



## Sociological Explanation of the Transformation of the Family Institution in the Light of Extramarital Affairs with the GT Approach

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### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 19 February 2021

Accepted: 03 July 2021

Article Type

**Research paper**

#### Keywords:

Extramarital relationship,  
Change in women's  
beliefs, Family structure

### ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to determine where women's beliefs and motivations fit into the conceptual model of their extramarital relationship. The study used a qualitative approach and the grounded theory method. Unstructured interviews and required data from interviews with 17 women living in Qazvin who had extramarital affairs were used to collect data. The interviewees were chosen using the purposive sampling method, which necessitates the use of sequential sampling known as snowball. Triangulation validity was used in this study. Based on the findings, the study's causal conditions were identified as sexual diversity-seeking, a lack of sexual skills and knowledge, and justification for extramarital relationships and the absence of a spouse. The core phenomenon of transformation of intimacy and the confluent love emerges as an alternative to the growth of social relations and change of social values, increase of leisure time and facilitation of new technologies. Individualism, gender bias, spouse indifference, and female inferiority in earning were identified as intervening conditions, and it was discovered that women, through the use of strategies to practice extramarital relationships and the desire to consume, body management, and hesitation to continue life, created the consequences of increasing hedonism and normalizing the extramarital relationship.

**Citation:** Abolhassan Tanhai, H & Aghajani Beigi, Z. (2021). Sociological explanation of the transformation of the family institution in the light of extramarital affairs With the GT approach. *Journal of Woman and Family Studies*, 9(4), 21-42. doi: 10.22051/jwfs.2021.35169.2649

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## Introduction

Changes in sexual behavior are one of the many aspects of modern life in the modern world. Men and women, according to Giddens, are looking for an intimate and equal relationship in the new age. Because the fundamental issue in today's world is a change in attitudes toward sex with the revolution, revisiting sexual and intimate relationships is associated with being fluid and fragile, meaning that people stay in a relationship as long as they are emotionally and sexually satisfied. In recent decades, sex has become a social issue. According to Giddens, we are currently experiencing the phenomenon of intimacy transformation (Giddens, 2013). In recent decades, equality movements in the field of intimacy have spawned a new sort of relationship known as fluid love, in which the rigorous commitment and necessity of stability in romantic love are questioned (Giddens, 1992). According to Bauman, materialism has infiltrated human relationships, making romantic interactions between couples flexible and ambiguous (Bauman, 2015). Aviram and Amichai believe that extramarital affairs, or (relationships beyond the marriage), is a modern sexual ethic focused on sexual pleasure and freedom. According to a broad definition, "Breaking the commitment of a dyadic relationship leads to the establishment of some degree of emotional and physical closeness with someone outside the marriage (Aviram & Amichai-Hamburger, 2005; Pittman, 1988). Pittman, 1989 also believes that extramarital affairs are not necessarily sexual relationships, but rather the foundation for a secret connection; a world in which incompatibility, daily obligations, reality testing, and honest thinking have no place (Pittman, 1988). Extramarital studies indicate that this phenomenon is becoming more prevalent and significant. Recent research indicates that on average, 23% of men and 19% of women worldwide have had extramarital encounters, although more recent studies show that men and women exhibit same levels of sexual and emotional extramarital behaviors (Allen et al., 2005; Prosser, 2013). Although precise statistics on the incidence of extramarital affairs in Iran have not been released, some studies have made direct and indirect references to the subject. For instance, the majority of domestic killings (about 30%) involve women who have been murdered by their husbands as a result of illegal intercourse and suspicion. On the other hand, 22% of family



homicides are due to men being murdered by their wives, while 40% of cases involve women murdering their husbands with the participation of their lover (Gholampour et al., 2017). Extramarital affairs have expanded throughout Iranian culture, particularly among Iranian women, who make up half of the population, and have even reached a small city like Qazvin. As a result, the goal of this study is to identify the role of women's motivation in the conceptual model of extramarital relationships and the causes of family relationship breakdown, as well as to explain the contributing factors in the rupture of the family foundation caused by women's extramarital relationships. The answer to this question can aid us in grasping the actors' motivations in their ongoing actions, allowing us to develop a theoretical model based on the data.

The main question: What effect will the extramarital affair of married women have on the future of the family?

Sub-question: What are the causes and motivations of women to involve in extramarital affairs?

