

## Review Article

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# Factors involving extramarital affairs among married adults in Bangladesh

**Yasmin Jahan<sup>1\*</sup>, Abu Sayeed Chowdhury<sup>1</sup>, S. M. Atiqur Rahman<sup>2</sup>, Sajeda Chowdhury<sup>3</sup>, Zara Khair<sup>1</sup>, K. A. T. M. Ehsanul Huq<sup>1</sup>, Md Moshiur Rahman<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Graduate School of Biomedical & Health Sciences, <sup>3</sup>Institute of Biomedical & Health Sciences, Hiroshima University, Japan

<sup>2</sup>School of Health, University of New England, Australia

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**\*Correspondence:**

Dr. Yasmin Jahan,

E-mail: d160207@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

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## ABSTRACT

Extramarital affairs have become a common occurrence in modern society. Many studies have pointed to the lack of variety in a relationship as a contributing factor related to divorce and extramarital affairs. This study wants to explore the reasons behind developing the extramarital affair in married adults. The study is based upon the information gathered through scanning newspapers, journals, books, and browsing the Internet and all related papers which were published from 1980 to 2016. However, there is a limited data on the specific topic. After reviewing literatures, we found some common factors that might be responsible for extramarital affairs. Based on that we have made some recommendations for lowering this devastating situation. From this study, we expect that the stakeholders and policy makers can develop some new thoughts and strategies to let down this overwhelming condition.

**Keywords:** Extramarital affair, Married adults, Bangladesh

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is commonly understood as relatively enduring relationship between male and female as husband and wife.<sup>1</sup> It is a bond by which a man and a woman gain the religious, social and legal recognition to live together.<sup>2</sup> It creates mutual obligations between husband and wife.<sup>3</sup> Marriage is well-known as the widely-accepted system to shape the male-female conjugal life across the world through an undisputed approval for reproduction of children.<sup>4,5</sup> No religion permits to satisfy this biological need outside the wedlock.<sup>6</sup> Sex outside the marriage is adultery and is known as extramarital affairs.<sup>7</sup> Extramarital (EM) sex occurs when a married person engages in sexual activity with someone other than his or her spouse.<sup>8,9</sup> Another perspective defines that

EM is also pertinent to an unmarried person having sex with a married one.<sup>10,11</sup> Kinsey et al showed that approximately half of married men and a quarter of married women participate in at least one EM affair during their lives.<sup>12</sup> Extramarital affairs involve the infidelity (physical, emotional, mental) of someone who is married.<sup>13,14</sup> It is estimated that roughly 30% to 60% of all married individuals (in the United States) will engage in infidelity at some point during their marriage.<sup>15</sup>

Infidelity is becoming more common among people under 30 years of age.<sup>16</sup> Many experts believe this increases in cheating is due to greater opportunity (time spent away from a spouse), as well as young people developing the habit of having multiple sexual partners before marriage.<sup>17,18</sup> Seeking for mental support and

pleasure to a person because of lack of variation in married life is a leading cause of an increase in the extramarital affair.<sup>19,20</sup> It indicates to pertinence of a strong correlation between individual desires and they are being engaged into diversified sexual or similar experiences, rather than the uncommitted ones.<sup>21</sup> This incidence can be identified as an outcome of perceived reverberation that finally results in attempts to break any feeling of conjugal life related mental fatigue.<sup>22</sup> Now-a-day, extramarital affairs have become a common marriage problem.<sup>23</sup> Any grimy marital status can also be entitled as "extra-marital" affair that has knocked down the balanced relationship of a married couple.<sup>22,24</sup> Bassard defined a marital problem (problematic marriage) as a breakdown in the communication among couples, which results in constant verbal argument, physical aggression, psychological, emotional and physical separation.<sup>25-27</sup> All of these may lead to an end in divorce.<sup>28</sup> Unfaithful association of a married individual finally results into a longer period illegitimate love relationship, to say specifically, an extramarital affair.<sup>29,30</sup>

An extramarital affair is related to a kind of sex problem and has been identified as one of the problems in marital relationship.<sup>31</sup> Several types and variations in extramarital affairs has been identified, for example, one night affair, emotional outbreak affair, emotional sexual affair, sexual addict affair.<sup>32,33</sup> Due to failure in fulfilling specific conjugal life demands, related factors affect the marriage relationship and can transpire an extramarital affair.<sup>34,35</sup> Some factors are expectation gap, difference of opinion and psychological deprivation, break in communication, sexual incompatibility, unemployment, childlessness, differences in interest, age at marriage.<sup>36</sup> Olayinka has highlighted the possibility of transpiring a knockdown in the balance of marriage relationship due to appropriate level and amount of communication between the married couple.<sup>37,38</sup> Incongruity in sexual demand satisfaction is among other causes of promoting marital instability.<sup>39</sup>

