Studia Psychologica, Vol. 64, No. 2, 2022, 173-187
https://doi.org/10.31577/sp.2022.02.846

Predicting Women's Social Media Infidelity: Facebook Addiction, Relationship Satisfaction, and Moral Disengagement

Alexandra Maftei, Alexandra Mihaela Solomon, Andrei Corneliu Holman
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, Romania

The current research explored the predictive power of an adapted version of the Moral Disengagement Scale, focused exclusively on online behaviors, along with age, relationship length and type (i.e., close or long-distance), Facebook addiction, and relationship satisfaction. Our sample consisted of 111 young heterosexual Romanian women aged 18 to 36 (M = 20.64, SD = 3.27). Hierarchical regression analysis suggested that the most important predictor of social media infidelity was Facebook addiction. None of the other considered predictors were significant in our final prediction model. However, a significant negative association emerged between social media infidelity and relationship satisfaction, suggesting that low relationship satisfaction might be a fertile ground for infidelity and social media addiction. Our model accounted for 18.3% of the variance in women's social media infidelity. Results are discussed considering self-justification mechanisms and self-serving attributions to infidelity.

Key words: women, social media infidelity, moral disengagement, relationship satisfaction, Facebook addiction

Introduction

Social networks are used daily by many people of different ages. Their popularity is due to the possibility of sharing pictures, appreciating other people's posts, sharing interests, and even intimate thoughts. These actions are generally beneficial, though sometimes they might endanger romantic relationships (McDaniel & Drouin, 2019). Social media may provide the context for problematic behaviors that can cause conflicts between partners. Among them is communication with former romantic partners or appreciation of other people's pictures, actions that might produce adverse reactions from one's partner, such as jealousy (McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2017). According to some studies, using these social networks correlates negatively with marriage and happiness and positively with conflicts in the couple's relationship or thoughts relat-

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Alexandra Maftei, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, 3 Toma Cozma Street, Romania. E-mail: alexandra.maftei@uaic.ro

Received February 8, 2021

ed to divorce (Valenzuela, Halpern, & Katz, 2014). Other studies found links between the use of social networks and the engagement in online infidelity behaviors, moderated by the age of the participants, the latter correlating negatively with the other two variables (Abbasi, 2019).

The concept of infidelity has many definitions, and it is difficult to determine which is the most appropriate due to significant differences between cultures and types of relationships. In the present study, we will consider infidelity as the violation of sexual and emotional exclusivity expectations in an intimate relationship (Zare, 2011). Generally, a romantic partnership is based on an implicit agreement on what is accepted in the relationship without precisely articulating the unacceptance of extradyadic behaviors. Furthermore, expectations or rules for dating can be particularly unclear in contemporary culture; thus, the violation of exclusivity may become even more difficult to define (DeGenova & Rice, 2005).

Emotional infidelity implies deep feelings and an emotional connection with an extradyadic partner, while sexual infidelity involves physical contact with another partner. The two forms can also coexist, mixing behaviors such as spending time with a person of the opposite sex, flirting, kissing, or having sex with someone other than your partner (Weiser et al., 2018). Infidelity does not fall into a specific category in the online environment, but it contains all three offline infidelity forms. Therefore, online infidelity behaviors are perceived as authentic as real-life behaviors (Whitty, 2003).

As previous work already suggested, the Internet plays an important role in romantic relationships. Partners can get to know each other online, and social networks can be integrated into all stages of the relationship (Smith & Duggan, 2013). Among these online platforms' main characteristics, three have been highlighted in several studies as having a prominent influence in romantic relationships. First of all, they increase the volume of information about the potential or actual partner if he/she is active in the online environment. A person's posts can reveal information about his/her daily activities, the people he/she interacts with, and this can induce jealousy, especially in long-distance relationships. Jealousy is also related to the second characteristic, i.e., monitoring the profile of the partner. The last feature refers to the public distribution of pictures and information about the relationship, which can have a positive and a negative effect (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). The positive effects lie in the fact that social networks can increase the level of satisfaction of the relationship because they allow partners to publicly demonstrate their feelings and commitment to each other. People can put their status "in a relationship", include their partner in the profile picture, or share pictures with him/her (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

