markers, have been examined for both IPV perpetration and victimization, alluding that individuals who have these risk markers might be more or less likely to experience and/or perpetrate IPV (Spencer et al., 2020). Interestingly, a recent meta-analysis examining risk markers for perpetration of physical IPV found only four studies that examined infidelity as a risk marker (Spencer et al., 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the association between infidelity and IPV perpetration and victimization, as a thorough investigation infidelity and its association with IPV has not been done in past research. It is paramount to understand the association between IPV and infidelity, as they can be a huge strain on partners in relationships. An increased understanding pertaining to this association could help in furthering research on preventative measures and the course of treatment in therapy for individuals who experience, or at risk for experiencing, these issues.

Infidelity

Infidelity can be defined as the violation of a partnership's agreement, stated or assumed, regarding sexual and/or emotional acts with other individuals outside of the partnership (Gibson et al., 2016). Notably, the definition of cheating in a partnership can, and often does, vary between partnerships, contributing to the act itself (Selterman et al., 2023). Sexual and emotional infidelities are undeniably common in adult romantic relationships, especially with access to the internet (Selterman et al., 2023). Research suggests that the lifetime prevalence for infidelity is anywhere between 1.2-85.5% (Hertlein et al., 2005; Luo et al., 2010). When defined more conservatively, research suggests that around 20-40% of married individuals and 33-50% of young adults in romantic relationships cheat on their partners (Atkins et al., 2001; Luo et al., 2010). Given the variance in the definition and prevalence of infidelity (Moller & Vossler, 2015), the current study allows participants to categorically select confirmed acts of infidelity themselves, including online extradyadic sexual behaviors.

Interpersonally, infidelity has been connected to increased marital distress, conflict, and relationship termination (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Hall & Ficham, 2006). In addition to interpersonal struggles, there are serious intrapersonal consequences that are often associated with infidelity. For the uninvolved partner, researchers have recorded an association between infidelity and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Warach & Josephs, 2021). Additionally, it has been noted that the hurt experienced by the uninvolved partner is analogous to other types of interpersonal trauma, also known as an attachment wound (Gordon et al., 2004; Warach & Josephs, 2021). Overall, relationship infidelity has the potential to be detrimental to relationship longevity and the well-being of the uninvolved partner. Due to this association and the consequences of infidelity, which have been found to be associated with IPV (Keilholtz et al.,

2023; Spencer et al., 2020), a thorough examination between infidelity and IPV perpetration and victimization is warranted.

Infidelity and Gender

Existing literature on stigma of infidelity also focuses on gender differences, illustrating that female infidelity often remains more stigmatized than male infidelity (Pichon et al., 2020). Looking at these findings through a socioculturally attuned lens provides context to the societal power imbalance that is the patriarchy (McDowell et al., 2022). Often, research has observed that men's accusations, without proof, of women's infidelity are weaponized as justification for perpetration of IPV (Pichon et al., 2020). Additionally, men have also used these accusations of infidelity to remove women from their jobs and/or impede their opportunities for education (Pichon et al., 2020).

As gender norms shift throughout society, research has observed an increase of accusations for women cheating on their male partners, potentially attributed to an increase in women working and spending more time outside the home (Pichon et al., 2020). Even so, some women who have experienced accusations of IPV by their male partners view it as a form of psychological IPV, as it often includes verbal aggression with the intent to control (Pichon et al., 2020). It appears a shift in gender norms might contribute to men's need for external control in their relationships.

Similarly to accusations of infidelity, there also likely exists individuals who believe their partner is participating in an extradyadic affair but may have experienced minimizing/denying and gaslighting behaviors from their partner, leading them to be unsure (Klein et al., 2023). Therefore, our study sought to include participants who had proof of their partner's infidelity and

participants who believed their partner was participating in infidelity, but who did not have proof to capture these dynamics.

Infidelity and IPV

As aforementioned, the association between infidelity and IPV has been understudied in extant literature. Thus far, research has examined perceptions of infidelity in heterosexual and same-sex couples, alluding that unfaithfulness, whether perceived or actual, leads to perceptions of victims of IPV as less moral and lowers the perceived seriousness of violence, especially in same-sex couples (Paolini et al., 2020; Witte, 2012). Moreover, existing research on the link between infidelity and IPV has focused on relationship jealousy and its role specifically in accusations of infidelity and violence (Hellmuth et al., 2013; Kaighobadi et al., 2008; Nemeth et al., 2012; Pichon et al., 2020). Relationship jealousy can be defined as a combination of thoughts, feelings, and actions, leading to a threatened sense of self and/or relationship (White, 1981). In the context of infidelity, whether confirmed or accused, relationship jealousy has been shown to be associated with IPV (Pichon et al., 2020).

In a similar vein, vignettes of infidelity perpetration have been shown to cause feelings of guilt in participants in a hypothetical scenario depicting infidelity (Fisher et al., 2008). Namely, men report feeling guiltier about a scenario depicting their sexual infidelity and women feel guiltier about a scenario depicting their emotional infidelity (Fisher et al., 2008). As for the non-involved partner, emotions that have been shown to be associated with reactions to a partner's sexual and emotional infidelity also differ depending on the type of infidelity (Shackelford et al., 2010). For example, participants associated feelings of nausea, repulsion, and anger from sexual infidelity, whereas participants associated undesirable, insecure, and anger (on a lower level) from emotional infidelity (Becker et al., 2004; Shackelford et al., 2010). In the same study

examining sexual and emotional infidelity combined, men scored higher on feelings surrounding homicide and suicide, whereas women identified more with feelings regarding undesirable and insecure (Shackelford et al., 2010). Deficits in emotion regulation, for all partners involved, might increase the likelihood of IPV perpetration where infidelity has occurred (Maloney et al., 2023). The occurrence of infidelity in relationships can be one of the most detrimental events individuals experience in relationships and might manifest powerful emotions; however, emotion regulation and higher levels of self-esteem have been shown to help cope with infidelity in more adaptive, non-violent ways (Maloney et al., 2023; Shrout & Weigel, 2020).

One subject that has been examined in recent studies is online infidelity (Majumdar, 2018). However, the potential association between online infidelity and IPV has been scarcely investigated in relation to IPV. Seeking out romantic and/or sexual encounters online might serve as an escape from IPV happening in an individual's current relationship (Majumdar, 2018). Alongside this, individuals reported the likelihood of IPV victimization if their partner were to find out about said online infidelities (Majumdar, 2018). The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature by directly analyzing online infidelity behaviors of participants and their partners in association with IPV.

