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Infidelity in young university students: interpersonal relationships and sexual behavior based on the analysis of proximal variables

ABSTRACT: Infidelity is a multi-causal phenomenon, with personal, family, and social consequences that affect physical and emotional health. The aim of this study is to identify groups of young university students with a relationship in the last year, based on the variable infidelity and to describe their features from proximal variables. A total of 172 women and 44 men between the ages of 18 and 30 participated in the study. The variables infidelity, conflict management, communication, jealousy, and sexual behavior were measured. As a result, three groups with different particularities were identified: "emotional infidelity desire" who establish romantic bonds; "non-infidels" who do not commit adultery and "sexual infidels" who are those people who practice sexual infidelity; concluding that "non-infidels" are less jealous, communicate assertively and resolve couple conflicts more effectively in contrast to "sexual infidels".

KEYWORDS: Interpersonal relations; emotions; Sexual behaviour.

Infidelidad en jóvenes universitarios: relaciones interpersonales y comportamiento sexual a partir del análisis de variables proximales

RESUMEN: La infidelidad es un fenómeno multicausal, con consecuencias individuales, familiares y sociales, que afectan la salud física y la emocional. El objetivo de este trabajo es identificar a grupos de jóvenes universitarios con relación de pareja en el último año, a partir de la variable infidelidad y describir sus características desde variables proximales. En la investigación participaron 172 mujeres y 44 hombres de entre 18 y 30 años. Se midieron las variables infidelidad, manejo del conflicto, comunicación, celos y conducta sexual. Como resultado se identificaron tres grupos con particularidades diferentes: "deseo de infidelidad emocional" quienes establecen vínculos románticos; "no infieles" que no cometen adulterio e "infieles sexuales" que son aquellas personas que practican la infidelidad sexual; concluyendo que los "no infieles" son menos celosos, se comunican asertivamente y resuelven conflictos de pareja más efectivamente en contraste con los "infieles sexuales".

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relaciones interpersonales; afectividad; comportamiento sexual.

Introduction

A relationship, in any of its multiple manifestations, makes its constituents responsible for coexisting, mediating conflicts, and resolving different faults and transgressions that may occur in the establishment of this bond. Infidelity is a transgression in the relationship that's considered a grave fault (Shrout & Weigle, 2017).

Experts in the field in different parts of the world describe infidelity as a violation of the exclusivity agreement in sexual and emotional relationships, even if there is no legal agreement (Díaz *et al.*, 2002; Guilbault *et al.*, 2019; González, Martínez & Martínez, 2009; Haseli *et al.*, 2019; Mark, Janssen & Milhausen, 2011; Rivera *et al.*, 2020; Wenger & Frisco, 2020). There is a scientific consensus that identifies two types of infidelity, the first one is sexual infidelity, which implies having sexual relations with another person that isn't the partner, and there is emotional infidelity, which occurs when one partner falls in love with someone different from their partner (Adam, 2019; Canto *et al.*, 2017; García, Rivera & Díaz, 2011; Guitar *et al.*, 2016; Martins *et al.*, 2015; Moller & Vossler, 2015).

The research in this line points out the differences in the unfaithful behavior associated with multiple variables, one of them being gender, by consistently identifying that men are more likely to commit sexual infidelity, while women tend to participate more in emotional infidelity (Guilbault *et al.*, 2019; Isma & Turnip, 2019; Martins *et al.*, 2015; Selterman, García & Tsapelas, 2017; Starratt, Weekes & Shakelford, 2016), since women can be motivated mainly by feelings of abandonment, indifference from their partner, or lack of affection; in the case of men, monotony, and desire for sexual variety are the main precipitating factors for unfaithful behaviors (Arantes, Barros & Oliveira, 2020; Munsch & Yorks, 2017; Selterman, García & Tsapelas, 2017).

The difference between genders also determines the response to the experience of infidelity from a partner, for men tend to express more feelings of jealousy and angst as a consequence of sexual involvement from their partners, while women show elevated levels of jealousy and angst, only it is due to emotional infidelity from their partners (Canto *et al.*, 2017; Saleem, Nazeer & Durrani, 2020).

The research is sufficient in pointing out that the motivations for infidelity derive from multiple factors and may be related to personal causes, deficits in the couple's relationship, or socio-sexual and situational causes (McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2017; Negash & Morgan, 2016; Selterman, García & Tsapelas, 2017). Regarding personal factors, it has been identified that unfaithful behavior is facilitated by the presence of various personality traits such as extroversion, neuroticism, low levels of agreeableness, and conscientiousness (van Zyl, 2020). Furthermore, in regard to the deficiencies in the relationship perceived by the unfaithful partner, we describe the frequency and levels of conflict, and the low satisfaction in the relationship (Ferron, Lussier, & Brassard, 2017; Guilbault *et al.*, 2019; Isma & Turnip, 2019; Rivera *et al.*, 2020), as well as the low value assigned to the partner (Arantes, Barros & Oliveira, 2020; Starratt, Weekes & Shalkelford, 2016).

