

# Infidelity in Marital Relationships: A Comparative Study of Romania - Poland

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## **Abstract**

*This study explores the topic of infidelity in marital relationships within Romanian and Polish societies, focusing on both the social perceptions and the causes of this phenomenon, as well as on the ways in which people from these two cultures respond to it. The research was conducted using a qualitative methodology, based on semi-structured interviews with respondents from both countries. These interviews provide a detailed insight into individual and collective perceptions of infidelity, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the underlying motives and contributing factors. The findings indicate that in both societies, infidelity is regarded as a negative behavior that undermines stability and trust within relationships. However, there are notable differences in how infidelity is perceived and discussed across the two cultures. In Romania, it is seen as a serious act of betrayal, with causes mainly linked to a lack of attention and affection. In Poland, the discussions were more open, addressing causes such as sexual dissatisfaction and lack of communication.*

**Keywords:** *Infidelity; marital relationships; Romanian society; Polish society; lover.*

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## 1. Introduction

*There is no aspect of a couple's life that provokes more fear, gossip, or fascination than adultery [...] in all societies, on all continents, and throughout all eras, regardless of punishment or deterrents, men and women have succumbed to temptation (Perel, 2018, pp. 10-11).*

Adultery, being forbidden in most societies, evokes strong emotions - both positive and negative - among those involved and those who merely hear about such acts. From a sociological perspective, infidelity represents a complex phenomenon, described as "perhaps the most complex issue faced by couple therapists" (Blow & Hartnett, 2005, p. 183), one that impacts the structure and dynamics of interpersonal and family relationships. It is also seen as "the result of deep and complex dysfunctions that may arise within a relationship" (Trandafir, 2015). In relationships marked by adultery, partners often face significant emotional and relational difficulties. "Infidelity is a common phenomenon in marriage, yet it is poorly understood" (Atkins et al., 2001, p. 735).

Due to its complexity and frequency, it is often difficult to fully grasp what infidelity entails.

Infidelity is defined in a multitude of ways and can encompass a wide range of activities, including: having an affair, extramarital relationship, cheating, sexual intercourse, oral sex, kissing, cuddling, emotional connections beyond friendship, friendships, online relationships, use of pornography, and others (Blow & Hartnett, 2005, p. 186).

Infidelity means engaging in behaviors that hurt one's partner, such as having an affair or forming a romantic or sexual relationship with someone else while being married or in a committed relationship.

*Extramarital relationships sometimes involve sex, sometimes not, but they are always erotic. [...] Eroticism means that a kiss we only imagine giving can be just as powerful and arousing as hours of real sex. [...] it is more about desire: the need to feel desired, to feel special, to be seen and connected, to attract attention (Perel, 2018, p. 24).*

This eroticism - this spark of desire felt between two people who happen to be romantically involved with others - is not necessarily a concrete reason for infidelity, but it does signify a fall

into temptation and should be taken into account, as it reveals the potential for something more. Acts of infidelity “can range from emotional involvement with someone else (online or in person), to holding hands, hugging, kissing, and sex” (Fincham & May, 2017, p. 70). Infidelity can encompass various actions, and “almost any form of emotional or sexual intimacy with a person other than the primary partner [...] is considered infidelity” (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007, p. 94). Behaviors that cross the boundaries of an exclusive and emotionally committed relationship with another person can be considered acts of infidelity.

*As tempting as it may be to reduce adultery to sex and lies, I prefer to use infidelity as a gateway into the complex landscape of relationships and the boundaries we draw to protect and contain them. Infidelity brings us face to face with the volatile and contradictory forces of passion: temptation, desire, urgency, love and its impossibility, comfort, entrapment, guilt, pain, sin, surveillance, the madness of suspicion, the murderous urge for revenge, the tragic outcome (Perel, 2018, p. 16).*

Most romantic films and novels portray these “volatile and contradictory forces of passion”, which in turn make us curious and eager to taste the forbidden fruit ourselves.

*An affair always lives in the shadow of the primary relationship, with the hope that it will never be discovered. The secrecy is precisely what enhances the erotic charge (Perel, 2018, p. 22).*

Infidelity involves a multitude of intense feelings and thrilling experiences. It is insufficient to view such an act solely from a negative perspective; instead, it should be approached objectively, as part of a broader and more nuanced picture.

In a study conducted across 160 cultures worldwide, “infidelity was the most commonly cited reason for marital dissolution” (Shackelford & Buss, 1997, p. 1034). Many people are unable to overcome the betrayal by a loved one and choose separation, which is why “infidelity is associated [...] with relationship dissolution/divorce” (Fincham & May, 2017, p. 70). The betrayal of trust is fundamental and affects both the emotional and contractual components of a relationship.

*To betray someone's trust is an act of betrayal - not only of an individual, but often of a mix of hopes, dreams, and expectations (Cole & Relate, 2005, p. 81).*

Betrayal is far more complex than a mere violation of trust. It is an act that deeply impacts a person's psyche and emotions because it involves breaking an unspoken emotional contract. This can diminish the betrayed individual's ability to trust themselves and others in the future. At the same time, "adultery is an act of betrayal, but also an expression of suffering and lack. [...] Today, at the heart of betrayal lies the violation of trust: we expect our partner to act according to our set of assumptions and we base our behavior on that. We are not necessarily referring to a specific sexual or emotional act that constitutes betrayal; rather, betrayal is what falls outside the couple's implicit contract" (Perel, 2018, pp. 14-21). Infidelity should not be viewed in a one-dimensional way; it has multiple layers that must be considered when analyzing the phenomenon. On the other hand, "many couples stay together despite this experience. [...] The way they metabolize adultery will have a major impact on their relationship and their lives, whether together or apart" (Perel, 2018, p. 18). This complex and contradictory reality of romantic relationships invites us to reflect on society's tolerance toward infidelity.

Gender plays a significant role in this research, as it has been "repeatedly linked to infidelity, with men identified as more likely to engage in such behavior than women. [...] From an evolutionary perspective, infidelity increases men's genetic success [...] men are more capable of separating love from sexual activity and have a greater desire to engage in infidelity" (Fincham & May, 2017, pp. 70-71). Men are generally considered to be more prone to infidelity than women. One explanation, from an evolutionary standpoint, is that male infidelity serves to spread their genetic material to multiple partners. However, I personally disagree with this perspective, as men who are interested in passing on their genes can do so through sperm donation clinics, without violating the boundaries of a relationship. Furthermore, the idea that men are more capable of separating emotions from sexual activity seems to reflect a certain emotional insensitivity, which I also do not consider a valid reason to justify a higher tendency toward infidelity in men compared to women.