Furthermore, in a global systematic review (Pichon et al., 2020), different types of IPV (e.g., psychological, physical, sexual, and economic) were significantly linked to accusations of and confirmed infidelity. However, many themes were found in accusations of infidelity, rather than confirmed acts. For example, men self-reported perpetrating physical and psychological IPV from suspecting their female partner of infidelity, and women who were suspected of infidelity from their male partners reported psychological and physical IPV victimization (Pichon et al., 2020). Additionally, women suspecting partner infidelity and experiencing male

suspicion of their own fidelity reported experiencing sexual coercion from their male partner (Goetz & Shackelford, 2009; Pichon et al., 2020).

Notably, among the 25 quantitative studies on IPV and infidelity included in the Pichon et al. (2020) literature review, only 7 included questions regarding real/confirmed male infidelity and only 2 included confirmed female infidelity along with questions about suspected infidelity. Among these, none that investigated the association between infidelity and IPV included various types of IPV victimization and perpetration and various types of infidelity (Conroy, 2014; Goetz & Shackelford, 2009; Kalokhe, 2018; Shrestha et al., 2019; Stieglitz et al., 2012; Townsend et al., 2017; Ulibarri et al., 2010). In sum, research has highlighted the significant association between accusations of infidelity and IPV, yet there remains a large gap in the literature on the association between various types of confirmed infidelity and various types of IPV (Conroy, 2014; Nemeth et al.,2012; Pichon et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

A widely held explanation for IPV perpetration is that the desire for power and control over their partner motivates perpetrators to act in violent ways, ultimately causing harm emotionally, physically, and/or sexually (Babcock et al., 2016). A common name for this evolving assertion is “Power and Control Theory” (PCT), originally referred to as the “Duluth Model” (Browne, 1987; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Important to this model are feminist and sociocultural concepts that assist in shaping the conceptualization of IPV, such as patriarchal domination and control (Grose & Grabe, 2014; Stark 2007). Feminist and sociocultural contexts acknowledge the sociohistorical context of the patriarchy, noting that specific social characteristics disproportionately yield men more power than women (Dhakal, 2008). According to these concepts, this power imbalance is innate to the patriarchal world we live in (Yllo, 2005).

Over time, PCT has been notably critiqued by researchers (Grose & Grabe, 2014; Overbeck & Park, 2001; Wagers 2012, 2015) on the account of grouping power and control together as concepts. Wagers (2012) sought out to differentiate and elaborate upon the PCT, namely introducing "Internal Power Theory" (IPT). Considering this, Wagers (2012) provided distinct definitions of power and control. In particular, control is defined as a behavior that is enacted upon to get another person to do something they want them to, while power is an internal sense of feeling either powerful or powerless. Along with this important distinction, they also contended that understanding and measuring control does not provide an explanation for an individual's motivation in using control tactics and violence in intimate partnerships, as assumed from the PCT (Wagers, 2012).

The IPT inquires why individuals, both men and women, act in controlling and violent ways toward their partners. Furthermore, in intimate partnerships, power dynamics remain present due to internal and external factors and characteristics (Wagers, 2021). Due to the nature of relationships, power is constantly changing and shifting. To create a more balanced distribution of power between partners, both individuals ought to feel valuable in the relationship to maintain a secure relational bond (Murray et al., 2005). When an individual has lower levels of internal power factors, such as self-esteem, they are more likely to feel inferior to their partner, which might lead to feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and a lack of empowerment (Murray et al., 2005). These feelings might lead this partner to behave in unproductive, violent ways in an attempt to regain control over their partner rather than their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Wagers, 2021). In addition, research shows that intense emotional experiences may be brought on by infidelity and/or IPV victimization in relationships (Becker et al., 2004; Shackelford et al., 2010), which could lead to decrease in self-esteem and lost sense of self

(Utley, 2017). Moreover, these events have the potential to lead to bi-directional IPV and/or infidelity in intimate partnerships.

Furthermore, concepts integral to this theory remain important to consider when discussing the association between IPV and infidelity. Through IPT, one might explain an individual's motivation for infidelity and IPV as low levels of internal power. In other words, lower levels of the internal power factors might influence one's motivation for seeking out affairs and/or perpetrating violence in the relationship to regain control in their partnership instead of sifting through these uncomfortable emotions. It is also important to note that gender roles and expectations might exacerbate low levels of internal power, especially in men.

The Current Study

The present study seeks to fill the existing gap in research regarding the association between infidelity and IPV. There exists a large body of research on relational jealousy, accusations of infidelity, and the association between these and IPV. However, confirmed acts of infidelity in previous research have been understudied (i.e., participants who report they have proof of their partner's infidelity). Further, our study is the first of our knowledge to examine the association between infidelity perpetration and victimization, combining those who reported they have proof and those who do not, (e.g., sending/receiving explicit pictures, a brief emotional affair, a serious emotional affair, an emotional affair that was online, a kiss, a date, a one-time sexual encounter, a brief physical affair, a serious physical affair, and other) and various types of IPV perpetration and victimization, physical, sexual, emotional, and severe, as well as minimizing/denying and blaming victimization. In addition to this, our study uniquely addresses gender of both victims and perpetrators of violence and infidelity, highlighting a potential necessity for further exploration on the topic. The study seeks to examine the following research

question: Is there an association between different types IPV perpetration and victimization (physical, sexual, psychological, severe), including minimizing and blaming victimization, and infidelity perpetration and victimization for men and women?

Chapter 3 - Methods

Procedures

Participants were gathered through a Qualtrics survey uploaded to the Prolific website, a research tool where individuals participate in surveys for a payment in return. Participants were compensated approximately $12 USD an hour for taking the survey. Participants were required to live in the United States and be at least 18 years old to participate in the study. The sample was nationally representative by gender, race, and age according to the 2010 Census data. Data were collected in two waves, one in May 2022 and the other in October 2022. In sum, data were collected from a total of 1,262 participants. Four participants were excluded because they did not say if they were in a relationship, 511 were excluded because they were single, 15 were excluded because they were widowed, and 19 were excluded because they did not fill out the infidelity questions. Thus, the final sample consisted of 713 participants that identified as currently in a relationship.

