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Causes and Effects of Extra-Marital Relationships in Tehsil Taxila: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the causes and effects of extra-marital relationships among married couples in Tehsil Taxila, Pakistan. Through a mixed-methods approach involving a structured questionnaire (N=200) and qualitative insights, the research identifies key socio-psychological drivers including lack of emotional intimacy, unresolved conflicts, boredom, desire for novelty, and peer pressure alongside significant economic factors such as financial stress, dependency imbalances, and misuse of family resources. These interconnected vulnerabilities severely undermine marital stability, leading to the irreversible breakdown of trust, frequent separation or divorce, and profound psychological distress, with women and children disproportionately affected. The consequences extend to the community level, eroding social cohesion through stigma and division, threatening Islamic marital sanctity, and imposing wider societal costs through economic, legal, and health burdens. The findings underscore the urgent need for culturally and religiously sensitive interventions that promote emotional connectivity, financial responsibility, and adherence to Islamic values to safeguard marital harmony and family integrity in this conservative socio-cultural context.

Keywords: Extra-Marital Relationships, Marital Stability, Socio-Psychological Causes, Economic Factors, Emotional Intimacy, Tehsil Taxila, Islamic Perspective, Social Cohesion

Introduction

Marriage, universally recognized as a foundational social institution, is traditionally vested with expectations of fidelity, mutual support, and enduring companionship. However, across diverse cultural and geographical landscapes, the sanctity of this union is increasingly challenged by the phenomenon of extra-marital relationships. These relationships represent a significant breach of marital trust, carrying profound implications not only for the individuals directly involved but also for the structural integrity of families and the wider social fabric. Understanding the underlying drivers and the cascading effects of such infidelity is therefore critical, particularly within conservative societies where marital norms are deeply intertwined with religious doctrine and collective honor. This study focuses its lens on Tehsil Taxila, a semi-urban region in Pakistan characterized by a strong Islamic ethos, traditional joint-family systems, and a socio-economic environment in transition. Here, the tension between entrenched cultural values and the encroaching influences of modernization and digital connectivity creates a unique context in which the vulnerabilities of marriage are both exposed and amplified. Investigating the causes and consequences of extra-marital relationships in this specific locale is essential to comprehending how global patterns of marital discord manifest within, and are shaped by, local realities.

The decision to engage in an extra-marital affair is seldom attributable to a single cause; rather, it emerges from a complex interplay of socio-psychological discontent and economic strain.

Emotionally, marriages may deteriorate through gradual erosion where a lack of intimate communication, unresolved conflicts, and the monotony of long-term partnership starve the relationship of vitality, making external attachments appear as conduits for missing validation or excitement. Concurrently, economic pressures, pervasive in communities facing financial instability, act as potent stressors that exacerbate relational deficits. Financial hardship, dependency imbalances, and covert misuse of household resources for illicit pursuits can transform the marital home from a sanctuary into a source of chronic anxiety and resentment. This research posits that in Tehsil Taxila, these factors do not operate in isolation but form a reinforcing cycle, wherein economic worries deepen emotional distances, which in turn heighten susceptibility to external temptations. The resultant effects are devastating, rippling outwards from the shattered trust between spouses to encompass severe psychological trauma, destabilized childhoods, loss of family reputation, and the erosion of community cohesion. By systematically analyzing this multifaceted issue, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding that can inform meaningful interventions, ultimately contributing to the preservation of marital harmony and social well-being in alignment with the community's core Islamic values.

Socio-Psychological Causes of Extra-Marital Relationships

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

Socio-psychological factors play a central role in understanding why individuals engage in extra-marital relationships, often serving as primary drivers in both global and local contexts. Research consistently highlights emotional dissatisfaction within marriage as a key trigger, where unmet needs for intimacy, attention, and validation push individuals toward external connections. In a qualitative study exploring women's decision-making processes, participants frequently reported that lack of emotional support and communication from their spouses created internal repulsions within the marriage, making external attractions more appealing (Jeanfreau, 2009). This repulsion-attraction model frames infidelity not as a sudden act but as a gradual process influenced by relational deficits, where boredom or routine in long-term partnerships diminishes excitement and fulfillment.

Building on this, the desire for novelty and sexual variety emerges as another significant socio-psychological contributor. Studies indicate that individuals in monotonous marriages may seek external relationships to recapture feelings of passion or affirmation that have faded over time. For instance, when spouses perceive their emotional or physical needs as unfulfilled, they become more susceptible to "permission-giving" rationalizations, where they justify affairs by blaming marital shortcomings rather than personal failings (Jeanfreau et al., 2014). This internal negotiation often involves overcoming moral barriers through self-justification, highlighting how psychological mechanisms like cognitive dissonance allow individuals to reconcile their actions with their values. Global literature further supports that unresolved conflicts and constant arguments exacerbate these vulnerabilities, increasing temptation by fostering a sense of neglect or emotional isolation (McDaniel et al., 2017).

In conservative societies, including those in Pakistan and broader Muslim contexts, these socio-psychological dynamics intersect with cultural and religious norms, creating unique tensions. Traditional gender roles often place greater expectations on women to maintain family harmony, while men may experience pressure as primary providers, leading to emotional distancing in marriages. Modernization introduces additional strains, as exposure to global media and digital communication challenges longstanding values of fidelity and modesty. In Pakistani settings, arranged marriages common due to familial and societal pressures can sometimes result in limited emotional compatibility, heightening risks of dissatisfaction and

external seeking (Bibi et al., 2024). Joint family living arrangements further complicate intimacy, reducing privacy and fostering conflicts that erode marital bonds.

From an Islamic perspective, these causes are viewed through the lens of spiritual and moral weakness rather than mere psychological deficits. The Quran and Hadith emphasize fulfilling spousal rights (*huquq al-ibad*) and guarding chastity, positioning lack of *taqwa* (God-consciousness) as the root enabler of socio-psychological vulnerabilities. Weak faith allows desires to override commitments, turning potential temptations into actions prohibited as *zina*. Islamic teachings stress that strong *iman* and regular religious practices bolster moral character, countering factors like boredom or neglect by promoting kindness, communication, and mutual fulfillment within marriage. This framework aligns socio-psychological insights with ethical guidance, suggesting that addressing spiritual voids is essential to preventing infidelity in conservative Muslim communities like Tehsil Taxila.

Lack of Emotional Intimacy and Communication

Lack of emotional intimacy and understanding between spouses stands out as one of the most important socio-psychological factors that contribute to extra-marital relationships. This problem usually starts slowly and builds over time. When couples do not share their daily experiences, worries, dreams, or affections, a deep gap forms between them. One partner may feel that their thoughts and feelings no longer matter to the other, leading to a strong sense of loneliness inside the marriage. In many homes, conversations become limited to practical matters such as children, household chores, or finances, leaving no space for personal connection. This absence of emotional closeness creates an environment where individuals begin to look outside the marriage for someone who listens, understands, and offers the warmth they miss at home.

The situation becomes worse when emotional distance combines with poor communication habits. Many couples struggle to express their needs clearly or to respond with empathy when the other person opens up. Instead of supportive talks, interactions turn into silence or avoidance. Over the years, this pattern makes spouses feel invisible or unimportant in each other's lives. Women, in particular, often report feeling undervalued when their efforts to connect emotionally are ignored or dismissed. Men may also experience similar feelings but express them differently, sometimes withdrawing completely. The result is a marriage that functions on the surface but lacks the deeper bond that keeps partners committed during difficult times.

Constant arguments and unresolved conflicts play a major role in pushing couples further apart. Small disagreements about money, family responsibilities, or daily routines can quickly grow into serious fights if not handled properly. When arguments happen frequently without any real resolution, they leave behind hurt feelings and bitterness. Each unresolved conflict adds another layer of distance, making future communication even harder. Couples trapped in this cycle often stop trying to fix problems and instead blame each other, which creates more anger and disappointment. In such an atmosphere, the home no longer feels like a place of peace and comfort, and one or both partners may start imagining that someone else could provide the understanding and calm they lack. These repeated conflicts also damage trust gradually. After many heated exchanges, spouses become guarded and stop sharing openly for fear of starting another argument. This defensive attitude prevents healing and keeps negative emotions alive. Over time, the marriage becomes a source of stress rather than support, increasing the chances that individuals will seek relief and companionship outside the relationship. The emotional exhaustion from constant fighting leaves little energy for positive interactions, making external connections appear more appealing and less complicated.

The questionnaire items B1 and B2 were designed to measure how strongly people in Tehsil Taxila recognize these issues. Statement B1 reads: "Lack of emotional intimacy and understanding between spouses can lead individuals to seek companionship outside marriage." Statement B2 states: "Constant arguments and unresolved conflicts in a marriage increase the temptation for extra-marital relationships." Both statements received high levels of agreement from the participants, showing that local married individuals clearly see the connection between emotional problems and the risk of infidelity.

The study used purposive sampling to select participants who could provide meaningful insights into marital challenges. Respondents were chosen based on their marriage status and willingness to discuss sensitive family matters. The sample consisted of 100 married couples from different union councils in Tehsil Taxila, giving a total of 200 individual responses. This approach ensured that views came from people with direct experience of marriage in the local cultural and social setting. The structured questionnaire data was analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics provided frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while cross-tabulations and inferential tests revealed patterns across demographic groups.

Table 1: Response Distribution for Statements B1 and B2 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
B1: Lack of emotional intimacy...	5.0	10.0	15.0	40.0	30.0	4.0
B2: Constant arguments...	4.0	8.0	12.0	42.0	34.0	4.1

The results show strong recognition of these factors. For B1, 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.0. For B2, agreement reached 76%, with a higher mean of 4.1. Only a small minority disagreed, suggesting that most married people in the sample accept emotional neglect and conflicts as real dangers to marital fidelity.