## **Literature review**

According to sexuality theory (Irvine, 2003), sociology "has a remarkable history of the denaturalization of expressions of sexuality and theorizing of its social origins in the form of a series of studies dating back to the Chicago School in the early twentieth century in which non-institutional forms of sexual expression are considered as a result of a repurture in informal controls, including family and neighborhood. Our sexual behavior is determined by the biological imperative of reproduction, but how, where, how frequently, with whom, and why we have sex are learnt cultural behaviors, and their meaning is culturally transferable.» (Longmore, 1998). The interpretive sociological framework of symbolic interaction, or interpretive approach, is the systematic examination of meaningful social action through careful observation of individuals in their natural state with the goal of elucidating how individuals construct and perpetuate their social worlds. Interpretive sociology is not the sociologist's interpretation of reality, but rather the objective examination of the group and societal interpretations of members of a particular generation or institution (Hassan Tanhai, 2011). The grounded theory method, which is the

analytic method of this research, is in the same sociological framework. Due to the significance of extramarital affairs, in addition to the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, numerous studies have been conducted by Iranian researchers on the sociological causes of extramarital relationships and their various dimensions, including emotional and virtual relationships, as well as associated injuries, which we will discuss in detail. For instance, Abedi's research revealed that satellite and Internet issues in society have resulted in sexual freedom, sexual addiction, and the introduction of illicit connections over the Internet (Abedi Tehrani & Afshari, 2012). Additionally, Khatibzadeh's research indicates that women who watched satellite television had worse marital satisfaction and poor mental health than those who did not (Khatibzadeh & Nemati, 2015). Ghadiri identified the primary influencing categories on extramarital relationships as individualism, being influenced by friends, economic problems, the media, and religious weakness in his research (Firouzjaeian & Ghadiri, 2017). In their study entitled the Role of Emotional Support and Self-Determination in Prediction of Marital Conflicts among Married Women, Mousavi and Ghoje Beigloo (2019) concluded that family emotional support in a way that strengthens husbands' support for their wives, actually satisfies the need for self-determination in the couple's relationship. It can provide the ground for positive interactions and reduce marital conflict in the relationship (Mousavi & Gholinasab Ghoje Beigloo, 2019). Findings of the research results by Baharloo, Mohammadi, Fallah Chai & Javadan (2019) were that both couples therapy methods had an effect on marital adjustment and in the follow-up phase the effect of both methods was lasting so that the results show no difference between the two couple therapy methods in the post-test (Baharloo et al., 2019). In another study by Arianfar & Rasouli (2019) found that the direct effect of the main family health and dimensions of love (i.e., desire, intimacy, commitment) on marital satisfaction was significant so that therapists can examine the health of the main family and lovemaking dimensions in analysis and treatment of marital problems (Arianfar, 2019).

Additionally, Zeinali determined in a study that inappropriate use of mass media (satellite, social media), a lack of religious convictions, and a lack of social support from the spouse are all social factors that contribute to married women's infidelity (Zeinali & Akbari, 2015). Abdolmaleki found in a study that the usage of global media, contemporary rethinking, and alteration of



intimacy and marital satisfaction all have an effect on couples' proclivity for extramarital relationships (Abdolmaleki et al., 2015). According to Seyyed Ali Tabar's research, Facebook users and social network users have a much higher level of internal and external religious orientation than non-users, and social networks have a variety of harmful and beneficial implications. In fact, what matters is the type of use (Alitabar et al., 2014) .

Urooj et al.' findings also imply that men are more prone to betray women, whereas women are more likely to commit emotional adultery. Sexual adultery was viewed as the worst kind of infidelity by men, while emotional infidelity was viewed as the worst form of infidelity by women (Urooj & Anjum, 2015). Gil Brewer et al. discovered that the triple dark trait predicts women's adultery, perceived vulnerability to partner infidelity, and retaliation in response to infidelity in their study (Brewer & Abell, 2015). According to previous research, the anxiety and avoidance dimensions of romantic attachment are linked to the performance frequency of the Benefit-Provisioning and Cost-Inflicting domains of mate retention (Barbaro et al., 2015). In a study, Ho Swee Lin discovered that relationships and behaviors fueled ethical conflicts over female identity and self-esteem, and that in the post-industrial society, the field of sexuality became a platform for socio-economic maneuverings, media demagoguery, marital strategies, and personal rebellions (Lin, 2012).

