

## Factors Contributing to Infidelity in Marriage Within Asian Countries a systematic review of literature

Mah Yong Xin<sup>2</sup> & Siti Aishah Hassan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Social Science Studies (IPSAS), Putra Infoport, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Education, Universiti Putra Malaysia Malaysia

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### Abstract

Infidelity in the marriage is one of the issues currently we have in this era. We cannot deny it is happening in this twenty-first century. Most common issue related to infidelity is sexual intercourse with the third partner beside the legal wife. Extramarital sex is considered as betray toward the marriage. It can be described like having sex outside the marriage. There are some factors can be connected to the infidelity issue such as marital jealousy, lack of paternal care in children, discomfort in marriage, and dissatisfy in sexual experience. This fault is no longer labels for men only but also to the women. This is a systematic review paper to explore and discover about what are the factors contribute to the extramarital sex. The journals for review are selected from the Asian region, and a total of 10 journals from different countries including China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Infidelity, Extramarital Sex, Factors, Asian Region and Systematic Review.

### Introduction

Asia is one of the largest continents in the earth that consists of forty-eight countries including Malaysia, China, Vietnam, India and Pakistan. When we look at China and India, they have over hundred million of residents, which mean they have the largest marriage population in Asia region. This review is intending to look into the Asia region with the regard of the infidelity factors in marriage and extramarital sex.

There are different religions in Asia including Islam, Christian, Buddhist, Tao and Hinduism. Different religions have different teaching in marriage life. However, none of the religions is teaching us to have infidelity in our marriage. Although there are certain Islam believers is practicing polygamy (Tsoaledi Daniel & Takayindisa, 2014) but there have the correct and right ways to marry other women with legal status. Meanwhile infidelity in marriage is more like an illegal “unofficial relationship” with another or multiple hidden partners.

Marriage is an oath between two person and testifies by relatives and friends during the marriage ceremony. Most of the marriage has undergone with a religion standard where certain rules and regulation will be applied in their marriage life. The third person is not allowed to interfere the marriage life except for certain region and religion that practicing the polygamy (Tsoaledi Daniel & Takayindisa, 2014) which is one man with many wives.

The word infidelity or in layman term “cheating in marriage” can be defined by different terminology including extramarital sex, and extramarital coitus. Some of the research referred the word “infidelity” as having sexual intercourse with others beside their own marriage partner or primary partner (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001). The motive of seeking sexual activity out from the original marriage life might due to the unsatisfied sexual desire or the needs of sex is not been fulfilled by their primary partner. Moreover, some people seek for extramarital sex because they would like to try for different variety of sex (Sonali, Shweta, & Neelma, 2009).

Besides, more and more people are willing to try or jump into an extramarital sexual/intercourse with the third person. They are also willing to face the consequences of what they have done to their marriage which might lead to divorce. Divorce is simplest way to end the marriage relationship. Whereas, the worst circumstances might lead to physical abuse especially in women (Anwar, 2014). In the past of China and Vietnam, women are required to protect and safeguard their virginity before marriage. After marriage they needed to follow the rules pass down by the elders. If a woman caught to have infidelity in their marriage they will be punished by stoned, drowned or disowned by the husband (Ha, 2008; Huyen, 2000; Khuat et al., 2010; Tai, 1992). However, nowadays laws and regulations are implied to protect lives, thus causing the increasing of the rate in extramarital sexual or relationship. Futhermore, there are no commitment is needed in extramarital sex, therefore people are more willing to take the risk (Buss, 1994; Zheng, 2009).

Commonly, the men are being viewed as the most gender engage in infidelity toward the love relationship or marriage. There was an interesting finding of gender infidelity where majority dating men, married men and cohabiting men are engaged in sexual infidelity compared to women (Camille & Daniel, 2011). Once again, the research shows that, the general view of the public toward men in easily betray to marriage is being testified. Although, men are more easily engaged or fall into the infidelity, but women might still have the chances to betray the marriage (Jemimah & Rowena, 2015).