The studies in the line of research of infidelity have identified that unfaithful behavior is predictable. The most reliable factors for its prediction are interpersonal: desire, love, satisfaction and duration in the relationship (Vowels, Vowels & Mark, 2021), other variables that predict unfaithful behavior is the history of infidelity in past relationships, as well as having experienced infidelity from a partner (Arantes, Barros & Oliveira, 2020; Knopp *et al.*, 2017).

Infidelity has various consequences for the partner of the unfaithful person, including depression and excessive alcohol consumption (Wenger & Frisco, 2020), stress, anxiety, guilt, shame, angst, anger, obsessive rumination, and suppression of emotions (Roos *et al.*, 2019; Shrout & Weigel, 2017). The degree of how much the partner of the unfaithful partner is affected will also depend on their high or low self-esteem (Shrout & Weigel, 2019), chronic jealousy, which can contribute to lower or worsen the degree of stress, as well as negative feelings (Shrout & Weigel, 2019), and anxiety caused by the unfaithful behavior (Canto *et al.*, 2017).

In the last decade, the importance of analyzing unfaithful behavior from an ecological relationship system, derived from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) has been recognized. The conceptual model integrates different factors associated with infidelity in a system constituted by the microsystem, that is to say, individual

characteristics from the subject and their partner that influence the sexual behavior; the mesosystem references the interactions between partners, such as satisfaction, commitment, and conflict; the exosystem refers to the description of face-to-face or virtual social environment that provides opportunities for cheating, such as social networks or the workplace; the macrosystem refers to the social and cultural principles that determine the level of acceptance or rejection from society towards infidelity, such as religion and gender roles. Lastly, the chronosystem is determined by the events that occur during the duration of the different stages of life that influence unfaithful behaviors, identified as experiences in their life history (Haseli *et al.*, 2019; Negash & Morgan, 2016; Selterman, García & Tsapelas, 2017; Vowels, Vowels & Mark, 2021).

The study of infidelity from a broader perspective has identified that it has a social impact, whose consequences extend beyond the couple, as it affects the family structure by breaking the relationship and communication with children, extended family and family friends (Vowels, Vowels & Mark, 2021), being the nuclear family probably the most damaged system (Negash & Morgan, 2016), different repercussions have been documented in the children who, at the moment of learning about the infidelity, cause them resentment, disappointment, apathy, passivity, anger and distancing from the unfaithful parent, as well as in future moments in the life of the children, who, when establishing their own relationships, generate doubts, fears, suspicion and risks, when they perceive that cheating is probably a behavior that will also be present in their relationship. Moreover, it has been identified that the episodes of infidelity of one of their parents can also contribute so that, from the family crisis caused, the children of unfaithful couples learn to recognize feelings and emotions that allow them to contribute to the establishment of much better couple relationships than the one formed by their parents (de Castro *et al.*, 2016).

In addition to the impact on the family, infidelity also affects health, as it increases the risk of experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that affect the partner's physical and emotional health, associated with symptoms of depression, perceived stress, and anxiety (Roos *et al.*, 2019; Shrout & Weigel, 2019), and, at the same time, people who tend to involve themselves in sexual infidelity are more likely to have to

deal with sexual health risks (Negash & Morgan, 2016), such as sexually transmitted diseases (Vowels, Vowels & Mark, 2021). As a matter of fact, in Mexico, the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases has risen: syphilis increased by 84%, chlamydia 48%, chancroid (soft chancre) 22%, genital herpes 16%, and HIV 62%, an increase identified when comparing the years 2020 and 2021 (DGE, 2021).

It is undeniable that unfaithful behavior is one of the main reasons for the dissolution of the legal bond of the couple (Isma & Turnip, 2019; Lampard, 2014). In Mexico, the relationship between divorce and marriage has increased significantly from 2000 to 2019, from 7 to 32 divorces by 100 marriages, practically quintupled (INEGI, 2021).