In a study, Emmers-Sommer discovered that the two factors of fear of punishment and commitment (undesirable alternatives) discourage people from starting extramarital relationships (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010). Russell and Clayton's study on the impact of new social networks on marital infidelity found that social networks launch extramarital relationships by offering a romantic setting with persons other than the spouse, and hence contribute to the breakdown of marital life (Clayton, 2014).

Finally, some earlier research findings are discussed, which are consistent with the current study's conclusions in several aspects. Zarandi, for example, noted in a study that new achievements by women and changes in gender roles, in addition to other factors, might help establish a stable and voluntary relationship and dissolve the current forced relationship, which is consistent with the current study (Zarandi et al., 2017). Another finding of this study is

individualism and the prevalence of subjective and selfish attitudes among individuals, as well as a desire for physical hedonism and sexual diversity, which is consistent with Garaee Moghaddam (2021), Entezari (2013), Fathi et al. (2014), and Shirdel (2006). Finally, the proposed theoretical model asserts that today's need for personal independence and hedonism has extended to sexual issues, with women seeking modern gender attractions in order to form romantic and emotional relationships.

## Methods

The current research is qualitative in nature and was conducted using the grounded theory method. Grounded theory is a qualitative method that use a set of systematic procedures to attempt to generate inductive theories about a phenomenon, and its conclusions include a theoretical arrangement of reality. This method involves not only the creation of concepts and the establishment of linkages between them, but also the temporary testing of these interactions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Theoretical coding and instant comparison processes, as well as unitization and categorization, were used to analyze the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Participants in this study are married women from Qazvin who have experienced an extramarital affair. Theoretical saturation was finally achieved after 17 interviews. The three steps coding of the grounded theory method were used to examine the findings of this study. 90 concepts were obtained during the first stage of open coding, which were then grouped into 27 key topic groups. And the core category was chosen, with the findings reported in Table 1. The logical connection of 27 key categories and how they interacted were determined during the axial coding stage. The core category was selected during the selective coding stage, and the results are shown in Table 1.

## Participants

The marriage duration of the studied women ranges between one and ten years, and their average age is 35 years. The youngest woman in the group was 27 years old, while the oldest was 53. 76% of respondents were married, while 23% were divorced or separated. 5% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, 11% held a master's degree, and 5% held a PhD. Additionally, 35% held a diploma or associate degree. 64% of respondents were employed, while 35% were housewives.



## Validity

To ensure the validity of the current research, the researcher asked questions during the interview to ensure that their interpretation of the participant's message matched what the participants were quoting. In other words, do they share the understanding of meanings? The validity of the research was determined during the interview since, in sensitive cases such as extramarital affairs, contacting the participants again may breach ethical principles pertaining to the participants' rights in the research. Finally, the most widely agreed upon codes were included in the final report.

## Results

The core concepts extracted from the interviews are then categorized into more general categories using the coding process.

Table 1

*Categories and concepts extracted from interviews*

	Concepts	Core categories	Type
1	Possibility to continue education - Communicating with a colleague - short trips with friends	The growth of social relations	
2	Supporting children - being alone and helpless - lack of trust in the third person	Women's discontent with divorce	
3	Personal interpretation of religion - decline in religious orientation - social prevalence of forbidden values	Value conflicts	
4	Lack power when it comes to personal work - husband blaming wife for her appearance - fear of rejection - negative self-image	Lack of confidence	
5	Ignoring the consequences of action for others - ignoring traditions - declining values	Change in social values	
6	Belief in praying on time - annual reading of the Quran in its whole year	Practicing religious rites	
7	Gatherings with friends- group trips abroad with friends	Increased leisure time	