The widespread impacts of extramarital affair are undoubtedly unexaggerated considering the deep-seeded influence upon every single member of the family of the individual.<sup>40</sup> However, a problem is best solved when the root causes are discovered and dealt with proper consideration.<sup>41</sup> Recognizing importance of each-other's choice is one of the most significant capabilities for resolution of problems induced by the extramarital affair.<sup>42,43</sup> Until now, there is very limited study of these issues. Now-a-day, percentage of divorce, violence, suicide such kinds of family discord is increasing among the developing countries like Bangladesh.<sup>44</sup> Somehow extramarital affair can be a contributing cause for such kind of activities.<sup>45,46</sup> We need to find out the causes, which are accountable for this kind of activities. This study wants to review the factors are responsible for extramarital affairs among married adults in Bangladesh.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Extramarital affairs have received some scholarly attention now-a-days.<sup>47</sup> According to the latest data from the National Opinion Research Center's General Society (NORCGS) survey was published on The Atlantic magazine (American Journal) that, the percentage of wives having affairs almost 40% during the last two decades to 14.7% in 2010, while the number of men admitting to extramarital affairs held constant at 21 percent, results vary by age.<sup>48</sup> Among Baby Boomers, age 49-66, 29% of males and 16% of females admitted to adultery. This is probably close to the lifetime rate, and perhaps differs by generation as well.<sup>49</sup> The National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLS) found that 4% of married men, 16% of cohabiting men, and 37% of dating men engaged in acts of sexual infidelity compared to 1% of married women, 8% of cohabiting women, and 17% of women in dating relationships.<sup>50</sup>

According to The Journal of Couples & Relationship Therapy, about 45-55% of married women and 50-60% of married men engage in extramarital sex at some time or another during their relationship.<sup>51</sup> A Study of Married Individuals Seeking to Have an Extramarital found in one survey, 27.2% of first time married men and 22.9% of first time married women were having an extramarital affair at the time of survey and in another study, 32.9% of first time married women had at least one affairs during their married lives.<sup>21</sup> Shirley Glass, a family therapist, found that 46% of unfaithful wives and 62% of unfaithful husbands had affairs with someone at work in her 20-year practice.<sup>32</sup> The effective factor in women's tendency toward extramarital relationships was the role of moral intelligence as a mediating factor. This study was conducted in Iran and found that there was a significant relationship between integrity and extramarital relationships.<sup>52</sup> A group of sociologists recognized three different categories of extramarital affairs as emotional involvement without sexual intercourse, only sexual without emotional involvement and both emotional and sexual involvement.<sup>53</sup>

According to the findings of quite a number of surveys within the national level, 56% male partners among married couples have been identified as involved in extramarital sex.<sup>54</sup> Maccabe attempted to establish a hypothesis that the fulfillment of basic needs for sustaining both intimacy and responsible companionship rather than opting for only the individual has a greater impact on increasing breakup in marriage bonding and to give up mutual responsibilities.<sup>55</sup> Individual's tendency of drawing sympathetic attention has highly significant and potential positive correlation with extramarital relationship in this region, also, noteworthy association was not observed in other regions.<sup>52,56</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

This paper is reviewed based on that papers which were published from 1980 till now. This study is based upon the information gathered through scanning newspapers, journals, books, and browsing the internet. A total 760 article were identified within our database search. After reviewing the abstract and removing duplicate publications, 100 full text articles were reviewed. Out of these articles 54 met the inclusion criteria. In this study, we tried to explore the linkages between extramarital affairs and the related factors, which are responsible for that issue. All the participants were married and also involved in extramarital affairs. After thoroughly reviewing the literatures, we found some common causes, which can be responsible for extra marital relationship. After reviewing, we think these factors can be accountable for extramarital relationship for Bangladesh and as well as other developing countries.