Due to its high prevalence and consequences, infidelity is a relevant issue, since various biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors influence its occurrence or inhibition, with uninhibited and open sexual behavior being a facilitating factor (Romero, Cruz & Diaz, 2008). Different researches have described the relationship of infidelity with other variables of interest, for example, jealousy, a variable widely studied to know its impact on infidelity, identifying that after an infidelity more jealousy and anguish are experienced (Miller & Maner, 2009), but which can also have the function of strengthening the relationship with the partner in the face of a third party's threat (Saleem, Nazeer & Durrani, 2020), there are also gender differences in the way jealousy is experienced, as men manifest it mainly through anger or aggression, while women express it through sadness or depression (Calderón, Flores & Rivera, 2018).

Infidelity, jealousy, and lack of communication have been identified as the most important triggers of conflict in a relationship, as a result of the violation of the exclusivity agreement (Scott *et al.*, 2017), these affect the quality of communication by hindering the stability and cohesion of the relationship, which generates real or imaginary suspicions towards the partner, as well as loss of trust, conditions that lead to a poor and unassertive communication (Guillén *et al.*, 2021; Isaza, 2011), associated with an increase in negative behaviors emitted during conflicts (Leone *et al.*, 2020), this affects the quality of the relationship and generates the necessary conditions for the search for a new infidelity (Guillén *et al.*, 2021; Isaza, 2011; Rivera *et al.*, 2011).

Based on the above, it is identified that there are still no studies that offer evidence about the description of proximal variables such as conflict management, jealousy, communication styles, and sexual behavior in young Latin American university students, so the objective of this research is to identify groups of young university students formed from the infidelity variable, describing them from proximal variables (conflict management, jealousy, communication styles in the couple and sexual behavior).

Method

Participants

216 university students participated –selected through a non-probabilistic convenience sample at a public university–, from which 172 were women and 44 were men from ages ranging from 18 to 30 years old ($\bar{x}$ = 20.02; σ = 2.005), 190 identified as heterosexual, 2 as homosexuals, and 24 as bisexuals, the inclusion criteria determined for this study were met (and having a relationship during the study or having had one in the last year).

Instruments

The Multidimensional Infidelity Inventory (IMIN for its acronym in Spanish), Sub-scale of Unfaithful Behavior (Romero, Rivera & Díaz, 2017) measures the unfaithful behavior with a total Cronbach's Alpha of α = 0.98, made up of 26 items, with the five-level answer Likert scale, where 1 is Never and 5 Always.

It is composed of four factors: Sexual infidelity (7 items and α = 0.95), Desire for emotional infidelity (7 items and α = 0.93), Desire for sexual infidelity (7 items and α = 0.95), and Emotional infidelity (5 items y α = 0.86).

The Conflict Management Scale (Rivera *et al.*, 2017a) measures the way in which people face the conflicts that arise in their romantic relationships, it has a total Cronbach's Alpha of α = 0.821, composed of 26 items, on a five-level answer Likert scale, where 1 is Always and 5 is Never, it is highlighted that the lower the score, the higher the presence of the evaluated factor.

It is composed of five factors: Expressive/Negotiating (7 items and α =0.82), Affectionate (5 items and α = 0.88), Calm/Compromising (4 items and α =0.75), Avoidant (5 items and α =0.73), and Accommodating (5 items and α = 0.72).

The Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (EMUCE for its acronym in Spanish) (Rivera *et al.*, 2017b) measures the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional components of jealousy in the adult population, has a total Cronbach's Alpha of α = 0.94, is composed of 111 items, and it is divided into 2 dimensions: Styles and cognitions (α = 0.93), and Emotions and feelings (α = 0.95), in a five-level answer Likert scale, were 1 is Strongly disagree and 5 is Strongly agree. The dimension of Styles and cognitions is composed by the following factors: Obsession with the partner (17 items and α = 0.93), Suspicion and intrigue (13 items and α = 0.90), Self-confidence (6 items and α = 0.74), Distrust (5 items and α = 0.78), Possession (4 items and α = 0.66), Frustration (4 items and α = 0.59), Avoidance (3 items and α = 0.67), and Trust in the partner (3 items and α = 0.76).

The Emotions and feelings dimension is made up of the following factors: Emotional responses generated by jealousy (17 items and α = 0.95), Anger (13 items and α = 0.91), Negative attitude (8 items and α = 0.76), Pain (6 items and α = 0.75), Control (5 items and α = 0.74), Fear (4 items and α = 0.74) and Aggressiveness (3 items and α = 0.66).