Contextual conditions

	Concepts	Core categories	Type
8	Following the trend of dating, feeling frustrated by the love experience, and yearning for dream love	Individualism	Interfering conditions
9	Gender dissatisfaction -a woman being the toy of today's world - Society ignorance of men's infidelity - not having the right to choose in life	Gender bias	
10	Communication with a third party through phone and hidden line - free room for emotional expression - easy dating on social media - video chat possibility	Facilitation by new technologies	
11	Women's receiving of lower salaries compared to men - lack of insurance - prejudice in the hiring of women	Woman's inferiority in earning	
12	The men's right to divorce - society's negative view of divorced women - lack of legal protection for divorced women	Divorce laws	
13	Husband's lack of consultation with his wife in life affairs - husband's lack of coordination with his wife in raising children - husband's lack of accompanying his wife in parties and trips	Indifference on the part of the spouse	
14	Attention to physical characteristics - forced marriage - conventional marriage	Lack of awareness in choosing a spouse	
15	Retaliation for infidelity - Women's lack of regret for the extramarital affair-	Revenge on the spouse	
16	Blaming the husband- Boring life after marriage- Take revenge on the spouse	Justification of extramarital affair	
17	Adventure and curiosity - Desire to experience relationships with different people - Living without diversity with the spouse - Increase of the quality of alternatives	Sexual diversity-seeking	
18	Lack of sexual skills and knowledge - talking about marital issues as a taboo - mistaken sexual knowledge	Lack of sexual skills and knowledge	
19	Husband's shifting work hours - Frequent job missions - imprisonment of husband	Absence of spouse	
20	The Importance of Sex in Marriage - The Importance of Sexual Satisfaction in Relationships	Dominance of sexual satisfaction discourse	





Concepts	Core categories	Type
21 Marital commitment as a flexible concept.	Fluid love or the metamorphosis of intimacy	Phenomenon
22 Women's reluctance to continue their lives - regrets over childbirth - discontent with their early marriage - regrets about the spouse they chose	Uncertainty over the continuing life	
23 The desire for cosmetic surgery - weight control and diet- a desire to improve one's appearance	Body management	Interactional dimension Interactive - process
24 Following fashion, wishing to show off - wishing to be fashionable	Consumerism	
25 Feeling happy - compensating for shortcomings - developing self-confidence	Increased hedonism	
26 Maintaining the relationship in a stress-free manner- uneventfulness of the relationship- compensating for the loss of peace in life	Normalization of extramarital affair	Consequences
27 Distance between the spouses - unwillingness to continue living - emotional divorce and filling for divorce - indifference to the repercussions of the extramarital affair	Breakdown of the family foundation	

According to the above table, the study's core categories are contextual conditions, intervening conditions, causal conditions, phenomena, the interactive-process dimension, and consequences. Each of these categories is addressed in detail here.

### Contextual conditions-related categories

Contextual conditions are a set of circumstances that come together at a certain time and place to create the necessary environment for a phenomena to form and for individuals to respond to it through their interactions(Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

**The growth of social relations:** One of the motivations and settings for women to have extramarital encounters is to raise their social awareness.

1- *"When I travel with my friends, I notice through conversation that they are all pleased with their marriages, but I am not. They advise me to think for myself in order to enjoy my life."* (Code 5.31, divorced, with an associate degree, employed).

**Women's discontent with divorce** is related to concepts such as child support, being alone and helpless, a lack of trust in a third party, fear of being judged by the people and financial dependence on a husband, the lack of independent housing, and the absence of family or community support.

2- *"I sustain this miserable life mostly for the sake of my children; I have no way back, no desire to remain, and if I divorce, I would have no one to support me."* (Code 3, 37 years old, married, with a middle school degree, and a housewife).

**Epistemological conflicts:** include the concepts of personal interpretation of religion, decline in religious affiliation, prevalence of forbidden social values.

3- *"I am always punctual in my prayers. Even at work, I continue to read prayers and the Qur'an. I believe these two events have nothing to do with one another; God forgive me; I have endured a great deal"* (Code 2, 35 years old, married, with an elementary degree, a housewife).

**Lack of self-confidence**, which includes concepts such as lack of power to do personal work, fear of rejection, negative self-image.

4- *"We had a really icy engagement period; I wished I had the ability to quit the relationship, but I lacked it; I had either lost my self-confidence or had none at all."* (Code 8, 31 years old, married, with a master's degree, and in employment).

**Social change values:** When individual expediency is prioritized over a society's core values, interpersonal interactions are likewise impacted and prioritized exclusively for the individual's benefit.

5 - *"Until a few years ago, it was considered quite unsightly for a married woman to fall in love and divorce, but that has changed. I also enjoy pursuing my dreams, regardless of how much time I have to live "*, (Code17, separating, 47 years old, with an elementary degree, a housewife).

Practicing religious rites, which includes the concepts of belief in praying on time and annual reading of the Quran in its whole. Commitment to the value of religious beliefs prevents the occurrence of common social pathologies in society, including infidelity (Mollazadeh et al., 2002).