Saslow, Muise, Impett, and Dubin (2012) suggested that generally, people who have a high level of satisfaction in the relationship are more likely to post online pictures of their partner or share more relevant information about their relationship. These results are significant because they suggest that the online exposure of one's relationship may be associated with a high level of couple satisfaction, with partners being less prone to infidelity. Therefore, relationship satisfaction is essential in predicting online infidelity behaviors (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Selterman, Garcia, & Tsapelas, 2019).

The Social Media threat: Cheating online

Online infidelity includes behaviors such as emotional involvement on the Internet, cy-

bersex, or watching pornography. The online environment may provide partners with the *ideal* context to engage in infidelity behaviors, which can subsequently be denied and motivated by the absence of physical interaction, keeping their distance from the partner's actual deceptive behavior. In addition, the psychological distance (i.e., absence of physical interactions) may contribute to a depersonalization process, making the unfaithful person think less about the other's feelings and how his/her actions might hurt his or her partner (Aiken, 2019) and to a decrease in inhibitions for the people involved, who are more open in sharing intimate thoughts and emotions (Abbasi, 2019).

Rus and Tiemensma (2017) suggested two types of online cheating behaviors: those activated by social networks and those created by their use. Thus, one can observe behaviors or characteristics of partners that generally exist but are activated by the use of different online platforms (for example, those related to attachment style, overlapping partner identity, and relationship satisfaction), but also behaviors that would not manifest in the absence of the use of social networks (e.g., monitoring partners, jealousy induced by these behaviors). This distinction allows a better assessment of social networks' impact on romantic relationships by creating new behaviors that might negatively affect couples.

The most common behaviors in the online environment that can be labeled as infidelity are flirting, hiding specific conversations or actions, and engaging in intimate or sexual conversations with other people besides one's partner (McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2017). However, Alexopoulos, Timmermans, and McNallie (2020) focused on explaining the cognitive process underlying online infidelity. They suggested that studying how the individual meets his/her needs for interaction and engages in deep conversations with other partners is more important than exploring the time spent on social networks.

Treas and Giesen (2008) suggested that personal values, opportunities, and marital satisfaction are associated with sexual infidelity. Thus, non-permissive values, sexual opportunities at work, and marital dissatisfaction may generate infidelity behaviors. Significant differences were observed between married and unmarried, living-together couples, the latter being more prone to cheating. The opportunity seems important for women, especially for those who work outside the home. They are more likely to engage in infidelity than women who do not work or work from home (Drigotas & Barta, 2001).

Social Media Addiction

Technology makes our lives easier and more comfortable in many ways. Using the Internet and its features, we manage to do things faster and sometimes better. However, in addition to the strengths, there are disadvantages, especially related to their overuse, eventually leading to addiction. Some individuals may become addicted to the Internet, as others may become addicted to drugs or alcohol, decreasing the quality of life in various areas. Internet addiction is "a problematic behavior defined as an impulse control disorder without the ingestion of psychoactive substances" (Young, 1998, p. 238). Social media addiction, i.e., addiction to social networks such as Facebook or Instagram, is a specific form of Internet addiction that implies a compulsion to excessively use social media (Starcevic, 2013), driven by an uncontrollable urge to log into these platforms (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). Social media addiction might have similar consequences as addiction to other substances (Rajesh & Rangaiah, 2020), mostly related to one's psychological distress (e.g., Hou et al., 2019). Young (1998) described sev-

eral criteria for this dependence. Addicts said that prolonged Internet use causes average or even severe damage to their lives, feeling unable to control their use of time. Salicetia (2015) argues that the time spent on social media platforms should not be longer than the time spent socializing offline, in order to maintain one's control and prevent impulsive behaviors.

