

The Paradox of Honesty: Catharsis, Coercion, and the Risks of Infidelity Disclosure in Marriage

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Abstract

This study examines self-disclosure among marital infidelity perpetrators as a form of micro-level information governance crisis. It focuses on disclosure motives, decision-making processes regarding timing, mode, and content, and communication strategies used to mitigate relational disruption. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation from purposively selected individuals who had disclosed infidelity to their spouses. Data were analyzed using an interactive model with iterative processes of reduction, display, and verification, supported by source triangulation. The findings reveal that disclosure is not spontaneous but reflects complex socio-emotional calculations. Two primary motives emerge: internal catharsis driven by guilt and external pressure due to potential exposure. Perpetrators employ incremental disclosure, accompanied by euphemistic and defensive narratives, to regulate conflict intensity. This process generates significant privacy turbulence and prompts boundary renegotiation, often resulting in radical transparency practices as new relational control mechanisms. Post-disclosure trajectories diverge into either relational dissolution or reconstruction. This study contributes by identifying dual-motive disclosure, conceptualizing incremental disclosure as a conflict mitigation strategy, and framing infidelity disclosure as a renegotiation of private governance. It advances sociological and governance perspectives by demonstrating that intimate information management constitutes a form of informal governance with broader social parallels.

Keywords: Communication Privacy Management, Incremental Disclosure, Micro-Level Governance, Relational Dynamics, Self-Disclosure

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INTRODUCTION

Infidelity within marriage has long been recognized as a central issue in the study of family sociology and interpersonal communication, primarily due to its profound implications for relational stability, psychological well-being, and the legitimacy of the family as a social institution. A growing body of research identifies infidelity as one of the leading causes of divorce across diverse social contexts (Campbell & Parker, 2022; Chairil & Masrina, 2023). In many societies, including those in Asia and Indonesia, infidelity is not merely framed as a moral transgression but also as a disruption to broader social order, given that the family remains a fundamental unit for the reproduction of values, norms, and social control (Doğan, 2025; Elesmi et al., 2024). Despite this, existing scholarship has largely focused on the causes and consequences of infidelity, while the critical moment in which perpetrators decide to disclose their affairs to their legitimate partners remains relatively underexplored.

In fact, the disclosure of infidelity represents a pivotal turning point in relational dynamics. Empirical evidence suggests that most cases of infidelity are eventually revealed, either through direct confession or third-party intervention (Falah & Ramadan, 2025; Fife et al., 2023). Such disclosure should not be understood as a mere communicative act, but rather as a socially embedded process characterized by emotional tension, strategic calculation, and power negotiation. Individuals are confronted with a fundamental dilemma between honesty as a moral imperative and the potential relational breakdown it may trigger. This paradox highlights that honesty—normatively regarded as the foundation of intimate relationships—can, under conditions of betrayal, become a catalyst for deeper relational crises.

Furthermore, the disclosure of infidelity can be conceptualized as a crisis in the management of private information within intimate relationships. Information regarding an affair is inherently private and typically tightly controlled by the perpetrator. However, once disclosed, the boundary between private and shared domains becomes blurred, if not entirely collapsed. In such circumstances, individuals are not only managing information but also navigating its social consequences, including stigma, guilt, and the potential loss of relational ties (Firdaus et al., 2025; Fitriyah & Wahyudi, 2025). Thus, disclosure may be framed as a form of “information governance crisis” at the micro level, wherein rules, access, and control over information must be renegotiated under highly vulnerable conditions.

Interpersonal communication scholarship offers an important theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals manage private information, particularly through Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory, which emphasizes the concepts of privacy boundaries and privacy turbulence (Hilmiana & Iskandar, 2024; Islamia et al., 2025). This framework posits that individuals develop rules governing when, how, and to whom private information is disclosed. However, in cases of violation such as infidelity, these rules become destabilized, resulting in privacy turbulence that disrupts relational equilibrium. Prior research (La Ajiri et al., 2025) demonstrates that the disclosure of sensitive information in romantic relationships is often followed by conflict and uncertainty, necessitating processes of renegotiation to restore relational balance.