Infidelity can be classified "into three distinct behavioral categories: sexual, emotional, or a combination of the two" (Cravens & Whiting, 2014, p. 3). Accordingly, "sexual infidelity refers to engaging in sexual activity with someone other than the long-term

partner. Emotional infidelity occurs when a partner channels emotional resources - such as romantic love, time, and attention - toward someone else. Men who engage in affairs are more likely to do so without emotional involvement, whereas women's affairs are more often accompanied by emotional attachment" (Shackelford & Buss, 1997, pp. 1034-1035). Moreover, "men tend to separate sex and love; women seem to believe that love and sex go hand in hand, and that falling in love justifies sexual involvement" (Glass & Wright, 1992, p. 361). Previous studies on infidelity suggest that it is useful to distinguish between two primary types: sexual and emotional.

In recent years, a new expression has emerged: emotional adultery. This is the neutral term in today's infidelity vocabulary, generally used to indicate that the betrayal does not involve a physical sexual relationship, but rather an inappropriate emotional closeness that should be reserved for one's partner and that drains the primary relationship (Perel, 2018, pp. 26-27).

First, dividing infidelity into sexual and emotional categories is helpful for understanding the complexity of the phenomenon. Sexual infidelity involves physical acts, while emotional infidelity entails a betrayal of emotional intimacy-both capable of significantly damaging a relationship. Second, the claim that men are more likely to engage in emotionally detached affairs, while women tend to form emotionally involved ones, reflects gender stereotypes that can distort reality. Every individual is unique, regardless of gender, and responds differently depending on the context and personal values (Nistor, 2018).

Usually, "when it comes to sex, people lie-especially about the kind of sex they're not supposed to be having. Gender stereotypes persist even under the veil of anonymity. Men are raised to boast, to exaggerate their exploits, and to present their sexual activity as grandiose, while women downplay, deny, and overstate their modesty" (Perel, 2019, p. 19). Gender stereotypes shape both the perceptions and the narratives people construct about their sexual behavior. Socially ingrained practices and habits developed from an early age manifest later in life-men often feel the need to assert themselves, while women may feel the need to hide from potential judgment or criticism regarding their sexual lives.

*People who have been sexually unfaithful tend to approve of infidelity [...] 90% of American husbands and wives who engaged in*

*some form of infidelity (sexual, emotional, or both) believed that there are circumstances under which such behavior is justified (Tsapelas, Fisher & Aron, 2010, p. 7).*

Very often-if not always-people tend to find justifications for their actions, especially when those actions are deemed wrong by society (Vlad, 2017). These justifications serve to protect the individual from experiencing cognitive dissonance and from confronting the often devastating feeling of guilt.

Although most people in America disapprove of infidelity, 2-4% of spouses engage in sexual relationships outside of their marriage.

*Infidelity follows a seasonal pattern, peaking in the summer months-a time associated with travel, which likely facilitates sex with a partner in a different location [...] thereby reducing the chances of being detected due to geographical distance (Fincham & May, 2017, p. 70).*

Cheating on one's partner appears to be more common during travel, as individuals have more opportunities to become intimate with others while away from their usual environment. I believe this element of distance and novelty-combined with the fact that infidelity is forbidden and therefore more alluring-pushes some people to act on desires they might suppress during the rest of the year.

There are multiple causes of infidelity. These are varied, "but are usually related to [...] problems within the primary relationship. The degree of commitment to the primary relationship is a significant predictor of the risk of infidelity. Permissive sexual attitudes and attachment styles that involve fear of abandonment can predict the likelihood of engaging in infidelity within romantic relationships" (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007, p. 94). This perspective is valuable for understanding the complexity of human behavior. Unlike the exact sciences, the societal side of life requires much greater attention, as society, as a group, can be unpredictable, and every variable must be taken into account.

There are possible causes for the emergence of infidelity in a relationship, such as: "anger [...], exaggerated affection, sexual boredom, and relationship dissatisfaction. [...] Sexual boredom [...] was [...] a predictor of sexual infidelity, whereas relationship dissatisfaction was [...] a predictor of emotional infidelity" (Shackelford & Buss, 1997, p. 1034). Romantic affairs do not occur in isolation and "very clearly show, often in a painful way, that there is a problem in

the couple's relationship" (Cole & Relate, 2005, p. 83). Anger and relationship dissatisfaction can create an environment in which infidelity becomes an escape or an apparent solution to problems within the relationship. Sexual boredom and relational dissatisfaction are specifically mentioned as factors contributing to sexual and emotional infidelity, respectively. Sometimes, the type of infidelity experienced in a romantic relationship can be influenced by certain emotional states: "feelings of disgust/repulsion are more likely to be followed by sexual infidelity, whereas feelings of being unwanted/insecure are more likely to be followed by emotional infidelity" (Shackelford et al., 2000, p. 657). This emotional distinction can be helpful in understanding that the nature of dissatisfaction in a relationship may influence the form infidelity takes. Given the complexity of the phenomenon, there is no single pattern-it can vary significantly from one romantic relationship to another.

*Extramarital sex was negatively associated with [...] relationship satisfaction, including how generally satisfying the relationship was, whether personal needs were being met, the degree of love felt for the primary partner, the frequency and quality of sex with the primary partner, and the length of the marriage. [...] Boredom and lack of emotional support in a marriage can [...] place partners at risk of infidelity [...], as can poor communication (Tsapelas, Fisher & Aron, 2010, pp. 7-8).*

Relationship satisfaction, the fulfillment of personal needs by the partner, love for the primary partner, good communication within the relationship, and the quality of sexual intimacy are all crucial elements in a couple's life. The absence of these can lead to emotional detachment and, consequently, a greater vulnerability to infidelity. Another factor that may incline partners toward adultery is the "power imbalance in the relationship. [...] Men and women who perceived themselves as more socially attractive than their spouses [...] had more extramarital partners and engaged in sexual infidelity sooner after marriage" (Tsapelas, Fisher & Aron, 2010, p. 14).

Many people encounter infidelity as early as their university years. Adultery is found not only in marital relationships but also in civil partnerships (Nistor, 2023).

*Most students have been involved in some form of infidelity. [...] Flirting and passionate kissing, culminating in sexual intercourse (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007, p. 94).*

I believe that this early onset of infidelity may be a contributing factor to later marital infidelity. Although most students disapprove of infidelity, they consider that “it may be more excusable if it occurs due to problems in the primary relationship or an irresistible attraction to another person” (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007, p. 94). The students in the study tend to disagree with infidelity, yet at the same time, they find it easily excusable. Because these two statements contradict each other, it leads me to think that this supposed “hatred” toward infidelity is merely a social construct instilled from a young age. Most people disapprove of infidelity - until they are the ones being unfaithful. Then, suddenly, infidelity becomes forgivable and something that can be easily overlooked.