Time spent on social networks may be influenced by the reasons why a person uses these platforms. The Model of Compensatory Internet Use (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014) suggests that excessive online activity compensates for psychological issues. This idea is also supported by Rajesh and Rangaiah (2020), who found a significant link between Facebook use and loneliness. Thus, individuals who feel lonely compensate for the lack of social skills in real life, and the low level of social support, by spending a long time on social media platforms. Also, an alternative explanation (given the correlational nature of these research results) is related to the idea that people might also feel lonely precisely because of the excessive use of Facebook and/or after using it. However, people also use social media to relax, increase their social status, find love, or establish further physical contact (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016). Nevertheless, Ryan, Reece, Chester, and Xenos (2016) suggested that the effects of overusing the Facebook platform include mood swings, inability to control time spent online, a decrease in performing daily tasks. In terms of relationships, Facebook can be a reason for couples' misunderstandings. causing infidelity and even divorce (Rus & Tiemensma, 2017). Therefore, further investigations are needed to clarify these underlying mechanisms.

Romantic disengagement, i.e., the loss of attachment to one's partner, was found to be a predictor of Facebook addiction. In other words, individuals who reported a high level of romantic disengagement also reported a higher dependence on Facebook (Abbasi, 2018). However, contrary to their expectations, researchers observed that this association did not influence the partners' commitment to the relationship. Nelson and Salawu (2017) explored Facebook's influence on emotional infidelity, as well as the level of self-disclosure among married women who use it. Their results suggested that a) 60% of the participants stated that they knew people who broke up due to the emotional infidelity expressed on the Facebook platform, and b) Facebook disclosure can be interpreted as a form of infidelity.

Finally, the way partners present and advertise their relationship on Facebook may significantly impact the relationship's functioning. Papp, Danielewicz, and Cayemberg (2012) suggested that men's Facebook relationship status (i.e., "in a relationship") and women's couple's profile picture (i.e., both partners displayed in the Facebook profile picture) increases relationship satisfaction. Disagreements between partners on how their relationship should be exposed to Facebook may affect the general state of the relationship and partners' commitment, and level of jealousy.

Gender and Infidelity

Suspecting your partner of infidelity generates feelings of jealousy. For men, partners' possible sexual infidelity is the primary source of jealousy, while for women, the possibility of the partner being emotionally unfaithful can produce more jealousy (Shackelford & Buss, 1997). From an evolutionary perspective, the *Parental Investment Theory* (PIT; Trivers, 1972) supports the idea that women and men have different levels of mandatory investment in offspring (Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007). Throughout history, wom-

en have had to invest one or more years in pregnancy and lactation to ensure their baby's chances of survival, while men could engage outside of sexual intercourse. Because of these differences in minimum investment levels, men's and women's fidelity behaviors differ in many ways. PIT argues that a strategy in which quantity is above quality is more effective when investment is low. Thus, those who invest less are more likely to engage in short-term infidelity behaviors. Generally, women prefer quality over quantity, becoming less likely to engage in short-term relationships with others outside the partner (Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007). However, when infidelity does not include sexual behaviors such as kissing or physical intercourse, gender differences tend to diminish or even disappear. Thus, romantic or sexual behaviors in nature, that do not involve physical contact, such as those expressed in the online environment, can still harm the relationship, violating people's expectations about their relationship (Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007). Women's justifications for infidelity seem to be related to intimacy and feelings of love, sexual reasons being considered among the last (Rafatmah, Nazari, & Nasrollahi, 2011).

A series of studies support the idea that men engage more often in infidelity behaviors. For example, Weiser et al. (2018) suggested that men are more likely to send messages and show physical intimacy with female acquaintances on Tinder compared to women. However, some results contradict this hypothesis, such as those presented by Mark, Janssen, and Milhausen (2011). They observed a link between relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction in infidelity behaviors, more robust for women. Thus, women who have a low level of relationship satisfaction or do not feel compatible with their partner in terms of sexual values are more prone to infidelity. Similar results, which support the idea that women are more likely to engage in infidelity behaviors (both online and offline), were presented by Brand, Markey, Mills, and Hodges (2007). Regarding Facebook, Villacampa, Ingram, Marti-Vilar, and Olivera-La Rosa (2018) argued that Facebook's use is associated with prosocial behavior more than sexual behavior, regardless of gender.