6 - *"My convictions are quite strong. I have not abandoned daily prayer and recitation of the Qur'an, but guilt now bothers me. I am embarrassed before God."* (Code 1, with a bachelor's degree, 29 years old, married, and employed).

Increased leisure time: Leisure time encompasses the concepts of joining friendly courses and gatherings with friends- group trips with friends domestically and internationally.

7- *"Women spend a lot of time these days; it's not like it used to be, when a woman wasn't working, she had to go out from morning to night, sleep, or talk on the phone"* (Code 141, married, a housewife, 30 years old, with a diploma).

### **Categorizations pertaining to intervening circumstances**

Intervening conditions are those that alleviate, worsen, or modify the causal conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Indeed, these conditions take place as a result of unanticipated and accidental circumstances that must be managed through action / interaction:

**Individualism:** which encompasses the concepts of following the trend of dating, feeling frustrated by the love experience, and yearning for dream love

8- *"I am somewhat assuming and rebellious; I like to have all I want; some gaps constantly irritate me; I like to fully experience and enjoy the world of youth"* (Code 131, married, 48 years old, with a master's degree)

**Gender bias:** which encompasses concepts Gender dissatisfaction, a woman being the toy of today's world, society ignorance of men's infidelity, and not having the right to choose in life.

9- *"Damn any sex discrimination law, why women should not have the right to choose or do anything, but men do whatever the f...ck they want how much enjoyment am I entitled to as a woman?"* (Code 16, married, 53, physician.)

**Facilitation by new technologies:** a new media culture is exploding with the ability to build visual interactions without the physical presence of individuals, sexual chat rooms, and sending photo and message, which could be linked to the dissolution of traditional family networks.

10- *"Mom! have fun with it," my kid said after installing the Telegram app on my phone. I made pals there as well, so I wasn't alone.*" (Code 3, 37 years old, married, a housewife, with a middle school diploma).

**Woman's inferiority in earning:** includes concepts such as women's receiving of lower salaries compared to men - lack of insurance - prejudice in the hiring of women.

11- *"I've always wished for a better job so that I wouldn't have to deal with men or give in to anything." A job that isn't covered by insurance. In addition, its pay is significantly lower than that of men.* (Code 2, a housewife, 35 years old, with an elementary school degree).

**Divorce laws:** This category includes concepts such as the men's right to divorce, society's negative view of divorced women - lack of legal protection for divorced women.

12- *"My wife and I are incompatible, and I don't want my life to be damaged since divorce is difficult in Iran; everyone looks down on women, and I don't have a new source of income with which to manage my life"* (Code 15, separating, 32 years old, a housewife).

**Indifference on the part of the spouse:** which includes concepts such as husband's lack of consultation with his wife in life affairs, husband's lack of coordination with his wife in raising children, and husband's lack of accompanying his wife in parties and trips.

13- *"We loved each other early on in our relationship, and I loved him to compensate for his family's lack of affection. My husband is not particularly warm or emotional; in fact, when I say romantic things, I notice that she falls asleep for a long period."* (Code 12, married, 27 years old, with a diploma, employed).

**Lack of awareness in choosing a spouse:** which includes concepts such as attention to physical characteristics, forced marriage, and conventional marriage.

14- *"The one thing I didn't even think about before marriage was mutual understanding and knowledge; I chose my husband without thinking; I got married so that I wouldn't have to worry about my father's house troubles"* (Code 8, married, 28 years old, with a diploma, and a housewife).

**Revenge on the spouse:** which includes concepts such as Retaliation for infidelity, and women's lack of regret for the extramarital affair.



15- *It was my husband who led me wrong. He was so distrustful of me and had injured me deeply that I felt compelled to seek retribution. "I had a secret affair with my previous boss."* (Code 11, separating, with a bachelor's degree, 39 years old).

**Justification of extramarital affair:** which includes concepts such as blaming the husband, boring life after marriage, take revenge on the spouse.

16- *"I became so caught up in my problems that I no longer give a damn what I do or the consequences of my relationship. I, too, have the right to a happy life."* (Code 151, 35 years old, with an elementary degree. married, a housewife).

**Sexual diversity-seeking:** which includes concepts such as adventure and curiosity - desire to experience relationships with different people, living without diversity with the spouse, and increase of the quality of alternatives.