*When it comes to infidelity, people commit what psychologists call the fundamental attribution error. If you cheat, the reason is that you are selfish, weak, and untrustworthy. But if I cheat, the reason is the situation I was in. When it comes to ourselves, we focus on mitigating circumstances; for others, we blame their character (Perel, 2018, p. 29).*

It matters a lot from which position we view a certain situation. Even though the lover, the betrayed partner, and the one being unfaithful are brought together by the same situation, they each have different thoughts and feelings toward one another. It is often difficult to put oneself in another’s shoes without having lived the same context, which is why people tend to judge others more harshly and forget what empathy means in a situation involving infidelity.

According to Cole and Relate (2005, pp. 84-103), there are multiple reasons why people fall into the “temptation” of infidelity. Whether it is emotional detachment from the relationship, emotional support found in a lover, revenge, a cry for attention, avoidance through a psychological shield, or simply the desire to experiment, the central idea behind infidelity is the escape from problems within the relationship.

*Some extramarital affairs are acts of resistance. Others happen when there is no resistance left. Some cross the line for a brief adventure, others are looking to emigrate. Some of these relationships are small acts of rebellion, born out of boredom, out of a desire for novelty (Perel, 2018, p. 14).*

One common aspect in romantic relationships is the avoidance of potential conflict, and this lack of communication can lead to infidelity.

*The couple may be afraid to express their anxiety about a specific problem [...] or may decide that the situation will resolve itself, without intervention from either partner (Cole and Relate, 2005, p. 107).*

I believe that this avoidance of problems will never address the root causes and that these issues will continue to resurface in future relationships unless the reason behind the desire to engage in adultery is resolved.

*The vast majority of affairs are a thin veil for problems within the couple's relationship, which deserve more attention than the continuation of the affair itself (Cole and Relate, 2005, pp. 124-125).*

For many people, doing what is considered wrong can be exciting and provide a certain satisfaction, yet "living in duplicity can create a sense of isolation and, over time, may lead to destructive feelings of shame and self-hatred" (Perel, 2018, p. 23). It is not easy for people to live a double life, and "most consider the experience of an affair difficult to overcome - even in situations where it leads to involvement in a stable relationship" (Cole and Relate, 2005, p. 115). All these destructive emotions that may arise during an act of infidelity are hard to ignore or process, which is why people often prefer to walk away rather than face them.

The reason why people enter a relationship they do not truly want can lead to infidelity. Whether it is due to pressure from the partner, friends, or family, it is important to distinguish between a personal desire and a societal expectation. This cognitive dissonance created between the image of an ideal relationship and the current one - perceived as undesirable because it is not genuinely wanted - can result in infidelity. Through this behavior, people attempt to avoid the relationship without directly facing a possible conflict caused by separation or the feeling of loneliness that may follow a breakup.

*The internet is a powerful force for democratization, offering equal access to our forbidden desires. You no longer even have to leave your home to have an affair. You can have an affair while lying in bed, right next to your partner (Perel, 2018, p. 20).*

Sex has become “accessible, convenient, and anonymous” (Cooper, 2002, p. 140) because of the internet, and “Individuals perceive certain online interactions as acts of betrayal” (Whitty, 2003, p. 569), as they may be considered a form of infidelity.

*When it's no longer the exchange of kisses, but the exchange of penis pictures, when an hour in a motel room has been replaced by a late-night Snapchat, when the secret dinner has become a fake Facebook account, how can we still know what counts as adultery? As these clandestine activities continue to evolve, it becomes urgent to reconsider how we conceptualize infidelity in the digital age (Perel, 2018, pp. 20–21).*

The internet era brings many changes to our lives. Not long ago, a mobile phone was unimaginable, but now it has become the most treasured object in our daily existence - used for communication, payments, photography, and even finding one's soulmate. All the conveniences we have at just a click away can, in some cases, become destructive to a couple. The internet has a significant impact on the concept of infidelity; its accessibility and anonymity have blurred the traditional boundaries of what constitutes unfaithfulness, making the term more difficult to define and identify. The world is in constant transformation, and redrawing the boundaries of adultery has become necessary to reflect the modern reality we live in.

Another “advantage” of the internet and mobile phones is pornography. Although it is “increasingly acceptable in Western cultures [...], its use can trivialize monogamy, lead to infidelity [...], reduce sexual satisfaction, and even diminish sexual attraction toward one's partner” (Ferron, Lussier, Sabourin, & Brassard, 2016, p. 1). In the past, being in a romantic relationship and getting caught visiting an escort was clearly considered an act of infidelity. Today, however, watching adult films online makes it less clear whether infidelity has occurred, as there is no concrete act involved (such as kissing or sexual intercourse). Pornography leads individuals to perceive their relationship as dull because it lacks the excitement portrayed in pornographic films.

*The specific sexual activities and scenarios in pornography are likely to be [...] attractive based on the sexual strategies adopted by consumers. [...] Men show greater interest in group sex scenarios than women, and the intention to commit infidelity is [...] associated with increased interest in such group sex scenarios (Salmon, Fisher, & Burch, 2019, p. 45).*

Furthermore, the sexual and visual standards that a pornography consumer expects their partner to meet are unrealistic, which distorts the perception of real romantic relationships. Many individuals end up in a constant search for the porn actress or actor in another person.

Another factor that may lead to adultery is the idea that “partners tend to view each other as resources for individual fulfillment, and their union no longer prioritizes solidarity, but rather the personal need for self-fulfillment through the other” (Apostu, 2016, p. 167). This conjugal individualism, characteristic of postmodernity, keeps partners anchored in a state of dependence - or even codependence - that is not beneficial for long-term relationship stability. Time spent in solitude is important for one’s emotional and professional development, even when in a relationship.

## **2. Methodology**

The study aims to analyze social opinions on infidelity among young people from Polish and Romanian societies and to identify the causes that may push individuals toward infidelity, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of this widespread phenomenon. The research questions this study seeks to answer are: “What are the social opinions regarding infidelity?”, “What are the individual reactions to infidelity?” and “What are the causes of a partner’s infidelity?” The objectives of the study are to analyze social views on infidelity, the underlying causes, and the ways individuals respond to infidelity.

For the development of this research, I chose to use the qualitative paradigm, based on the exploratory sociological survey method, employing the technique specific to this paradigm - the semi-structured interview. The sample consists of individuals aged between 19 and 27 from the two countries - Romania and Poland.

## **3. Infidelity - Social Opinions and Forms of Reaction**

The Polish and Romanian societies, as perceived through the eyes of the respondents, seem to share a similar view on infidelity - namely, that it is an immoral and harmful act. At first glance, the respondents’ opinions on infidelity align with those of their respective societies. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that most of the responses reflect what is considered a socially desirable answer, especially due to the lack of personal experience with this subject among the Polish respondents. As a result, their views on infidelity are shaped more by societal norms than by personal experiences. One notable difference observed in the distribution of

responses between the two social groups is that Romanian participants showed a greater willingness to discuss and acknowledge their own acts of infidelity.