The Communication in a Couple Relationship Inventory (INCOPAR for its acronym in Spanish). The Style of Personal Communication Scale (Villanueva, Rivera & García, 2017) measures the way in which the subjects are perceived when communicating with their partner, and it has a total Cronbach's Alpha of α = 0.81, it is composed of 26 items in a five-level answer Likert scale, where 1 is Never and 5 is Always. It is composed of five factors: Positive (7 items and α = 0.88), Kind (6 items and α = 0.83), Negative (6 items and α = 0.74), Social receptive (5 items and α = 0.76), and Reserved (3 items and α = 0.63).

The Sexual Conduct Inventory (García & Díaz, 2007) measures the presence of conducts related to sexuality, it has a total Cronbach's Alpha of α = 0.96, it is composed of 70 items, in a seven-level answer Likert scale, where 1 is Never and 7 is More than once a day. It is composed of five factors: Sexual contact (25 items and α = 0.94), Seduction (15

items and α = 0.87), Autoeroticism (12 items and α = 0.87), Physical contact (10 items and α = 0.85), and Sexual variants (8 items and α = 0.83).

Procedure

The application of the instruments was carried out electronically through a PDF document with instructions integrated and access links to answer the instruments, which were found in Google Forms. Informed consent was included in each of the instruments; the time to answer the questionnaires was approximately 60 minutes.

Analysis of the data

The responses were collected in a database with the statistical software SPSS version 20.0. In order to answer the general objective of the research, a *K-means* statistical analysis was performed, which made it possible to classify participants into groups according to the infidelity variable.

Once the groups were identified through the *k-means* statistic, an analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was performed to identify statistically significant differences between the groups, the differences were made on the basis of the variables: Conflict management, Jealousy; Communication styles in the relationship, and Sexual conduct.

Results

From the *k-means* statistical analysis, three groups were identified: group 1: "Emotional infidelity desire"; group 2: "Non-infidels", and group 3: "Sexual infidels".

Table 1. Group distribution.

Group		Men	Women	Total
1 **Emotional infidelity desire**	Number of participants	9	45	54
	% of the group	16.7%	83.3%	100%
	% of the total sample size	4.2%	20.8%	25%
2 **Non-infidels**	Number of participants	27	125	152
	% of the group	17.8%	82.2%	100%
	% of the total sample size	12.5%	57.9%	70.4%
3 **Sexual infidels**	Number of participants	8	2	10
	% of the group	80%	20%	100%
	% of the total sample size	3.7%	0.9%	4.6%

Source: Own elaboration (2022)

The following describes each group in table 1:

Group 1: Emotional infidelity desire. Comprised of 54 people, which represents 25% of the total sample size, made up by 45 women (83.3% of the group) and 9 men (16.7% of the group), is characterized for expressing only desires of emotional infidelity, that is to say, to establish a romantic bond with another person in addition to the main partner, which manifests in aspects such as interest, attraction or liking other people, even though they do not present conducts or desires for sexual infidelity.

Group 2: Non-infidels. Comprised of 152 people, is the majority group with 70.4% of the total sample size, is composed of 125 women (82.2% of the group) and 27 men (17.8% of the group), and is characterized by not presenting behaviors or desires of sexual or emotional infidelity.

Group 3: Sexual infidels. Comprised of 10 people, which represent 4.6% of the total sample size, two women (20% of the group) and eight men (80% of the group), is characterized for rarely presenting behaviors of emotional infidelity, and sometimes presenting behaviors of sexual infidelity, manifested after having had sexual contact with another person that was not their partner, and, in addition, sometimes show a desire to be sexually and emotionally involved with other people other than their partner.

Contrast of means

With the purpose of knowing the statistically significant differences between the three groups contrasts of means were developed based on the variables: conflict management, jealousy; communication styles in the relationship, and sexual conduct. The results are shown in tables 2-6, where the number of participants that comprise each group *(n)*, the mean for the communication style, conflict management in the relationship *(x̄)*, the standard deviation *(σ)*, the ANOVA value *(F)*, the value of significance *(p)*, and post hoc contrasts.

Conflict management

In table 2, the contrasts of the means (one-way ANOVA) are presented for the three groups in function of the variable of conflict management: Expressive/Negotiating; Affectionate; Calm/Compromising; Avoidant and Accommodating.

Table 2. Contrast of means for the factors in the Conflict Management Scale.