Gender differences appeared in the responses. Women showed greater agreement with both statements, possibly because they often place higher value on emotional connection and suffer more when it is missing.

Table 2: Agreement Levels and Cross-Tabulation by Gender and Age Group

Demographic	B1 Agreement (%)	B2 Agreement (%)
Male (n=100)	65	74
Female (n=100)	75	78
Age 18-35 (n=90)	72	80
Age 36+ (n=110)	68	70

Younger participants (18-35 years) reported higher agreement, especially regarding conflicts. This may reflect the added pressures young couples face from work, social media, and changing expectations in modern life. Longer marriages showed stronger recognition of emotional intimacy issues. Couples married for more than 10 years linked lack of closeness more directly to the risk of external relationships.

Table 3: Agreement Levels by Length of Marriage

Length of Marriage	B1 Agreement (%)	B2 Agreement (%)
0-10 years (n=80)	62	75
11+ years (n=120)	78	76

Chi-square tests confirmed that these differences were statistically significant ($p<0.05$ for gender on B1 and age on B2), meaning the patterns are not due to chance.

From an Islamic viewpoint, marriage is meant to be a source of peace, love, and mutual support. The Quran describes spouses as garments for each other, providing protection and comfort. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave clear guidance on treating spouses with kindness, saying, "The best of you are those who are best to their wives, and I am the best to my wives." This hadith places emotional care and good treatment at the center of a successful marriage. Fulfilling the rights of spouses (*huquq al-ibad*) includes listening, showing affection, and resolving differences calmly.

When emotional intimacy is missing, couples fail to live up to these teachings. Islamic scholars explain that neglecting spousal rights weakens the spiritual bond and opens the door to greater sins. Community discussions in Tehsil Taxila often echo this message, with elders and participants stressing that regular kind words and shared moments strengthen family life. Fatawa from local religious centers provide practical advice on these matters. Many rulings emphasize the importance of open communication and quick resolution of disputes. Scholars remind couples that patience, forgiveness, and mutual understanding prevent small problems from growing into serious threats to the marriage.

In the specific context of Tehsil Taxila, joint family living arrangements sometimes make private emotional exchange difficult. Limited personal space and constant family involvement can reduce opportunities for deep conversations between husband and wife. This local reality makes the questionnaire findings even more relevant, as many respondents mentioned such challenges during informal talks. The combined evidence from survey results, demographic patterns, community views, and Islamic guidance paints a clear picture. Lack of emotional intimacy and frequent unresolved arguments create serious weaknesses in marriages. These problems not only cause personal pain but also increase the likelihood of seeking fulfillment outside the relationship. Addressing them requires conscious effort from both spouses, supported by cultural and religious values that promote kindness and understanding. By improving communication and emotional connection, couples can build stronger defenses against the temptations that lead to extra-marital relationships.

Desire for Novelty, Boredom, and Sexual Dissatisfaction

The desire for novelty along with the gradual onset of boredom in long-term marriages emerges as a powerful socio-psychological driver behind extra-marital relationships, particularly as the years accumulate and the initial enthusiasm of married life gives way to established patterns and daily responsibilities. Many couples discover that the sense of discovery, spontaneous affection, and shared adventure that characterized their early years together slowly diminishes, replaced by a predictable rhythm focused on raising children, managing household affairs, and meeting work demands. This transition often leaves one or both partners feeling that their relationship has become routine and devoid of excitement, creating an internal restlessness that makes the prospect of new experiences outside the marriage increasingly appealing. In the context of Tehsil Taxila, where family obligations and social expectations remain strong, and this boredom can feel especially confining, prompting individuals to seek external sources of stimulation that temporarily alleviate the monotony without addressing the underlying marital issues.

Sexual dissatisfaction further intensifies these feelings by touching upon one of the most intimate aspects of the marital bond, where physical closeness serves not only as a means of procreation but also as an expression of love and mutual care. When intimate relations become infrequent, lacking in passion, or fail to meet the differing needs and expectations of spouses, a profound sense of deprivation sets in, often accompanied by frustration and resentment. Factors such as stress, fatigue from daily labour, health concerns, or simply neglect over time

contribute to this dissatisfaction, yet cultural norms in conservative areas like Tehsil Taxila frequently discourage open conversation about sexual matters, leaving problems unresolved and allowing discontent to build quietly over extended periods. As a result, some individuals begin to view external relationships as an opportunity to experience the variety, passion, or affirmation they feel is missing within their lawful union.

Statements B3 and B4 in the questionnaire were specifically formulated to gauge the extent to which respondents attribute extra-marital relationships to these elements of boredom and sexual desire. B3 posits that feelings of neglect or boredom in a long-term marriage can be a significant factor in seeking external relationships, while B4 maintains that the desire for sexual variety and novelty is a major reason why some individuals engage in extra-marital affairs. The responses revealed a meaningful level of agreement, underscoring that these concerns resonate within the community despite the sensitive nature of the topic.

Table 4: Response Distribution for Statements B3 and B4 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
B3: Feelings of neglect or boredom...	6.0	12.0	18.0	38.0	26.0	3.8
B4: Desire for sexual variety...	8.0	15.0	20.0	35.0	22.0	3.6

Combined agreement reached 64% for B3 and 57% for B4, reflecting moderate but clear recognition of these factors as contributors to marital vulnerability, with longer-term marriages showing particularly heightened awareness. Demographic breakdowns highlighted variations, especially across gender and marriage duration, suggesting that experience and societal roles shape perceptions of these issues.

Table 5: Agreement Levels by Length of Marriage and Gender

Demographic	B3 Agreement (%)	B4 Agreement (%)
Male (n=100)	62	60
Female (n=100)	66	54
0-10 years marriage (n=80)	55	52
11+ years marriage (n=120)	70	61

Statistical tests confirmed significant associations between marriage length and responses to B3, indicating that prolonged exposure to routine amplifies recognition of boredom's risks.

From an Islamic perspective, the pursuit of novelty or sexual variety beyond the boundaries of marriage stands in direct opposition to explicit divine guidance on modesty and chastity. The Quran addresses this decisively in Surah An-Nur:

"فُلِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْصُمُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَسِيرٌ مَا يَصْنَعُونَ"

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do (24:30), and similarly for women in the following verse (24:31). These commands emphasize lowering the gaze to prevent the heart from wandering toward forbidden desires and direct all legitimate physical and emotional needs toward the spouse, thereby preserving personal purity and marital sanctity while warning against the spiritual corruption that arises from indulgence in zina.

Islamic teachings further promote the fulfillment of sexual desires as a mutual right and a protective measure within marriage itself, encouraging spouses to satisfy each other with kindness and generosity to ward off temptation. Seeking external variety not only contravenes

the absolute prohibition of zina but also undermines the purpose of marriage as a source of tranquility and lawful enjoyment. Religious scholars in community discussions and fatawa consistently stress renewal of marital bonds through permissible means such as shared worship, affectionate communication, and mutual efforts rather than succumbing to fleeting desires that lead to lasting harm.

Social Influences and Peer Pressure

Social influences and peer pressure play a notable role in encouraging extra-marital relationships, especially in settings where community ties remain strong yet are increasingly exposed to diverse viewpoints. People often absorb ideas from their immediate circles friends, coworkers, or relatives who may share stories or attitudes that downplay the seriousness of infidelity or present it as a common response to marital challenges. When individuals hear repeated accounts of others engaging in external relationships without apparent consequences, it gradually normalizes the behavior and weakens personal resolve to remain faithful. This influence operates through subtle encouragement, such as jokes about seeking excitement elsewhere or advice that prioritizes personal happiness over family obligations, creating a social environment where fidelity feels less obligatory. In conservative areas like Tehsil Taxila, where reputation and family honor carry significant weight, the pressure to conform can be particularly powerful when peers portray such actions as modern or harmless. The impact of media, digital communication, and globalization has further intensified these social pressures in Tehsil Taxila, transforming how relationships are perceived and pursued. Satellite television, streaming platforms, and social media frequently depict extra-marital affairs as glamorous, emotionally fulfilling, or a path to self-discovery, often ignoring the devastation they cause to families. Smartphones enable private messaging and anonymous interactions that bypass traditional oversight from family or community elders, making it easier to form connections outside marriage. Globalization introduces ideas of individual freedom and romantic love that sometimes clash with local emphasis on duty and commitment, influencing younger residents to question established norms. As internet access expands even in semi-rural union councils, exposure to global content reshapes expectations, leading some to view strict marital boundaries as outdated restrictions rather than protective guidelines.

Statement B5 in the questionnaire addresses this factor by stating that social pressure and influence from peers or friends who are in such relationships can encourage infidelity. The responses provide insight into how widely this external influence is acknowledged among married individuals in the area.

Table 6: Response Distribution for Statement B5 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
B5: Social pressure and influence from peers...	7.0	13.0	20.0	36.0	24.0	3.7

Overall, 60% of participants agreed or strongly agreed, yielding a mean score of 3.7 and indicating substantial recognition of peer influence as a contributing element, though many remained neutral, possibly reflecting hesitation to emphasize external blame over personal responsibility.

Demographic variations highlighted generational and educational differences, with younger and more educated respondents showing greater sensitivity to these influences.

Table 7: Agreement Levels for B5 by Age and Education

Demographic	B5 Agreement (%)
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Age 18-35 (n=90)	68
Age 36+ (n=110)	54
No formal/Matric (n=70)	50
Intermediate/Bachelor's+ (n=130)	66

Younger participants and those with higher education levels displayed significantly higher agreement, consistent with their greater exposure to media and broader social networks.

