



Resilience Among Wives Experiencing Marital Infidelity: A Descriptive Study

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Resiliens, Marital Infidelity, Wifes, Type of Infidelity

Received : 22, May

Revised : 24, June

Accepted: 31, July

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the level of resilience among wives who have experienced infidelity but chose to remain in their marriages. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to endure, adapt, and recover from stressful situations. This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach with a total of 117 wives who had experienced infidelity with type emotional, seksual and online. The instrument used was the 25-item version of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). The results showed that the majority of participants had very high (75,21%), (5.12%) high, (7.69%) low and (11.96%) very low category. A total of 117 wives participated in the study. These findings indicate that most wives possess strong psychological resilience in coping with the experience of infidelity.

INTRODUCTION

Infidelity is a fairly common phenomenon in marriage. Buss and Shackelford (Syamsuri & Yitnamurti, 2020) stated that at least one of the partners in a marriage is likely to engage in infidelity at some point during their relationship. Data from the Institute for Family Studies (Saffana, 2021) also indicates that men are more likely to commit infidelity than women, with 20% of married men admitting to having cheated, compared to 13% of married women. This fact reinforces the perception that wives are more often in the position of being victims of infidelity.

The impact of infidelity on wives is broad, affecting not only their emotional well-being but also their social functioning and roles within the family. Initial reactions commonly include disbelief, anger, sadness, and even depression (Ginanjar, 2009). Robbany and Ariana (2025) also note that wives often experience decreased self-esteem, a sense of humiliation, and psychological distress due to betrayal. Socially, wives who are cheated on tend to experience isolation and withdraw from their surroundings because of shame and negative stigma (Adam, 2020). Infidelity also affects the wife's role as a mother; emotional distress often impairs their parenting abilities, and children raised in such conditions are more prone to anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems (Steven & Sukmaningrum, 2020; Batara et al., 2020).

Amidst such complex impacts, some wives choose to remain in their marriages despite being betrayed. Hargrave (in Adam, 2020) explained that wives may decide to stay due to love for their spouse and concern for their children's well-being. This decision is far from easy and requires substantial psychological strength. In this context, the concept of resilience becomes crucial—it refers to an individual's ability to endure, adapt, and recover even when facing significant psychological pressure (Masten in Miarsih et al., 2024).

Wu et al. (2013) emphasized that resilience is essential for wives to recover from the emotional burden of infidelity. Women with high resilience tend to make more rational decisions and rebuild their sense of purpose after a crisis. The study by Putri and Aulia (2021) found that wives who chose to stay after experiencing infidelity demonstrated resilience through positive meaning-making, optimism about change, problem-solving abilities, and spiritual strength. This shows that resilience not only reflects the capacity to endure but also the ability to grow psychologically from painful experiences.

Similarly, Elda and Widyorini's (2024) study revealed that wives who are able to forgive, rebuild trust, and renew their marital commitment demonstrate strong resilience. Although this process is challenging, it becomes key for wives to continue their married life despite having suffered emotional wounds caused by infidelity. Therefore, it is important to examine the resilience of wives who choose to stay as a form of psychological adaptation in dealing with marital conflict.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience is a psychological ability of an individual to recover, endure, and adapt positively when facing stress, trauma, or life difficulties (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Luthar, 2003; Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Resilience not only reflects toughness in overcoming problems but also represents the individual's capacity to grow amidst unfavorable conditions.

According to Connor and Davidson (2003), resilience consists of five core aspects: (1) personal competence, high standards, and tenacity; (2) trust in one's instincts and tolerance of negative emotions; (3) positive acceptance and the ability to build secure relationships; (4) self-control; and (5) spirituality. These five aspects illustrate the psychological and social dimensions that support individuals in responding to pressure in an adaptive way.

In addition to internal aspects, resilience is also influenced by various external and social factors. Some of the key contributors to resilience include age, gender, socioeconomic status, personality traits, religiosity, coping strategies, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, optimism, parenting style, and social support (Nashori & Saputro, 2021). The more protective factors an individual possesses, the greater their potential to demonstrate strong resilience.

Infidelity is a violation of commitment in a romantic relationship, which can involve emotional, sexual, or online involvement with a third party (Rokach & Chan, 2023; Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Types of infidelity include emotional, sexual, and online infidelity, which may occur independently or in combination. For example, online infidelity may develop into emotional or even sexual relationships.

Several factors that cause infidelity include dissatisfaction in the relationship, stress, weak religious commitment, and permissive attitudes toward infidelity, particularly among men (Rokach & Chan, 2023). Conflict, life pressures, and lack of communication are also common triggers.

The impact is significant for wives who become victims. They may experience emotional distress such as anger, disappointment, and depression (Snyder et al., 2008), withdraw from their social environment due to shame (Adam, 2020), and even suffer from psychological trauma such as PTSD (Shaleha & Kurniasih, 2021). Infidelity also disrupts social functioning and maternal roles.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument used in this study was the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). The scale consists of 25 items with five response options and was translated and adapted by the researcher to suit the context of wives who have experienced infidelity. This scale measures key aspects of resilience such as personal strength, the ability to cope with pressure, and spiritual beliefs.