A man or husband is more concern about their fulfilment in sexual and their sexual desire, whereby women or wives are more concern with the compatibility of their partner (Viveca, Eileen, & Virginia, 1995). Moreover, the research also shows that the perspective toward the “love” and “Sex” will affect the acceptance of infidelity in marriage (Viveca, Eileen, & Virginia, 1995). If the person perceives love is just as caring, paternal care for children or motherhood for children and nothing to do with sex, then this person will have to accept that their partner will seek for the extra sexual fulfilment if they unable to fulfilled their partner needs.

According to Viveca, Eileen, & Virginia the marital dissatisfaction overall is the top reason why man and women are reported in infidelity of marriage. Although, the marital dissatisfaction is the main cause in infidelity, but there is still some other reasons of being “cheating” in marriage (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001). Besides, those who are experienced premarital sexual will also have the high possibility to have extramarital sexual after marriage (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999).

Based on the previous report, meeting with different gender in workplace has increased the chances of having infidelity. This is because there are bigger exposures and facing more opposite gender during their working hours (Mansanori, 2013). Furthermore, a company that has the large fraction of workers with different gender might also lead to infidelity. This is mainly occurred among the married men and is less likely to the married women (Mansanori, 2013).

On the others hand, based on the previous research, we notice that the higher exposure toward opposite gender, the more likely of having infidelity in the marriage, especially for men. According to Ostovich and Sabini, most of the male intended to have higher sex drives and desire for sexual activity compared to the female. Their research result also indicate that male is likely to have more sexual partners in the lifetime (Ostovich & Sabini, 2004). The sexual desire in the male is longer, stronger and lots frequent compared to the women's in life cycle (Regan & Atkins, 2006). However, female can be physically aroused when they see the male body image without psychological think deep about the sexual (Rosemarry, 2002). This allows us to understand that sexual desire of a female can be triggered by watching a male body.

### **Objectives**

The aim of this study is to discover the factors of infidelity in marriage specifically extramarital sex. There are some areas that we can discover it within the Asian countries, such as religions, social economic status, and living environment. This is to discover the reasons that make peoples willing to betray in their marriage life. The literature findings are stated in table for a better understanding on the infidelity factors within Asian countries.

### **Methodology**

A systematic review is using systematic ways to collect secondary data, critically appraise and compile the studies (Bearman & Dawson, 2013). This systematic review initiated by an idea of intending to discover more about the infidelity issues in Asian regions, few keywords were derived from an area of interest which is infidelity and extramarital sex. A proper search strategy was applied to retrieved suitable and useful journals for this review. When selecting a journal, we need to be minimal in bias to produce a neutral review study.

### **The Search Strategy**

The literature search was done in few databases provided by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) library web site. All the subscribed databases by UPM, can easily access by the reviewer. One of the databases that used for searching the journal is ProQuest. The reviewer used two keywords which are infidelity and Asian to get the extended list of the literatures. To be precise, two conditions were applied in the searching method which is inclusion and exclusion criteria as shown in table 1 and table 2. Most of the literature year selected from 2014 to 2018, to create the latest study from the review. Fewer of journals selected from year 2007 to 2012. In addition, social psychology was chosen as the main subject area and sub-subject are behaviour and personal relationship in ProQuest. Furthermore, the country was one of the important criteria to put in as one of the search criteria. Asian region countries such as China, Pakistan, Vietnam etc. is one of the criteria that reviewers will focus on searching. The main reason of putting Asian region in focus is to discover the pattern of infidelity in this region. As all the Asian country might practice different culture and belief, therefore through this review we able to understand the different perception and factors cause infidelity. Further details about the search area in ProQuest can be view in table 1.

The total number of journals using the keyword infidelity and Asian search is the highest, a total of 873 journals have been found under these two key term searches. This is still a huge number for the reviewer, therefore after some filtration of inclusion and exclusion criteria including the source type, and tick only scholarly journal needed, the numbers of the journal are decreased until 21 journals. Thus, reviewer carry out another round of filtering and remove the unwanted journal including the different language, books and lastly left only six journals.