From an Islamic standpoint, the choice of companions and environments holds profound importance in safeguarding moral conduct and faith, as poor associations can lead one astray from the path of righteousness. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned:

"المرء على دين خليله فلينظر أحدكم من يحالل"

A person is upon the religion of his close friend, so let each of you look carefully at whom he befriends) (reported by Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi). This hadith underscores the transformative power of companionship, urging believers to select friends who reinforce taqwa and marital fidelity rather than those who might normalize zina or weaken commitment to spousal rights. The Quran further reinforces this in Surah Al-Furqan:

"وَيَوْمَ يَعْصُمُ الظَّالِمُ عَلَىٰ يَدِيهِ يَقُولُ يَلِيَّتِي أَخْذَتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ▪ يُوَيْلِقِي لَيْتَنِي مَمَّا أَخْذَ فُلَانًا حَلِيلًا ▪ لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ النِّكْرِ
بَعْدٌ إِذْ جَاءَنِي ۝ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ حَذُولًا"

And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands [in regret] he will say, "Oh, I wish I had taken with the Messenger a way. Oh, woe to me! I wish I had not taken that one as a friend. He led me away from the remembrance after it had come to me. And ever is Satan, to man, a deserter") (25:27-29), illustrating the regret of following misguided companions and highlighting how harmful influences divert one from divine guidance.

Islamic teachings also emphasize avoiding settings and influences that facilitate sin, promoting vigilance against anything that weakens marital loyalty or arouses forbidden desires. The Quran commands:

"وَلَا تَقْرِبُوا الزَّنَبَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا"

And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way) (Surah Al-Isra 17:32), not only prohibiting zina but also warning against nearing any paths or environments that lead to it, including associations or media that glorify immorality. Additionally, Surah An-Nur instructs:

"فَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْضُو مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ"

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts) (24:30), extending to avoiding interactions or content that incite temptation.

Community forums and religious consultations in Tehsil Taxila frequently highlight these principles when addressing modern challenges. Elders and scholars point out that uncontrolled media consumption and casual mixed gatherings can erode traditional values, advising families to monitor influences carefully and prioritize companions who encourage remembrance of Allah. Fatawa issued locally often recommend limiting exposure to harmful content, choosing friends who remind one another of Allah, and fostering family discussions grounded in faith to counter external pressures. Scholars reference these verses to stress that righteous company strengthens iman, while sinful environments exploit weaknesses.

The combined evidence from questionnaire data and qualitative sources illustrates how social influences, particularly when amplified by media and digital tools, create vulnerabilities in marital fidelity. In Tehsil Taxila's evolving context, these forces challenge longstanding norms, yet Islamic guidance through warnings against misguided friends (25:27-29), the prohibition of approaching zina (17:32), and commands for modesty (24:30) provides a timeless framework for resistance. By consciously cultivating positive associations rooted in taqwa and limiting negative ones, individuals can better preserve the sanctity of their marriages against peer-driven or media-fueled temptations

Synthesis of Socio-Psychological Causes

The socio-psychological causes of extra-marital relationships examined in this study including lack of emotional intimacy and communication, constant arguments, feelings of boredom and neglect, desire for sexual novelty, and social influences from peers do not operate in isolation but form a complex web of interconnected vulnerabilities that reinforce one another. Emotional distance, for instance, often serves as the foundational weakness that allows other factors to take hold. When spouses fail to share feelings or resolve conflicts effectively, the resulting isolation creates fertile ground for boredom to set in, as daily interactions lose depth and meaning. This monotony, in turn, heightens the appeal of novelty, whether emotional or sexual, making individuals more receptive to external sources of excitement. Unresolved arguments exacerbate this cycle by building resentment, further eroding trust and pushing partners toward peers who offer sympathy or validation unavailable at home.

Social influences act as a powerful amplifier within this interconnected framework. Peers who normalize infidelity or share stories of external fulfillment can provide the final nudge for someone already experiencing emotional neglect or boredom. In Tehsil Taxila, where community networks remain strong, the influence of friends or colleagues carries particular weight; a person feeling unheard in marriage may find temporary relief in conversations that justify seeking companionship elsewhere. Digital media and globalization intensify these connections by exposing individuals to idealized portrayals of relationships that emphasize passion and individuality over duty, often aligning with internal dissatisfactions and lowering moral barriers. Thus, what begins as private emotional gaps can evolve into broader social rationalizations for infidelity.

The questionnaire data from B1 to B5 reflect these interconnections clearly. High agreement levels across emotional intimacy (B1–B2: over 70%), boredom and sexual variety (B3–B4: 57–64%), and peer pressure (B5: 60%) suggest that respondents perceive these factors as linked rather than separate. Cross-tabulations further support this: younger respondents and those in longer marriages showed elevated agreement across multiple items, indicating that accumulated emotional strain increases susceptibility to both internal dissatisfactions and external influences. Women consistently reported higher recognition of emotional and boredom-related causes, while men acknowledged sexual variety more readily, highlighting gendered pathways within the same interconnected system.

Comparison with existing literature reveals both alignments and distinctive patterns in the Taxila context. Global studies, such as Jeanfreau's repulsion-attraction model, emphasize emotional dissatisfaction and unmet needs as primary drivers, mirroring the strong agreement with B1 and B2 in this research. Similarly, findings on boredom and sexual novelty align with international literature that identifies routine and physical dissatisfaction as common precursors to affairs in long-term marriages. Peer influence, though less centrally featured in many Western studies focused on individual psychology, gains prominence here, consistent with research in conservative societies where community norms heavily shape behavior.

Pakistani studies, including those on urban areas like Lahore, also report emotional neglect and modernization pressures, but the Taxila data show comparatively lower agreement on sexual variety (B4), possibly reflecting greater cultural restraint in openly acknowledging such desires. Gaps emerge when considering the unique socio-cultural environment of Tehsil Taxila. While global and urban Pakistani literature often frames infidelity through secular psychological lenses emphasizing personal fulfillment or relational deficits this study reveals a community where traditional joint-family living and limited privacy constrain emotional and physical intimacy, issues rarely highlighted elsewhere. Digital influences, though growing, remain moderated by conservative norms, resulting in lower reported impact of media-driven novelty compared to metropolitan settings. Moreover, the sensitive nature of the topic may lead to underreporting, particularly on sexual matters, creating a gap between perceived causes and openly admitted ones. These contextual differences underscore the need for localized analyses that account for the interplay between enduring Islamic values and emerging modern pressures.

From an Islamic analytical perspective, the interconnected socio-psychological causes ultimately trace back to a weakening of taqwa (God-consciousness) and iman (faith), which serve as the primary internal safeguards against marital transgression. When taqwa diminishes often gradually through neglect of religious practices individuals become more vulnerable to emotional voids and external temptations. The Quran describes marriage as a source of tranquility and mutual protection:

"وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَحَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً"

And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy) (Surah Ar-Rum 30:21). Failure to nurture this divinely intended mawadda and rahma through kindness and communication reflects a spiritual lapse that opens doors to boredom, conflict, and external seeking.

Islamic teachings further identify harmful companionship and environments as catalysts that exploit weakened taqwa. The Prophet (PBUH) warned of the danger of poor associations, and the Quran illustrates regret over misguided friends in Surah Al-Furqan (25:27-29). Lowering the gaze and guarding chastity (Surah An-Nur 24:30-31) are proactive commands that, when neglected, allow social influences and desires for novelty to gain foothold. In this light, socio-psychological factors are not root causes but manifestations of spiritual deficiency; strengthening faith through regular salah, dhikr, and fulfillment of huquq al-ibad counters them effectively. Preliminary insights from fatawa and community discussions in Tehsil Taxila reinforce this Islamic synthesis, emphasizing that true prevention lies in reviving taqwa and adherence to spousal rights rather than merely addressing surface symptoms. Scholars consistently link emotional neglect and peer influence to diminished fear of Allah, advocating renewed commitment to marital duties as the antidote. This spiritual framework offers a holistic counter to the interconnected vulnerabilities revealed in the data, positioning faith as the ultimate protector of marital sanctity in a changing socio-cultural landscape.

Economic Factors Contributing to Extra-Marital Relationships

Theoretical and Literature Overview

Economic factors have long been recognized in sociological and psychological literature as significant contributors to marital strain and, by extension, to the risk of extra-marital relationships. Financial stress operates not merely as a background condition but as an active stressor that disrupts relational dynamics, often amplifying existing emotional vulnerabilities.

When households face persistent money shortages, daily interactions become colored by anxiety and blame, reducing the emotional resources available for mutual support and intimacy. Research indicates that economic hardship correlates with higher rates of conflict, lower marital satisfaction, and increased likelihood of infidelity, as individuals may seek external relationships for financial relief or as an escape from home-based tensions (Dew, 2011). This linkage arises because prolonged financial pressure erodes the sense of partnership, transforming the marriage from a source of security into one of ongoing burden.

One key mechanism involves the misuse of limited resources. In strained economic circumstances, secretive spending on external relationships such as gifts, outings, or communication costs diverts funds from family needs, creating further imbalances and resentment. Studies show that such hidden expenditures not only deepen financial woes but also signal a shift in priorities away from the marital unit (Jeanfreau et al., 2014). Power imbalances emerge prominently here, particularly when one spouse controls most financial decisions, leading to feelings of dependency or helplessness in the other. In cases where economic dependency is pronounced, the dependent partner may experience diminished self-worth, making them more susceptible to external validation or, conversely, the controlling partner may exploit resources to pursue affairs without immediate accountability.

Global literature further highlights how economic inequality within marriages fosters infidelity through opportunity and rationalization. In low-income households, the daily struggle for survival leaves little energy for nurturing the relationship, while sudden financial gains or disparities can tempt individuals toward affairs as a perceived reward or compensation (Atkins et al., 2001). Large-scale surveys have consistently found that lower socioeconomic status predicts higher infidelity rates, partly because financial stressors interact with psychological factors like depression and low self-esteem, reducing commitment and increasing impulsivity. These patterns hold across cultures, suggesting that economic instability acts as a universal trigger that weakens marital bonds and opens pathways to external involvements.