Participants

Of the total participants, the average age was 46 years old, with the range from 18 to 80 years old. Women made up 46.7% of the participants and men made up 51.9%, while the remaining 1.4% was made up of transwomen and non-binary individuals. Most participants reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual (84.9%), whereas 9.4% reported being bisexual, 3.1% lesbian/gay, 0.6% queer, 1.3% pansexual, and 0.7% as other. As for race/ethnicity, 78.1%

were White, followed by Black or African American (11.8%), Asian (7.4%), Hispanic or Latino (6.9%), American Indian or Alaska Native (2.1%), other (0.7%), and Southwest Asian or North African or Middle Eastern (0.3%). Over half of the participants had a four-year college degree or higher (61.0%) with income between $25,000-$50,000 (25.2%), $50,000-$100,000 (37.4%), and $100,000-$200,000 (21.0%). Last, the majority of participants reported having no children (38.4%), followed by two children (24.4%), one child (17.4%), three children (12.9%), four children (4.8%), with the remaining 2.1% including those with five or more children and those who listed other.

Measures

IPV Perpetration and Victimization.

IPV perpetration and victimization was assessed using The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996; Straus & Douglas, 2004), containing 78 items to measure participants' frequency of perpetration and victimization of physical, sexual, and psychological IPV in their current relationship. Physical IPV victimization items consisted of questions such as, "*I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner*". While sexual IPV victimization items included questions like, "*I made my partner have sex without a condom*". Last, psychological IPV victimization items consisted of questions such as, "*I shouted or yelled at my partner*". Perpetration of physical, sexual, and psychological IPV were assessed by follow-up questions after each item of perpetration, which consisted of a statement like, "*My partner did this to me."* Participants' responses were rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *No, this has never happened,* 2 = *Once or twice in the past year,* 3 = *3-5 times in the past year,* 4 = *6-10 times in the past year,* 5 = *11-20 times in the past year,* to 6 = *More than 20 in the past year,* with 7 = *it has happened, just not in the past year*. For the purpose of this study, answers for physical, sexual,

and psychological IPV victimization and perpetration were dichotomized separately where 1 = *have experienced IPV perpetration; have experienced IPV victimization* and 0 = *have not experienced IPV perpetration; have not experienced IPV victimization.* In addition, severe IPV victimization and perpetration were measured by calculating the mean score of seven items that a participant could have experienced or perpetrated involving IPV that have the potential to cause severe physical injury (i.e., being choked, using a knife or gun on them, being kicked, being punched or hit with something that could cause harm, etc.).

Controlling Behavior Victimization.

In addition to the CTS, the Checklist of Controlling Behaviors Scale was administered to assess IPV victimization, specifically minimizing and blaming in their current relationship (CCB; Lehmann, 1998). The CCB is an 84-item questionnaire with 10 subscales and 7 to 10 questions per subscale. For the purpose of the current study, only the blaming and minimizing/denying subscales were used in assessing the association between these and IPV. The blaming subscale consisted of items such as, "*Blamed me for his abusive behavior by saying it was my fault."* The minimizing/denying subscale consisted of questions items such as, "*Insisted that what they did was not so bad."* Answers for minimizing and denying subscales were dichotomized separately where 1 = *have experienced* and 0 = *have not experienced.*

Infidelity.

Infidelity victimization was assessed by asking participants if they have ever been cheated on emotionally, or physically/sexually in their current relationship. Participants selected their response accordingly (e.g., 1 = *yes & I believe so, but do not have proof,* 0 = *no)*. Participants who responded, "*I believe so, but do not have proof",* were coded with those who responded "*yes"* due to the possibility that the partner involved in infidelity behaviors might engage in

manipulative behaviors toward the non-involved partner, leading the non-involved partner to potentially minimize their behavior. Additionally, infidelity perpetration was assessed by asking participants if they have ever cheated on their current partner (e.g., *1 = yes, 0 = no*). If participants answered yes to either of these questions, they were asked about the type of infidelity (e.g., *sending/receiving explicit pictures, a brief emotional affair, a serious emotional affair, an emotional affair that was online, a kiss, a date, a one-time sexual encounter, a brief physical affair, a serious physical affair, and other*) and were asked to select all that apply. Infidelity victimization and perpetration were coded separately, combining each type of infidelity, where 1 = *experienced infidelity* and 0 = *did not experience infidelity*.

Analysis Plan

First, frequencies of various types of infidelity (e.g., sending/receiving explicit pictures, a brief emotional affair, a serious emotional affair, an emotional affair that was online, a kiss, a date, a one-time sexual encounter, a brief physical affair, a serious physical affair, and other) perpetration and victimization were run for men and women in their current relationship. Second, IPV variables regarding physical, sexual, psychological, and severe victimization and perpetration, as well as minimizing and blaming victimization were dichotomized separately, and frequencies and percentages were run for all participants currently in a relationship, and then for men and women separately. Chi-square values were calculated to determine if there were significant differences in IPV perpetration and victimization based on whether individuals perpetrated or experienced infidelity in their current relationships.

Chapter 4 - Results

Table 1. Frequencies of Infidelity Victimization Current Relationship (*n* = 1,262)

Have you been cheated on in your current relationship?			
	Total (n = 711)	Women (*n* = 369)	Men (*n* = 332)
Yes	*n* = 88 (12.4%)	*n* = 42 (11.4%)	*n* = 46 (13.9%)
No	*n* = 587 (82.6%)	*n* = 304 (82.4%)	*n* = 274 (82.5%)
I believe so, but do not have proof	*n* = 36 (5.1%)	*n* = 23 (6.2%)	*n* = 12 (3.6%)
Type(s) of infidelity (for "yes" response and "I believe so, but do not have proof")			
Sending/receiving explicit pictures	*n* = 23 (18.5%)	*n* = 13 (20%)	*n* = 10 (17.2%)
Other	*n* = 12 (9.7%)	*n* = 7 (10.8%)	*n* = 5 (8.6%)
A brief emotional affair (e.g., romantically involved with someone, but did not have physical contact)	*n* = 24 (19.3%)	*n* = 12 (18.5%)	*n* = 11 (19.0%)
A serious emotional affair (e.g., romantically involved with someone, but did not have physical contact)	*n* = 13 (10.5%)	*n* = 10 (15.4%)	*n* = 2 (3.4%)
An emotional affair that was online (e.g., messaging someone on social media or dating app)	*n* = 20 (16.1%)	*n* = 11 (16.9%)	*n* = 9 (15.5%)
A kiss	*n* = 16 (12.9%)	*n* = 7 (10.8%)	*n* = 9 (15.5%)
A date	*n* = 14 (11.3%)	*n* = 6 (9.2%)	*n* = 7 (12.1%)
A one-time sexual encounter	*n* = 37 (29.8%)	*n* = 15 (23.1%)	*n* = 21 (36.2%)
A brief physical affair	*n* = 30 (24.2%)	*n* = 17 (26.1%)	*n* = 13 (22.4%)
A serious physical affair	*n* = 20 (16.1%)	*n* = 11 (16.9%)	*n* = 9 (15.5%)