Moral Disengagement

Moral standards are constructed on evaluative social reactions to others' behaviors and exposure to self-assessment standards shaped by others. Once these standards are created, they serve as a guide for people's actions. People adjust their actions according to their consequences. Therefore, behaviors that provide satisfaction and a sense of self-worth are preferred, while behaviors that violate moral standards are expressed to a lesser extent. Anticipatory self-sanctions maintain a conduct following the internal standards of individuals. Thus, moral conduct is activated and regulated by exerting a continuous influence on one's person (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). The social-cognitive theory of morality describes the moral agent through a self-regulation system that operates through three significant subfunctions: self-monitoring, judgment, and self-reactive subfunction. Monitoring one's behavior is the first step in controlling it. Next, moral judgment provides an opportunity to exercise self-reactive influence. Thus, people end up acting in line with their moral standards through positive or negative anticipatory reactions to different courses of action (Bandura et al., 1996). However, self-reactive influences only work when activated, and there are numerous psychosocial processes by which one's sanctions can be separated from inhuman conduct (Bandura et al., 1996). The selective activation and disengagement

of internal control allow the manifestation of different types of conduct.

An essential set of disengagement practices operates on the construction of harmful behavior. People do not usually engage in behaviors that others can condemn until they self-justify these actions, diminishing the guilt through cognitive reconstruction. In this moral justification process, inappropriate behavior becomes personally and socially acceptable by portraying it from the perspective of valued moral or social goals, people then act from a social or moral imperative (Bandura et al., 1996). *Euphemistic language* is a convenient tool used to mask reprehensible actions. People can act more aggressively when hurting a person receives a clean label compared to a situation in which this action is clearly defined as "aggression." By advantageously comparing the person's condemnable conduct with other more harmful behaviors, the unethical conduct can have fewer negatively perceived consequences. Cognitive transformation of a harmful act into more acceptable conduct through moral justification, euphemistic language, and advantageous comparison are some of the most effective psychological mechanisms for disengaging self-sanctions, leading to self-approval and positive self-assessment (Bandura et al., 1996).

Additionally, by shifting responsibility, people see their actions due to the social pressure or orders received from other people and less as a result of their personal choices. Another moral disengagement practice is to distort or disregard the consequences of the action. When people engage in activities that hurt others for personal gain, they avoid facing the harm they have done or diminish its intensity. Finally, the self-censorship of harmful conduct can be diminished by dehumanization. Once dehumanized, victims of unethical behavior are no longer perceived as people who have emotions, hopes, or concerns but as simple objects. Simultaneously, by attributing the guilt, punitive conduct becomes reasonable, defensive reactions to a challenge. Therefore, the real victims are blamed for causing their suffering (Bandura et al., 1996).

Moral disengagement (MD) influences unethical behavior both directly and indirectly through its influence on prosocial behavior, the level of guilt, and the degree of aggression. Those with a high MD level are more likely to feel anger and exhibit unethical behaviors, which can cause harm, compared to those who apply moral sanctions to avoid such behaviors. Though not explicitly centered on online infidelity, the study conducted by Denes, Dillow, DelGreco, Lannutti, and Bevan (2020) found that "attributions of blame were positively associated with revenge, avoidance, and relationship termination; perceived intentionality was positively associated with avoidance, and blame was negatively associated with benevolence" (p. 482). Furthermore, in their research, blame was indirectly associated with the relationship ending through avoidance and benevolence, and these specific results were not moderated by gender.

As far as we know, the specific association between MD and online social media infidelity hasn't yet been investigated, though several other studies explored, for example, the relationship between online MD, cyberbullying, and cyber-aggression (Runions & Bak, 2015), the use of social media and MD (Parlangeli et al., 2019), or dishonesty, MD, and motivated forgetting (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011).