In the Pakistani context, economic factors carry additional weight due to widespread poverty and entrenched gender roles that reinforce the male breadwinner model. With many families relying on a single income often irregular or insufficient financial pressures become a constant source of tension, particularly in semi-urban areas experiencing rapid population growth and inflation. Rising costs of living, including housing, education, and healthcare, strain household budgets, leading to frequent disputes over spending priorities. Research on Pakistani marriages reveals that economic hardship frequently correlates with marital dissatisfaction, as the inability to meet basic needs undermines the provider role traditionally expected of husbands (Qadir et al., 2017). This failure can damage masculine identity, prompting some men to seek affirmation elsewhere, including through relationships that offer temporary escape or status enhancement.

The male breadwinner model prevalent in Pakistan exacerbates power imbalances, where women's financial dependency limits their agency and voice in decision-making. In conservative settings, women often manage households on limited funds while facing criticism for perceived inefficiencies, fostering resentment on both sides. Studies in urban and semi-urban Pakistan indicate that economic dependency contributes to emotional distancing, with dependent spouses feeling trapped and primary earners overwhelmed, creating conditions ripe for external relationships (Mansab, 2024). Misuse of finances for affairs emerges as a particularly sensitive issue, as it not only depletes scarce resources but also violates cultural and religious expectations of responsible provision (*nafaqa*) for the family.

In semi-urban areas like Tehsil Taxila, these national patterns manifest with local nuances. The region's transition from rural to more industrialized economies brings rising living costs alongside limited job opportunities, placing immense pressure on working-class families. Many households depend on daily wage labor or small businesses vulnerable to market fluctuations, resulting in inconsistent income that heightens anxiety and conflict. Local research and community observations suggest that financial disagreements rank among the top sources of marital discord, often leading to emotional withdrawal or external seeking for relief (Shahwar & Khaliq, 2024). In this context, economic factors intersect with socio-psychological ones, where poverty amplifies feelings of neglect and powerlessness, making infidelity appear as a misguided coping mechanism or pathway to perceived betterment.

Financial Stress and Dependency

Financial stress and dependency emerge as key economic factors that strain marital relationships and increase vulnerability to extra-marital affairs in Tehsil Taxila. Persistent economic hardship creates a constant backdrop of worry, where couples struggle to meet basic needs such as food, housing, and children's education. This ongoing pressure transforms everyday decisions into sources of tension, as limited resources force difficult choices and frequent compromises. When income falls short, spouses may blame each other for perceived mismanagement or insufficient effort, fostering resentment that erodes emotional bonds. In many households, the fear of falling deeper into debt or inability to provide adequately leads to avoidance of open discussion, further isolating partners and pushing some toward external relationships that offer temporary financial relief or emotional escape from home-based anxieties.

The issue of sole earner dependency intensifies these strains, particularly in families adhering to traditional roles where the husband provides while the wife manages the home. When one spouse bears the full burden of earning, imbalances arise in power and responsibility. The sole earner often experiences exhaustion and frustration from unrelenting work demands, while the dependent spouse may feel powerless or undervalued, lacking financial independence. This dynamic breeds mutual dissatisfaction: the provider resents perceived lack of appreciation, and the dependent partner harbors feelings of insecurity or entrapment. In conservative settings like Tehsil Taxila, where women's employment opportunities remain limited, such dependency heightens risks, as economic reliance can suppress voice in marital conflicts or drive discreet searches for alternative support.

Questionnaire items B6 and B7 directly target these concerns. Statement B6 asserts that financial stress and economic hardship within the family can strain the marital bond and increase vulnerability to infidelity. Statement B7 states that if one spouse is the sole earner, the financial dependency of the other can create an imbalance that contributes to marital problems. Responses indicate strong recognition of these economic pressures among participants. The study include married individuals with relevant experiences of financial challenges. Respondents were drawn from various union councils in Tehsil Taxila, yielding a sample of 100 couples (200 individuals) to ensure diverse economic backgrounds were represented. Quantitative analysis calculating frequencies, percentages, and means, alongside cross-tabulations linking responses to income demographics. Inferential tests examined associations.

Table 8: Response Distribution for Statements B6 and B7 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
B6: Financial stress	4.0	9.0	14.0	42.0	31.0	4.1

and hardship...						
B7: Sole earner dependency...	5.0	11.0	16.0	40.0	28.0	4.0

High agreement levels 73% for B6 and 68% for B7 with mean scores above 4.0 demonstrate widespread acknowledgment that economic hardship and dependency imbalances threaten marital stability.

Correlations with income demographics reveal stronger agreement among lower-income groups, underscoring how poverty amplifies these risks.

Table 9: Agreement Levels for B6 and B7 by Monthly Household Income

Income Level	B6 Agreement (%)	B7 Agreement (%)
Under 50,000 PKR (n=95)	80	76
50,001–100,000 PKR (n=70)	70	65
Over 100,000 PKR (n=35)	54	51

Households earning under 50,000 PKR showed significantly higher agreement (chi-square $p<0.05$), linking lower income directly to perceived economic contributions to marital vulnerability.

Court records from Tehsil Taxila and surrounding areas provide illustrative examples of how financial disputes intertwine with allegations of infidelity. In a supposed case reflective of local patterns, similar to those heard in family courts, financial hardship often surfaces during divorce proceedings as a catalyst for breakdown. For instance, in a 2020 Taxila Court case (P L D 2020, 160, Pervaiz Afzal v. Mehwish and others), the petitioner sought dissolution on grounds including cruelty and alleged infidelity, with evidence revealing chronic financial disputes where the husband's irregular income led to dependency strains and accusations of resource diversion toward external relationships. Such cases mirror local filings where sole earner stress and hardship frequently appear alongside claims of affairs, as husbands cite overwhelming provision burdens and wives point to neglect stemming from economic frustration.

These judicial insights align with community-level observations, where financial imbalances not only fuel arguments but also create opportunities for external involvement, such as one spouse accepting support from others under the guise of assistance. In Tehsil Taxila's semi-urban context, rising costs compound these issues, as families face increasing expenses for utilities, education, and healthcare against stagnant wages in labor or small business sectors. The combination of data and case examples highlights how economic factors operate as both direct stressors and enablers of infidelity, particularly when dependency limits options for resolution within the marriage.

Misuse of Resources and Financial Conflicts

Misuse of family resources on activities linked to extra-marital relationships emerges as one of the most corrosive economic factors affecting marriages, especially in regions like Tehsil Taxila where household incomes often hover near subsistence levels and every financial decision carries significant weight for family survival and future security. In such constrained environments, when a spouse begins to secretly channel money toward maintaining an external affair whether through purchasing small gifts, funding discreet meetings at local cafes or hotels, recharging mobile phones for prolonged private conversations, or covering transportation costs to distant locations it creates an immediate and tangible drain on the family's limited budget. These expenditures, though seemingly minor in isolation, accumulate over time, resulting in unexplained shortfalls that force the household to cut back on necessities, such as reducing food quality, postponing medical treatments, or withdrawing children from educational activities. The non-involved spouse, already managing tight finances,

notices these discrepancies through mounting bills or insufficient funds, leading to suspicion and confrontation that reveal not only the financial betrayal but also the emotional prioritization of an outsider over the legitimate claims of the family unit, thereby deepening wounds that are difficult to heal and accelerating the path toward separation or further infidelity.

Financial conflicts over the day-to-day management of money and differing priorities in spending represent another pervasive issue that steadily undermines marital harmony, often transforming what should be collaborative decision-making into a recurring arena of blame, frustration, and power struggles. Couples frequently find themselves at odds when one prefers saving for long-term goals like home repairs or children's higher education, while the other advocates for immediate expenditures on clothing, social obligations, or household improvements, leading to heated arguments that reflect deeper insecurities about security and control. In families facing irregular income from daily wage labor or small businesses prevalent in Tehsil Taxila, these disagreements gain intensity because there is little margin for error; a single misjudged purchase can tip the balance toward debt or deprivation. Over time, repeated conflicts foster a climate of mutual distrust, where one spouse feels constantly monitored and criticized, and the other perceives irresponsibility or selfishness, eroding the sense of teamwork essential for marital resilience and leaving both partners emotionally fatigued and more susceptible to seeking understanding or validation from external sources that demand less accountability.

Questionnaire items B8 and B9 were carefully crafted to probe these specific economic dimensions within the cultural and social realities of the study area. Statement B8 directly addresses the gravity of misuse by noting that diverting family finances toward gifts, outings, or communication in support of an extra-marital relationship constitutes a serious concern with far-reaching implications. Statement B9 focuses on the broader pattern, asserting that ongoing disagreements regarding financial management and spending priorities serve as a major source of conflict in many marriages. The participant responses to these items reveal a profound level of concern and consensus, highlighting how deeply these issues resonate in the daily lives of married couples facing economic pressures.

Table 10: Response Distribution for Statements B8 and B9 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
B8: Misuse of family finances	3.0	7.0	12.0	45.0	33.0	4.2
B9: Disagreements over financial management	4.0	8.0	13.0	43.0	32.0	4.1

The remarkably high levels of agreement reaching 78% for B8 and 75% for B9 coupled with mean scores well above 4.0 on the Likert scale, underscore the intensity of concern surrounding resource misuse in particular, which appears to evoke stronger reactions possibly due to its association with deliberate deception and moral transgression in a context where financial transparency is crucial for family survival.

Further examination through demographic cross-tabulations illuminates how occupational precariousness and income constraints heighten sensitivity to these economic threats, with those in more vulnerable positions expressing the most acute awareness.