Table 1

*Inclusion criteria of the systematic review.*

| Inclusion criteria presented in order | Particulars                         | Literatures identified | Literatures remaining |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Key term                              | Infidelity and Asian region         | 1,362                  | 1, 362                |
| Years                                 | From year 2007 to 2018              | 378                    | 378                   |
| Subject area                          | Social psychology                   | 132                    | 132                   |
| Sub-subject area                      | Behaviour and personal relationship | 21                     | 21                    |
| Countries                             | China                               | 3                      | } 14                  |
|                                       | Vietnam                             | 3                      |                       |
|                                       | Philippines                         | 1                      |                       |
|                                       | Pakistan                            | 2                      |                       |
|                                       | Bangladesh                          | 2                      |                       |
|                                       | India                               | 3                      |                       |

For a standard systematic review, the reviewers need to get at least ten journals to be considered as sufficient enough. Therefore, another subscribed database by UPM library was used to locate more journals. SAGE was used to search for another four journals. Similar key term was put into the search and the result has shown 489 journals. To lower down the numbers of journals, reviewer included the open access, year and Asian region. The numbers of journals are decreased to 35. Exclude the different language and unrelated journals, only eight journals are left.

The search stopped, when the reviewer was satisfied with these 14 journals, all the journals were in the portable document format (PDF). Through these 14 journals, reviewer selects the most suitable journals and reduce the journals until 10 journals. One of the exceptions that reviewer has made during search is the year of published which from range of 2014 to 2018 extended to the range of year 2014 to year 2007. The reason of extending is because there are limited journal regard Asian region and infidelity. Therefore, reviewer has decided to extend the years and get the more related journals. In this review, there are total of three journals which are before year 2014. The journals sources were tabulated in table 3. Every journal is read, studied and reviewed by the reviewer and all the information including the journal title, authors, year, sample, country and relevant finding is transferred into table as shown in table 4. The flow of the systematic review is using PRISMA standard flow chart. The review begins with the key term search, followed by years of publication of the journals, and the related subject area, language, type of article as shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 gives a better understanding of the details of review and search strategy.

**Table 2**

*Exclusion criteria of the systematic review*

| Exclusion criteria presented in order | Particulars | Literatures identified | Literatures remaining |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Inclusion criteria                    |             |                        | 21                    |
| Language                              | Indonesia   | 1                      | 20                    |
| Article type                          | Books       | 6                      | 14                    |

**Table 3**

*Journals sources of the systematic review*

|                  |  |   |      |
|------------------|--|---|------|
| Journals sources | SAGE                                       | 1 |      |
|                  | Journal of Comparative Family Studies      | 1 | } 10 |
|                  | Journal of Sex Research                    | 2 |      |
|                  | Asian Criminology                          | 1 |      |
|                  | Pakistan Perspectives                      | 1 |      |
|                  | Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research | 1 |      |
|                  | Asian Journal of Home Science              | 1 |      |
|                  | Archives of Sexual Behavior                | 1 |      |
|                  | Sexually Transmitted Infections            | 1 |      |