Factor	Group	n	x̄	σ	F (2 and 213)	p	Post hoc (Scheffé)
Expressive / Negotiating	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	15.30	4.993	3.192	.04	EID>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	13.26	5.281	3.192	.04	SIN=EID
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	14.60	4.789	3.192	.93	SIN=NI
Affectionate	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	14.15	5.33	.775	.46	EID=NI* EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	13.55	5.39	.775	.46	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	15.50	5.91	.775	.46	SIN=EID SIN=NI

Factor	Group	n	x̄	σ	F	p	Post hoc
Calm/ Compromising	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	9.46	3.02	3.512	.03	EID>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	8.23	3.00	3.512	.03	SIN=EID
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	8.00	2.82	3.512	.79	SIN=NI
Avoidant	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	15.39	4.01	13.069	.00	NI>EID*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	18.06	3.23	13.069	.00	SIN=EID
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	15.40	4.40	13.069	.08	SIN=NI
Acommodating	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	15.63	3.31	.233	.79	EID=NI* / EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	15.98	3.23	.233	.79	NI=EID / NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	16.00	3.83	.233	.79	SIN=EID / SIN=NI

Note: * Scheffé, ** Games-Howell. **Source:** Own elaboration (2022)

As it is shown in table 2, the members of the Desire for emotional infidelity group present statistically significant higher means in conflict resolution in the factors: Expressive/Negotiating (x̄ = 15.30) and Calm/Compromising (x̄ = 9.46) than the Non-infidels group (x̄ = 13.26; x̄ = 8.23), respectively.

The youth in the Non-infidels group present statistically significant higher means in conflict resolution by using more avoidance strategies (x̄ = 18.06) than the Emotional infidelity desire group (x̄ = 15.39). As can be seen in table 2, there are no statistically significant differences between the means of the Emotional infidelity desire, Non-infidels, and Sexual infidels groups in the Affectionate and Accommodating factors.

Jealousy
In tables 3 and 4 are presented the contrasts of means of the three identified groups, in function of the jealousy variable (style and cognitions dimension; emotions and feelings).

Table 3. Contrast of means for the factors in the Multidimensional Jealousy Inventory (EMUCE), Styles and cognitions dimension.

Factor	Group	n	x̄	σ	F (2 and 213)	p	Post hoc (Games-Howell)

Obsession with the partner	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	37.28	13.42	5.153	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	32.25	9.68	5.153	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	38.00	10.32	5.153	.24	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Suspicion and intrigue	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	28.09	10.86	10.020	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	22.34	7.71	10.020	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	28.20	8.71	10.020	.24	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Self-confidence	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	22.81	3.67	2.557	.08	EID=NI* EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	24.01	3.27	2.557	.08	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	23.90	2.64	2.557	.08	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Distrust	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	11.69	5.15	10.381	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	8.82	3.66	10.381	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	11.10	4.20	10.381	.26	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Possession	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	9.59	3.68	.922	.39	EID=NI* EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	9.22	3.00	.922	.39	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	10.50	2.95	.922	.39	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Frustation	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	12.76	3.57	13.448	.00	EID>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	10.03	3.42	13.448	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	12.40	3.56	13.448	.80	SIN=EID SIN=NI

Avoidance	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	6.93	2.94	8.222	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	5.52	2.04	8.222	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	6.80	1.87	8.222	.14	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Trust in a partner	Emotional infidelity desire (EID).	54	11.39	1.89	.781	.45	EID=NI* EID=SiN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	11.57	2.31	.781	.45	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	10.70	2.75	.781	.45	SIN=EID SIN=NI

Note: * Scheffé, ** Games-Howell. **Source:** Own elaboration (2022)

As shown in Table 3, members of the Emotional infidelity desire group present statistically significant higher means in jealousy reactions in the factors: Obsession with the partner ($\bar{x}$ = 37.28), Suspicion and intrigue ($\bar{x}$ = 28.09), Distrust ($\bar{x}$ = 11.69), Frustration ($\bar{x}$ = 12.76) and Avoidance ($\bar{x}$ = 6.93), than the Non-infidels group ($\bar{x}$ = 32.25; $\bar{x}$ = 22.34; $\bar{x}$ = 8.82; $\bar{x}$ = 10.03; $\bar{x}$ = 5.52), respectively. There were no statistically significant differences in the means of the Emotional infidelity desire, Non-infidels, and Sexual infidels groups in the following factors: Self-confidence, Possession, and Trust in the partner (see table 3).

Table 4. Contrast of means for the factors of the instrument Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (EMUCE) Emotions and feelings dimension.