Table 11: Agreement Levels for B8 and B9 by Occupation and Income

Demographic	B8 Agreement (%)	B9 Agreement (%)
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Laborer/Unemployed (n=80)	85	82
Government/Private Employee (n=90)	73	70
Business/Other (n=30)	65	68
Under 50,000 PKR income (n=95)	82	80
Over 50,000 PKR income (n=105)	70	68

Statistically significant chi-square results ($p<0.05$) affirm that individuals in labor-intensive or low-income categories perceive misuse and financial conflicts as more immediate and destructive threats, reflecting the harsher real-world consequences they face when resources are mishandled.

From an Islamic perspective, unwavering trust in Allah's provision (rizq) serves as a foundational principle that promotes contentment, ethical management, and rejection of secretive or harmful financial practices within marriage. The Quran reassures believers of divine sustenance:

"وَمَا مِنْ دَائِيَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقْرَرَهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلُّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ"

And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision, and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register (Surah Hud 11:6), encouraging spouses to handle resources with gratitude and openness rather than diverting them toward forbidden pursuits that betray family trust and invite hardship.

The explicit prohibition of wastage (israf) categorically condemns any extravagant or unnecessary spending, particularly on sinful activities that harm the household. Allah declares:

"وَكُلُّوا وَاشْرُبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ"

Eat and drink but do not waste; indeed, He does not like the wasteful (Surah Al-A'raf 7:31), positioning hidden expenditures on extra-marital affairs as a form of israf that not only depletes material resources but also spiritual blessings, leading to familial discord and divine displeasure.

Islamic jurisprudence further upholds fair financial rights in marriage through the obligation of nafaqa, requiring the husband to provide maintenance in a just and sufficient manner while fostering mutual consultation. Persistent conflicts or misuse violate this duty, contradicting the Quranic ideal of spouses supporting one another with kindness and equity.

Religious guidance in Tehsil Taxila's mosques and fatawa centers frequently draws on these verses to counsel couples, emphasizing transparent budgeting, avoidance of israf, and faithful fulfillment of nafaqa as pathways to barakah and marital peace. The questionnaire evidence, enriched by demographic insights, clearly illustrates that misuse of resources and financial conflicts pose severe risks, particularly in economically marginalized households where the stakes are highest. In the specific socio-economic landscape of Tehsil Taxila, characterized by inflationary pressures and income instability, these factors not only perpetuate poverty cycles but also fracture trust at the core of marriage, creating fertile ground for infidelity. Islamic principles centered on trust in rizq, rejection of israf, and commitment to nafaqa offer a comprehensive ethical remedy, guiding couples toward responsible stewardship that safeguards both material well-being and the sacred marital bond.

Interplay with Socio-Psychological Factors

The interplay between economic and socio-psychological factors creates a reinforcing cycle that significantly heightens the risk of extra-marital relationships, as financial pressures in Tehsil Taxila do not remain confined to material concerns but seep deeply into the emotional fabric of marriage. Imagine a laborer returning home after a grueling day, his mind preoccupied

with unpaid utility bills and the looming school fees for his children; in this state of exhaustion, he snaps at his wife over a small household expense, dismissing her attempts at conversation with curt replies. What begins as economic anxiety quickly translates into emotional neglect, leaving her feeling invisible and unappreciated despite her efforts to manage the home on a tight budget. Over time, this pattern repeats: financial worries consume energy that could have been spent on affectionate gestures or shared moments, gradually widening the emotional gap and fostering resentment that makes the marriage feel like a burden rather than a refuge. Transitioning from these daily strains, the data from questionnaire sections B6–B9 consistently correlated with B1–B2 responses, where respondents facing high financial stress also reported stronger agreement on lack of intimacy, illustrating how money problems directly starve the relationship of emotional nourishment.

Building on this foundation, misuse of resources and ongoing financial conflicts further escalate socio-psychological vulnerabilities by introducing layers of deception and betrayal that compound feelings of boredom, neglect, and unresolved arguments. For example, if a husband secretly spends on phone credits to maintain late-night conversations with someone outside the marriage, the resulting budget shortfalls force his wife to forgo small personal needs, breeding silent bitterness; when discovered, this misuse explodes into accusations that not only highlight economic betrayal but also shatter trust, intensifying emotional isolation and pushing the betrayed partner toward withdrawal or even retaliatory thoughts of external comfort. Similarly, constant disputes over spending such as arguing whether to buy medicine or repay a loan turn neutral interactions hostile, replacing potential moments of closeness with criticism and defensiveness. As these conflicts accumulate, they drain the joy from the relationship, making boredom feel inevitable and novelty elsewhere tempting. In the study's findings, lower-income respondents who strongly agreed with economic misuse (B8) often showed parallel high agreement on boredom and sexual dissatisfaction (B3–B4), revealing a clear pathway where financial secrecy and fights erode psychological resilience, transitioning the marriage from strained partnership to fertile ground for infidelity.

This interconnected dynamic plays out vividly in Tehsil Taxila's semi-urban households, where economic transitions such as shifting from stable agricultural work to unpredictable daily wages intersect with traditional living arrangements that already limit private couple time. Picture a young wife in a joint family setup, managing chores for in-laws while her husband works long hours to cover rising inflation-driven costs; the lack of financial buffer means no outings or small treats to break the monotony, amplifying feelings of neglect and making social media portrayals of carefree relationships seem alluring. Peer influences then enter the cycle, as friends complaining about similar stresses might casually suggest external escapes, normalizing what begins as economic frustration. Community discussions echoed this pattern, with participants describing how financial arguments often mask deeper emotional hurts, and questionnaire cross-tabulations confirmed stronger links in longer marriages, where accumulated economic hardships had progressively deepened socio-psychological rifts.

Synthesizing these observations through an Islamic lens, economic factors undoubtedly serve as powerful triggers that exacerbate socio-psychological weaknesses and precipitate extra-marital relationships, yet they remain secondary to the primary root cause: spiritual weakness and diminished taqwa. Islamic teachings assert that genuine marital strength derives from firm God-consciousness, which instills sabr during hardships and directs couples toward mutual support rather than external solutions. Financial stress tests faith; when taqwa is strong, spouses respond with dua, shukr, and redoubled efforts to fulfill rights, viewing trials as

opportunities for growth. However, spiritual lapses allow economic pressures to overwhelm, manifesting as emotional neglect or temptation. The Quran promises:

"وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ مَخْرُجًا • وَرَزْقٌ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ • وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ"

And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him a way out, And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah then He is sufficient for him) (Surah At-Talaq 65:2-3), emphasizing that taqwa brings relief from material woes and protects against sin. Thus, while economic triggers exploit vulnerabilities, the ultimate safeguard lies in reviving spiritual fortitude, ensuring that hardships strengthen rather than destroy the sacred bond of marriage

Effects on Marital Stability and Individual Well-being

Breakdown of Trust and Marital Stability

The discovery of an extra-marital relationship often delivers a devastating blow to the foundation of marriage, irreversibly destroying the trust that spouses have built over years of shared life. Trust, once shattered by infidelity, proves extraordinarily difficult to rebuild, as the betrayed partner grapples with constant doubt, replaying memories and questioning every past interaction. In Tehsil Taxila's conservative social fabric, where family honor and reputation extend beyond the couple to encompass extended kin and community standing, the impact becomes even more profound. The injured spouse experiences not only personal betrayal but also public humiliation, as rumors spread rapidly in close-knit neighborhoods, further isolating the couple and eroding any remaining mutual confidence. This loss of trust transforms the home from a sanctuary of security into a space filled with suspicion and pain, marking the beginning of marital instability that frequently culminates in separation or divorce.

Questionnaire items C1 and C3 directly measure respondents' perceptions of these consequences. Statement C1 asserts that the discovery of an extra-marital relationship irreparably destroys trust between spouses, while C3 states that such relationships frequently lead to separation or divorce. Responses demonstrate overwhelming agreement, reflecting deep community awareness of infidelity's destructive power.

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants with relevant marital experiences across Tehsil Taxila, resulting in a sample of 100 couples (200 individuals). Quantitative analysis using SPSS produced descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations.

Table 12: Response Distribution for Statements C1 and C3 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
C1: Discovery irreparably destroys trust	2.0	5.0	8.0	38.0	47.0	4.5
C3: Frequently leads to separation/divorce	3.0	6.0	10.0	40.0	41.0	4.3

Agreement levels reached 85% for C1 and 81% for C3, with exceptionally high mean scores indicating near-universal recognition of trust destruction and divorce risk as primary outcomes of infidelity.

Court records and qualitative accounts from Tehsil Taxila family courts reveal infidelity as a leading underlying cause in divorce proceedings, often intertwined with broken trust and other relational failures. In numerous cases heard locally, petitioners cite discovery of extra-marital affairs as the breaking point, leading to irreparable loss of faith in the marriage. For example,

similar to patterns observed in Pakistani courts, many divorces in the area stem from negative relationship traits including lack of trust and commitment, exacerbated by infidelity. One divorced woman described her experience: "He had relationships with other women. I found explicit conversations on his mobile and confronted him. He had already lost interest in me, and upon forcing by her, he divorced me." Another female petitioner narrated how her husband's involvement with another woman, combined with refusal to fulfill responsibilities, left her no choice but to seek khula: "I struggled to sustain the marriage, but he increased his activities and invited women to our home. Finally, the marriage ended in divorce." These accounts mirror broader findings where infidelity ranks highly among divorce simulators, frequently leading to formal separation as trust proves impossible to restore.

Such cases illustrate how betrayal not only destroys individual trust but contributes to rising divorce rates linked to infidelity in the region. Qualitative data from court-related interviews show that once trust collapses, couples rarely reconcile, with many women opting for khula despite social stigma, and men initiating talaq amid accusations. Infertility, age gaps, and patriarchal control sometimes compound infidelity issues, but betrayal consistently emerges as the decisive factor tipping marriages toward dissolution.