The Present Study

The present cross-sectional study aimed to explore a series of predictors of online infidelity among young women. Though several studies investigated the relationship between

online infidelity and several variables such as marital satisfaction (e.g., Isanejad & Bagheri, 2018; McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2017), or gender (Martins, Pereira, Andrade, Dattilio, Narciso, & Canavaroo, 2016; Whitty & Quingley, 2008), we were interested in extending the prediction model with an MD measure, and in focusing on social media, namely Facebook-related infidelity behaviors. We chose Facebook as the online environment to investigate in the present research because Facebook is the most used social media platform for young adults (Statisa, 2021). The novelty of our approach lies in both the choice of predictors in our model as well as the scale we developed to measure online infidelity-related MD.

Our main assumptions were related to the high predictive power of marital satisfaction, relationship length and type, age (as negative, significant predictors of online infidelity), and the significant, positive associations between Facebook addiction and MD. We assumed that a model including all six variables would significantly predict social media infidelity.

Method

Participants

Our convenient initial sample consisted of 147 females, out of which 36 were excluded from the final set of participants due to lack of responses within the demographical scale. Our final sample was formed by 111 heterosexual Romanian women aged 18 to 36 (M = 20.64, SD = 3.27). The only inclusion criteria were being at least 18 years old and involved in a committed romantic relationship for at least one month. Among them, 27% were in a long-distance relationship. The average time of the relationship length was 21 months (min. = 1 month, max. = 228 months). We chose an exclusively female sample because females are generally believed to be less likely to cheat, compared to men (e.g., Martins et al., 2015; Zhang, Parish, Huang, & Pan, 2012), an assumption found to be subject to the women's age. We aimed to explore these mechanisms using a different practical approach.

Procedure

Participants first completed a demographic scale assessing gender, age, relationship type (close or long-distance), and length (number of months). All instruments were administered individually, offline, and a consent form described the purpose of the study (the general perception of online behavior) and its duration (about 15 minutes). All participants signed consent forms and were briefed about the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers, along with the fact that they can resign from the study anytime they wanted. The research was conducted in line with the ethical requirements from the university where the authors are affiliated, and the ethical standards within the 2013 Helsinki Declaration.

Instruments

All instruments were self-report questionnaires. Scales were translated into Romanian using the forward-backward translation method. Three versions of each scale were analyzed by two independent researchers familiar with the main concepts, and a professional translator.

We used the 6-item *Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale* (BFAS), developed by Andearssen, Torsheim, Brunborg, and Pallesen (2012), to assess Facebook addiction. We chose this specific instrument considering our particular focus on the Facebook platform, and not social media platforms in general. We included this observation within our manuscript. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (very

rarely) to 5 (very often). Thus, the total score for the BFAS can range from 6 to 30. Example items include "How often during the last year have you thought about how you could free more time to spend on Facebook or planned use of Facebook?" *or "*How often during the last year have you felt that you had to use Facebook more?". According to Andearssen et al. (2012), there are two ways to assess a cut-off point for BFAS: "a polythetic scoring scheme (e.g., scoring 3 or above on at least four of the six items), whereas a more conservative approach could be to use a monothetic scoring key (e.g., scoring 3 or above on all six items)" (p. 512). In the present study, we used a cut-off point of 12. Cronbach's alpha indicated a satisfying internal consistency of the scale (.846).

We measured relationship satisfaction using *The Global Relationship Satisfaction* scale (Hendrick, 1988). This instrument contains seven items that can be evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (little) to 5 (a lot). Example items include "*How often did you wish you had not been involved in this relationship?*" or "*How often do problems arise in your relationship?*". Higher scores indicate a high level of couple satisfaction. The internal consistency of the scale for the present study was .837 (Cronbach's alpha).

The social media infidelity related behaviors were measured using the 7-item instrument (SMIRB scale) developed by McDaniel, Drouin, and Cravens (2017). Participants rated their agreement on a 6-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), to items such as "*If my spouse/partner asked me about my chats, comments, and messages to others on social networking sites, there are some messages I would like to hide from him/her*". The internal consistency of the scale (Cronbach's alpha) for the present study was .77.