Factor	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	σ	F (2 and 213)	p	Post hoc (Games-Howell)
Emotional responses generated by jealousy	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	42.15	15.93	7.803	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	34.49	12.01	7.803	.00	

	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	42.40	11.53	7.803	.13	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Anger	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	26.70	9.80	7.077	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	22.50	7.08	7.077	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	27.80	7.14	7.077	.10	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Negative attitude	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	19.43	6.72	11.222	.00	EID>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	15.06	5.74	11.222	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	18.30	5.12	11.222	.14	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Pain	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	21.52	5.26	1.690	.18	EID=NI* EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	20.41	5.47	1.690	.18	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	23.00	5.07	1.690	.18	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Control	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	17.67	4.25	4.110	.01	EID>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	15.87	4.22	4.110	.01	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	17.70	3.91	4.110	.90	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Fear	Emotional infidelity	54	11.31	4.53	6.975	.00	

	desire (EID)					
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	9.46	3.95	6.975	.00	NI<EID* NI<SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	13.20	4.44	6.975	.00	
Aggressiveness	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	5.00	2.41	7.418	.00	EID>NI**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	3.94	1.46	7.418	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	4.80	2.44	7.418	.53	SIN=EID SIN=NI

Note: * Scheffé, ** Games-Howell. **Source:** Own elaboration (2022)

As shown in Table 4, members of the Emotional infidelity desire group present statistically significant higher means in jealousy reactions in the factors: Emotional responses generated by jealousy ($\bar{x} = 42.15$), Anger ($\bar{x} = 26.70$), Negative attitude ($\bar{x} = 19.43$), Control ($\bar{x} = 17.67$) and Aggressiveness ($\bar{x} = 5.00$) than the Non-infidels group ($\bar{x} = 34.49$; $\bar{x} = 22.50$; $\bar{x} = 15.06$; $\bar{x} = 15.85$; $\bar{x} = 3.94$), respectively.

The participants in the Non-infidels group present a statistically significantly lower mean in the Fear factor ($\bar{x} = 9.46$) than in the Emotional infidelity desire ($\bar{x} = 11.31$) and Sexual infidels ($\bar{x} = 13.20$) groups.

There were no statistically significant differences in the means of the Emotional infidelity desire, Non-infidels, and Sexual infidels groups in the Pain factor (see table 4).

Communication in the relationship

In table 5, the contrast of means for the three identified groups in function of the communication in the relationship are presented.

Table 5. Contrast of means for the factors of the Communication in a Couple Relationship Inventory (INCOPAR).

Factor	Group	n	x̄	Σ	F (2 and 213)	p	Post hoc (Scheffé)
Positive	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	29.35	4.19	4.383	.01	NI>EID*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	31.11	3.50	4.383	.01	SIN=EID
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	30.80	4.59	4.383	.31	SIN=NI
Kind	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	26.26	3.21	7.359	.00	NI>EID**
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	27.76	2.23	7.359	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	26.50	3.47	7.359	.51	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Negative	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	11.11	3.25	8.848	.00	EID>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	9.26	2.61	8.848	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	10.30	2.90	8.848	.08	SIN= EID SIN=NI
Social receptive	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	20.91	2.82	1.153	.31	EID=NI* EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	21.59	2.82	1.153	31	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	21.40	3.30	1.153	31	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Reserved	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	7.20	2.21	1.710	.18	EID=NI* EID=SIN
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	6.94	2.22	1.710	.18	NI=EID NI=SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	5.80	1.98	1.710	.18	SIN=EID SIN=NI

Note: * Scheffé, ** Games-Howell. **Source:** Own elaboration (2022)

The members of the Non-infidels group present statistically significant higher means in communication styles with the partner in the factors: Positive ($\bar{x} = 31.11$) and Kind ($\bar{x} = 27.76$) than the Emotional infidelity desire group in positive communication ($\bar{x} = 29.35$) and kind ($\bar{x} = 26.26$).

The participants in the Emotional infidelity desire group present statistically significant higher mean for the Negative factor ($\bar{x}$ = 11.11) than the Non-infidels group ($\bar{x}$ = 9.26). There were no statistically significant differences in the means of the Emotional infidelity desire, Non-infidels and Sexual infidels groups in the following factors: Social receptive and Reserved (see table 5).

Sexual conduct

In table 6, the contrast of means is shown for the three groups, according to the sexual behavior variable (Sexual Contact, Seduction, Autoeroticism, Physical Contact, and Sexual variants).

Table 6. Contrast of means for the factors of the Sexual Conduct Inventory.