Note: Percentages for type(s) of infidelity include participants who answered "yes" and "I believe so, but do not have proof"

Infidelity Victimization in Current Relationship Prevalence

Infidelity victimization in participants' current relationship was reported among men and women combined at 12.4%, in addition to 5.1% of individuals that reported they believe so but did not have proof. Between men and women, more male participants (13.9%) reported infidelity victimization in their current relationship than women (11.4%). Participants who selected "yes" and "I believe so, but do not have proof" were combined to investigate frequencies of various types of infidelity. For the entire sample, participants reported experiencing a one-time sexual encounter victimization the most (29.8%), followed by a brief physical affair (24.2%), a brief emotional affair (19.7%), an emotional affair that was online (16.1%), sending/receiving explicit pictures (18.5%), a kiss (12.9%), a serious physical affair (16.1%), other (9.7%), and a date (11.3%). Men identified a one-time sexual encounter as the most often experienced type of infidelity victimization in their current relationship (36.2%), while women identified a brief physical affair as the most often experienced type (26.1%).

Table 2. Frequencies of Infidelity Perpetration Current Relationship (n = 1,262)

Have you cheated on your current partner?			
	Total (n = 711)	Women (n = 369)	Men (n = 332)
Yes	n = 61 (8.6%)	n = 28 (7.6%)	n = 33 (9.9%)
No	n = 650 (91.4%)	n = 341 (92.4%)	n = 299 (90.1%)
Type(s) of infidelity			
Sending/receiving explicit pictures	n = 13 (21.3%)	n = 7 (25%)	n = 6 (18.2%)
Other	n = 2 (3.3%)	n = 2 (7.1%)	n = 0 (0.0%)
An emotional affair (e.g., romantically involved with someone, but did not have physical contact)	n = 18 (29.5%)	n = 11 (39.3%)	n = 7 (21.2%)
A serious affair	n = 13 (21.3%)	n = 5 (17.8%)	n = 8 (24.2%)
A brief affair	n = 18 (29.5%)	n = 7 (25%)	n = 11 (33.3%)
A kiss	n = 20 (32.8%)	n = 9 (32.1%)	n = 11 (33.3%)
A date	n = 6 (9.8%)	n = 1 (3.6%)	n = 5 (15.1%)
A one-time sexual encounter	n = 23 (37.7%)	n = 8 (28.6%)	n = 15 (45.4%)

Note: Percentages for type(s) of infidelity include participants who answered "yes"

Infidelity Perpetration in Current Relationship Prevalence

Approximately 9% of participants reported infidelity perpetration in their current relationship. Among male participants, 9.9% identified infidelity perpetration in their current relationship, and 7.6% of female participants identified infidelity perpetration. Due to an error in inputting the study's survey into Qualtrics, the types of infidelity were accidentally combined and/or omitted, as shown in Table 3 (i.e., a brief emotional affair and a serious emotional affair were combined). Considering this, men and women combined most frequently reported perpetrating a one-time sexual encounter in their current relationship (37.7%), followed by a kiss (32.8%), a brief affair (29.5%), an emotional affair (29.5%), a serious affair and sending/receiving explicit pictures (21.3%), a date (9.8%), and other (3.3%). Interestingly, men reported perpetrating a one-time sexual encounter (45.4%) more than any other type of infidelity,

and women reported perpetrating an emotional affair (39.3%) more than any other type of infidelity.

Table 3. Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Prevalence of IPV and Infidelity for Men and Women in Current Relationship (n = 1,262)

Variable	Infidelity	No Infidelity	χ^2	*p*-value
Infidelity Victimization Current Relationship				
	Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 182)	No Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 830)		
Severe IPV Perpetration	***n* = 15 (8.2%)**	***n* = 30 (3.6%)**	**7.522**	**0.006**
Severe IPV Victimization	*n* = 11 (6.0%)	*n* = 36 (4.3%)	0.982	0.322
Physical IPV Perpetration	*n* = 25 (13.7%)	*n* = 105 (12.6%)	0.157	0.692
Physical IPV Victimization	*n* = 35 (19.2%)	*n* = 117 (14.1%)	3.083	0.079
Psychological IPV Perpetration	*n* = 126 (69.2%)	*n* = 515 (62.0%)	3.316	0.069
Psychological IPV Victimization	***n* = 128 (70.3%)**	***n* = 490 (59.0%)**	**8.008**	**0.005**
Sexual IPV Perpetration	*n* = 34 (18.7%)	*n* = 135 (16.3%)	0.626	0.429
Sexual IPV Victimization	*n* = 43 (23.6%)	*n* = 156 (18.8%)	2.205	0.138
	Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 155)	No Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 676)		
Minimizing Victimization	***n* = 79 (51.0%)**	***n* = 141 (20.8%)**	**58.73**	**<0.001**
Blaming Victimization	***n* = 47 (30.3%)**	***n* = 99 (14.7%)**	**21.229**	**<0.001**
Infidelity Perpetration Current Relationship				
	Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 82)	No Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 929)		
Severe IPV Perpetration	*n* = 5 (6.1%)	*n* = 40 (4.3%)	0.569	0.451
Severe IPV Victimization	*n* = 3 (3.7%)	*n* = 44 (4.7%)	0.197	0.657
Physical IPV Perpetration	*n* = 11 (13.4%)	*n* = 119 (12.8%)	0.025	0.875
Physical IPV Victimization	*n* = 12 (14.6%)	*n* = 140 (15.1%)	0.011	0.916
Psychological IPV Perpetration	***n* = 62 (75.6%)**	***n* = 579 (62.3%)**	**5.731**	**0.017**
Psychological IPV Victimization	***n* = 60 (73.2%)**	***n* = 558 (60.1%)**	**5.447**	**0.020**
Sexual IPV Perpetration	*n* = 17 (20.7%)	*n* = 152 (16.4%)	1.034	0.309
Sexual IPV Victimization	*n* = 17 (20.7%)	*n* = 182 (19.6%)	0.062	0.803
	Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 70)	No Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 761)		
Minimizing Victimization	*n* = 23 (32.8%)	*n* = 197 (25.9%)	1.600	0.206
Blaming Victimization	***n* = 19 (27.5%)**	***n* = 127 (16.7%)**	**5.109**	**0.024**