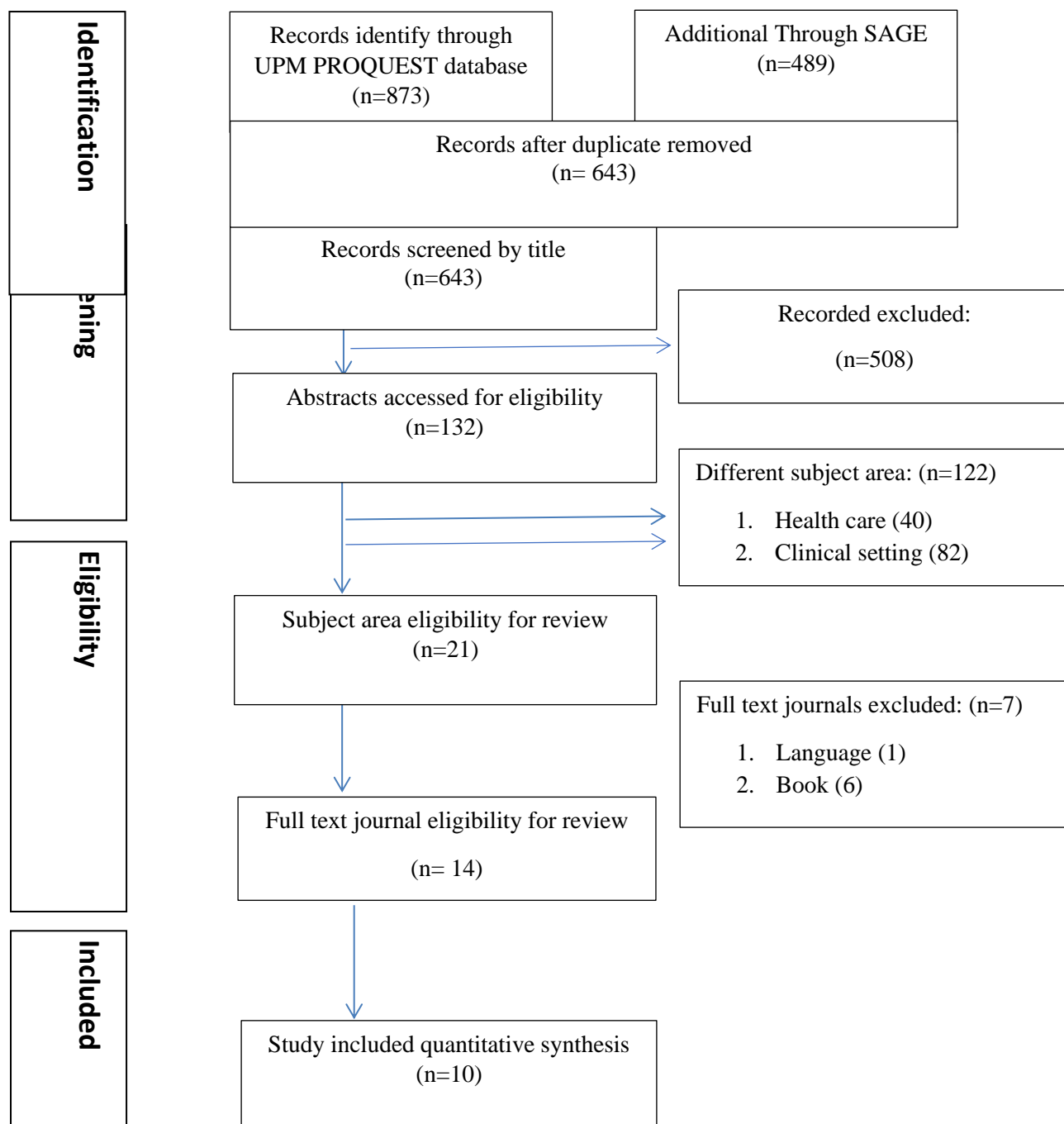


Figure 1. Flow diagram for selection review of studies on infidelity in marriage in Asia.

**Findings of Literature Review**

Table 4 showed summary of selected literatures. All the journals have been reviewed by using categories which included author, year of publication, title of journal, setting of the study, sample, and findings. This information was tabulated to get better understanding about the finding of each journal. Besides that, the finding also indicates the factors of infidelity in marriage.