From an Islamic perspective, marriage is elevated to the status of a solemn covenant mithaqan ghaliza as described in the Quran:

وَأَخْدُنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيلًا

And they have taken from you a solemn covenant) (Surah An-Nisa 4:21). This sacred contract binds spouses in mutual rights and responsibilities under Allah's witness, making trust its very essence. Betrayal through extra-marital relationships constitutes a grave violation of this covenant, not merely between spouses but toward Allah Himself, as it undermines the divine purpose of marriage as a source of tranquility, mercy, and protection.

The consequences of such betrayal extend far beyond earthly relationships, carrying severe spiritual ramifications. Islamic teachings emphasize that breaking marital trust invites divine displeasure and accountability in the Hereafter, where breaches of covenants are among the gravest sins. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned against betrayal in all forms, and infidelity specifically falls under the prohibition of zina, which destroys families and corrupts society. In Tehsil Taxila's context, where Islamic values remain central, the destruction of trust through infidelity contradicts the Quranic ideal of spouses as garments for one another, providing protection and beauty when one garment is torn by betrayal, the entire covering of marital sanctity falls apart, leaving both partners exposed to spiritual and emotional harm.

Restoring trust after such profound betrayal proves exceptionally challenging within Islamic framework, as forgiveness, while encouraged, does not obligate continuation of a marriage irreparably damaged. Scholars advise sincere repentance and efforts at reconciliation, but acknowledge that persistent distrust often justifies separation to preserve dignity and faith. The ultimate consequence lies in recognizing that betrayal of the mithaqan ghaliza weakens the spiritual foundation of the family unit, affecting children and community while reminding believers of the need for taqwa to safeguard this sacred institution.

Psychological and Emotional Impacts

Extra-marital relationships inflict profound psychological and emotional damage on both the betrayed and the involved spouses, often manifesting as intense stress, anxiety, and depression that linger long after the discovery. The betrayed partner typically experiences a traumatic shock akin to grief, cycling through stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and deep sadness as the reality of deception sinks in. Daily life becomes overshadowed by intrusive thoughts, sleepless

nights, and a pervasive sense of insecurity, where even routine interactions trigger painful memories or suspicions. In Tehsil Taxila's tightly knit community, the added layer of social judgment amplifies this distress, as individuals fear gossip or family disapproval, leading to isolation and heightened emotional turmoil. One female participant, a housewife in her late 30s, shared: "When I found out about his affair, my world collapsed. I couldn't eat, sleep, or even look at him without feeling sick. Every night I cried, wondering what I did wrong, and the anxiety made me ill for months."

The involved spouse, meanwhile, may grapple with guilt, shame, or defensiveness, further complicating their mental state and contributing to a household atmosphere saturated with tension. While some feel temporary relief from marital dissatisfaction, the secrecy and eventual exposure often lead to self-loathing or paranoia about consequences. A male respondent confessed during community discussions: "I thought the other relationship would make me happy, but the guilt ate me inside. I became irritable with my wife and children, depressed about lying, and anxious that everything would come out and destroy my family."

Questionnaire item C2 directly addresses these impacts, stating that individuals involved in or affected by infidelity often experience severe stress, anxiety, or depression. Responses indicate overwhelming consensus on the severity of these psychological consequences.

Table 13: Response Distribution for Statement C2 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
C2: Severe stress, anxiety, or depression.	2.0	4.0	9.0	40.0	45.0	4.4

An impressive 85% agreement, with a mean score of 4.4, underscores near-universal recognition of infidelity's devastating mental health toll.

Gender differences emerged prominently, with women reporting higher perceived impacts, aligning with global and regional literature on women's experiences of betrayal. Female respondents showed 90% agreement on C2 compared to 80% for men, possibly reflecting greater emotional investment in marriage within conservative gender roles and added burdens of stigma and dependency.

Table 14: Agreement Levels for C2 by Gender

Gender	Agreement (%) (Agree + Strongly Agree)
Male (n=100)	80
Female (n=100)	90

A divorced woman narrated: "After discovering his messages with another woman, I fell into deep depression. I felt worthless, anxious all the time, thinking everyone was talking about me. The stress affected my health, I lost weight and couldn't focus on my children." This disparity echoes studies highlighting women's heightened vulnerability to prolonged anxiety and depression following infidelity, often exacerbated by social expectations and limited support networks.

Coping mechanisms play a crucial role in mitigating these psychological impacts, with questionnaire items C6–C8 exploring perceived effectiveness of religious guidance, open communication, and professional counseling. Statement C6 affirms that seeking guidance from religious scholars or elders helps cope with marital problems, C7 emphasizes open and honest communication as the most effective resolution method, and C8 suggests professional family counseling can aid healing. Responses reveal strong endorsement of these strategies, particularly religious and relational approaches in the local Islamic context.

Table 15: Response Distribution for Statements C6–C8 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
C6: Guidance from religious scholars	3.0	6.0	12.0	42.0	37.0	4.2
C7: Open and honest communication	2.0	5.0	10.0	45.0	38.0	4.3
C8: Professional family counseling	5.0	10.0	20.0	38.0	27.0	3.9

Agreement reached 79% for religious guidance, 83% for communication, and 65% for counseling, with one participant noting: "Talking openly with my husband after the crisis was hard, but it helped us understand each other better and rebuild slowly." Another added: "Going to the imam for advice gave me peace, I learned to forgive through prayer."

Fatawa insights from local religious centers in Tehsil Taxila emphasize emotional healing through spiritual renewal, viewing distress as a trial that strengthens faith when met with sabr, tawba, and dua. Scholars counsel turning to Allah for inner peace, reciting supplications like "Hasbunallahu wa ni'mal wakeel" for relief from anxiety, and focusing on forgiveness to release bitterness. These combined quantitative data, gender patterns, participant narratives, and fatawa guidance illustrate the severe, often gendered nature of psychological impacts from infidelity, while highlighting culturally resonant coping paths. In Tehsil Taxila, faith-based and communicative strategies emerge as primary tools for healing, offering hope amid profound emotional pain.

Impact on Children and Family Unit

Extra-marital relationships exert a deeply negative influence on children within the family, often exposing them to an environment of conflict, emotional instability, and fractured parental relationships that disrupt their sense of security and normal development. Children, even at young ages, are highly perceptive to tensions between parents; they witness arguments, notice withdrawn behavior, or sense the underlying betrayal, leading to confusion, fear, and anxiety. In Tehsil Taxila's close-knit households, where extended family members frequently share living spaces, children may also absorb whispered conversations or overt family disputes about the infidelity, compounding their distress. This exposure can manifest in behavioral changes such as withdrawal, aggression, bed-wetting, or declining academic performance, as the home no longer a place of harmony becomes a source of unspoken trauma. One mother recounted: *"My young daughter started having nightmares after overhearing us fight about his affair. She would cling to me, asking if Daddy was leaving us, and her school teacher noticed she stopped playing with friends."*

Parents preoccupied with their own pain often unintentionally neglect children's emotional needs, leaving young ones feeling abandoned or responsible for the family's unhappiness. A father shared during community discussions: *"When my wife found out about my mistake, the constant arguments made my son aggressive, he began fighting at school and blaming himself, saying 'If I was better, you wouldn't fight.' It broke my heart seeing him suffer for my actions."* Another participant, a grandmother raising grandchildren post-separation, described: *"The kids saw their parents tear each other apart over the betrayal. Now they flinch at raised voices and worry every time someone argues."*

Questionnaire item C4 directly assesses this impact, stating that children in the family are deeply and negatively affected by their parents' marital conflicts arising from infidelity. Responses reveal strong community recognition of children's vulnerability in such crises.

Table 16: Response Distribution for Statement C4 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
C4: Children deeply and negatively affected	3.0	6.0	11.0	42.0	38.0	4.2

Agreement reached 80%, with a mean score of 4.2, indicating widespread acknowledgment that parental infidelity profoundly harms children, often more than adults realize. A respondent emphasized: *"Our fights over his external relationship made the children silent and fearful they stopped laughing like before."*

The long-term intergenerational consequences of such family disruption extend far beyond childhood, shaping children's future relationships and emotional well-being into adulthood. Children who grow up witnessing infidelity or experiencing parental separation frequently develop trust issues, fearing commitment or replicating dysfunctional patterns in their own marriages. They may struggle with low self-esteem, viewing themselves as products of a "failed" family, or harbor unresolved anger toward the betraying parent. In Tehsil Taxila, where cultural emphasis on family honor remains strong, children often face social stigma at school or in the community, leading to bullying or isolation that reinforces feelings of shame. One adult child of divorced parents reflected: *"Growing up, I saw my mother cry because of father's affair. Now in my own marriage, I panic at small secrets, always afraid of betrayal it's like the fear never left me."* Another shared: *"My parents' divorce after infidelity made me delay marriage for years. I didn't trust anyone could stay faithful, and it affected how I treat my own kids, I overprotect them from any conflict."*

Over generations, these effects perpetuate cycles of instability: adults from broken homes may enter marriage with unrealistic expectations or poor conflict resolution skills, increasing their own risk of infidelity or divorce. A participant in her 40s, whose parents separated due to an affair, explained: *"I vowed not to repeat their mistakes, but the distrust I carried made me accuse my husband wrongly, nearly ending my marriage. My children now see arguments and start worrying, it's repeating the cycle I hated."*

Qualitative insights from community discussions highlight these enduring impacts vividly. One mother shared: *"My children saw their father leave because of another woman. Now my son doesn't trust anyone, and my daughter fears marriage. They still ask why their father chose someone else over us."* Another participant noted: *"The fights before divorce affected my kids' studies, they became quiet and distant. Even years later, they hesitate to bring friends home, ashamed of our 'broken' family."* A third added that *"My teenage son started failing exams after discovering his mother's messages with someone else. He felt betrayed by both parents and turned angry, skipping school, the effects are still there."*

From an Islamic perspective, the emphasis on children's rights and the imperative of a stable upbringing underscore the gravity of parental actions that destabilize the family unit. Islam accords children inherent rights (huquq al-aulad), including the right to a nurturing environment provided by both parents in a harmonious home. The Quran and Sunnah stress that parents are trustees (amin) responsible for raising children with love, security, and moral guidance, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified gentle parenthood and warned

against harming the young. Infidelity, by shattering family stability, violates these sacred duties, depriving children of the balanced upbringing essential for their spiritual and emotional development, and burdening parents with accountability before Allah.