Chi-Square Analyses for All Participants

Chi-square analyses were run to examine the relation between infidelity perpetration and victimization and various types of IPV perpetration and victimization (i.e., severe IPV, physical IPV, psychological IPV, sexual IPV, minimizing, and blaming). Results indicated participants were more likely to perpetrate severe IPV when infidelity victimization was present, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262 = 7.5, p = .006. Additionally, participants were more likely to experience psychological IPV victimization when infidelity victimization was present, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262) = 8.0, p = .005. Further, our results alluded participants were more likely to experience minimizing victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262) = 58.7, p = <.001, and blaming victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262) = 21.2, p = <.001, when infidelity victimization was present.

Along with these significant findings, results also revealed participants were more likely to perpetrate psychological IPV, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262) = 5.7, p = .017, and experience psychological IPV victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262) = 5.4, p = .020, when infidelity perpetration was present. In addition, the present study alludes that participants were more likely to experience blaming victimization when infidelity perpetration was present, χ^2 (1, N = 1,262) = 5.1, p = .024. In addition, the following variables were not significantly related to infidelity victimization: severe IPV victimization, physical IPV perpetration and victimization, psychological IPV perpetration, and sexual IPV perpetration and victimization. Similarly, severe IPV perpetration and victimization, physical IPV perpetration and victimization, sexual IPV perpetration and victimization, and minimizing victimization were not significantly related to infidelity perpetration.

Table 4. Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Prevalence of IPV and Infidelity for Men in Current Relationship

Variable	Infidelity	No Infidelity	χ^2	*p*-value
Infidelity Victimization Current Relationship				
	Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 84)	No Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 403)		
Severe IPV Perpetration	*n* = 4 (4.8%)	*n* = 14 (3.5%)	0.324	0.569
Severe IPV Victimization	*n* = 5 (5.9%)	*n* = 19 (4.7%)	0.227	0.634
Physical IPV Perpetration	*n* = 13 (15.5%)	*n* = 54 (13.4%)	0.253	0.615
Physical IPV Victimization	*n* = 16 (19.0%)	*n* = 57 (14.1%)	1.312	0.252
Psychological IPV Perpetration	*n* = 52 (61.9%)	*n* = 237 (58.8%)	0.276	0.599
Psychological IPV Victimization	*n* = 54 (64.3%)	*n* = 239 (59.3%)	0.719	0.396
Sexual IPV Perpetration	*n* = 20 (23.8%)	*n* = 85 (21.1%)	0.304	0.582
Sexual IPV Victimization	*n* = 20 (23.8%)	*n* = 77 (19.1%)	0.964	0.326
	Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 70)	No Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 312)		
Minimizing Victimization	***n* = 28 (40.0%)**	***n* = 59 (18.9%)**	**14.458**	**<0.001**
Blaming Victimization	***n* = 18 (25.7%)**	***n* = 39 (12.5%)**	**7.795**	**0.005**
Infidelity Perpetration Current Relationship				
	Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 42)	No Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 439)		
Severe IPV Perpetration	*n* = 1 (2.4%)	*n* = 17 (3.9%)	0.362	0.547
Severe IPV Victimization	*n* = 1 (2.4%)	*n* = 23 (5.2%)	0.876	0.349
Physical IPV Perpetration	*n* = 5 (11.9%)	*n* = 62 (14.1%)	0.434	0.510
Physical IPV Victimization	*n* = 5 (11.9%)	*n* = 68 (15.5%)	0.783	0.376
Psychological IPV Perpetration	***n* = 35 (83.3%)**	***n* = 254 (57.8%)**	**4.859**	**0.028**
Psychological IPV Victimization	***n* = 35 (83.3%)**	***n* = 258 (58.8%)**	**4.370**	**0.037**
Sexual IPV Perpetration	*n* = 13 (31.0%)	*n* = 92 (21.0%)	1.126	0.289
Sexual IPV Victimization	*n* = 12 (28.6%)	*n* = 85 (19.4%)	1.012	0.315
	Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 38)	No Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 344)		
Minimizing Victimization	***n* = 14 (36.8%)**	***n* = 73 (21.2%)**	**4.748**	**0.029**
Blaming Victimization	***n* = 11 (29.7%)**	***n* = 46 (13.4%)**	**7.026**	**0.008**

Chi-Square Analyses for Men

For men only, our study indicates participants were more likely to experience minimizing victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 605) = 14.4, p = <.001, as well as blaming victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 84) = 7.8, p = .005, when infidelity victimization was present. Moreover, results also show participants were more likely to perpetrate psychological IPV, χ^2 (1, N = 605) = 4.4, p = .037, as well as experience psychological IPV victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 605) = 4.8, p = .028, when infidelity perpetration was present. Additionally, these findings highlight that participants were more likely to experience minimizing victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 605) = 4.7, p = .029, and blaming victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 605) = 7.0, p = .008 when infidelity perpetration was present. Last, the following variables were not significantly related to infidelity victimization: severe IPV perpetration and victimization, physical IPV perpetration and victimization, psychological IPV perpetration and victimization, and sexual IPV perpetration and victimization. Along with this, severe IPV perpetration and victimization, physical IPV perpetration and victimization, and sexual IPV perpetration and victimization were not significantly related to infidelity perpetration.