Table 4

*Summary of Selected Literatures*

| <b>Author (Year)</b>  | <b>Title of Journal</b>  | <b>Country</b>   | <b>Sample</b>  | <b>Relevant Findings</b>   |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Densley, James A., Hilal, Susan M., Li, Spencer D. & Tang, Wei (2018) | Homicide–Suicide in China: an Exploratory Study of Characteristics and Types   | China  | 63 homicide -suicide cases that include two or more homicide victims                 | Intimate partner conflict and extramarital affairs are precipitating factors in almost half of the incidents of homicide-suicide.  |
| Huong Nguyen, Cheng-Shi Shiu & Melissa Hardesty (2016)                | Extramarital Sex Among Vietnamese Married Men: Results of a Survey in Urban and Rural Areas of Northern and Southern Vietnam | Vietnam, Hanoi   | 228 Vietnamese men between the ages of 15 and 67                                     | Vietnamese married men have some of the highest extra-marital sex (EMS) rates in the world. The results show that geographic location had a strong impact on extra-marital sex (EMS)   |
| Yang Hu (2016)  | Sex Ideologies in China: Examining Interprovince Differences   | China, 480 street areas in 125 cities, towns, and villages | 12,000 individuals randomly selected   | Deindustrialization was found to be significantly associated with sex ideologies at province level, particularly ideologies relating to extramarital sex   |
| Jemimah Gaité Pizarro & Rowena Gaspay-Fernandez (2015)                | Estranged Wife, Other Man’s Beloved: Perspectives of Filipino Women Involved in Extramarital Relationships                   | Philippines  | Eight married Pilipino Women   | When women negatively perceived marital relationship quality, paternal neglect of children, will increasing opportunities for extra-marital sex (EMS).   |
| Abduls Hasnat Golam Quddus (2015)                                     | Behind the Myth of Puritan Bangladesh: Pre- and Extra Marital Sexual Reality Among Lower-Class Urban Men                     | Bangladesh   | Low-income married male household heads living in slums of a port city of Bangladesh | The slum dwellers who had pre-marital intercourse were also involved with extra-marital intercourse. The sex workers were the most frequent extra-marital intercourse partners of the respondents with extra-marital experience. |
| Anum Urooj, Anis-ul-Haque & Gulnaz Anjum (2015)                       | Perception of Emotional and Sexual Infidelity among Married Men and Women  | Pakistan, Rawalpindi and Islamabad                         | 300 married participants of 150 husbands and 150 wives                               | Results showed that men perceived to commit sexual infidelity more than women, whereas, women perceived to commit emotional infidelity more than men.  |

|   |  |                        |   |  |
|---|--|------------------------|---|--|
| Anwar Shaheen (2014)  | Intimate Partners and Multifaceted Violent Behaviour in Pakistan                             | Pakistan               | 80 Pakistanis of 40 males and 40 females                            | Intimate partners and multifaceted violent behaviour not only happen in female, but males will also as a victim when due to marital jealousies.            |
| Na Zhang, William L. Parish, Yingying Huang & Suiming Pan (2012)                  | Sexual Infidelity in China: Prevalence and Gender-Specific Correlates                        | China                  | 3,567 participants in age 18 - 49 years old                         | The age 49 and below are disagree about extramarital sex, but the trend of extramarital is rising due to one child policies.                               |
| Sonali Singh, Shweta Pal & Neelma Kunwar (2009)                                   | Advantages of extra-marital relationship in Indian community                                 | India, Kanpur district | 160 were selected 95 male and 65 females                            | Different factors which leads people towards extramarital relations are age, economic status, disharmony in marriage life, extended period away from home. |
| Jay G Silverman, Michele R Decker, Nitin A Kapur, Jhumka Gupta & Anita Raj (2007) | Violence against wives, sexual risk and sexually transmitted infection among Bangladeshi men | Bangladesh             | 361 participants of 122 in the urban area and 239 in the rural area | Men who report significantly abuse their wives, if they have pre-marital and extramarital sex partners.  |

## Discussion

Infidelity can be considered as one of the issues that give rise to marriage become vulnerable. Getting married is a happy thing, but infidelity in marriage will bring lots of negative emotion or even some violent behaviour including physical abuse toward their marriage partner and the worst is lead to life-threatening. The discussion is based on the research questions answered.

### 1. What are the factors that lead to infidelity?

#### Education

In Vietnam and China, the teaching in Confucianism, man's duty can be fulfilled through wedding itself and the production of children (Nguyen, Shiu, & Hardesty, 2015). However, this traditional teaching might indirectly support the involvement in extramarital sexual as China practicing one child policy (Zhang et al., 2012). Therefore, seek for a sexual partner to produce children is possible occurred in China. In contrast, one of the important teaching by Confucian is to manage the family which remind people that family is very important.

Lacking education in slum dwellers society and rural area, has cause the extramarital sexual or infidelity issue to become serious (Nguyen, Shiu, & Hardesty, 2015). This is because



the residents can simply have sexual intercourse with the person they like without getting the proper information from their extra partner such as health status to prevent diseases like HIV.