17- *"I had to respond to the demands of strangers because my husband was in prison. To pay my bills, I lived with a man for approximately a year until my husband was released."* (Employed, 39 years old, with a diploma, married, code 4).

**Lack of sexual skills and knowledge:** which includes concepts such as lack of sexual skills and knowledge, talking about marital issues as a taboo, and mistaken sexual knowledge. This term refers to a lack of understanding of oneself and the opposite sex, as well as the incompleteness of one's sexual identity.

18- *"It wasn't long before I discovered I was pregnant; I wasn't old enough to be a mother; I had no idea about sex before; I didn't even realize a woman had the right to enjoy her relationship with her spouse"* (code 6, married, 32 years, with an associate degree, employed).

**Absence of spouse:** which includes concepts such as Husband's shifting work hours - Frequent job missions - imprisonment of husband, and being away from spouse due to work or missions.

19- *"My husband will be gone for a half of week because of his profession, which requires him to travel continuously; I enjoy that he works from morning to night, but I want him to be with me at night because I am afraid of being alone, and I fall asleep playing with my phone."* (Code 12, 27 years old, married, with a diploma and employed).

**Dominance of sexual satisfaction discourse:** which includes concepts such as The Importance of Sex in Marriage - The Importance of Sexual Satisfaction in Relationships.

20- *"I'm always trying to make myself appealing to my hubby. He doesn't care at all. He is very cold. He's freezing. He can't satisfy me in sex no matter how hard he tries I advised him multiple times to consult a physician, but he stated that "it is what it is".* (Code 8, 28-year-old housewife, married, with a diploma).

### Interactions

Interaction refers to deliberate strategies and actions taken to resolve a problem. Indeed, contextual, intervening, and causal conditions serve as the foundation for the development of family processes and interactions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) . These interactions are the following:

**Uncertainty over the continuing life:** which includes concepts such as women's reluctance to continue their lives, regrets over childbirth, discontent with their early marriage, and regrets about the spouse they chose.

21- *"My husband is unable to pay dowry, and I want a divorce; he does not accept children, and I am also dependent on my children. On the other hand, I don't want to live any longer, I'm between the devil and deep blue sea"* (Code 17, separating, 47 years old, a housewife)

**Body management:** which includes concepts such as the desire for cosmetic surgery, weight control and dietm and a desire to improve one's appearance.

22- *"In my family of origins, I couldn't to realize my dreams; I had hoped to undergo cosmetic surgery, but my father was a low-paid worker; I had always wished to travel overseas and purchase branded clothing for myself. Unfortunately, I was unable to realize my dreams in my wife's home as well."* (Code 15, separating, 32 years, with a bachelor's degree)

**Consumerism:** which includes concepts such as following fashion, wishing to show off, and wishing to be fashionable.

23- *"I am a big spender. I enjoy shopping and dressing up to keep up with the latest trends. I didn't have a precise criterion for picking more important than material items when my lover did this to me"* (Code 14, married, 30 years old, with a diploma, a housewife).



## Consequences

Numerous human behaviors have inherent complexities that are understandable only in their particular contexts. Using the method of grounded theory, it is possible to identify the consequences that have other consequences by understanding the context in which actions occur and the effect that this context has on individuals' activities. Consequences that were not anticipated initially but become apparent over time. The following are the consequences of the strategies adopted by the women that resulted in an extramarital relationship and a change in family pattern:

**Normalization of extramarital affair:** which includes concepts such as maintaining the relationship in a stress-free manner, uneventfulness of the relationship, and compensating for the loss of peace in life.

24- *"I can no longer cut off my relationship with my friend completely, I have become extremely reliant on him and do not wish to lose him at any cost."* (Code 16 - married, 53 years old, physician)

**Violation of a committed relationship:** Many people believe that continuing to have sexual and emotional relationships in the form of monogamy and fidelity to a spouse is an irrational and old fashioned belief, and that the cause of uncommitted relationships is sometimes the desire to experience new and forbidden sex, excitement, passion, and a modern diversity-seeking.

25- *"I met my lover out of curiosity. I persuaded myself that it was simply an emotional relationship and that I should not get too close. In this way, I would get what I wanted and I would have my life and no one wouldn't realize, but unfortunately everything fell apart"* (Code 11, with a master's degree, separating, employed).

**Breakdown of the family foundation:** The deterioration of the couple's emotional bases and intimacy, as well as the growth of differences and negative interactions, cause the marital connection to chill, resulting in the rupture of the family compact and, eventually, emotional and formal divorce.