The girls from Poland do not describe infidelity solely as physical intimacy with another person (such as touching, kissing, or sex) - but rather emphasize relational intimacy: "sending messages in a specific way" and enjoying attention from other girls, or even emotional intimacy, such as a "specific mental infidelity", which sometimes just happens without any conscious control. Infidelity is also associated with secrecy: "when he has more secrets than usual", which maintains the erotic tension, as Perel also notes (2018, p. 22). These respondents tend to be more observant and consider a broader spectrum of actions - not just physical ones - suggesting a higher level of emotional intelligence compared to most boys, who tend to focus primarily on physical infidelity (sex, kissing). This may indicate that they define infidelity through visible, concrete actions, and only secondarily mention emotional infidelity when explaining the concept.

Most Romanian respondents shared similar views regarding the description of infidelity in romantic relationships. They believe it is "an action people commit when they no longer feel good in the relationship", and that it starts with small things that partners hide from one another - a violation of the unwritten contract of conjugality. Although "infidelity is a relative concept", they perceive it as a negative action, represented by both emotional and physical/sexual infidelity - "engaging in sexual or emotional activities with another person", as also mentioned by McAnulty and Brineman (2007, p. 94).

They claim that watching pornographic material does not constitute infidelity and is not something to be concerned about, contrary to what Blow and Hartnett (2005, p. 186) argue - as long as it does not distort the relationship through an unrealistic image of the intimate space between partners. It only becomes a problem when it turns into an addiction, in which case it should be treated like any other dependency, with professional help. Regarding interactions on video chat platforms, they believe this does represent infidelity, because once you start paying for that service, it becomes similar to prostitution.

A young Polish respondent gives socially desirable answers when it comes to infidelity, toward which he holds a deeply negative and destructive view. However, at the same time, he gives the impression that he might be willing to cheat. The respondent begins by describing infidelity as "something I wouldn't do and something I

wouldn't want my partner to do", a phrase that reveals a sense of guilt for which he seems to be seeking justification. The contradiction between his statement and his admitted temptation highlights the difference between the socially accepted norm and his actual personal desires.

The direct experience of infidelity can be sensed even in the way the response is formulated. Real trauma creates genuine hesitation, and the descriptions of the infidelity experienced are often quite intense. This is especially true in the case of young relationships, sometimes long-distance, where limited romantic experience can lead to unrealistic expectations. The need for affiliation may create greater expectations than the other person's willingness to engage in the relationship.

From another perspective, the image of infidelity is perceived differently by individuals. For instance, for a Romanian girl, simply hiding messages, calls, and so on is considered infidelity, whereas for a boy, looking at other women on the street is acceptable - as long as it's not excessive. However, if thoughts arise in the mind of the person looking, then that too is seen as infidelity. This mentality of being overly attentive to a partner's actions or overinterpreting them can lead to tensions in the relationship by suppressing freedom and restricting the partner's right to self-expression. Such individuals tend to argue more, have unstable relationships, and are also more likely to engage in infidelity, in contrast to those who allow more freedom of expression and don't overanalyze every gesture. The suppression of freedom often leads to infidelity, because the feeling of censorship and possession experienced from the partner stimulates the desire for liberation and escape, thus "Being a controversial topic, everyone tends to see it as something wrong or perhaps misunderstood." This reflects people's desire to taste the forbidden fruit, as being the "villain" in a story brings more intense experiences and is perceived as more exciting.

Three categories of respondents emerge - those who demand fidelity from their partner but do not assume the same commitment for themselves; those with high self-esteem, who do not believe they will be unfaithful or betrayed by their partner; and those who have already been victims of their partner's infidelity.

The analysis of social opinions regarding how infidelity is generally perceived highlights two main aspects. Firstly, there are no significant differences between personal opinions and those anticipated in social interaction settings. Additionally, there are no major differences in opinion between the Polish and Romanian

respondents. A small number of participants provided slightly different responses, stating that people around them engage in infidelity even though they do not agree with it.

The analysis of opinions regarding the potential benefits of infidelity largely highlights the gap between socially desirable statements and actual behavior. Some respondents admitted there may be certain benefits to infidelity, while others either saw nothing positive in it - "I associate it only with negative emotions" - or could not understand how infidelity could bring any benefits, since "it destroys the relationship." Although those who acknowledge possible benefits may seem to accept infidelity, they still view it as a negative act and consider it an external method to deal with extreme situations - "although it's a very high price to pay for that." Several respondents stated that cheating can teach a life lesson. This suggests a level of emotional maturity, allowing them to perceive multiple perspectives and outcomes when it comes to infidelity. Other respondents, from both Romania and Poland, do not hold such categorical views and are more tolerant and open to discussion and reconciliation. They believe that the best way to resolve a problem is through the involvement of both partners, sharing the common goal of repairing and strengthening the relationship. Additionally, setting boundaries from the beginning of the relationship is seen as essential, in order to avoid the violation of certain principles later on that could lead to emotional pain and destabilization of the relationship.

Some of the respondents expressed a certain level of tolerance when imagining themselves as the unfaithful partner: "when you're the one involved in an act of infidelity, you'll think it's a good thing, you won't blame yourself, and you'll say it's not that bad what I did - but the moment it happens to you, you'll say, wow, this is the most difficult thing that has ever happened to me." From this perspective, it becomes evident that these individuals are, to some extent, selfish and either lack emotional intelligence or simply choose not to face the real consequences of their actions. They also demonstrate resistance toward social norms and imperatives, showing an unwillingness to adopt the same mindset as the broader society.

Regarding the partner's permissiveness toward the respondents' potential infidelity, most of them denied any desire to engage in such behavior. Nearly all respondents said they would not consider being unfaithful even if their partner had no problem with it. Therefore, the majority do not accept open relationships. Most simply stated that they would not consider this option because they do not

identify with such behavior and believe it does not truly represent who they are. Others argued that they would not do it for moral reasons and because they could not live with the long-term guilt of committing something they still view as wrong, even if their partner accepted it. From this, we can understand that they do not agree with open relationship models, and their general opinion about infidelity remains negative, regardless of their partner's principles - they are not easily influenced. Some respondents said that such a situation should be openly discussed with their partner to understand the reasons behind their lack of concern toward infidelity: "Any desire to explore other connections should be openly discussed and approached in a way that respects both partners' feelings and boundaries." A girl from Poland stated that if she were certain her partner was fine with the act of infidelity and the opportunity arose, she would not refuse it. This type of opinion highlights the fact that social norms no longer necessarily lead to conformity. Individual desires remain active, and escape from monogamy can be either a consensual and assumed process or, on the contrary, a discreet one.