Finally, we used an adapted version of *The Moral Disengagement Scale* developed by Bandura et al. (1996). We designed and pretested a 32-item scale (The Online Infidelity Moral Disengagement Scale – OIMDS), containing four items on each of the eight moral disengagement dimensions, adapted to the infidelity behavior, particularly online. Example items include: "*When your partner leaves their phone unlocked, it is acceptable to check their messages"* (Moral justification); "*Talking online to people of the opposite sex, apart from your partner, means socializing only*" (Euphemistic language); "*There's no point in worrying about hiding your partner's online messages when everyone is doing this*" (Advantageous comparison); "*No matter what you do, you should not feel guilty if your partner does not like your online behavior, if this may be due to a former relationship*" (Displacement of responsibility); "*If you send online messages to your ex-partner due to alcohol consumption, you are not completely guilty of your actions*" (Diffusion of responsibility); "*Hiding certain things (e.g., online messages) from your partner is not serious if he/she does not ask you about that topic*" (Distorting consequences); "*If your partner lied to you about an online behavior, you are less guilty if you lie too*" (Attribution of blame); and "*Those who are cheated on online did something to deserve it*" (Dehumanization). Participants answered on a 3-point Likert scale, from 1 (disagree) to 3 (agree). Therefore, the higher the score, the higher the moral disengagement level. The pretesting procedure (N = 32, M = 23.4, SD = 0.61, 100% females) indicated a high overall internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .91). In our study sample, Cronbach's alpha was .834.

Results

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 was used to analyze the data. We first conducted a series of prelimi-

nary analyses before computing a multiple linear hierarchical regression. Table 1 details the descriptive statistics of our main variables of interest.

The total score for the BFAS scale, assessing participants' addiction to Facebook, can range from 6 to 30. Using the cut-off point of 12 for Facebook addiction (scoring 3 or above on at least four of the six items), our data suggested that 62.2% (N = 69) of participants in our sample scored above this cut-off point, indicating potential addiction to Facebook. Next, we normalized one predictor, namely the global score for BFAS, which did not contain normally distributed residuals. We tested for multi-collinearities (Coakes, 2005), and results indicated that the variance inflation factor (VIF) values were all within the acceptable limits. Additionally, we analyzed the residual and scatter plots (Hair et al., 1998; Pallant, 2001) and confirmed that the homoscedasticity condition was satisfied. Finally, we explored the associations between the variables (see Table 2) to identify highly correlated variables.

Our data suggested a significant negative association between social media infidelity and relationship satisfaction (r = -.286, p < .001), as well as between Facebook addiction and social media infidelity (r = .348, p < .001).

We then conducted a five-stage multiple regression (stepwise) with social media infidelity-related behaviors (SMIRB) as the dependent variable. In addition, we were interested to see whether age (stage one) relationship characteristics (type and length) – stage two, relationship satisfaction (stage three), Facebook addiction (stage four), and moral disengagement (stage five) significantly predict SMIRB. Regression statistics are presented in Table 3.

The hierarchical multiple regression revealed that age did not contribute significantly to the regression model at Stage one, F (1, 109) = .022, p = .883). Introducing the

Table 1 *Descriptive statistics for the main variables (N = 111)*

	M	*SD*	*Mdn*	Min	Max	α (Cronbach)
Relationship satisfaction	27.03	5.13	28	12	35	.83
Facebook addiction	11.66	4.98	10	6	30	.84
Moral disengagement	71.06	9.91	72	44	87	.83
Social media infidelity	13.52	5.63	12	7	33	.77

Table 2 *Means, standard deviation, and Pearson Correlation matrix for the main variables (N = 111)*

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	20.64	3.27	1						
2. Relationship length	21.05	1.72	.726**	1					
3. Type of relationship	1.72	.44	.127	.114	1				
4. Relationship satisfaction	27.03	5.13	-.020	.109	.044	1			
5. Facebook addiction	11.66	4.98	-.046	-.113	-.020	-.350**	1		
6. Moral disengagement	71.06	9.91	.009	.057	.066	.161	-.127	1	
7. Social media infidelity related behaviors	13.52	5.63	-.014	-.148	.053	-.286**	.348**	-.152	1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 *Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting Social Media Infidelity (N = 111)*