Table 5. Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Prevalence of IPV and Infidelity for Women in Current Relationship

Variable	Infidelity	No Infidelity	χ^2	*p*-value
Infidelity Victimization Current Relationship				
	Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 96)	No Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 409)		
Severe IPV Perpetration	***n* = 10 (10.4%)**	***n* = 16 (3.9%)**	**6.736**	**0.009**
Severe IPV Victimization	*n* = 6 (6.2%)	*n* = 17 (4.1%)	0.784	0.376
Physical IPV Perpetration	*n* = 12 (12.5%)	*n* = 51 (12.5%)	0.000	0.993
Physical IPV Victimization	*n* = 18 (18.7%)	*n* = 60 (14.7%)	0.991	0.319
Psychological IPV Perpetration	*n* = 72 (75.0%)	*n* = 269 (65.7%)	3.020	0.082
Psychological IPV Victimization	***n* = 72 (75.0%)**	***n* = 243 (59.4%)**	**8.049**	**0.005**
Sexual IPV Perpetration	*n* = 13 (13.5%)	*n* = 48 (11.7%)	0.239	0.625
Sexual IPV Victimization	*n* = 22 (22.9%)	*n* = 76 (18.6%)	0.934	0.334
	Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 83)	No Infidelity Victimization (*n* = 350)		
Minimizing Victimization	***n* = 49 (58.3%)**	***n* = 80 (19.8%)**	**41.984**	**<0.001**
Blaming Victimization	***n* = 27 (32.5%)**	***n* = 59 (16.8%)**	**10.180**	**0.001**
Infidelity Perpetration Current Relationship				
	Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 33)	No Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 472)		
Severe IPV Perpetration	*n* = 4 (12.1%)	*n* = 22 (4.7%)	3.515	0.061
Severe IPV Victimization	*n* = 2 (6.1%)	*n* = 21 (4.4%)	0.184	0.668
Physical IPV Perpetration	*n* = 6 (18.2%)	*n* = 57 (12.1%)	1.053	0.305
Physical IPV Victimization	*n* = 7 (21.2%)	*n* = 71 (15.0%)	0.899	0.343
Psychological IPV Perpetration	*n* = 26 (78.8%)	*n* = 315 (66.7%)	2.043	0.153
Psychological IPV Victimization	*n* = 24 (72.7%)	*n* = 291 (61.6%)	1.612	0.204
Sexual IPV Perpetration	*n* = 4 (12.1%)	*n* = 57 (12.1%)	0.000	0.994
Sexual IPV Victimization	*n* = 5 (15.1%)	*n* = 93 (19.7%)	0.409	0.523
	Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 30)	No Infidelity Perpetration (*n* = 403)		
Minimizing Victimization	*n* = 8 (26.7%)	*n* = 121 (30.0%)	0.151	0.698
Blaming Victimization	*n* = 7 (23.3%)	*n* = 79 (19.6%)	0.231	0.631

Chi-Square Analyses for Women

When examining women only, our results underscore participants were more likely to perpetrate severe IPV when infidelity victimization was present, χ^2 (1, N = 630) = 6.7, p = .009. Additionally, results revealed women were more likely to experience psychological IPV victimization when infidelity victimization was present, χ^2 (1, N = 630) = 8.0, p = .005. Furthermore, participants indicated they were more likely to experience minimizing victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 630) = 42.0, p = <.001, and blaming victimization, χ^2 (1, N = 630) = 10.2, p = .001 when infidelity victimization was present. However, severe IPV victimization, physical IPV perpetration and victimization, psychological IPV perpetration, and sexual IPV perpetration and victimization were not significantly related to infidelity victimization. Additionally, the following variables were not significantly related to infidelity perpetration: severe IPV perpetration and victimization, physical IPV perpetration and victimization, psychological IPV perpetration and victimization, sexual IPV perpetration and victimization, minimizing victimization, and blaming victimization.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The current study examined the association between IPV and infidelity, both perpetration and victimization, for men and women through calculating frequencies, percentages, and chi-square analyses. Moreover, our results indicate that significant associations exist between some types of IPV victimization and perpetration and infidelity, in line with our hypothesis and extant literature (Hellmuth et al., 2013; Kaighobadi et al., 2008; Nemeth et al., 2012; Pichon et al., 2020;). The results from this study highlight the association between psychological IPV, blaming, and minimizing with the presence of infidelity in the relationship. In addition, the current findings do not indicate any temporal association between IPV and infidelity victimization and perpetration. Therefore, this discussion includes explanations regarding infidelity leading to IPV and vice versa, keeping in mind that more context is needed to provide more accurate inferences.

Infidelity perpetration, in general, was similar in frequency among men and women, indicating that women and men participate in extradyadic affairs at a similar rate. Likewise, men and women reported infidelity victimization at a similar rate, with men reporting a slightly higher percentage than men. Early research regarding gender differences among men and women's engagement with infidelity holds that men participate in extradyadic affairs more than women (Greely 1994; Wierderman, 1997). However, as research has expanded the definition of infidelity, examining other behaviors aside from intercourse (i.e., emotional affairs) and investigating prevalence among older adults, this gender difference has narrowed (Allen et al., 2005; Drigotas et al., 1999; Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Our current findings support the notion that men and women participate in infidelity behaviors at a similar rate, in line with more recent literature on infidelity behaviors.

In examining the frequencies of different types of infidelity victimization among those currently in a relationship, our study revealed that the most common types of infidelity among all participants were a one-time sexual encounter and a brief physical affair. When separating women and men, our results indicated a brief physical affair was the most common type of infidelity victimization behavior reported among women and a one-time sexual encounter was the most common type among men. It could be that emotional infidelity is more ambiguous and harder to define, while sexual infidelity is easier to define according to extant research (Guitar et al., 2017). Therefore, when participants were asked if they had been cheated on before, they may have answered "*no"*, which would have excluded them from selecting which types of infidelity their partner had engaged in, or neglected to select types of infidelity regarding emotional affairs. Another rationale could simply be that the most common type of infidelity among men and women is a shorter-term sexual encounter.

The most common type of infidelity perpetration reported among all participants was a one-time sexual encounter. When separating women and men, results indicated that women participated in an emotional affair the most often, while men reported participating in a one-time sexual encounter the most. It may be that women seek out emotional affairs (i.e., being romantically involved with someone, but not having physical contact), more so than men. This finding is interesting, given evolutionary perspectives and previous literature indicating that heterosexual women are more likely to be upset by emotional infidelity compared to heterosexual men, and heterosexual men are more likely to be upset by sexual infidelity compared to heterosexual women (Buss et al., 1992; Frederick & Fales, 2016).

However, men and women indicated relatively similar levels of seeking out sexual encounters outside of their relationship, alluding that men and women behave more similarly in

this regard than past research has suggested, which may be due to previous research focusing on college-aged students (McAnulty & Brineman, 2012). In support of this finding, a study by Wiederman (1997) found that 23% of men and 12% of women had participated in an affair; however, these differences disappeared when examining the data for those over 40 years old. This goes to say that adult women and men seemingly participate in sexual affairs at a similar frequency, and that women might seek out emotional affairs more often than men.