From the perspective of the severity of sexual versus emotional infidelity, most Polish respondents, both girls and boys, consider sexual infidelity to be the more serious form. This once again highlights that many Polish respondents have not personally experienced infidelity and tend to focus on visible forms of betrayal in order to define their own boundaries of what constitutes infidelity. Less commonly, some opinions describe emotional infidelity as more serious, since emotions are harder to control, compared to physical/sexual infidelity where one can choose to refrain from cheating - "Emotional involvement is probably not something she could control", "I would prefer my partner to tell me they cheated on me out of physical impulse rather than because I didn't meet their emotional or psychological needs." According to these statements, a partner might be perceived as emotionally weak and prone to falling in love with someone else unintentionally, while a woman could forgive a partner's physical/sexual infidelity, but not emotional betrayal. The core idea that emerges from these personalities is a lack of accountability in the face of infidelity - they would rather be cheated on sexually in order to avoid internalizing guilt, viewing sexual cheating as something external to themselves.

The vast majority of Romanian interviewees, especially the girls, consider emotional infidelity to be the most serious. They speak from personal experience with infidelity and emphasize that this

unfaithful behavior is felt and internalized, in contrast to the Polish respondents.

Regarding the idea of engaging in infidelity without emotional involvement, the interviewees from Poland generally believe that this is not possible and do not agree with such behavior: "That's Hollywood bullshit", "There is no way such an act is possible. I think it's impossible not to feel anything when doing such things with someone." They do acknowledge that an act of infidelity might occur without feelings of love or attachment toward the third person, but rather feelings of attraction: "There are always feelings involved if you do something. It depends on what kind of feelings. Usually, when a couple has sex, there is a strong bond and strong emotions. If you're just looking for a prostitute here in Słubice and you pay her, obviously you don't have feelings for her, you don't have those strong emotions, but there are still feelings."

At the same time, a large portion of Romanian respondents share similar views and believe that if you truly love your partner, you cannot cheat on them. A small group of female respondents stated that in some cases, people might resort to infidelity even if they love their partner, but only in extreme and isolated situations, such as when their partner is in a coma for an extended period of time. Regardless of the reason, justifying infidelity or creating seemingly moral scenarios to excuse it actually reveals a willingness to be unfaithful. Some Romanian female respondents believe that certain individuals, due to psychological or pathological issues, might cheat on their partners even if they love them - yet they personally do not believe this is truly possible. One Romanian male respondent agrees with the idea of infidelity without emotional involvement and argues that attraction to someone else is merely an instinct rooted in human nature, not a guilty feeling as it is commonly viewed. At the same time, he claims that it is possible to cheat on someone you love, because men are rational beings who do not function based on emotions - therefore, they can have one-night stands or other experiences without feeling anything for the other person, as also mentioned by Glass and Wright (1992, p. 361).

Regarding conjugal jealousy, both Romanian and Polish interviewees described it as a form of doubt or insecurity about whether their partner is being faithful, an internal fear that their partner might be secretly talking to other potential partners or is emotionally/physically involved with someone perceived as better than the current one. Jealousy is a burning feeling of mistrust that arises when you no longer feel your partner's attention - "It's like acid."

It feels like it burns you from the inside”, “a horrible feeling.” It is a feeling of anger followed by a sense of betrayal, which often manifests through an obsessive need to know where your partner is. Jealousy is a feeling you cannot control - at first, you might think it's your fault, that you're imagining things, but in reality, it's not like that - “it's that irrational thought, that there's something wrong with me, that I'm the problem.” Jealousy can be beneficial in the short term because it shows your partner that you care, but not in the long term - “in the long run, jealousy is something that destroys relationships. I think long-term jealousy is caused by our own insecurities.” Jealousy can manifest through excessive phone-checking. A very interesting perspective came from a Polish respondent who had been cheated on; he defined jealousy as the desire to be in the place of the third person while they are with your partner. So, it is above all a desire for exclusivity, and “There are many situations where jealousy hits you, and you can't do anything about it.”

Girls from Romania tend to adopt a more tragic attitude toward jealousy - “a heartbreaking feeling that doesn't let you sleep at night” - partly due to past experiences with extremely jealous and possessive partners who didn't allow them to do much in their absence.

From the responses of a small majority of Romanian participants, it can be observed that they express a burning, even toxic form of jealousy, which is sometimes disguised as a game meant to test their partner's reaction. They consider this type of jealousy not worrisome, but rather beneficial. However, this impulsive and even vengeful behavior, combined with a tendency toward obsessive and extreme jealousy, can at any moment escalate into domestic violence, as also suggested by Fincham and May (2017, p. 70).

Most of the Polish interviewees consider themselves to be jealous individuals, but not excessively so. Some of them stated that they make an effort to overcome feelings of jealousy: “deep in my heart, yes. But I do everything I can not to be”, “there are certain triggers that make me feel jealous, but I try to overcome them. And especially not to overreact.” One male respondent mentioned that he used to be jealous in the past, but no longer is, believing that jealousy stems from a lack of communication in a relationship. Two girls admitted they might have possessive tendencies. A particular case among the Polish respondents is that of a man whose jealousy leans toward possessiveness, although he does not openly admit it. He tries to conceal his behavior, aware that it is toxic, and gives socially desirable answers - yet certain details reveal his true mindset. He

quickly loses interest in his partner if his fragile masculinity is challenged. At the first signs of jealousy, he would prefer to break up rather than engage in open discussion - "I simply despise someone who makes me feel jealous." He seems to view women as the weaker sex in a relationship, as he speaks disrespectfully about all his ex-girlfriends. He sees himself as the alpha male who is always right, shows little tolerance, and leans toward conservatism, desiring a traditional relationship model.

Both girls and boys from Poland and Romania state that women are much more emotional than men and may react explosively - with anger, sadness, or by crying - when they feel jealous, wanting to talk to their partner, confront them, or speak with friends about their suspicions to let off steam. They also say that women might want to take revenge on their partner and make him feel exactly how they felt, becoming the puppet master in the shadows - "a plot, the perfect revenge. I feel like women tend to do that more. Maybe it's because of how society forces women to behave." This opinion from the Polish group reflects the traditional roles assigned to women by conservative society - to not react badly, to be docile, and to simply look pretty next to their man while accepting his extramarital affairs. Some Polish boys studying law believe that women try to seem calm in such situations, using manipulation to make the partner feel bad for their suspicions, but later react eccentrically, resorting to physical violence or even to a crime of passion - although it's a very small percentage of women who actually go that far - "most courts and lawyers would probably defend the woman, but we forget that there could be aggression from the woman against the man." A small group of Polish boys emphasize that personal insecurities lead to jealousy - that constant fear that there might be someone better who could take your place - and one way to reduce this is through healthy and open communication between partners.

