Social Media and Marital Infidelity

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Abstract: Infidelity impacts negatively on relationship functioning and stability of the marriages making the study of this phenomenon is crucial. In spite of widespread beliefs that relationship partners should be faithful to each other, marital infidelity occurs fairly often nowadays and usually caused by the existence of social media (Kioko, 2009). Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate on how social media could lead someone into marital infidelity. Three primary research questions were formulated through this study which are: what causes marital infidelity through social media in the first place, how the participant define marital infidelity, and what kind of disloyalty behaviour might be generated through social media. The participants on this research were three divorced couples who were chosen by using a purposive sampling technique. While the picture of marital infidelity through social media was obtained using the qualitative research method through in-depth interview and nonparticipant observation. The result showed that the factor which drives people to become unfaithful to their partner in the very first place is because there's a feeling of dissatisfaction and conflict in their marriage life. In addition, all research subjects agreed that the existence of social media can lead someone into marital-infidelity because it perceived less harmed. Another interesting finding on this study showed that there are some fundamental differences between male and female subjects in defining marital infidelity, while the definition of disloyalty according to women subjects refer to a very basic things men tend to judge disloyalty through social media only occurs if it involves feelings or deeper if they are willing to leave their legitimate partner for someone else.

1 INTRODUCTION

There is no obstacle in receiving and conveying information in human life nowadays due to the rapid development of technology, especially in the communication sector, for instance, the growth of social media. Social media can be defined as an internet-based technology which allows people to connect, to share information, ideas, and other forms of expression through a virtual community (Obar & Wildman, 2015). As Seopressor (2014) stated that, in every four people around the world, one use social network sites to communicate and share ideas with one another. This is fascinating because, with the widespread of internet users around the world, social media have become important platforms for establishing intellectual connections, social movements' outreaches, awareness creation, sharing political views or interest, etc. In the other hand, besides all these functions, using social media can

actually be harmful especially to a romantic relationship system like a marriage. Marriage life, as an institution that highly upholds privacy lately, has become more open to the public through social media networks and it makes the marriage becomes more vulnerable. Research shows that increased usage of social media could lead to marital problems, marital infidelity, and divorce. Therefore, it is not surprising that the current divorce rate caused by social media continues to increase. Social media (and temptations that come with it) is having a big impact on marriages. In fact, one of three divorces starts with online affairs. For example, in the U.S. alone, Facebook has been linked to 66 percent of divorce and the 81 percent of the nation's top divorce lawyer claiming clients have cited using social networks as damning evidence against their spouses in the past five years (Abramovich, 2013). Another study released in 2014, which analyzed the relationship between social media, marriage satisfaction and divorce showed that using social media is negatively correlated with the

quality of marriage life and happiness, yet positively correlated with experiencing conflict and having an intention to divorce (Valenzuela, Halpern, Katz, 2014). In addition to that, Indonesia also experienced the same phenomenon. The Manna Religious Court, Bengkulu Province, recorded the divorce rate as of the middle of this year reaching 447 cases, and most of them were triggered by the unwise use of social media (Sairun, 2018 retrieved from www.liputan6.com).

This kind of case also happened in Aceh – the only Indonesian Province practicing Sharia Law officially, The Aceh Syariah Court, stated that divorce cases throughout Aceh Province in 2018 increased by 13,11 percent compared to the previous year, where there were at least 4,917 cases in 2017 then increased to 5,562. Through the preliminary interviewed with one of the staff from Aceh Syariah Court, it's well-informed that the most commonly reported major contributors for separation sequentially are domestic violence, financial problems, continuous arguments and disputes. Marital infidelity might not occur as the major contributors as mentioned above but it always appears in the trial as the major cause of the continuous conflict between the married couple. The same opinion was expressed by Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, Allen & Markman (2013) who mentioned that the marital infidelity became the second most reasons for divorce.

Marital infidelity goes by any name cheating, being unfaithful, being dishonest or having an affair is a violation of a couple's assumed or stated contract regarding emotional and or sexual exclusivity (Weeks, Gambescia & Jenkins, 2003). While Leeker & Carlozzi (2012) defined it as a violation according to the subjective feeling that one's partner has violated a set of marital norms. To conclude, digital technology – innumerable social media platform, have made infidelity far more accessible than it's ever been. Therefore, considering the enormous impact on marriage sustainability, the research related to Social Media and Marital Infidelity is significant, especially to provide an empirical evidence related to this topic.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to investigate on how social media leads into marital infidelity. The author of this study divided the research objective into two:
a. General Objectives: to identify factors that could lead to marital infidelity

b. Specific Objectives: to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of the participants towards social media and marital infidelity.