26- *"When my husband saw me and my lover at home, she became enraged and attacked both of us with a knife. That person escaped and I was slightly wounded. After that he filed for divorce. My life could have been so easily ruined."* (Code 15, with a bachelor's degree, 32 years, employed).

**Core category**

After identifying the axes and core categories underlying women's interpretations of extramarital affairs, the core category "fluid love or metamorphosis of intimacy" was established in the research's theoretical model, as illustrated in the paradigmatic model. Three components comprise this paradigmatic model: conditions, interactions (processes), and consequences. Today's intimate relationships are moving away from long-term commitments and toward negotiation and understanding, so that the quality of the relationship is negotiated, discussed, and exchanged by the parties at all stages of the relationship, with women in particular attempting to avoid pre-determined commitments.

27- *"Perhaps (extramarital) relationships are a repulsive thing in our society, but I believe that every human being is born free and has the right to live freely." A woman is not destined to her first decision or to suffer in silence and lose her delight in life.*" (Code 11, 39 years old, master's degree, employed).





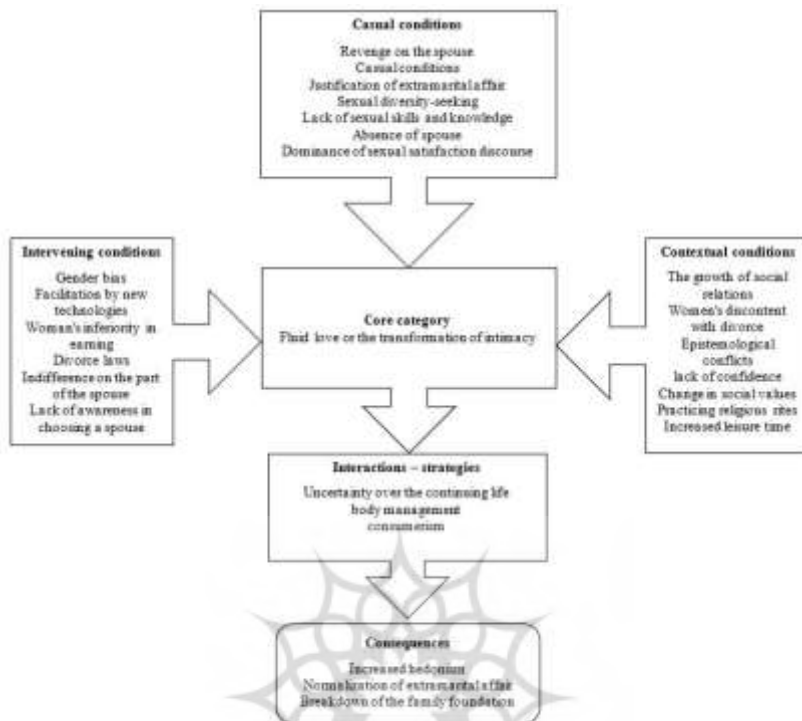


Figure 1  
*The grounded theory model of extramarital relationship*

## Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study is to provide an explanation for the sociological transformation of the family institution as a result of extramarital relationships, to develop a conceptual model of the causal, contextual, and intervening factors, as well as the core phenomenon and its influencing consequences. To accomplish this, we used qualitative research and the grounded theory technique to investigate this problem.

The results of explaining the pattern of the process of extramarital relationship formation that has contributed in the breakdown of the Iranian family in recent decades revealed that due to changes in the modern world and civilized lifestyle in the modern era, the pattern of marital coexistence is based on a dual model; on the one hand, married life is influenced by modern life requirements, while on the other hand, it is entangled in the harsh traditions of

the past. In comparison to prior generations, Qazvin women attitudes regarding marriage have shifted as well.

In today's world, where women work alongside men in a variety of jobs and activities and have a sizable presence in the social and economic sphere, they have entered the public realm of society and interact with a variety of groups and individuals on a daily basis, and these interactions have played a role in changing women's mental and emotional schemas.

Indeed, contemporary women seek ways to regain or establish lost self-esteem for a variety of reasons, including excitement, increased leisure time, a lack of intimacy with their husbands, a lack of verbal skills with their husbands, and sexual problems or low self-esteem, given that modern Iranian female identity is a reflexive combination of modern and traditional identities. Indeed, women aim to construct a new social identity by integrating these two identities. With societal advancement and the development of female individuality and relative independence from men, women have moved from a marginal role to a central one and have developed an independent personality. They have substantially increased their visibility in contemporary life, reducing their reliance on men and casting doubt on the second sex's position.