On the other hand, the literature on infidelity has predominantly centered on victims as the primary unit of analysis. Studies by Luo and Yu (2022) and Maharani and Yundianto (2024), for instance, focus extensively on the psychological consequences experienced by betrayed partners, including trauma, depression, and loss of trust. In contrast, the perspective of perpetrators—particularly regarding the process of disclosure—remains relatively limited. While some studies address motives for confession, such as guilt or external pressure (Munyoki et al., 2023; Najmah et al., 2025), they rarely examine how these motives are translated into concrete communicative strategies.

Moreover, research on self-disclosure in interpersonal communication has largely been applied to less extreme contexts, such as the sharing of personal identity, health conditions, or everyday experiences (Nasyiah, 2024; Nazari et al., 2024). In such contexts, self-disclosure is typically conceptualized as a mechanism for fostering intimacy and trust.

However, in the case of infidelity, self-disclosure may instead undermine intimacy and erode previously established trust. This indicates that the dynamics of self-disclosure in crisis contexts possess distinct characteristics that require a more context-sensitive analytical approach.

The expansion of digital technologies has further transformed the landscape of information management within intimate relationships. Practices such as password sharing, location tracking, and digital monitoring are increasingly normalized as expressions of relational transparency (Nisa et al., 2026; Obasi, 2025). In post-infidelity contexts, these practices often function as mechanisms for rebuilding trust, while simultaneously introducing new forms of control that resemble surveillance systems found in broader social structures. This development invites a reconceptualization of intimate relationships not merely as emotional spaces, but also as arenas of informal governance shaped through everyday practices.

Additionally, existing studies indicate that gender plays a significant role in shaping how individuals manage and disclose private information. Women tend to be more emotionally expressive, whereas men are often more selective in managing information that may threaten their self-image (Rahmalia et al., 2022; Rakhmawati & Gumelar, 2025). These differences have implications for disclosure strategies, including timing, narrative construction, and the intensity of information conveyed. However, research that explicitly links gender differences to disclosure strategies in the context of infidelity remains scarce.

Within this broader landscape of scholarship, it becomes evident that although infidelity and self-disclosure have been extensively examined, they are rarely integrated within a single analytical framework that positions disclosure as a complex and strategic social process. Furthermore, the governance dimension of private information management at the level of intimate relationships remains underexplored, despite its potential to deepen our understanding of how power, control, and legitimacy are negotiated in everyday life.

Against this backdrop, this study departs from the assumption that the disclosure of infidelity cannot be reduced to an individual moral act, but should instead be understood as a socially embedded practice involving complex calculations, strategies, and negotiations. Individuals are not only driven by the moral imperative to be honest, but also by situational pressures that compel them to reveal previously concealed information. At the same time, the manner of disclosure—whether direct, gradual, or narratively constructed—reflects strategic efforts to manage potential consequences and mitigate relational damage.

Through this perspective, the present study seeks to offer a more integrative approach by conceptualizing the disclosure of infidelity as an arena in which privacy boundaries are renegotiated, communication strategies are deliberately constructed, and new forms of control emerge within intimate relationships. The findings suggest that disclosure is shaped not by a single motive, but by an interplay of internal drives and external pressures. Gradual disclosure practices, in particular, indicate the presence of strategic efforts to de-escalate conflict while simultaneously opening possibilities for relational reconstruction.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore the dynamics of self-disclosure in the context of infidelity, with a specific focus on motives for disclosure, decision-making processes, and the communicative strategies employed by perpetrators. It further examines how such disclosures trigger privacy turbulence and prompt the renegotiation of relational rules, as well as how these processes may be understood as forms of micro-level governance. In doing so, this study seeks to contribute to the theoretical advancement of family sociology and interpersonal communication, while also opening interdisciplinary dialogue with broader socio-political perspectives, particularly in relation to the dynamics of governance in everyday life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to capture in depth the dynamics of self-disclosure in the context of infidelity, a phenomenon that is inherently sensitive, complex, and highly contextual. A qualitative approach is deemed appropriate as the phenomenon under investigation cannot be reduced to measurable variables; rather, it requires an interpretive understanding of meaning, subjective experiences, and the social processes that shape individual actions (Rangkuti et al., 2025). In this regard, the disclosure of infidelity is not merely a communicative event, but a process embedded with emotional tensions, moral considerations, and relational negotiations that can only be accessed through an approach that enables a deep exploration of participants' lived experiences (Rokach & Chan, 2023).