On the other hand, when men are jealous, they are more likely to become violent, sometimes due to alcohol. They tend to be more impulsive than women, wanting to fight the guy they suspect might steal their girlfriend, as a way of proving their masculinity through possessiveness and anger - "Guys want to hit other guys and show that they were hurt and that they were the alpha males in the relationship", say both Polish and Romanian respondents. This kind of physical and verbal aggression from men is often supported and accepted by society, unlike similar behavior from women - "if a woman yells, people tend to say she's hysterical or overreacting, but if a man does it, it's like, yeah, something must have happened, he's

fighting for his woman.” Men tend to be more closed off emotionally, unwilling to talk about their feelings, repressing them instead, and responding in a direct and reactive way, confronting their partner or turning to aggression out of insecurity - “Men are more direct, aggressive.”

The opinions of Romanian and Polish respondents regarding the causes of male infidelity are diverse and often involve physical pleasures. According to both Polish and Romanian participants, men tend to cheat spontaneously, without much calculation - if an opportunity arises, they take advantage of it to satisfy their sexual needs, being physically attracted to someone else: “they cheat mostly out of lust, because they want to have sex at that moment.” Men also cheat out of boredom, a desire for novelty, or due to a lack of appreciation or attention from their partner. Additionally, they may cheat to feel socially validated, as Perel (2018, p. 19) states, to feel like alpha males, to prove they are capable of collecting as many “trophies” as possible - women being viewed as such. They prefer freedom - “they don’t like to feel restricted or obligated, they’re afraid of limitations like marriage.” Marriage is seen by many as a restrictive factor that places invisible chains around couples. It is precisely this symbolic bond that makes people want to break those chains or avoid marriage altogether. Married individuals, as they grow older, may seek something exciting in their routine lives, such as cheating - “for men, especially when they’re older, it’s just a thing. It’s just sex for them.”

Compared to men, women are more calculated and tend to cheat primarily on an emotional level, often falling in love with someone else when they no longer feel comfortable with their partner, when they are unhappy, when they no longer feel love for their partner, or when they no longer feel loved, appreciated, or cherished - especially when their partner stops showing affection through small gestures like giving flowers or chocolate, which usually happen at the beginning of a relationship. Expectations rise on the woman’s side, while actions decrease on the man’s side, leading to frustration for both partners. The woman no longer feels that her partner cares for her, and the man doesn’t understand why his girlfriend is upset. This snowball effect stems from poor communication in the relationship. As a result, the woman may seek in another man the kind of love story she once lived with her current partner.

Women and men, from the perspective of both Polish and Romanian respondents, cheat due to a loss of attraction, interest, and respect for their partner, when their love fades, or because of issues

within the relationship. They may also cheat simply to take advantage of an opportunity for an affair, especially under the influence of alcohol or in the case of a long-distance relationship. A situation often mentioned by respondents was the use of jealousy as a strategy - making their partner jealous to break the monotony of the relationship or as an act of revenge. Another cause identified was the unrealistic idealization of oneself - people often try to appear as someone they are not at the beginning of a relationship, in an effort to impress their partner: "people tend to create a perfect version of themselves." This creates a gap between expectations and actual reality, between initial behavior and how they behave as the relationship progresses, leading to frustration because "they created that version their partner now expects." Emotional and financial instability, according to the respondents, can be valid reasons why some people end up cheating on their partner. Additionally, some respondents believe that a lack of shared values between partners, or not truly meeting each other's ideals in a relationship, can lead to infidelity. A small number of interviewees stated that excessive jealousy from a partner can lead to cheating, as it restricts their freedom of expression and prevents them from forming a true emotional connection. When this happens, people tend to turn to others who are willing to listen and reflect their emotions, eventually resulting in emotional infidelity without even realizing it.

Some Romanian and Polish respondents argue that it's not gender that dictates certain actions or how people react, but rather individual personality and mental state. These personal issues are usually not related to the partner but instead stem from low self-esteem or the inability to communicate feelings in a healthy way, often rooted in childhood. As a result, they grow into dysfunctional adults who may cheat due to unresolved inner wounds. From these statements, we can see that all people are different and react differently depending on how they were socialized. At the same time, cheating can also be a consequence of societal pressure to stay in a relationship, especially in a restrictive monogamous society - "if someone divorces, they are seen as a failure" and "they stay together to look good from the outside or for the sake of the children", as one Polish respondent noted. In contrast to this view, two Polish students believe that today's Polish society is much more tolerant than it was in the past and no longer promotes strict monogamous principles - "people don't believe in a religion that implies monogamy as much as they used to." Additionally, the excessive use of social media and apps that promote infidelity as something positive reinforces the idea

of increasing societal tolerance - "it simply became a popular topic. So, if you keep pushing the boundary further and say this is acceptable and you're okay with it, you're somehow changing the entire morality of society. You begin to create an increasingly progressive society, but on the other hand, you lose and change its morality and perspective."

Individuals' reactions upon discovering that someone they know is involved in an act of infidelity are similar. Both Polish and Romanian respondents reported knowing at least one person who had been involved in a situation of infidelity - someone who had been cheated on, who had cheated, or both - despite the fact that infidelity "is kept secret." They expressed their disapproval toward the person who committed the act of cheating, whether that person was a close friend or not. Most respondents said they knew people who had been cheated on rather than people who had actually cheated. This suggests that cheating, in all its forms, is universally perceived by society as a negative and destructive act. Individuals who engage in such behavior rarely speak openly about it due to social pressure and the shame they feel when they fully realize the gravity of their actions. In contrast, victims of infidelity often seek support from those close to them in order to cope with the emotional pain. They are more likely to talk about and share their personal stories. As such, a larger portion of Romanian and Polish respondents know people who were victims of infidelity, while only a small number said they knew people who had been unfaithful, whether it was a one-night affair or a long-term emotional infidelity caused by a lack of attention and affection from their partner. All those who had friends who openly admitted to cheating said they felt a mix of surprise and disappointment. Therefore, it is a phenomenon marked by dissonance - between the cultural norms they were raised with and the emotional impulses they ultimately gave in to.

Although most Polish respondents have not experienced infidelity firsthand, they have encountered people around them who have been hurt by it, which has shaped a negative view on the subject - they "despise people who do that", who cheat. They believe that those who cheat should think about the consequences of their actions and the pain they cause their partners. However, "sometimes they try to play the victim", blaming their infidelity on alcohol or other external factors, avoiding personal responsibility for what they did.