The population of this study included wives from various regions in Indonesia who experienced infidelity from their husbands and decided to maintain their marriages. A total of 117 wives participated in the study. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with the snowball

sampling method, where respondents were recruited through recommendations and networks from previous participants.

Data collection was carried out online using Google Forms, and the data were processed and analyzed using SPSS version 24. The analytical technique used was descriptive statistics, examining minimum, maximum, mean scores, and standard deviation of resilience levels. The results provide a general overview of the tendencies and patterns of resilience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 117 wives who experienced infidelity in their marriage but chose to remain in the relationship.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time Since Last Infidelity	This year	32	27.35%
	One year ago	34	29.06%
	Two years ago	23	19.66%
	Three years ago	6	5.13%
	Four years ago	7	5.98%
	Five years ago	3	2.56%
	More than five years ago	8	6.84%
	More than ten years ago	4	3.42%
Type of Infidelity	Emotional	28	23.93%
	Sexual	18	15.38%
	Online	29	24.79%
	Emotional & Sexual	9	7.69%
	Emotional & Online	25	21.37%
	Sexual & Online	3	2.56%
	Emotional, Sexual & Online	5	4.27%

Based on the timing of the incident, most participants experienced infidelity relatively recently, with 29.06% reporting it occurred one year ago and 27.35% within the current year. Another 23 participants (19.66%) reported experiencing infidelity two years ago, while the rest were spread across three years ago to more than ten years ago.

The most commonly reported form of infidelity was online infidelity, experienced by 29 participants (24.79%), followed by emotional infidelity (23.93%) and a combination of emotional and online infidelity (21.37%). Other types included sexual infidelity (15.38%), emotional & sexual (7.69%), sexual & online (2.56%), and all three combined – emotional, sexual, and online – reported by 5 participants (4.27%).

The description of resilience levels is based on empirical and hypothetical values of minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 Empirical and Hypothetical Scores of Resilience

Variable	Empirical				Hypothetical			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Resilience	25	125	92,75	25,79	25	125	75	16,67

The table presents the descriptive statistics for the resilience variable, based on both empirical values (actual data from participants) and hypothetical values (theoretical values derived from the instrument's scoring range).

From the empirical data, resilience scores range from 25 to 125, with a mean of 92.75 and a standard deviation of 25.79. This indicates that most participants tend to have a high level of resilience, with a considerable variation in resilience levels among them.

On the other hand, the hypothetical values represent the theoretical limits of the measurement scale, with a minimum score of 25, a maximum of 125, a theoretical mean of 75, and a standard deviation of 16.67. The empirical mean (92.75), which is higher than the hypothetical mean (75), suggests that, in general, the participants in this study have a higher-than-average level of resilience compared to what is theoretically expected.

Table 3 Categorization of Resilience Scores

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
≤ 50	Very Low	14	11,96%
51 – 66	Low	9	7,69%
67 – 83	High	6	5,12%
≥ 84	Very High	88	75,21%
Total		117	100%

Based on the categorization of resilience levels, the majority of participants fell into the very high category, totaling 88 individuals (75.21%). This indicates that most wives who experienced infidelity demonstrated a very strong level of psychological resilience. A total of 6 participants (5.12%) were classified as having high resilience, while 9 participants (7.69%) were in the low category, and 14 participants (11.96%) fell into the very low category. In total, 117 participants were included in this analysis.

A cross-tabulation between resilience and age based on Levinson's (1987) adult development stages was conducted, and the results are presented in the following table 4:

Table 4 Cross-tabulation of Resilience and Age

Age Categories	Resilience Level				Total
	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	
Early Adult Transition	15 (12.82%)	1 (0.85%)	-	2 (1.71%)	18 (15.3%)

Entering the Adult World	19 (16.24%)	2 (1.71%)	-	7 (5.98%)	28 (23.9%)
Age 30 Transition	27 (23.08%)	1 (0.85%)	1 (0.85%)	2 (1.71%)	31 (26.5%)
Settling Down	20 (17.09%)	1 (0.85%)	6 (5.13%)	3 (2.56%)	30 (25.6%)
Mid-life Transition	5 (4.27%)	1 (0.85%)	2 (1.71%)	-	8 (6.80%)
Entering Middle Adulthood	2 (1.71%)	-	-	-	2 (1.71%)
Total	88 (75.21%)	6 (5.13%)	9 (7.69%)	14 (11.97%)	117 (100%)

Based on the data distribution, the majority of wives who had experienced infidelity were in the Age 30 Transition (29–33 years) and Settling Down (34–40 years) categories, with 31 participants (26.50%) and 30 participants (25.64%) respectively. This was followed by those in the Entering the Adult World (23–28 years) category with 28 participants (23.93%) and Early Adult Transition (18–22 years) with 18 participants (15.38%). Meanwhile, fewer participants were in the Mid-life Transition (41–45 years) and Entering Middle Adulthood (46–50 years) categories, with only 8 (6.84%) and 2 (1.71%) participants respectively.