Some women, despite practicing religious rites and beliefs, have somehow become involved in extreme value conflicts in their belief system and personal interpretation of religion, which, with having contradiction in their words and deeds, have justified the ways to achieve pleasures through individual expediency. When a society's fundamental values are founded on individual hedonism and expediency, human individuals regard only their own pleasures and interests, and as a result, everything is framed in terms of material and tangible concerns, leaving emotional and familial bonds extremely vulnerable, and over time, relationships will eventually become depleted and shattered for a multitude of reasons.

Additionally, based on gender ambivalence and what liberal feminism argues, women have fewer opportunities than men due to their inferior social status and authority. In fact, this lower position is a devaluation of traits that are associated with or attributed to being a woman, leading to unhappiness or discomfort. As a result of the lack of legal protection for divorced women and their lower earning possibility compared to men, some women regard marriage as a social privilege that allows them to fulfill their wishes in terms



of family life, because if they are divorced from their spouse, they will face a slew of problems as well as a lack of social and family support.

Moreover, many women in marriage contracts regard sex as a duty rather than a shared emotion, so coldness in sexual relationships, particularly by men, leads to coldness in moral commitment. Although it is commonly assumed that men are more likely to have an extramarital affair, recent research on extramarital affairs, particularly in the late 1980s, suggests that ignoring women's emotional needs has led to an increase in women's desire for extramarital experiences. Another reason in the expansion of women's awareness is the facilitation of new technologies, which has led the external level of society to be different from its underlying layers due to the growth of cyberspace in recent years on the one hand and its constrained social conditions in Iran on the other. On the other hand, modern humans are undergoing significant lifestyle changes, and as a result of the increasing growth of social and cultural relations, social anomalies, and changes in social values that have spread throughout families, positive interactions in marital relationships have decreased.

In today's individualistic societies, each person has replaced his or her own behavioral standards with collective behavioral standards, and as a result, the concept of satisfaction has become a relative concept. Core values are pushed towards consumption as societies modernize, and this creates the conditions for the breakdown of family bonds and roles, as well as a pull towards individuality and personal fulfillment and hedonism. Meanwhile, by changing their lifestyles, women try to draw attention and demonstrate their uniqueness to others by using their bodies as a means of authenticating their identity or acquiring a new one.

As a result, women attempt to rationalize the problems and normalize extramarital relationships by altering their beliefs and interpretations of the married world and seizing possibilities they regard as their birthright. Indeed, persons who engage in extramarital affairs employ a variety of justification methods to explain their action and the continuation of the relationship, including a variety of attitude justifiers such as entitlement, redefinition, and nonmaleficence. The purpose of this study was to provide a theoretical explanation for the sociological causes of the family institution's alteration in

the face of extramarital affairs, which were not clearly addressed in the findings of previous studies. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that extramarital affairs among women are a very complex and multi-causal phenomenon that cannot be explained solely by individual and micro factors, and that a variety of social factors contribute to the development of this phenomenon. Today, women have earned a new social position through a shift in their attitude toward the past and the acquisition of a social status that contradicts the past traditional commitments and framework. As a result of changing beliefs, attitudes, and finally expectations, moral standards will progressively erode, and society would suffer from anomie, bewilderment, and family breakdown.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

**Ethical considerations:** In this research, ethical issues such as explaining the purpose of the research to the participants, giving enough time to each interviewee to understand and answer the research questions, anonymity, confidentiality of information, privacy, informed consent, honesty and integrity were given full attention. Also, the ethical principles of the data collection stage, the principles of fidelity and reasoned judgment, the ethical principles of the research were considered and in the stage of analysis and interpretation, the rights of all stakeholders of this research were observed.

**Financial support:** The present study was not funded by any third-party organization.

**Authors contribution:** Authors' contribution: The corresponding author was zahra Aghajani beigi and was responsible for researching and writing the article. the second author was Hossein Abolhassan tanhai was responsible for the scientific editing of the article.

**Conflict of interest:** Authors declare no direct or indirect conflict of interest.

**Acknowledgments:** Researchers appreciate all the Women who helped us in this research by their participation in the study.



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