Among all participants, our findings indicate that participants were more likely to perpetrate severe IPV when infidelity victimization is present, compared to when it is not present. In terms of gender differences, the association between severe IPV perpetration and infidelity victimization was not significant for men, yet it was for women. This finding yields an interpretation that goes beyond issues relating to the roles of gender and power and control, suggesting that many contextual and internal factors exist that lead individuals, particularly women in this case, to act aggressively toward their partner. Therefore, relationship infidelity in an intimate partnership may be a unique situation where women are more likely to perpetrate severe IPV, potentially due to factors such as anger, hostility, and internalizing negative emotions that have been shown to be associated with female perpetration of severe IPV (Beck, 1999; Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015). Furthering this notion, research examining motivations for women's perpetration of violence indicate that a large majority of women use violence toward their partner to show anger (58%), to retaliate against their partner for emotional hurt (56%), and to express their emotions they felt they could not verbalize (27%; Follingstad et al., 1991). Although these findings were significant, it is important to note that only ten women indicated they were more likely to perpetrate severe IPV in the presence of infidelity victimization, highlighting a need for further research to examine this association.

Participants also indicated experiencing psychological IPV victimization and perpetration significantly more often with infidelity present in their relationship. Overall, one explanation for the increased presence of psychological IPV when infidelity is present might be that explosive verbal behaviors (e.g., shouting and yelling at your partner) are more likely to occur if infidelity is present due to the increase in anger and emotionality surrounding the betrayal (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014). When separating men and women, men were more likely to experience both psychological IPV victimization and perpetration when they had participated in an extradyadic affair. Further, it may be that men perpetrate psychological IPV toward their partner to conceal their affair, and that women may perpetrate psychological IPV against men when suspecting and/or finding out about an affair. Moreover, qualitative research suggests that men who have perpetrated infidelity may use psychological IPV in the form of social aggression, accusing their non-involved partner of infidelity publicly to conceal their own infidelity (Utley, 2017). In addition, research suggests that psychological IPV perpetration in the face of one's own infidelity may indicate a need for control that was lost by the partner finding out about infidelity and may look like gaslighting, manipulation, and threatening the non-involved partner's life (Utley, 2017).

It is not unlikely that, in the face of male infidelity perpetration, that women might react their partner's psychologically aggressive behaviors with similar behaviors or vice versa, potentially leading to bi-directional violence that has shown to be the most common type of bidirectional violence (Machado et al., 2023). For women, results indicated they were more likely to experience psychological IPV victimization when their partner had participated in an extradyadic affair. This highlights the multiple facets of hurt that women experience with their

partner cheating on them and using psychological IPV against them, both of which can cause an extreme decrease in self-esteem and sense of security in the relationship (Utley, 2017).

When examining men, we found that men were more likely to experience minimizing and blaming victimization when both infidelity victimization and perpetration were present. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to experience blaming and minimizing victimization when only infidelity victimization was present compared to when infidelity was not present. Men may more commonly experience blaming and minimizing victimization from their partner when they themselves have participated in infidelity, compared to when they have not. Minimizing and blaming can occur in many different contexts in relationships, and often contributes to relationship dissatisfaction (Scott & Strauss, 2007), which is one of the many motivations for participating in extradyadic affairs (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Selterman et al., 2019).

Therefore, minimizing and blaming, and potentially other types of IPV as well, can occur in relationships for long periods of time, likely contributing to relationship dissatisfaction of the victim. Due to this, it is possible that an individual who is experiencing IPV victimization may seek out an affair with an individual outside of their relationship. Research has not yet examined IPV as a motivation for seeking out affairs; however, research has indicated that IPV can lead to relationship dissatisfaction, which is a motivator for an individual to seek out an extradyadic affair (Selterman et al., 2019). Moreover, this highlights the necessity for more context in regards to the temporal relationship between IPV and infidelity.

Additionally, research shows that IPV is perceived as more justified and lowers the seriousness of the violence when infidelity is present (Paolini et al., 2020; Witte, 2012). There might exist a connection between this sense of justification for perpetrating IPV for the non-involved partner followed by minimizing/denying and blaming. Furthermore, if the non-involved

partner is perpetrating some form of sexual, physical, psychological, or severe IPV, after finding out about an extradyadic affair, they may be more likely to minimize the seriousness of the violence they perpetrated and blame their partner for it.

On the other side of the coin, qualitative research has highlighted the experiences of women who have been cheated on by their male partners, suggesting that blaming and minimizing of their transgressions is a common theme (Utley, 2017). For example, many women described being blamed and shamed for their male partner's affair, saying things such as, "You're a bitch and that's why you don't have a husband, that's why 'cause you don't know how to treat a man" (Utley, 2017; p. 434). It is important to keep in mind that these results do not indicate any temporal association; thus, it is possible that minimizing and blaming victimization could occur before, after, or even during infidelity perpetration and/or victimization.

Clinical Implications

Clinicians indicate that infidelity is one of the most common issues couples come into their office with and that it is one of the most difficult to treat (Whisman et al., 1997). Research on couples who are in therapy addressing the issue of infidelity shows that some couples recovering from infidelity improve significantly, whereas some couples who have experienced infidelity separate (Marin et al., 2014). It is not uncommon that couples experience infidelity in their relationships, which have shown to bring about a multiplicity of emotions (i.e., anger, guilt, shame, insecurity) that have the potential to lead to manipulative or aggressive behaviors toward a partner, indicating lower levels of internal power and often seen as reactionary to finding out about an extradyadic affair. In addition, relationship dissatisfaction is one of the most common motivations for seeking out affairs in relationships, which could stem from IPV victimization (i.e., blaming, minimizing). Therefore, it seems important that therapists assess for IPV in

relationships to assist in replacing unhealthy behaviors, such as blaming or physically harming a partner, with helpful behaviors, like taking responsibility, using time-outs, and teaching mindfulness as preventative care for infidelity behaviors and further violence.