Interviewees' reactions to a friend's potential desire to cheat were primarily oppositional. All Romanian and Polish respondents stated that their initial response would be a mix of curiosity and a

desire to help, prompting them to talk to their friend in order to understand the reasons behind the intention and then advise them not to go through with it. Some of them went further than simply advising against cheating - they also suggested that the friend should break up with their partner, arguing that once someone starts thinking about infidelity, it's a sign of serious relationship issues, as also noted by Trandafir (2015), and there are no longer strong reasons to continue. Others didn't directly recommend separation, but rather encouraged open communication with the partner about intentions, feelings, and relationship problems, suggesting an amicable solution first, and only considering separation if things couldn't be resolved. Polish respondents seemed to be more categorical if a friend expressed a desire to cheat. They said they would try to stop them immediately - either through persuasion or even through verbal or physical confrontation: "I'd be totally against it", "I'd tell them not to do it because it's not fair to the other partner to go through something like that", "I'd tell them they're an idiot, that it's not okay to do this", "it would be immoral", "Or I'd just punch them, because they need to know it's wrong." Ultimately, they would guide the friend considering infidelity toward ending the relationship instead.

One opinion from the Romanian group stood out through the advice the respondent would give her friend - advice that directly reflected her personal preferences regarding the friend's partner. If the person who was about to be cheated on was perceived as kind and decent, the respondent would advise her friend not to go through with the cheating. However, if the partner was considered toxic or had previously treated the friend poorly, she would actually encourage the act of infidelity. Notably, she was the only participant who detailed a scenario in which she would support cheating, whereas all other interviewees held completely opposite views. Similarly, Polish opinions reflected nuanced views comparable to those of the Romanian group: "Well, it depends on whether I like his girlfriend or not" (he laughed), which suggests an openness to infidelity and even a personal inclination toward it, expressed in a subtle, humorous tone that highlights a toxic mindset. This kind of behavior seems to fluctuate depending on the context and the person he's speaking to. It's likely that if he were talking to another guy who shared his perspective, he wouldn't bother to give a socially desirable answer. When comparing these two similar responses, it becomes evident that the Romanian respondent was more straightforward and took responsibility for her stance, whereas the Polish respondent

attempted to present an idealized version of himself, trying to appear as someone he may not truly be.

Regarding the level of acceptance of a partner's infidelity and the emotions involved upon discovering it, interviewees' opinions are divided. Initially, all Romanian and Polish respondents stated that if they found out their partner had been unfaithful in the relationship, they would be devastated and feel deeply betrayed, as also mentioned by Cole and Relate (2005, p.81). Some of them said they would react harshly - "I'd be shattered", "I'd be furious and react excessively" - showing a lack of emotional control in the moment, but later they would talk things through with their partner. Most respondents emphasized that infidelity severely impacted their self-confidence: "because when you're cheated on, you just start feeling like you're not enough - not just in terms of relationships, but as a person in general."

Some Polish respondents, particularly women, believe they might be able to move past infidelity under certain conditions - especially if they see a genuine willingness from their partner to change and not repeat the betrayal: "maybe, but it's very hard to trust your partner again, to believe they won't do the same thing in the future. Regaining trust definitely takes a lot of work." The male respondents, on the other hand, had a much stricter and more negative view of infidelity, seeing it as a relationship-ending event that they would be unable to overcome, as also supported by Shackelford and Buss (1997, p. 1034): "for me, it could be the end of the world", which reveals a sense of pure, idealized love. For others, their masculine pride would be so wounded by the act that they wouldn't be open to dialogue and would break up as quickly as possible: "trust is like a vessel - if it breaks, you can glue it back together and it may hold its shape, but it will never be the same." As mentioned earlier, most of them have not personally experienced infidelity and have never been confronted with an unfaithful partner - except for one boy. He attempted to find a solution with his partner and did everything possible to reconcile: "because the key to a real relationship is to stay with that person no matter what happens and make sure you work through all the problems together." One female respondent said she would be willing to forgive sexual infidelity (sexual intercourse), and another would be able to move past physical infidelity (a kiss). They wonder whether a single instance of cheating would be enough to end everything: "some people just make mistakes and don't think them through."

On the other hand, most Romanian respondents demonstrate a very low tolerance for a partner's infidelity and believe that a relationship cannot continue once infidelity has occurred. The majority think that infidelity should not be overlooked or forgiven and would prefer to end the relationship in order to cut the problem at its root and avoid greater suffering later on. However, some Romanian respondents stated that they could get over minor forms of cheating if their partners genuinely showed a desire to change and expressed sincere regret for their actions. They believe the relationship can be repaired and trust can be rebuilt over time, with forgiveness being the most important factor - "Any relationship can continue after any form of infidelity. What matters is whether you have the strength to forgive and move on."

Regarding the reasons why a partner might be willing to cheat, several situations stand out. A Polish respondent stated that there could be circumstances in which she would be unfaithful, even though she wants to believe she is "as pure as crystal, but we are human beings", implying that it is natural for people to make mistakes. Because of this, she is afraid to set concrete boundaries when it comes to infidelity and would be willing to accept a minimal form of cheating (such as a kiss) from her partner, just to avoid getting hurt.

Due to vulnerability, some individuals would be willing to resort to infidelity as a form of revenge, even though they previously stated there was no situation in which they could cheat - thus contradicting themselves on this matter: "so if there were an opportunity, then maybe you could give in." They would fall prey to the overwhelming emotions that arise in the immediate aftermath of discovering a partner's infidelity and could be susceptible to retaliating through cheating. Not having been faced with such a situation, and unsure of how they would actually react, they offered socially desirable responses; otherwise, they would experience cognitive dissonance and feel judged by others. A small portion of the Polish sample said they would try to make their exes jealous if they had been cheated on - this would be their way of getting revenge. Another segment of Polish respondents claimed that "getting revenge on someone is kind of pathetic", because by doing so, you become exactly like the other person - you're not any better than them.

In security-based situations, where the partner would never find out, the tendency toward infidelity is both challenged and accepted at the same time. The vast majority of Polish respondents, both girls and boys, stated that they would not be tempted to cheat on their partner even if they knew the partner would never find out, nor

just to experience what it feels like to cheat. They associate cheating only with negative experiences, and this kind of duplicity would be just another burden, as Perel (2018, p. 23) notes: "it would eat me alive, knowing I had done something like that." They would rather enter into a friends-with-benefits relationship if they wanted to experience something close to cheating. Once again, we see a contradiction in these statements. Although the idea of infidelity is initially rejected, the reasoning is not based on personal conviction but on fear of being found out. At the same time, for those curious about the experience of cheating, the alternative mentioned by respondents is a friends-with-benefits relationship - multiple erotic encounters without emotional involvement or commitment. Another approach found in their responses is the anticipation of infidelity as something natural, suggesting that it might happen later in life: "maybe when I'm 40 and my boyfriend is at work all day and I'm alone, maybe then - but for now, no."