### **Age**

In the research of Sonali, Shweta, & Neelma (2009), age is not the reasons to block the extramarital affairs. In fact, participants in age range of 40 – 50 are found to be majority of the group having the most number in infidelity. According to Pizarro & Gaspay-Fernandez (2015), women on average of 37 years old are having extramarital love partner experience. In previously, age 49 and below are disagree about extramarital sex but due to one child policies in China, the extramarital issue is rising.

### **Disharmony in Marriage and Unsatisfactory Sexual Experience**

Disharmony in marriage life. Husband and wives are always having conflict and fighting. This made the participants likely to seek for peaceful love. Another reason of infidelity is the unsatisfactory in sex life. According to researcher finding, this unsatisfactory will lead to men or women look for an alternative solution to fulfil this desire (Sonali, Shweta, & Neelma, 2009).

### **Economic**

Through the review, reviewer also noticed that the economic status is one of the reasons that lead to infidelity in marriage. According to the research by Pizarro & Gaspay-Fernandez (2015), people are willing receive financial support from the extramarital lover. Participants of the research also reported that financial support is not only for themselves but also support for their children. Temptation is always there and once the person cannot resist, they will fall into this infidelity trap.

Furthermore, Social economic can be one of the factors that related to infidelity (Sonali, Shweta, & Neelma, 2009) age. The statistic result of Abul Hasnat (2015) studies show that extramarital relationship and sexual intercourse among slum dwellers is very high. The poor environment enhances the rate of extramarital affairs. Sex workers have the highest chances as the extramarital sexual partner, followed by fictive kin (emotional infidelity) and sisters in law (Abul Hasnat, 2015). Due to one-time commitment and exchange for sexual services, thus sex worker is the highest compared to the others. In the society of Bangladesh, most of the husband are sexual involved with wives' sister. Extramarital sex in slum dwellers of Bangladesh is almost reaching the level of highly permissive societies (Warner, 2006).

## **2. What are the different perceptions toward infidelity between Asian's people staying in rural and urban area?**

### **Rural and Urban area**

In Vietnam, men who live in urban area are tend to high percentage in having extramarital sex (Nguyen, Shiu, & Hardesty, 2015). The research also found out men in Hanoi (rural area) are attentive to their wife and they satisfied with their marriage relationship compared to men who live in Ho Chi Minh City (urban area).

In china, people who live in underdeveloped province they have lower perception in having extramarital relationship (Hu, 2016). This might because the traditional social values from Confucian and Taoist continue to infuse men's and women's conceptions of gender and sexual norms in marriage, despite social policies prescribing monogamy (Wisensale, 2000).

Besides, people that are from the developed provinces in socioeconomic have less traditional attitudes toward extramarital sex compared to a less developed provinces in China (Hu, 2016; Zhang et al., 2012). This is because traditional attitudes are no longer practice by them.

According the study complete by Hu (2016) the result also showing that people live in urban area are highly associated with extramarital sex or affair. Even though, most of the participants in the research are disagree on having extramarital affair. This is because of they still hold on the traditional values of marriage. On the others hand, the ongoing of sexual liberation in China is based on the behavioural observation (Hu, 2016; Parish et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2012). To be concluded, rural area is still strongly on hold the traditional social value whereas urban area is more open to accept the extramarital relationship.

### **3. Are there any different factors that cause infidelity between the genders in Asian?**

As traditional view in marriage, men are likely in power, control and higher possibilities of having extramarital affair. This mean that women can be the one who initiates the infidelity in marriage. There are several reasons of why women wanted to escape from their current marriage and seek for something new or recover the excitement in love. One of a reason behind this issue is that women has no longer feel in love with their husband, they just stayed because of their children's. Due to lack of emotionally support from each other, the "love" is now transformed into vague. In the beginning of the marriage, the love is clear and able to see in action, but over the time conflict is occurred between two person and without communication it can become a serious problem and may lead to extramarital exposure. According to Pizarro & Gaspay-Fernandez (2015), alternative marital relationship is to fulfil the unfulfillment element inside their heart, like something new, the partner is only taking care for the children. Lack of paternal care in children is also one of the major reasons of seeking an extramarital relationship. Women feel lonely and helpless in taking care children of their children. Besides, they also have to be independent to solve the problems in life (Pizarro & Gaspay-Fernandez, 2015).