1.2 Research Questions

This paper aims to provide an answer to those research objectives by these following research questions, which are:
1) What causes marital infidelity through social media in the first place?
2) What is the definition of marital infidelity through social media according to the subject?
3) What are the forms of disloyalty behavior might be generated through social media? And how is the experience?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Marital Infidelity

Marital infidelity might not a new subject to the western world, but there are only a few kinds of literature could be found here in Indonesia or in any Asia studies. It might happen because the topic is still considered taboo by the community. Therefore, the discussion regardless of this topic is worth to be studied. Marital Infidelity can be defined as unfaithfulness by virtue of being unreliable and cheating on the spouse that takes place despite a commitment to exclusiveness (Zare, 2011). While according to Moller &Vossler (2015) marital infidelity can be anything that involves emotional or sexual act which violates the commitment of the primary relationship. According to Schneider, Weiss, R., & Samenow (2012), there are three different types of marital infidelity for instance:
a. Emotional infidelity: type of infidelity that involves deep feeling and a deep bond for another person. This could involve lustful thoughts of that person. Example: sneaking around and lying to your partner about spending quality time with another partner
b. Sexual Infidelity: type of infidelity involves physical and sexual involvement with another person. Basically having sexual relations or engaging in the act of sex with someone other than their spouse.
c. Cyber Infidelity happened when someone is physically and emotionally attracted to people online. People who flirting with other people online and even having an online affair.

Although marriage infidelity is a prevalent phenomenon and some research suggest that the factors which could lead someone to this matter is varied from person to person, but there is almost no study which investigates the experience of marital infidelity through the couple perspectives, makes this study is significant and different from previous research. Heirtlein & Percy (2006) from the previous study stated that the couple who experience the same events may have different ideas about whether such actions would be considered as marital infidelity or not.

2.2 Social Media

According to Kietzmann, J &Hermkens, K (2011) social networking is a virtual community based on computer-mediated technology which connects people with the same preferences communicate, share and discuss a variety of ideas. Similarly, Obar, J & Steve, W (2015) defined social media as a platform for social networking that brings people together which has some common features such as user-generated content and web 2.0 internet-based application.

In addition to that, there are 13 types of social media for instance: blogs, business networks, forums, social gaming, etc. However, the social media intended in this study is limited to the use of Mobile Social Media. Mobile social media refer to the use of social media on a mobile device such as smartphone and tablet computers

3 RESEARCH METHOD

To execute this study, the author of this paper used a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is conducted to obtain a description of the social phenomenon in a more natural environment (Hancock, 1998). Due to its specific terms then this research using a purposive sampling method which means the sample in this research is determined based on certain specific criteria which are:
1. Divorced Couple
2. The divorces were caused directly or indirectly by the use of mobile social media
3. Willing to fully participate in this research

The research sample was selected based on these selection criteria that have been mentioned above. The subjects were chosen based on the valid data which was obtained from Religious Courts in Banda Aceh.

There were three divorced couples who meet the criteria and willing to be the participant of this research. The data of these three participants can be found on this following table:

Table 1: --

	COUPLE A		COUPLE B		COUPLE C	
Initial	RM	RR	RZ	SV	PT	CU
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F
Number of Children	2		2		3	
Marriage for	10 years		6 years		8 years	
MSM used	Whatsapp, BBM, IG		Whatsapp, dating app		Whatsapp, IG	
*MSM: Mobile Social Media						

3.1 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection procedure in this study using the method of observation and interview. With each explanation as follows:
1. Observation Method: the observation method was used in this research was direct observation. Direct observation enables researchers to felt, seen and lived within the subject. In this study, researchers used a non – participant observation i.e. researchers were the outsider and not participate in subject activities.
2. In-depth Interviews Method: the process of obtaining information for research purposes is done by a face-to-face interview between the interviewer and the interviewee using a tool called the interview guide. In this study, the approach chosen is unstructured interview instructions. The reason for using this method is to uncover the profuse and gather as much as possible data by using the guidelines which have been made before.

3.2 Data Analysis

Means giving the meaning to analysis, describes a pattern or a category, look for the relationships between the various concepts. Based on the explanation above, then the data analysis techniques used in this research are:
1. Reduction and Elimination: the raw data or material which had been collected from the field are summarized then selected. Furthermore, it is later can be categorized based on the same theme or the same issues.
2. Display and Data Clustering: the results of the reduction necessary in particular-display in each pattern, the category, the focus, the theme of

which was about to be understood and to understand the issue is sitting together. The data display can help researchers to be able to see the whole or certain parts of the research results.

3. Conclusion: the estuary from the conclusions of the qualitative data analysis is located on how the researcher represented the research result to the reader so that it can be understood regardless of an issue which is examined

4 RESULT

Before starting the research, the informed consent sheet was given to the participants in order to express their approval in participating in the research process. Marital infidelity measurement began with general questions such as "What is the definition of marital infidelity in your opinion?", and continue to become more complicated as "To what form of unfaithful behavior you did through social media?". The research finding showed some interesting facts which will be delivered briefly in this paper through some categories, namely:

4.1 Definition of Marital Infidelity through Social Media According to the Participant

This research has difficulty in defining marital infidelity because according to the participants the definition of it, is very subjective depends on someone's value. In addition to that, there is a different way between male and female subjects on defining marital infidelity through social media. While the male subjects on this research tend to think that marital infidelity only happened if there's emotional involvement, female subjects think the otherwise. Women consider an intense communication between his husband and a person outside the relationship as a sign of disloyalty even the man is just fooling around. According to the male subjects, they were committing cyber infidelity without a hard feeling. As stated by the Subject RZ below:

"I don't know why I love to have a constant conversation with another women through the app, I just can't help. I didn't even consider it as a mistake until I got caught and my wife was enraged"

They just simply believed that they're just chatting and have no intention to cheat or leave their partner. However, some conclusions can be drawn

regarding the definition of marital infidelity according to the research subjects as follows:

a. Marital Infidelity through social media means if you have emotional feelings or attachments to other people who are outside your legitimate partner and those feelings are also countered by that person, There is also an intense communication between the two by using the social media.

b. Marital Infidelity through social media also means if you have a relationship with someone else then you are willing to leave your legitimate partner for that person

In addition, this research has also found that the types of marital infidelity which were happened to these three couples are the type of cyber infidelity, means being physically and emotionally attracted to people online, with no activity for sexual involvement nor real-life meeting (Schneider, Weiss, R., & Samenow, 2012).

4.2 What Causes Marital Infidelity through Social Media in the First Place?

The reason why these couples did marital infidelity through social media is varied and complex. Some literatures said that people tend to seek the extramarital affair because of several factors for instance lack of communication, financial pressure, low compatibility, emotional or physical disconnect, and the lack of respect. However, this study found that the most common reason about what drives people to become unfaithful to their partner in the very first place is because there's a feeling of dissatisfaction and conflict in their marriage life.

To be more specific, for the A couple, there was a dissatisfaction with their sex life, thus the husband seeking sexual intimacy through social media with the third party. While for the B and C couple, the main problem was more about the great need for excitement, sympathetic, affection, and respectful from other company which they could not obtain from their legitimate partner. To conclude the finding, the subjects perceived that being unfaithful through social media is safer than doing it in the real life. Another interesting finding, this study able to portrait the 8 stages of marital infidelity through social media that experienced by the participants, which can see through the figure below:
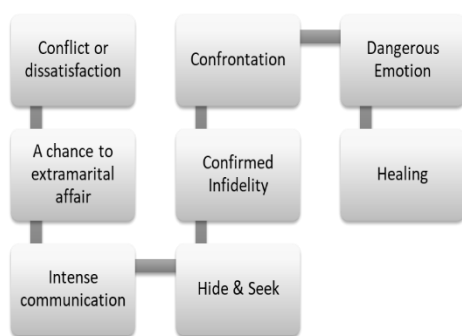
Figure 1:--

4.3 Kind of Disloyalty Behavior Generated through Social Media

a. Sending emoticons with the purpose of flirting. Emoticons are viewed by the research subjects as a way to flirt on the opposite sex without having difficulty in choosing the right words. The availability of emoticons in social media app helps and provides an opportunity to approach other parties

b. Deleting conversations on social media sites. According to the female subjects in this study, deleting the conversations with the opposite sex, with the aim of hiding the conversation from a legitimate partner is one form of unfaithful behavior, while for the male subjects to erase the message is intended to not to hurt their partner's feelings simply because these messages seems normal for them. According to still male subjects, deleting messages cannot be called unfaithful behavior because it is done to prevent couples from being jealous.

c. A great demand for privacy. When someone begins unfaithful to their spouse, they are starting to demand greater privacy. For example: locked the smartphones, change the password, and veil their online activity in secrecy.

5 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this research, the existence of social media can lead someone into marital-infidelity because it is perceived less harmed than an action in the real life. The first finding on this research was about the difference meaning of marital infidelity through social media perceived by the participants. While men tend to judge marital infidelity happened if only emotional attached, women in the other hand think

the otherwise. Female subjects in this research argue that all forms of behavior that is intentionally hidden from their partners, whether involving feelings or not can be called dishonesty in marriage. For instance, if a man secretly sent a friend invitation to the opposite sex, it can be said that he has been disloyal to his partner. Because according to the female subjects, there should be nothing to hide between the marriage couple. However, this research has not been able to answer what lies behind the difference definition of disloyalty marriage between men and women. Hence, this can be a subject to a further research study.

The second finding on this research is about the 8 stages of marital infidelity through social media which are (1) there is a conflict or dissatisfaction in marriage life which lead into a certain behavior like seeking someone else who could be a good listener , (2) has a chance to do extramarital affair through social media (3) intense communication with the third party (4) hide seek with the legal partner, (5) the legal partner found out and do a confrontation (6) dangerous emotion (ex: want to get revenge), (7) healing, in this stage the subject is ready with all the consequence of the decision they have made (either they decide to get divorce or forgive their partner and start over). According to the third finding of the research, it can be said that there are three kind of disloyalty behavior which could be generated through social media, for instance sending emoticons with the purpose of flirting, deleting conversations on social media sites, and a great demand for privacy.

To conclude, certain suggestions can be made based on the result from this study, which are specifying conflict or dissatisfaction in the marriage life are significant to be specified in order to avoiding damage in trust between the couples. In addition to that, certain focused group discussion or conference can be held by a professional to help couples develop correct habits in using social media.

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