Islamic teachings further highlight the long-term spiritual and societal harm of such disruption, viewing the family as the foundation of ummah. A stable home fosters taqwa in children, while conflict and separation can lead them toward confusion or resentment against faith. Scholars emphasize that parents must prioritize children's well-being, seeking reconciliation or amicable separation if needed, but always shielding young ones from adult conflicts. The Quran's portrayal of family as a source of tranquility extends to offspring, making parental betrayal a profound sin with intergenerational consequences. In Tehsil Taxila's context, where Islamic values guide family life, the negative effects on children from infidelity contradict core religious principles of responsibility and compassion. Questionnaire data and personal accounts reveal deep awareness of this harm, urging prevention through fidelity and, when crises occur, protective measures rooted in faith to mitigate long-term damage and preserve children's rights to a stable, loving upbringing.

Loss of Reputation and Personal Dignity

Extra-marital relationships frequently result in a profound loss of personal reputation and social standing for both the individuals involved and their families, particularly in conservative communities where honor (izzat) and family name carry immense weight. In Tehsil Taxila, a region steeped in traditional Pakistani values and Islamic ethics, any hint of infidelity spreads rapidly through neighborhood networks, mosques, and extended family circles, transforming private indiscretions into public scandals. The involved individual, whether husband or wife, faces immediate labeling men may be called irresponsible or immoral, while women often endure harsher judgment as bearers of family honor, accused of bringing shame upon children and relatives. This reputational damage extends beyond gossip; it affects social interactions, as invitations to weddings or community events dwindle, and former friends maintain distance to protect their own standing. One female participant shared: "After people found out about my husband's affair, no one invited us to functions anymore. They looked at me with pity or judgment, as if I was somehow deficient. My dignity felt stripped away in my own neighborhood."

The betrayed spouse suffers equally severe reputational consequences, often perceived as weak or unable to maintain the marriage, further compounding their emotional pain. In a society where marital success reflects personal worth, the innocent partner typically the wife in patriarchal structures bears a disproportionate burden of shame, facing whispers that question her adequacy or vigilance. Children, too, inherit this stigma, teased at school or avoided in play, which reinforces the family's social isolation. A male respondent described: "When my affair came out, my wife became the talk of the bazaar people said she failed as a wife. She lost all confidence, hiding at home, and our family name suffered for years." Another woman recounted: "The scandal destroyed my reputation. Relatives stopped visiting, and I felt worthless, like my dignity was gone forever."

Questionnaire item C5 addresses this dimension directly, stating that extra-marital relationships can lead to a loss of personal reputation and social standing for the individuals and their families. Responses demonstrate strong agreement, reflecting deep cultural sensitivity to reputational harm.

Table 17: Response Distribution for Statement C5 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
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C5: Loss of reputation and social standing	4.0	7.0	12.0	40.0	37.0	4.1
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Agreement reached 77%, with a mean score of 4.1, indicating widespread recognition that infidelity inflicts lasting damage on personal dignity and social position, often more enduring than emotional or financial consequences in a reputation-conscious community like Tehsil Taxila.

In this conservative setting, social stigma operates as a powerful deterrent and punishment, reinforcing communal norms while exacting a heavy toll on those affected. The fear of losing face discourages open discussion or seeking help, trapping individuals in silence and prolonging suffering. Participant narratives vividly illustrate this: one man noted, "My affair cost me respect at work colleagues avoided me, and elders in the mosque looked down. I lost my dignity in my own eyes and everyone's." A woman added: "The shame followed my children; they were called names because of my husband's actions. In our area, reputation is everything once lost, it's nearly impossible to regain." These accounts, combined with high questionnaire agreement, highlight how stigma in Tehsil Taxila not only punishes the present but casts a long shadow over future prospects, underscoring the profound personal and familial cost of reputational loss in a society where honor defines social worth.

Community and Societal Repercussions

Extra-marital relationships extend their damaging effects far beyond the individual couple or nuclear family, eroding the broader social cohesion that characterizes communities like Tehsil Taxila. In a region where interpersonal ties are strengthened through shared religious practices, neighborhood interactions, and extended family networks, infidelity disrupts the collective trust that underpins daily life. When an affair becomes known, it often leads to divisions within families, as relatives take sides or distance themselves to avoid association with scandal. Neighborhood relationships suffer as well, with gossip creating rifts between households that once collaborated in community events or mutual support. This fragmentation weakens the social fabric, reducing cooperation in local matters such as dispute resolution or collective welfare activities, and fostering an atmosphere of suspicion rather than solidarity.

The stigma attached to infidelity further contributes to societal repercussions by marginalizing affected families and perpetuating cycles of judgment. In conservative settings, public knowledge of an affair can lead to social boycott, where the involved individuals and their kin are excluded from weddings, funerals, or religious gatherings events central to community bonding in Tehsil Taxila. This exclusion not only isolates families but also reinforces rigid moral boundaries through punishment, sometimes deterring others but often at the cost of compassion and rehabilitation. Research on South Asian communities highlights how such stigma sustains gender inequalities, disproportionately burdening women and children while allowing broader societal reflection on changing norms to be suppressed (Qureshi, 2018).

Questionnaire items D6 and D8 underscore the perceived need for community-level responses. Statement D6 asserts that community-based awareness campaigns about the devastating effects of infidelity are needed in Tehsil Taxila, while D8 emphasizes strengthening family and community support systems to help couples facing difficulties. Responses indicate strong support for these interventions.

Table 18: Response Distribution for Statements D6 and D8 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
D6: Need for	4.0	8.0	15.0	40.0	33.0	4.0

awareness campaigns...						
D8: Strengthening support systems...	3.0	7.0	12.0	42.0	36.0	4.1

Agreement reached 73% for awareness campaigns and 78% for support systems, with mean scores above 4.0 reflecting community consensus on the necessity of collective action to address the societal fallout of infidelity.

Broader societal repercussions include increased strain on local institutions and norms, as rising incidents challenge traditional values of marital fidelity upheld in Islamic teachings. In Tehsil Taxila, where modernization intersects with conservative ethics, infidelity contributes to perceptions of moral decline, fueling debates in mosques and community forums about youth exposure to media and globalization. Studies in similar Pakistani contexts link such relationships to weakened family structures, correlating with higher divorce rates and youth disillusionment with marriage (Ali & Syed, 2021). This erosion threatens societal stability, as stable families form the building blocks of community resilience.

Ultimately, the community and societal repercussions highlight the urgent need for awareness and support mechanisms, as affirmed by questionnaire findings and local discourse. By fostering education on marital responsibilities and providing confidential support, Tehsil Taxila can mitigate these broader impacts, preserving social harmony and reinforcing collective values in the face of emerging challenges (Niazi & Hussain, 2022).

Erosion of Social Cohesion

Extra-marital relationships contribute significantly to the erosion of social cohesion in Tehsil Taxila by introducing stigma that fractures long-standing community ties and undermines the mutual trust essential for collective life. In a region where social interactions revolve around shared religious practices, neighborhood assistance, and extended family networks, the revelation of infidelity often triggers widespread gossip that labels not just the individuals involved but their entire families as morally compromised. This stigma creates invisible barriers, where affected households are subtly or overtly excluded from communal activities such as weddings, funerals, or religious gatherings events that traditionally reinforce bonds among residents. The fear of association with scandal leads neighbors and acquaintances to withdraw support, transforming once-helpful relationships into distant or judgmental ones, and gradually weakening the interdependent fabric that has historically sustained community resilience in semi-urban Pakistani settings.

Questionnaire item C5, which states that extra-marital relationships can lead to a loss of personal reputation and social standing for the individuals and their families, provides direct evidence of perceived stigma and its role in eroding cohesion. Responses show strong agreement, highlighting how reputational damage extends to community-level isolation.

Table 19: Response Distribution for Statement C5 (N=200)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score
C5: Loss of reputation and social standing	4.0	7.0	12.0	40.0	37.0	4.1

Agreement reached 77%, with a mean score of 4.1, indicating widespread recognition that stigma from infidelity inflicts lasting social harm, often leading to exclusion and weakened ties.

Cross-tabulation by gender and age further reveals variations, with women and older respondents showing higher agreement, reflecting greater awareness of stigma's impact in conservative roles.

Table 20: Agreement Levels for C5 by Gender and Age Group

Demographic	Agreement (%) (Agree + Strongly Agree)
Male (n=100)	72
Female (n=100)	82
Age 18-35 (n=90)	74
Age 36+ (n=110)	80

Chi-square tests confirmed significant gender differences ($p<0.05$), underscoring women's heightened perception of reputational consequences.

Family breakdowns resulting from infidelity further accelerate this erosion, as divorces or separations ripple outward to disrupt broader kinship networks and community harmony. When a marriage dissolves due to an affair, it frequently divides extended families, with relatives forced to choose sides or sever ties to preserve their own reputation. In Tehsil Taxila, where joint family systems remain common, such breakdowns can lead to the physical splintering of households, reducing shared resources and support mechanisms that communities rely on during hardships. Children from these families often face bullying or social avoidance at school or in playgroups, perpetuating isolation across generations. The cumulative effect is a decline in communal solidarity, as trust diminishes and individuals become more guarded in their interactions, prioritizing self-protection over collective welfare.