Factor	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	σ	F (2 and 213)	p	Post hoc (Scheffé)
Sexual contact	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	68.04	29.12	17.635	.00	
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	47.06	23.36	17.635	.00	NI<EID* NI<SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	73.90	22.92	17.635	.00	
Seduction	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	41.93	16.06	27.951	.00	
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	28.17	11.80	27.951	.00	NI<EID** NI<SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	45.30	8.55	27.951	.00	
Autoeroticism	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	23.46	8.64	15.806	.00	
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	18.40	7.11	15.806	.00	NI<EID* NI<SIN
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	28.50	4.88	15.806	.00	
Physical contact	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	37.33	13.49	8.536	.00	DIE>NI*
	Non-infidels (NI)	152	28.88	13.03	8.536	.00	
	Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	33.70	10.57	8.536	.75	SIN=EID SIN=NI
Sexual variants	Emotional infidelity desire (EID)	54	10.11	2.49	12.366	.00	

						NI<EID**
Non-infidels (NI)	152	9.04	1.79	12.366	.00	NI<SIN
Sexual infidels (SIN)	10	11.70	2.16	12.366	.00	

Note: * Scheffé, ** Games-Howell. **Source:** Own elaboration (2022)

As it is seen in table 6, the members of the Non-infidels group present a statistically significant lower mean of sexual conducts in the factors: Sexual contact ($\bar{x}$ = 47.06), Seduction ($\bar{x}$ = 28.17), Autoeroticism ($\bar{x}$ = 18.40) and Sexual variants ($\bar{x}$ = 9.04) than the means of the Desire for emotional infidelity group ($\bar{x}$ = 68.04; $\bar{x}$ = 41.93; $\bar{x}$ = 23.46; $\bar{x}$ = 10.11) and the mean of the Sexual infidels group ($\bar{x}$ = 73.90; $\bar{x}$ = 45.30; $\bar{x}$ = 28.50; $\bar{x}$ = 11.70), respectively.

Members of the Emotional infidelity desire group present statistically significant higher means on the Physical contact factor ($\bar{x}$ = 37.33) than the Non-infidels group ($\bar{x}$ = 28.88).

Discussion

The study made it possible to fulfill the general objective of the research by identifying the existence of three university groups formed on the basis of the infidelity variable: "Emotional infidelity desire", "Non-infidels", and "Sexual infidels", with significant differences between them, based on the study variables: Conflict, Jealousy, Communication, and Sexual conduct.

The first group identified is "Desire for emotional infidelity", characterized by a desire to establish romantic ties with other people, showing interest, attraction, and liking for other people, although they do not engage in sexual or emotional infidelity. The second group, "Non-infidels", is the majority group and does not present desire or unfaithful behaviors, whether it be sexual or emotional. The members of the third group "Sexual infidels" represent the people with conducts of sexual infidelity, such as having had sexual contact with other people different from their main partner, and also presenting desires of emotional and sexual involvement with other people. Similar results to those reported by

González, Martínez & Martínez (2009) and Britos *et al.* (2019), who identify different clusters developed from their unfaithful behavior, in groups of young university students.

The study allows us to conclude that each identified group shows specific characteristics according to the proximal variables studied. The youth in the "Desire for emotional infidelity" group sometimes show indifference upon a conflict with their partner, and prefer not talking and staying away to avoid conflict; in communicating with their partner, they rarely do so in a harmful, manipulative or dishonest way, similar results were reported by Rivera *et al.* (2011), who noted that conflict is linked to infidelity, as are López, Vargas & Cortés (2018) who posit that conflict resolution avoidance strategies are an important factor in realizing infidelity. Conflict is a component of the mesosystem, as it occurs in the interaction between two or more people (Haseli *et al.*, 2019), so the use of ineffective coping strategies can be a precursor to unfaithful behavior or desire (Isaza, 2011; Rivera *et al.*, 2011).

On the other hand, the members of the group called "Non-infidels", when faced with a couple's conflict, express themselves openly, seek solutions through dialogue and express their ideas in a calm manner, try to calm down and stop, findings that are consistent with other studies in which it is suggested that proper conflict resolution in the couple's relationship works as a protective factor that prevents sexual or emotional involvement of the partners with other partners (Armin, Fakhri & Hasanzadeh, 2021; Yoosefi, Karimipour, & Amani, 2016).

The results mentioned can be explained because it has been identified that unfaithful behavior tends to increase conflicts and decrease positive conducts and increase negative ones (Ferron *et al.*, 2017; Leone *et al.*, 2020), therefore, it is hypothesized that this group of young people, not having unfaithful behaviors, present more positive styles for conflict resolution, through dialogue and the calm expression of ideas.

Regarding jealousy, the non-infidels group is the least jealous, since they do not have frequent thoughts or insecurities about the possible infidelity of their partner, they do not feel a sense of failure in the face of their partner's transgressions nor do they avoid situations that provoke jealousy or worry about not being the center of attention of their

partners, results similar to what is reported in other research such as that of Miller & Maner (2009), who propose that the most jealous people tend to damage their relationship through insecurity, excessive doubts, and infidelity, for their part, López, Vargas & Cortés (2018) propose that jealousy is associated with unfaithful behavior, since unfaithful people use jealousy as a way to justify their unfaithful behavior, for the results of this study, by not presenting the behavior or desire for infidelity, it is identified that jealousy is not presented as a compensatory means of fault in the relationship.