In terms of resilience level, most wives who experienced infidelity showed very high resilience, especially those in the Age 30 Transition (11.97%) and Settling Down (10.26%) categories. This suggests that as wives mature in age, they are more likely to demonstrate high resilience in facing the experience of infidelity.

Very high resilience was also found in the Entering the Adult World (9.40%) and Early Adult Transition (5.13%) groups, although in smaller numbers. Conversely, very low resilience was most commonly found in the Entering the Adult World group (4.27%) and the Age 30 Transition group (1.71%).

In terms of emotional regulation, wives with high emotional regulation abilities tended to exhibit better resilience. It was evident that most participants with very high resilience also had very high emotional regulation, particularly in the Age 30 Transition and Settling Down age groups. In conclusion, wives in the early to middle adulthood age range (approximately 29–40 years) tend to be more capable of recovering from the experience of being cheated on.

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of wives who experienced infidelity but chose to remain in their marriages possess a very high level of resilience (75.21%). This suggests that, despite encountering emotionally distressing experiences, most of these women demonstrate strong psychological endurance and adaptive capabilities in navigating marital crises. These results align with the resilience theory by Connor and Davidson (2003), which posits that resilient individuals are capable of recovering from psychological adversity.

Several factors contribute to the high resilience levels observed, including life experiences, social support, and spiritual beliefs, all of which assist individuals in finding new meaning amid painful events. As noted by Reivich and Shatté (2002),

resilience extends beyond mere endurance; it entails active emotional regulation and constructive problem-solving. Supporting this, studies by Wu et al. (2013) and Putri and Aulia (2021) found that wives who remained in their marriages post-infidelity often employed positive meaning-making, reconstructed life purposes, and engaged in adaptive coping.

Based on the age distribution of wives who experienced infidelity in this study, the majority were in the adult developmental stages identified by Levinson (1978), specifically the Age 30 Transition and Settling Down phases. The age range of 29–40 years represents a critical period for evaluating life choices (Age 30 Transition) and establishing a stable life structure (Settling Down). At this stage, most wives who experienced infidelity demonstrated very high levels of both resilience and emotional regulation. This reflects a higher level of resilience, likely driven by a stronger motivation to maintain family stability.

These findings align with the research of Farial et al. (2020), which found a positive correlation between age and resilience among drug users. The study stated that the older a person is, the higher their level of resilience tends to be. Conversely, younger individuals generally display lower resilience. The influence of age on the increase in resilience was found to be 3.8%, indicating that age plays a role as a contributing factor in the development of psychological endurance. Furthermore, Cohen & Armeli (as cited in Rusmaladewi et al., 2020) explained that age is one of the factors affecting an individual's emotional regulation. As people age, they tend to have better abilities in managing and expressing their emotions due to richer life experiences and more mature coping strategies.

Thus, both theory and previous research suggest that age is an important factor in shaping resilience, particularly among wives who have gone through emotionally distressing experiences such as infidelity. Early to middle adulthood is not only marked by greater emotional regulation but also by more developed psychological readiness to face marital conflict and rebuild a disrupted life.

Although a minority of participants exhibited low or very low resilience, these variations may stem from differences in life history, perceived social support, and emotional regulation skills. These findings emphasize the importance of targeted psychological interventions for women who have experienced infidelity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that the majority of wives who experienced infidelity and chose to stay in their marriages demonstrated very high levels of resilience (75.21%). These findings indicate that many women possess strong psychological endurance and adaptive coping strategies despite facing emotionally distressing events such as infidelity. The highest levels of resilience were found in the age group of 29–40 years, suggesting that maturity and life phase play significant roles in emotional regulation and the ability to recover from marital crises.

Additionally, a positive correlation was observed between resilience and emotional regulation. Women who were more emotionally mature tended to respond to betrayal with greater composure, optimism, and constructive problem-solving. This underscores the importance of personal growth, social support, and spirituality as internal and external protective factors. While most

participants showed high resilience, a small proportion exhibited low or very low resilience, signaling the need for tailored psychological assistance.

Mental health professionals should offer emotional support and coping training to enhance resilience in wives who have experienced infidelity. Additionally, implementing structured programs such as meaning therapy, mindfulness practices, and emotion regulation workshops can equip women with effective psychological tools to cope with betrayal trauma. Empowerment initiatives at the community or institutional level may further assist in reducing the long-term psychological impact and promote healing, growth, and renewed personal strength.

FURTHER STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, future research is recommended to explore additional variables that may influence resilience among wives who experience infidelity. While this study focused on the level of resilience and its relationship with age, future studies could consider other psychological factors such as coping strategies, self-efficacy, forgiveness, religiosity, and perceived social support, as these remain important areas for further investigation.

Furthermore, exploring the role of cultural beliefs, family dynamics, and previous trauma histories may offer a more comprehensive understanding of resilience mechanisms. Utilizing mixed-method and longitudinal approaches would also help to capture the complexity and evolution of resilience over time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to all the participants who willingly shared their personal experiences and took part in this study with honesty and openness. Their willingness to participate made this research possible and meaningful. Special thanks are also extended to the academic supervisors and lecturers who have provided invaluable guidance, feedback, and support throughout the research process. Your encouragement and insights were essential in shaping the direction and depth of this study.

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