The study was conducted in an urban area of Maluku, Indonesia, on the premise that urban communities exhibit more complex relational dynamics, particularly in relation to access to communication technologies, shifting family values, and higher intensities of social interaction. This context is particularly relevant as practices of infidelity and the management of private information are often intertwined with digital media use, social mobility, and the distinct social pressures characteristic of urban life (Saraswaty et al., 2025). Furthermore, the researcher's cultural proximity to the research setting facilitated the establishment of trust with participants, which is essential given the sensitive nature of the topic.

A total of eight participants were recruited through purposive sampling, based on the primary criterion that they had engaged in extramarital affairs within marriage and had disclosed such experiences to their legitimate partners. This selection strategy was intended to ensure the collection of rich and relevant data grounded in direct experience of the disclosure process. Variation among participants was also considered in terms of gender, age, and social background to capture a diversity of experiences and disclosure strategies. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, defined as the point at which the data exhibit recurring patterns and no longer yield substantially new insights.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews served as the primary method, as they enabled the exploration of

personal narratives, motivations, and decision-making processes that are not directly observable. The semi-structured format provided a systematic framework of guiding questions while allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences in a reflective and open manner. Observations were conducted to capture non-verbal expressions, such as pauses, intonation, and body language, which often convey critical insights into the emotional states and tensions experienced by participants. Documentation, including personal notes or digital conversations (with participants' consent), was utilized as supplementary data to provide additional context to the disclosure process.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed both source and method triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information across participants to identify patterns of similarity and divergence in their experiences (Taj & Ameen, 2025). Method triangulation was achieved by integrating multiple data collection techniques—interviews, observation, and documentation—thereby reducing reliance on a single data source. Data analysis was conducted iteratively following the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2020), which encompasses data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were rigorously upheld through the implementation of informed consent, participant anonymity, and data confidentiality, given the potential social and emotional risks associated with the topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Disclosure as a Process of Social Calculation: From Spontaneity to Strategy

The findings of this study reveal that the disclosure of infidelity rarely emerges as a purely spontaneous act driven solely by emotional impulses; rather, it constitutes the outcome of a complex process of social and emotional calculation. Informants consistently described a reflective phase preceding disclosure, during which they carefully weighed the potential consequences that might arise. Within this phase, disclosure was treated as a high-risk decision with the capacity to radically alter the trajectory of the relationship—either toward dissolution or the possibility of reconstruction. These considerations encompassed anticipated partner reactions, ranging from anger and rejection to the prospect of separation, as well as broader implications for the family, children, and surrounding social environment. In this sense, disclosure operates as a “critical juncture” that extends beyond personal honesty and engages wider social dimensions.

Notably, within this process of calculation, informants did not merely consider the aftermath of disclosure but also strategically evaluated the timing and manner in which disclosure should occur. The timing was often deliberately selected, for instance, when the partner's emotional condition was perceived as more stable or when opportunities for open dialogue were more feasible. Several informants reported postponing disclosure for months—not due to an unwillingness to be truthful, but as an effort to identify what they perceived as the “safest” moment to minimize destructive consequences. This indicates that

disclosure is not a singular event, but rather part of a consciously structured process in which individuals act as active agents managing a crisis situation.