In regards to communication with their partner, the "Non-infidels" group communicates in a gentle, kind, effective, and respectful manner with their partner, results explained based on what was pointed out by López *et al.* (2013) and López, Vargas & Cortés (2018), which indicate that open and effective conflict resolution styles show positive couple communication, as well as adequate conflict resolution in the relationship with their partner, thus identifying that effective communication in the couple reduces the likelihood of infidelity (Allen *et al.*, 2008).

It is also concluded that the members of the Non-infidels group have not performed behaviors aimed at attracting, courting or conquering other people, nor have they had sexual contact with other people, have not been sexually stimulated, nor have they included sexual variants to enrich their sexual life (such as making use of objects or circumstances), results that can be explained due to these behaviors being perceived by people as unfaithful behaviors (Arantes, Barros & Oliveira, 2020; Romero, Cruz & Díaz, 2008; Scott *et al.*, 2017), so that their absence coincides with the description of the members of this group.

In reference to the description of the third group: "Sexual infidels", it is concluded that they show differences in relations with the other two groups, specifically when it comes to sexual conduct, that is to say, they show a higher presence of these conducts, such as: physical touching, sexual foreplay, coital and oral sex, as well as grooming, courtship and conquest behaviors, which are aimed at attracting and pleasing others, and have also performed sexual stimulation and gratification behaviors, such as masturbation and viewing pornography, and have included sexual variants, like using objects, stimuli,

and circumstances that enrich their sexual life. These results concur with other research that support that unfaithful people tend to have a more active sex life, and as the frequency or sexual satisfaction with their partners decreases, they tend to seek new partners (Scott *et al.*, 2017), in addition to making more use of pornography (Ferron *et al.*, 2017).

Although men were a minority in this sample, it is important to note that, despite this, they were the majority in the group called "Sexual infidels", which comes to join the large number of studies that argue that men have more unfaithful behaviors than women, a situation that can be explained by sociocultural, biological or evolutionary aspects, since men show greater openness to have more partners, in addition to the fact that male infidelity is culturally less reprimanded than female infidelity (Guilbault *et al.*, 2019; Isma & Turnip, 2019; Martins *et al.*, 2015), by noting that sexual variants are a strong predictor of sexual infidelity in men (Romero, Cruz & Diaz, 2008), which coincides with this research, since this group is mainly composed of men.

It is important to highlight that unfaithful conduct is a multifactorial phenomenon, influenced by different factors, therefore, the analysis of various variables can shine a light on the mechanisms that intervene in or that predict it (Negash & Morgan, 2016).

In this sense, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is very useful to understand this phenomenon (Haseli *et al.*, 2019), as it shows how the interaction of various systems, such as the microsystem, integrated by individual characteristics, can show a tendency towards infidelity, although aspects such as the mesosystem, that is, the interaction between the individual microsystem and that of other people, in this case, the partner, can be an important element, both systems analyzed in this study, by providing differentiated information in the groups of Infidels and Non-infidels.

In this investigation, aspects such as adequate conflict resolution or good communication, elements included in the mesosystem, are characteristic of people who are not prone to unfaithful behavior, be it sexual or emotional, so they may be indicators that effective interaction with the partner is a factor that prevents unfaithful behavior.

The limitations of this study have to be taken into account, since there was no equity in the proportion between men and women, albeit that was not the objective of the

research; furthermore, due to the fact that the participants are all university students, these results cannot be generalized to the whole population.

Finally, it is important to note that unfaithful behavior can also be influenced by individual factors in people, such as perceiving themselves as more attractive, the ease of engaging in conquest and courtship actions, and a greater sexual desire (Arantes, Barros, & Oliveira, 2020), personality traits such as extroversion, neuroticism, or low levels of agreeableness (Van Zyl, 2020), more liberal sexual attitudes (Vowels, Vowels, & Mark, 2021), low levels of self-control (Rodrigues, Lopes, & Pereira, 2016), having an insecure attachment style towards the partner (Guilbault *et al.* , 2019; Negash & Morgan, 2016; Selterman, Garcia & Tsapelas, 2017), using infidelity as a means to increase self-esteem (Guilbault *et al.*, 2019), or by previous infidelities in previous partners (Martins *et al.*, 2015), variables that are suggested to be studied in future research.

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