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*
Age	-.02	.16	-0.1	.32	.23	.19	.23	.23	.13	.23	.22	.13	.22	.22	.13
R. length				-.05	.02	-.29*	-.04	.02	-.22	-.03	.23	-.20	-.03	.02	-.19
R. type				.78	1.2	.06	.92	1.1	.07	.91	1.1	0.7	.97	1.1	0.7
Satisfaction							-.28	.10	-.26*	-.18	.10	-.16	-.17	.10	-.15
FB addiction										1.53	.53	.27*	1.5	.53	.26*
MD													-.05	.05	-.08
R^2		.00			.044			.110			.175			.183	
F for change in R^2		.022			2.45			7.87*			8.28*			.94	

Note. *p < .05

type and length of relationship explained an additional 4.4% of the dependent variable variation, but this change in R^2 was not significant, F (2, 107) = 2.45, p = .09. Adding the relationship satisfaction measure to the regression model explained 11% of social media infidelity variation, and this change in R^2 was significant, F (1, 106) = 7.87, p = .006. The Facebook addiction measure added at stage 4 accounted for 17.5% of the variation in social media infidelity, and this change in R^2 was also significant, F (1, 105) = 8.28, p = .005. Finally, the final model, which included the moral disengagement measurement, accounted for 18.3% of the variance in social media infidelity, but the change in R^2 was not significant, F (1, 104) = .94, p = .33. When all six independent variables were included in stage five of the regression model, the only significant predictor of social media infidelity was Facebook addiction (β = .26, p = .006). Together, the six independent variables accounted for 18.3% of the variance in social media infidelity.

Discussion

In a cross-sectional study among women aged 18 to 36, a hierarchical regression analysis suggested that the most important predictor of social media infidelity was Facebook addiction. We assumed that in our final prediction model all the other considered predictors would be found significant (i.e., age, relationship status and type, relationship satisfaction, and moral disengagement). No other significant predictors were found. A significant, negative association emerged within the correlational analysis between social media infidelity and relationship satisfaction, confirming previous findings that suggest that a low satisfaction would be a fertile ground for infidelity (e.g., Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Saslow, Muise, Impett, & Dubin, 2012; Selterman, Garcia, & Tsapelas, 2019; Treas & Giesen, 2008), as well as social media addiction (Abbasi, 2018; Nelson & Salawu, 2017; Rus & Tiemensma, 2017). Additionally, as previous research suggested (e.g., Abassi, 2021; González-Rivera et al., 2020; Zawada & Skurzyńska, 2021), relationship satisfaction might have a moderating role within the relationship between online infidelity and Facebook addiction. For example, González-Rivera and their collaborators (2020) suggested that women who engage in social media infidelity-related behaviors reported lower levels of sexual satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and relationship satisfaction.

Previous findings confirmed that romantic disengagement is considered a significant predictor of Facebook addiction (Abbasi, 2018), while our result suggests that Facebook addiction predicts online infidelity. Therefore, future studies might want to explore Facebook addiction's mediating role in the relationship between the loss of attachment to one's partner and social media infidelity in both male and female samples.

We assumed that distant relationships (e.g., when you have a partner in a different city) and the length of time spent in the relationship would be a significant negative predictor for social media infidelity. In line with previous findings (e.g., Le, Korn, Crockett, & Loving, 2010) related to these particular links, we assumed that the more distant and rarer the interaction, and the greater the length, the chances for online infidelity would be lower. None of these predictions were confirmed within our sample. One explanation could rely on our sample's homogeneity compared to the other studies on the matter.

We did not find a significant relationship between moral disengagement and social media infidelity. Though previous research linked self-justification and self-serving attributions to infidelity (Warach, Josephs, & Gorman, 2018), at the present moment, our study is the first to address this connection by using an adapted scale for online cheating behaviors only. Future studies may want to test this result in a broader sample to assess the reliability of the present findings in larger, more heterogeneous groups.