In this context, the normative value of honesty within intimate relationships undergoes complex negotiation. Informants acknowledged that the moral imperative to be truthful frequently collided with the fear of losing an established relationship. Honesty, therefore, is no longer understood as an absolute value, but as a contingent choice that must be evaluated in relation to its social consequences. Some informants characterized this tension as an “internal struggle” between the desire to alleviate moral burden and the intention to preserve marital stability. Accordingly, disclosure cannot be reduced to an individual moral act; instead, it must be understood as a social practice that simultaneously involves rational, emotional, and relational considerations.

This process of calculation further illustrates how individuals attempt to anticipate and, to some extent, manage their partner’s responses. Informants often imagined multiple possible reaction scenarios and adjusted their disclosure strategies accordingly. In certain cases, disclosure was conducted through more cautious approaches, employing softened language or indirect narratives as a means of mitigating potential conflict. This suggests that even prior to the act of disclosure, the relationship had already entered a phase of symbolic negotiation, wherein meanings, emotions, and positional dynamics between partners began to be contested.

These findings align with relational decision-making perspectives under conditions of uncertainty, which emphasize that decisions within intimate relationships are inherently shaped by ambiguity and risk (Tandrianto & Winduwati, 2022; Varma et al., 2023). Within this framework, individuals never possess complete certainty regarding how their partners will respond; consequently, decisions must be made under conditions of inherent uncertainty. Thus, the disclosure of infidelity may be conceptualized as a probabilistic relational decision, in which individuals seek to maximize desirable outcomes while minimizing potential risks.

Dual-Motive Disclosure: Between Internal Catharsis and External Pressure

The disclosure of infidelity is not driven by a singular motive; rather, it emerges from a complex configuration of internal impulses and external pressures that are deeply intertwined. On the one hand, informants described a strong need for catharsis—an urge to release the psychological burden associated with guilt, anxiety, and the persistent tension of concealing an affair. This sense of guilt extends beyond the individual level, reflecting an awareness of having violated relational norms and moral commitments within marriage. In many cases, informants reported that maintaining secrecy generated greater emotional strain than the potential risks associated with disclosure. In this regard, disclosure functions as a release mechanism that enables individuals to restore emotional equilibrium, albeit at the cost of uncertain relational consequences.

However, catharsis in this context cannot be understood solely as an internal psychological process. The findings indicate that the desire to “feel relieved” is closely linked to efforts to restore one’s moral identity in the eyes of the partner. Informants expressed not

only a need to alleviate emotional burden but also a desire to be perceived once again as honest, responsible, and trustworthy individuals, despite their transgression. In this sense, disclosure operates as a symbolic act with a distinct social dimension, through which individuals attempt to reconstruct their self-image within the relationship. This perspective aligns with the view that self-disclosure in intimate relationships is often associated with identity management and the need for social acceptance (Walker, 2025; Wang, 2025).

On the other hand, external pressure emerges as an equally significant driver of disclosure. Many informants revealed that their decision to confess was frequently triggered by the threat of exposure by third parties, such as friends, colleagues, or even the affair partner. In such situations, control over information becomes distributed and no longer resides entirely with the individual. As the likelihood of exposure increases, disclosure becomes a strategic effort to “reclaim the narrative” before the information surfaces in an uncontrolled manner. In other words, disclosure is undertaken not merely out of a desire for honesty, but also as an attempt to manage the manner and context in which the truth is revealed to the partner.

The interplay between internal catharsis and external pressure underscores the dynamic and situational nature of disclosure motives. In some instances, internal impulses serve as the primary trigger, subsequently reinforced by external pressures. In other cases, external forces become the dominant factor, compelling individuals to disclose despite their lack of emotional readiness. This often results in disclosure occurring under suboptimal conditions, both in terms of emotional preparedness and relational stability. Consequently, the disclosure process becomes more susceptible to heightened conflict and tension.