### **Marriage**

It is the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law we considered as marriage.<sup>57</sup> Formally arranged marriage goes through various experiences, thus requires careful handling of all the situations with patience and good understanding with related people which often become hampered.<sup>58</sup> Another thing is people who marry in their early 20s would most likely have achieved some level of stability and social standing by their mid-30s. An interesting phenomenon is the deprivation of teenage relationship experience.<sup>59</sup> This perceived feeling makes an individual careless enough to fall into an extramarital affair.<sup>58</sup>

### **Sex**

Sex is perhaps one of the most important reasons, and it is an amalgamation of love and passion between two people. After a certain period, sex can become monotonous and if there is a lack of desire, passion, and romance in the relationship, then it may drive the person to seek it with someone else. Individuals with less self-control and deeper dissatisfaction of sexual desire have the common reason of intense sexual addiction to opposite sex as a fact of searching for extramarital relationship.<sup>58</sup>

### **Married for the wrong reasons**

Many people enter marriage for the wrong reasons like pressures from family and society. After a point, many people agree to marriage without even getting to know each other. High priority in searching always the best for himself or herself by an individual is another potential factor of causing extramarital relationship. Regardless of the justification, even after being married, this poor tendency often creates emptiness to fill up which the individuals immediately get attracted to another person

meeting their expectation and ultimately their previous relationship ends up.<sup>58</sup>

### **Becoming parents**

Newcomer parents experience rapid but practical changes in terms of pursuing responsibilities, changes in precedence order, time sharing, etc. The new environment requires tremendous efforts from the mother. Hence, incidences can be found where the male person may have perceived feeling of deprivation with less attention in terms of importance and can be driven to the involvement in extramarital affair in case of less consideration from the women.<sup>58</sup>

### **Physical dissatisfaction**

It is the most penetrating issue for married persons' involvement in extramarital affair since fulfillment of sexual satisfaction remains as a key phenomenon to sustain physical relationship. Lack of sexual satisfaction ultimately causes expectation gap and married female were found highly sensitive to this issue in several previous studies. The same things can happen in case of male persons in terms of their desire to fulfill sexual discontent through making a new affair and procuring a more responsive partner.<sup>58</sup>

### **Career advancement**

Discord regarding the question of career and financial establishment is another pathetic reason but reality. It hampers economic solvency of a married couple and intensifies mismanagement of family finance issues triggering the onset of a continuous wrangling. After the effect of this volatile situation surely does not help the mutual cognitive understanding, as it constantly pressurizes the financial stability of the married couple. Long term impact of this issue creates acute scenario with severe conflict of intrinsic remorse and loyalty.<sup>58</sup>

### **Need for excitement**

Human instinct is quite immeasurable, diversified, and it is impossible to fathom and predict the nature and depth of any desire. A result of which is the outbreak of an extramarital affair through searching for the opportunity of removing boredom, exhaustion as well as for recreation.<sup>58</sup>

### **No common interests**

The role of negotiation and respect for each other's choice has no alternative to sustain peaceful coexistence in pursuing the conjugal life responsibilities. Any failure to recognize this fact and doing accordingly cause distortion the mutual interest and a sharp cut down in the personal time spending which can lead towards development of an extramarital affair after a certain period of time.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Self-esteem problems***

Perceived recognition about self-esteem and cognition about individual's own behavioral aptitude requires balance to maintain sound level of personal judgment. The apparent deprivation of being less or least loved by own husband or wife is a powerful phenomenon and can be easily driven by the feeling of deprivation of companionship and love from partner. Psychological deprivation is not an abstract phenomenon. Therefore, it is not possible to improve mental condition without positive conscience of the individual to overcome the threat of extramarital affair involvement.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Social network***

The anonymity and easy availability of online dating now result in many more spouses looking for love outside marriage.<sup>61</sup> In accordance with a recent survey of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), for the last five (5) years, an astonishing scenario has been observed by the nation's 81% top divorce attorneys claiming that the easy availability of individual identity and contact in social media is the key promoter behind the rapid increase in divorce rate. Here Facebook remains as the undisputed pioneer with an awful 66% contribution to the online divorce evidence, according to the original source. Like Facebook, there are so many social websites where married persons can express themselves and seek for an extramarital relation.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Other issues***

Other factors instigating individual tendency of searching for compassionate love are as follows: i) opportunity to live together even after being committed in a marriage; ii) midlife crisis as a period of psychological stress occurring in middle age (this shapes individual thought to be triggered by a physical, occupational, or domestic event); iii) concerns related to natural deterioration of physical condition (this can cause significant and sometimes unwanted accidental changes in life).<sup>60</sup>