Throughout the review, we can clearly see that men are satisfied in most part of their marital relationship. Thus, seeking extramarital sex is just to satisfy their libidos (Nguyen, Shiu, & Hardesty, 2015). Men also stated they have the right to seek for sex beside their marriage life (Khuat et al., 2010; Linh & Harris, 2009). In the study of Nguyen, Shiu, & Hardesty (2015), the men who stay in village or rural areas are found to have lesser consent on extramarital affair compared to the urban area's men. Besides, they hold strongly on to the traditional marriage teaching and loyal to their partner. In Vietnam, their culture values about concept of happy family, relationship among family members is strong (Hang Song Vu et al., 2014). However, the numbers of people involved in extramarital sexual intercourse have been increased (Hu, 2016). One of the reasons that support the finding is the geographical location in Vietnam. The people in the city especially in Hanoi have greater exposure compared to the people living in the village. The Men can be easily seeking for massage and sex worker to fulfil their sexual desire (Nguyen, Shiu, & Hardesty, 2015).

In Pakistan society, when men commit infidelity in terms of emotional or physical they don't need to answer to anyone (Anum, Anis, & Gulnaz, 2015). In contrast, women in the Pakistan society is dependent on their husband. The traditional practice also teaches them to accept all the blame. In the long run of this practice, women are likely will feel guilty when committed to infidelity. There is an interesting report shows that female is tending to have higher infidelity in emotion, whereas male will have more infidelity in sexual. The research

also found that men cannot forgive women infidelity in sexual and women are hard to forgive men infidelity in emotionally (Anum, Anis, & Gulnaz, 2015).

Infidelity in marriage can cause danger in life. If husband or wife found out that their love partner is cheating, aggressive behaviour might have performed and might hurt their partner (Densley, Hilal, Li, & Tang, 2016). Physical and sexual abuse is one of the common things happen when extramarital affair is discovered in one family (Jemimah & Rowena, 2015; Silverman, Decker, Kapur, Gupta, & Raj, 2006). Overall, the abuse being carried out by male it is very common to see violence against wives among Bangladeshi women (Silverman, Decker, Kapur, Gupta, & Raj, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

Marriage is involved two-person agreement and living together as one family. Infidelity can lead to negative emotion and aggressive behaviour (Silverman, Decker, Kapur, Gupta, & Raj, 2006). Based on the discussion above, we can have a better understanding about what are the reasons of having infidelity in marriage.

Few things we can conclude after reading all the literature. Men are significantly angry if their spouse having physical sexual intercourse with others, while female are significantly angry if their spouse emotionally infidelity. Traditionally some good teaching about family are passed down to every generation in rural area but not in urban area or highly develop providence. People are not practicing it because of the influence from western culture has affected the thought of the society and causes peoples to accept the extramarital sex and infidelity.

When love is missing from the marriage, the partner is likely to search for a similar love. Women is care about their own children, therefore when a “partner” show up and willing to provide care and financial support to the women and their children, the woman might decide and choose to have further relationship with this man.

Furthermore, education is needed and provided to the rural area people. This is because education can allow the rural resident to understand the consequences of having complicated sexual intercourse are dangerous. Even though, western culture might not yet affect the mind of locals, but through reading and studying they can recall back what are the things on hold in marriage.

Lastly, infidelity in marriage can be dangerous and threatening the life. As a normal human, when our partner betrays in marriage. Aggressive emotion such as anger, disappointment toward the partner might lead to the death. Lots of physical abuse are done by man to their marriage partner, and when husband found out women is betraying to the marriage. Some research show that men have high in power in the society, therefore they no need to answer to anyone even if they are having extramarital affairs.

Asian region consists lots of country, and each country have different setting and development pace. This reviewed are meant to these ten journals and understand the factors behind the infidelity. One of the limitations in this review are journals regard infidelity in marriage is less, therefore it will be more interesting if we can have lots of journals to review in future.

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