Several limitations for the present study need to be acknowledged. First, the generalizability of results needs improvement in future studies addressing similar issues (Crossman, 2018). Second, our participants were exclusively women, lowering the chances to extend our results to other genders. However, though studies generally focused on females and males and their online infidelity behaviors, research is relatively scarce on women's social-media infidelity predictors only. For example, we already knew that women are more likely to experience jealousy related to online extradyadic behaviors than similar offline behavior (Dijkstra, Barelds, & Groothof, 2013). We were also aware of previous research suggesting that women are angrier about emotional infidelity, while men are more disturbed about sexual infidelity (Whitty & Quingley, 2008). Finally, online infidelity usually implies cybersex, regardless of feelings, and we were interested in exploring our series of predictors, especially among a population believed to be less likely to cheat, compared to men (e.g., Martins et al., 2015; Zhang, Parish, Huang, & Pan, 2012), an assumption found to be subject to the women's age[1]. However, age was not found to be a significant predictor for social media infidelity, and one potential explanation lies in previous research (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001), which suggested that women aged 40-45 are the most likely to cheat on their husbands. Their study focused on infidelity in general and not on social media infidelity, though our results might contribute to an extension to the online environment of such findings related to age and infidelity.

Another limit to the present study is related to previous extradyadic behavior, both as an agent as well as a victim. More specifically, we did not assess nor control this variable among our sample. Studies already showed that previous infidelity experiences are related to sexual desire, relationship quality, and attractiveness (e.g., Arantanes, Barros, & Oliveira, 2020). For example, Martins et al. (2016) suggested that women who reported previous infidelity were more likely to engage in online cheating behavior. Therefore, future

[1] https://ifstudies.org/blog/who-cheats-more-the-demographics-of-cheating-in-america

studies might want to consider this variable within an alternative prediction model for online infidelity. Also, the adapted Moral Disengagement Scale that we used showed a satisfying internal consistency. Future studies might want to integrate a confirmatory factor analysis to better explore the related social media infidelity mechanisms. Recommendations concerning the appropriate sample size to use when conducting factor analysis underline that the suggested minimums for sample size include "from 3 to 20 times the number of variables and absolute ranges from 100 to over 1,000" (Mundfrom et al., 2005, p. 159). Thus, future research on larger samples might want to address this issue.

Another limitation, closely related to the sample size in our study, is related to the number of predictors included in the regression model. In general, research suggests a minimum of twenty participants for each tested predictor (Rabušic et al., 2019). In the present study, we explored the predictive power of six variables, implying a minimum number of 120 participants. Though the difference is not very large (i.e., nine participants), the regression model needs further exploration in future research that should include a larger sample (of < 120 participants).

Finally, the amount of variance unexplained by the proposed model indicated that other factors, not included in our analyses, might be relevant to social media infidelity prediction. These factors may include the level of education (Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011), personality traits (Barta & Kiene, 2005), sexual reputation (Hirsch, 2007), social environment, religiosity (Burdette et al., 2007) or moral identity. Future research might incorporate a more comprehensive set of variables, including this additional set of potential predictors.

To our knowledge, this is the first research to address the potential prediction power of moral disengagement and the first to explore this link by using an adapted version of the scale developed by Bandura et al. and their collaborators (1996), encouraging future research in this area. Nevertheless, the new tool that we proposed (The Online Infidelity Moral Disengagement Scale – OIMDS) needs further investigation to assess its reliability, validity, and stability over time. Also, the complex mechanisms underlying women's social media infidelity further require more extensive investigations that might involve other tools and variables, assessing personality variables, time on social media, and other types of social media (frequently) used platforms. Despite these limitations, our study contributes to a better understanding of online infidelity-related behaviors, especially within social media platforms such as Facebook.

Authors' ORCID
Alexandra Maftei
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9700-8794
Andrei Corneliu Holman
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9309-3821

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