## **DISCUSSION**

The extra-marital affair is one of society's unrecognized relationships.<sup>63</sup> It exists somewhere between the shadows of disapproval and the limelight of prurient speculation.<sup>64</sup> It depends on some common factors which researchers are thinking to be responsible for extramarital affairs among couples; gender, age, religion, educational qualification and other factors of the respondents influenced their perception positively.<sup>22</sup> According to the common social perspective of Bangladesh communities where relationships outside marriage and sudden divorce are becoming more frequent throughout the recent years, the phrase "extramarital affair" is quite undermined.<sup>65</sup> Rather than putting attention, there are even evidences of making troll with it which can occur acute negative downfall in the mass social beliefs and community values

considering the fact as a very ordinary social phenomenon. It's an undeniable fact that tendency of taking any serious social issue a waffle.<sup>66</sup>

Once upon a time, a person might be thought is that true? Can an intimate medium cause someone to betray their husband and wife?<sup>67</sup> But now-a-day it happens frequently and few people are interested to find out the reasons behind it.

There are few studies conducted in Bangladesh like extramarital affair and family discord, and the related problems. However, till now, there is no vibrant data concerning factors responsible for extra marital issues in Bangladesh.

Diversified negative impacts aroused from extramarital affair collapse the foundation of mutual trust and faith in terms of social, family and personal relationship.<sup>68</sup> This unrecoverable damage of trust and faith in eternal relationships is the core reason behind the rapid increase in the divorce rate of Bangladesh.<sup>69</sup> Resilience and negligence to this downfall is quite suicidal as the collapse of any social value or belief or norm gradually takes an epidemic form. Family values are the root learning for children. Most importantly, children have the highly sensitive psychology and cognitive perception. Therefore, any conflicts in their learning or discrepancy of values in the social application permanently damage their adherence to the norms.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, a child being a victim of impacts of parents' extramarital affair related breakup may be driven by acute psychological disorder if not properly taken care of them.<sup>70</sup> The human society has been evolved through the social values and marriage vow stands based on these grounds; therefore, even after considering the hazardous impacts upon children and greater interest of the family, it becomes very difficult for the couple to forgive the convicted partner.<sup>71</sup> One very definite outcome is the breakdown of a conjugal relationship chain with sexual abstinence and discomfort to become sexually involved with the partner.<sup>4</sup>

In Bangladesh, approximately 90 percent population is Muslim and the remaining ten percent of the people are Hindu, Christian and Buddhist. The beliefs of these religions strongly criticize extramarital sexual activity not only that Islam strongly prohibited doing extra marital relation or sex among the same sex and indeed the true expression of sexuality. As Bangladesh is a Muslim country, Islam regards sex within marriage as one of the good things of life.<sup>4</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Insights from the past researches regarding extramarital affairs have elaborately illustrated the catastrophic impacts from individual up to the broader level of society and social relationships. Extreme outcome of an extramarital affair can be the suicidal attempt of the deceived partner, which can never be taken as a usual

incidence. An extramarital affair not only negatively impacts moral and psychological development but also has the chances of developing sexually transmitted diseases. There are a lot of factors responsible for developing extramarital relationship. To uproot this social epidemic, raising awareness among every member of the society is very important starting from the adolescent age group to establish a concrete understanding at the very early life regarding the widespread future threats of the extramarital affair. For individuals already involved in such affairs, after identification of the common factors, recovery guidance through step-by-step family counseling has significance to revitalize the distorted trust considering the future of them and their children. As a concentric effort, counselors have to try utmost for the best utilization of human values to reconstruct the shattered faith among the family members emphasizing on the fact that, forgiving brings more peace than painful separation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wedlock is a universally accepted ancient revered association of men and women that aims at establishing mutual responsibilities and compulsion to maintain the social structure. To eradicate the incidence of extramarital affairs the following recommendations can be applicable:

1. Psychologists and counselors can design and organize mass media based awareness raising programs on various factors responsible for extramarital affairs through Counseling Association of Bangladesh. These programs can enlighten married couples and youngsters for appropriate learning aimed at keeping adherence to marriage related sexual obligations and challenges.
2. The similar approach can also be applied in the case of academic institutions to educate youths on family, sex and marital counseling. Therefore, enabling their minds to prepare for the responsibilities they are expected to perform when getting into marriage.
3. To educate married couples on the effects of extramarital affair in their married life, open discussion sessions, workshops, and seminars can be arranged.

Bangladesh, with the highest portion of population being Muslims, religion and religious practices can make greater contribution to put an end to extramarital affairs. When both the spouses will be able to achieve strong adherence to religion and strict practices, then their religious obligations will question their soul and keep them away from disloyalty.

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