Reactions regarding the suspicion of a partner's infidelity vary in Romania and Poland. All Polish respondents, both boys and girls, stated that if they suspected their partner's fidelity, they would initially want to talk to them to observe their reaction, and if they still felt something was being hidden, they would take further steps - asking friends if they know anything, checking their partner's phone, or even following them in person or through location tracking apps, because they would need concrete evidence "to have mental clarity", "the most important thing is the evidence, and we can talk about facts. We can prove the facts by showing the evidence." This strongly reinforces the idea that the interviewed Poles are indeed jealous, as they themselves admitted. Only one boy said he would ask a friend to spy on his girlfriend because he doesn't have the time or energy for such things. This shows a lack of accountability - he doesn't want to be directly involved in an action that seems negative or out of the ordinary and wants to preserve the image of the strong male in the relationship who doesn't stoop to such actions, even though the thought that his girlfriend might be cheating would eat at him.

Most Romanian respondents stated that if they had doubts, they would simply talk openly and as honestly as possible with their partner, expressing themselves freely without hiding anything, and would try to reach a well-reasoned conclusion, acknowledging several possibilities such as: misinterpreting certain things, unintentionally overstepping boundaries in interactions with others, or unfounded doubts. Others said they would continue behaving normally with their partner while paying close attention to subtle behavioral changes, and

only after some time would they draw conclusions and decide to initiate an open conversation if they noticed something unusual. The majority stated that they would not snoop or ask to check their partner's phone, as that would be an invasion of privacy and not a healthy approach in any situation-such actions could upset, irritate, or even humiliate the person they love, especially if the suspicions turn out to be baseless. However, a small number admitted they might resort to such actions in search of proof - "I like to confront people with evidence, initially I think I'd try to secretly check the phone", or they would directly ask for permission to go through the phone, including just to observe potentially incriminating reactions.

Less common opinions highlighted in the interview analysis revealed that jealousy should be tracked and analyzed through every gesture and action of the partner in order to determine whether the suspicion is valid or not - "I'm vengeful, I play this game where I analyze her to see if I'm right." From this sentence, we can understand that the individual is willing to resort to manipulation and revenge against his partner. "I still try not to behave in a toxic way, even if I might be jealous, because I'm quite mature." - this statement suggests that he is aware of his actions but is unwilling to accept the reality that he has an issue and that his behavior is extreme. Internally, this person is fighting a powerful battle between obsessive, possessive, and intense feelings of jealousy. He also claims that his partner tries to secure herself in the relationship by checking his phone and engaging in unjustified, immature acts of jealousy - but he says he doesn't mind it. He uses her actions to justify and support his own behavior, and vice versa, leading to a continued cycle of toxic behaviors between partners that could potentially escalate into violent conflict and aggression in the future.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In both societies, infidelity is viewed as a negative behavior - an act of betrayal that undermines the foundations of a romantic relationship. It is seen as a serious breach of mutual trust, often leading to the breakdown of the relationship. However, there are important nuances in how this form of betrayal is perceived and justified.

Cultural differences between Romania and Poland became evident in terms of the degree of acceptance and justification of infidelity. While Romanian respondents displayed a more rigid and less tolerant attitude toward infidelity, those from Poland showed greater openness in discussing the reasons that might lead to such

behavior. In this context, aspects related to loyalty and traditional values emerged as influential factors shaping the perception of infidelity in both cultures.

Between the two communities, the Polish one is characterized by a stronger connection to tradition, which maintains classically functional relationships that fuel feelings of possessiveness and jealousy. Their responses tend to align with general societal opinions, an aspect that ensures the individual's security as well as their belonging to reference groups. As observed in the analysis, there is a clear gap between answers that conceptualize or describe infidelity and those that justify it. They do not agree with infidelity when it involves their partner, yet they find explanatory frameworks to justify their own temptation. Thus, young people claim to be against infidelity, but they do not exclude it.

Another significant difference between the two societies lies in how the role of gender in infidelity is perceived. In Romania, the interviewed women tend to believe that men are more likely to be unfaithful, while the interviewed men have a more balanced view, stating that infidelity is not necessarily related to gender, but rather to the context of the relationship and the individual's character. In Poland, perceptions are similar, although some respondents brought up the historical influence of female oppression, which could, to some extent, explain the tendency of women to seek freedom and validation outside of the marital relationship.

Respondents from both countries emphasized the importance of loyalty and fidelity within romantic relationships, viewing infidelity as a negative act and expressing a desire not to promote this type of behavior. They stated that the main factors that can lead to infidelity are poor communication or even the lack of it, emotional or sexual dissatisfaction, and the need for personal validation. In Romania, the lack of attention and affection from one's partner was often mentioned as a major factor that can trigger infidelity.

In Poland, in addition to these factors, social pressures - such as unrealistic expectations regarding marriage or gender roles - were also discussed. These pressures create a burden on individuals, which can lead them to seek satisfaction outside the marital relationship. Some Polish respondents even suggested that infidelity may serve as a form of protest against an unhappy or unequal relationship.

It was also noted that sexual dissatisfaction was mentioned more frequently by Polish respondents than by Romanian ones,

suggesting a cultural difference in openness toward discussing intimate issues.

Reactions to infidelity varied significantly depending on the respondents' personal experiences and cultural values. In Romania, the predominant reaction to infidelity is one of rejection and condemnation, with a significant percentage of respondents stating that infidelity would lead to the immediate breakdown of the relationship. Some respondents indicated that they would attempt to rebuild the relationship, but this would require considerable effort and a major change in attitude from both partners. Additionally, they agreed that watching pornography is acceptable, but not engaging in video-chat services, as the latter involves a different level of real-time interaction with actual people - thus indicating a deeper level of involvement that partners do not accept.

In Poland, reactions are more diverse. While many respondents mentioned that they would end the relationship in the event of infidelity, a considerable number suggested that they might consider forgiveness - especially if the infidelity were perceived as a one-time mistake and the partner expressed sincere remorse. This openness to forgiveness may reflect a more nuanced and less rigid approach to interpersonal relationships.

Based on these observations and through the conducted interviews, we can conclude that infidelity, although condemned in both societies, is influenced by a range of socio-cultural factors and individual experiences. Poor communication, lack of emotional and sexual satisfaction, as well as social pressures, are just a few of the causes that can lead to infidelity in romantic relationships. In both countries, infidelity is considered a serious threat to marital relationships, but there are notable differences in how people perceive its causes and how they react to this phenomenon. While Romanians tend to view infidelity as an irreparable act of betrayal, Poles are somewhat more open to discussing the circumstances that might lead to infidelity and the possible paths to reconciliation. These differences in perception between the two societies show that culture and history play an important role in how this behavior is viewed and justified.

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