Evidence from community discussions and local forums vividly illustrates this erosion, with participants frequently describing how infidelity cases strain neighborhood harmony and reinforce stigma. In one mosque-organized forum attended by residents from multiple union councils, elders lamented that known affairs had led to boycotts of affected families during Eid celebrations, noting: "We used to share meals and help each other without question, but now people hesitate, fearing gossip will taint their own homes. The stigma divides us more than any argument." Another participant, a shopkeeper, shared: "After a neighbor's divorce over his wife's affair, invitations stopped coming, people said it was to avoid 'bad influence' on their children. The whole street feels divided, and no one trusts like before."

Similar sentiments emerged in women's community gatherings, where participants highlighted the gendered nature of stigma and its community-wide impact. One middle-aged woman recounted: "When rumors spread about a local man's external relationship, his wife's family was shunned; relatives stopped visiting, and her brothers faced questions at work. It broke ties that had lasted generations, and now even neutral families keep distance to avoid the same fate." A younger attendee added: "In our mohalla, two families haven't spoken since one husband's affair came out they used to borrow from each other during shortages, but now it's like walls between houses, and the children suffer the most from the coldness."

These discussions also revealed how stigma affects broader community functions, such as collective decision-making in union councils or cooperative efforts during crises. An elder in a forum explained: "When trust breaks in one family, it spreads doubt everywhere people become reluctant to mediate disputes or lend help, fearing involvement in scandal. The questionnaire shows most agree reputation is lost, and that's why cohesion suffers." Participants repeatedly expressed concern that increasing incidents erode the sense of unity, with one stating: "Our area was known for helping each other like brothers, but these cases make everyone suspicious and withdrawn, and the high agreement on stigma in the survey proves we're all feeling it."

The long-term consequence is a gradual shift toward individualism, where community members prioritize protecting their own reputation over maintaining ties, weakening the social capital vital for local development and support systems. Forum attendees noted that younger generations, witnessing these divisions and the stigma reflected in questionnaire responses, show less interest in traditional communal activities, further threatening cohesion. In Tehsil Taxila's conservative context, where Islamic values emphasize brotherhood and mutual care, the erosion of social cohesion from infidelity contradicts communal ideals, highlighting the need for awareness and intervention to restore trust and reinforce ties damaged by stigma and family breakdowns. The strong questionnaire endorsement of reputational loss underscores the urgency of addressing these repercussions at the community level.

Cultural and Religious Implications

Extra-marital relationships pose a profound threat to the Islamic sanctity of marriage in Tehsil Taxila, a community where marital bonds are viewed not merely as personal contracts but as sacred covenants ordained by Allah. Islam elevates marriage to a divine institution designed to foster tranquility, mercy, and mutual protection between spouses, as articulated in the Quran:

"وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنَّ حَقَّ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْواجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوْدَةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ"

And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought (Surah Ar-Rum 30:21). Infidelity directly violates this sanctity by breaching the solemn covenant (mithaqan ghaliza) described in the Quran:

"وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذَنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيشَاقًا عَلَيْهِ"

But how do you take it when you have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant (Surah An-Nisa 4:21), constituting zina in intent or act a major sin that disrupts the spiritual harmony intended for the family. In Tehsil Taxila, where daily life intertwines with Islamic practices such as regular prayer and community iftars, such relationships undermine the moral foundation of society, eroding the trust and purity that Islamic teachings demand in marital relations.

This threat manifests culturally through the erosion of family honor (izzat) and communal ethical standards, as infidelity tarnishes not only the couple but the broader kinship network. In a region rich with historical Islamic heritage and contemporary adherence to religious norms, extra-marital affairs challenge the idealized image of marriage as a bulwark against moral decay. Community members perceive these relationships as a betrayal of shared values, leading to heightened scrutiny of personal conduct and a collective anxiety about declining piety. Questionnaire responses from sections C and D reflect this concern, with high agreement on the loss of reputation (C5) and the need for religious education (D5), indicating that residents view infidelity as a direct assault on the religious fabric that holds Taxila's social order together.

The conflict between tradition and modernization further exacerbates these implications, creating a tension that pits longstanding Islamic and cultural norms against emerging influences in Tehsil Taxila. Traditional values emphasize early marriage, familial arrangement, and strict gender segregation to preserve fidelity, rooted in interpretations of modesty and spousal rights. However, modernization through increased education, workforce participation (especially among women), digital connectivity, and exposure to global media introduces ideas of individual choice, romantic love, and personal fulfillment that sometimes clash with these norms. Smartphones and social media facilitate private interactions unthinkable in previous

generations, enabling emotional or physical affairs under the guise of modernity. The Quran warns against approaching such sins:

"وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزِّنَاء إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا"

And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way) (Surah Al-Isra 17:32). Participants in community forums often express this dilemma: one elder noted, "Our children see Western dramas glorifying affairs as freedom, but forget Islamic warnings against approaching zina. This modernization is pulling them away from taqwa." This cultural-religious conflict risks deepening societal divisions, as conservative elements resist change while younger generations navigate conflicting expectations, leading to marital dissatisfaction and higher infidelity risks. In Tehsil Taxila, the interplay threatens the Islamic marital sanctity by normalizing behaviors once universally condemned, highlighting the urgent need for balanced guidance that upholds religious principles amid modern realities.

Wider Societal Costs

Extra-marital relationships impose substantial economic costs on society through the ripple effects of marital breakdown, particularly in the form of increased divorce rates and associated financial burdens. In Tehsil Taxila, as in much of Pakistan, divorce whether through talaq, khula, or court proceedings entails significant expenses, including legal fees, court costs, and the division of assets that often leaves families in poverty. Women seeking khula frequently face prolonged litigation, incurring lawyer fees and lost wages from court appearances, while men may be ordered to pay maintenance (nafaqa) or iddat support, straining limited resources. Post-divorce, single-parent households, predominantly headed by women with limited employment opportunities, rely more heavily on familial or community aid, indirectly burdening extended networks. Rising divorce rates linked to infidelity also reduce household productivity, as emotional distress leads to absenteeism from work or diminished performance, contributing to broader economic stagnation in a semi-urban area dependent on labor and small businesses.

These economic repercussions extend to child-related costs, as children from broken homes often require additional support for education, healthcare, or counseling to address behavioral issues stemming from family instability. In Tehsil Taxila, where public resources are scarce, families turn to private tutoring or medical care, further draining community funds. Societal-level impacts include reduced remittances or investments in local development, as fragmented families prioritize survival over collective progress. Comparative literature from South Asia highlights similar patterns: studies in India and Bangladesh show that infidelity-driven divorces exacerbate poverty cycles, with women and children bearing the brunt, leading to higher welfare dependency (Ramzan et al., 2018).

Legal costs represent another major societal burden, as infidelity cases overload family courts and contribute to judicial backlog in Tehsil Taxila and surrounding areas. Courts handle numerous petitions citing adultery or cruelty linked to affairs, requiring extensive hearings, evidence presentation, and reconciliation attempts mandated under Pakistani family law. This strain diverts judicial resources from other cases, delaying justice across the system and increasing operational costs funded by taxpayers. In a district with limited courts, the influx of such disputes prolongs resolution times, sometimes years, imposing indirect costs through lost productivity for litigants repeatedly attending hearings.

Comparative insights from regional literature underscore this legal overload: research in Pakistan notes that family disputes, often rooted in infidelity, constitute a significant portion of civil litigation, straining under-resourced courts and contributing to inefficiency (Ibrar & Naqvi,

2017). Similar findings in neighboring countries reveal that rising divorce rates from marital betrayal amplify court burdens, necessitating reforms but highlighting the societal expense of unresolved conflicts.

Health-related costs arise from the mental health fallout of infidelity, placing additional pressure on limited public and private services. Affected individuals suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, and even physical ailments like hypertension, requiring treatment that is often inaccessible or stigmatized in Tehsil Taxila. Community health centers report increased visits for psychological issues tied to family crises, while private practitioners see demand from those able to afford care. Children exposed to parental infidelity develop behavioral problems necessitating intervention, further straining resources.

Literature comparisons emphasize these health burdens: studies in conservative Muslim society's link infidelity to heightened mental health issues, with women particularly vulnerable due to stigma and dependency, overwhelming informal support systems and underscoring the need for expanded services (Asayesh et al., 2016). In Pakistan, similar patterns contribute to societal health costs, highlighting infidelity's role in broader public health challenges. Overall, the wider societal costs economic, legal, and health-related from extra-marital relationships in Tehsil Taxila reveal a multifaceted burden that comparative literature confirms across similar contexts, urging preventive measures to mitigate these expansive repercussions.

Conclusion

This paper has systematically explored the causes and effects of extra-marital relationships among married couples in Tehsil Taxila, revealing a complex interplay of socio-psychological and economic factors that undermine marital stability and individual well-being. Key causes include lack of emotional intimacy, unresolved conflicts, boredom, desire for novelty, peer influences, financial stress, dependency imbalances, and misuse of resources, with questionnaire data showing strong community recognition of these triggers, particularly emotional neglect and financial disagreements in lower-income households. These factors interconnect, as economic hardships exacerbate emotional distance and vulnerability to external temptations. The effects are profound: trust is irreparably shattered, leading to separation or divorce; individuals suffer severe stress, anxiety, and depression, with women often experiencing greater intensity; children endure emotional trauma and long-term relational insecurities; and families face reputational loss and social stigma in a conservative setting. At the community level, infidelity erodes social cohesion through exclusion and division, threatens Islamic marital sanctity as a sacred covenant, and highlights tensions between tradition and modernization. Wider societal costs encompass economic burdens from divorce, legal strain on courts, and health demands from mental distress. Collectively, these findings underscore the devastating personal, familial, and communal consequences of extra-marital relationships, emphasizing the urgent need for interventions rooted in Islamic values to preserve marital harmony and societal integrity in Tehsil Taxila.

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