It is also important to note that research indicates that people participate in infidelity behaviors for many different reasons in addition to relationship dissatisfaction (i.e., sexual desire, low sexual satisfaction, attachment orientations, emotional attraction to individuals outside of the relationship, lack of love, low commitment, esteem, gaining sexual variety, situational factors, gender and sexual orientation, acceptance/permissiveness, and personality traits; Selterman et al., 2017; Altgelt et al., 2018; Mark et al., 2011; Sevi et al., 2020; Gibson et al., 2016; Lehmiller & Selterman, 2021; Goodman, 1985). Interestingly, more recent research on motivations for infidelity indicates that individuals who report high romantic love toward their partners and moderate satisfaction and conflict also engage in extradyadic affairs (Selterman et al., 2023). As previous research indicates individuals experiencing guilt and shame in response to their own infidelity, Selterman and colleagues (2023) allude that some individuals who participate in extradyadic affairs report feeling positively about themselves and being relatively satisfied with their lives. These contrasting findings illustrate the complicated nature of infidelity, which may contribute to therapists reporting this as a difficult issue to recover from. Additionally, our present study indicates the importance of assessing for both infidelity and IPV in relationships within a socioculturally attuned framework and keeping in mind the complexity of motivations behind infidelity and IPV.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations, namely, the temporal association between IPV and infidelity was not assessed. Therefore, the findings must be interpreted with this in mind, as

participants could experience IPV and infidelity in many different temporal sequences. No current studies of our knowledge examine this temporal association, which emphasizes the importance of future research on the matter. Furthermore, it is important to assess the sequence of IPV and infidelity in relationships to provide effective interventions during couple's therapy to provide preventative measures, such as self-regulation, mindfulness, and timeouts to prevent violence and/or infidelity in relationships. When IPV is present in a relationship, there might exist unique motivations for infidelity for the involved partner, depending on victimization and/or perpetration. On the other hand, when infidelity is present, there might exist specific risk factors for individuals that increase the likelihood of victimization and/or perpetration. Notably, infidelity and IPV could exist interchangeably in relationships as well, and future research ought to examine these patterns further. Along with this, future research ought to further examine severe IPV perpetration in the face of infidelity victimization among women due to the small amount of participants that contributed to statistical significance.

In addition to the aforementioned limitation, there was a human error when inputting the study's survey onto Qualtrics, specifically with types of infidelity perpetration in participants' current relationship (see Table 3). A brief emotional affair, a serious emotional affair, and an emotional affair that was online were accidentally combined as "*an emotional affair",* and a brief physical affair and a serious physical affair were shortened to "*a serious affair"* and "*a brief affair".* When looking at infidelity perpetration in participants' current relationship, the inconsistency and vagueness in categorization of cheating behaviors might have led participants to interpret the list of behaviors differently than intended. For example, participants could have selected a serious affair, when they were reporting on their experience in being involved in a

serious emotional affair. Future studies ought to ensure their selection of types of infidelity are consistent across questions.

On a similar note, the types of infidelity listed in the current survey were not completely objective (i.e., a brief emotional affair), so participants likely interpreted them to the best of their ability. Just as researchers' definitions of infidelity vary, participants' definitions do as well. Moreover, mixed-methodology research focusing on investigating participants' definitions of emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity highlights that male and female participants had more consistency when defining sexual infidelity compared to emotional infidelity, alluding that emotional infidelity is more subject to interpretation and individual definitions (Guitar et al., 2017). Future research ought to further examine individuals' definitions of various types of infidelity, including emotional and online infidelity, in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how participants conceptualize these behaviors.

An additional limitation to this study might be that participants were first asked if they have been cheated on and if they had cheated on their current or previous partner before they looked at the types of infidelity. If participants selected the answer, *"no",* they were not given the types of infidelity to choose from. Since each individual and each partnership has a stated or assumed definition of what constitutes infidelity, one might have answered "*no"* to the question but might have only been thinking about sexual infidelity. Previous literature has shown gender differences in the perception of infidelity behaviors, alluding that women are more distressed by emotional and sexual infidelity (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014; Thornton & Nagurney, 2011) and perceive more behaviors as infidelity, even online infidelity behaviors (Docon-Morgan & Docan, 2007; Moreno & Kahumoku-Fessler, 2018; Oberle et al., 2017). Therefore, female participants in the study might have been more likely to select, "*yes"* or "*I believe so, but do not have proof"*,

more so than male participants. Moreover, research should keep this in mind when creating online surveys, potentially providing an encompassing definition of infidelity behaviors, then asking participants yes/no questions.

Although it is a strength that the sample was nationally representative, it is largely a White, heterosexual, cisgender sample. Further, this limits the generalizability of the findings of our study. Thus, it is important that future research examine the association between IPV and infidelity among specific populations to identify similarities and differences across cultures, ethnicities, different types of relationships (i.e., consensually non-monogamous), same-sex couples, and more.

An additional limitation to our study is that we included "*I believe so, but do not have proof*" and "*yes*" response in our crosstabs. We did this due to the potential presence of manipulation, blaming, etc. that the involved partner might use against the non-involved partner in order to prevent them from leaving, finding out, and whatever else their intent may be. Moreover, this could be viewed as a strength in some ways, yet it can also be seen as a limitation. Individuals who display higher levels of relationship jealousy might be more likely to falsely accuse a partner of infidelity; however, that might be less likely to occur in a survey due to accusations being used as a form of control toward a partner (Pichon et al., 2020). Lastly, we recognize that our study did not separate types of infidelity when running our chi-square analyses; therefore, future research ought to examine infidelity behaviors individually along with types of IPV victimization and perpetration to assess if specific types of infidelity are risk markers for types of IPV.

Conclusion

IPV and infidelity are some of the most difficult, and common, experiences in relationships, and can lead to negative health outcomes, and sometimes, relationship termination (Luo et al., 2010; Marin et al., 2014; Warach & Josephs, 2021). The association between IPV and Infidelity is heavily understudied in extant literature, yet the association does exist and is seemingly prevalent in relationships. The present study sought to expand the knowledge of research on the relationship between infidelity and various types of IPV (physical, sexual, psychological, severe, minimizing, and blaming) among men and women through an online survey of a nationally representative sample. Through running frequencies and chi-square analyses, our results revealed significant associations between some types of IPV and infidelity and highlighted unique gender differences. Our study provides unique insights into the association between types of IPV and infidelity across male and female participants, both separately and together. These findings further highlight the necessity for therapists to screen couples who disclose an extradyadic affair in their relationship for IPV and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to help them decrease violence in the relationship.

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