These findings further affirm that the disclosure of infidelity cannot be understood as a fully autonomous act. Although individuals appear to be the primary agents in this process, their decisions are significantly shaped by surrounding social structures, including power relations, social norms, and the distribution of information. From an interpersonal communication perspective, this reflects the notion that the management of private information is always embedded within broader relational networks, where the boundary between the private and the public becomes increasingly fluid (Weiser et al., 2023; Wusu, 2022). Accordingly, dual-motive disclosure not only illustrates the complexity of individual motivations but also highlights how disclosure practices emerge from the ongoing negotiation between internal drives and external pressures.

Incremental Disclosure as a Conflict Mitigation Strategy

The disclosure of infidelity is rarely conducted in a single, comprehensive act; rather, it tends to unfold gradually through what can be conceptualized as incremental disclosure. In this practice, perpetrators reveal information in stages, beginning with general acknowledgments and progressively moving toward more specific details as their partner’s responses evolve. This pattern indicates that disclosure is not merely an act of conveying truth, but a communicative strategy deliberately designed to manage conflict dynamics with caution. Informants reported consciously withholding certain information in the initial

stages—not solely to conceal, but to prevent overwhelming emotional reactions that could lead to immediate relational breakdown.

This gradual strategy also functions as a mechanism for gauging the partner's response. At each stage of disclosure, perpetrators closely observe both emotional and verbal reactions, using these cues to determine subsequent steps. When responses are perceived as explosive, individuals tend to withhold additional information or reframe it in more tempered ways. Conversely, when partners demonstrate openness to الحوار, perpetrators become more willing to disclose deeper and more detailed aspects of the affair. This process highlights a dynamic interaction in which disclosure is shaped not only by the perpetrator's intentions but also by the evolving responses of the partner. In this sense, incremental disclosure serves as a tool to preserve the possibility of relational continuity by avoiding uncontrollable points of conflict escalation.

In practice, this strategy is often accompanied by the use of euphemistic language, wherein softer or more ambiguous terms are employed to describe the act of infidelity. For instance, informants initially used expressions such as “becoming close to someone else” or “being emotionally involved” before eventually acknowledging a more serious relationship. Additionally, defensive narratives emerged as part of the communicative strategy, with perpetrators attempting to justify or contextualize their actions by referring to marital conflict or unmet emotional needs. Selective disclosure also played a crucial role, as certain details were filtered or delayed to mitigate the emotional impact on the partner. These practices underscore that disclosure is never neutral; rather, it is constructed through linguistic and narrative choices that shape how information is received and interpreted.

Within this framework, disclosure can be understood as a performative process, in which individuals do not merely present facts but actively “perform” particular roles to influence their partner's perceptions and responses. Perpetrators seek to position themselves as remorseful, honest, or responsible, even within a context marked by tension and vulnerability. This performativity is evident in their management of tone, word choice, and the sequencing of information. Consequently, disclosure becomes an arena in which identity, emotion, and communicative strategy intersect in efforts to minimize relational damage.

These findings are consistent with perspectives on communication accommodation and emotional regulation in intimate relationships, which emphasize that individuals actively adjust their communicative behaviors to manage emotions and sustain relational bonds (Yang et al., 2025). Within this framework, incremental disclosure can be interpreted as a form of communicative adaptation, whereby individuals calibrate the intensity and form of their messages in response to the emotional context they encounter. Emotional regulation thus operates not only at the internal level but is also manifested in strategic communicative practices aimed at de-escalating conflict and creating space for potential reconciliation.

Furthermore, this practice suggests that honesty in relationships does not always manifest as immediate and total transparency; rather, it is often negotiated through gradual and selective processes. This challenges the normative assumption that “ideal” disclosure

should be complete and direct. Instead, the findings demonstrate that in crisis situations, honesty is mediated by strategic considerations oriented toward preserving relational continuity.

Privacy Turbulence and the Crisis of Information Governance

The findings of this study demonstrate that the disclosure of infidelity serves as a primary trigger of significant privacy turbulence within marital relationships. Such turbulence emerges when previously well-defined boundaries between private and shared information abruptly collapse following confession. Information that had been tightly controlled by the perpetrator as part of a private domain is suddenly introduced into the shared relational space, thereby disrupting the existing equilibrium. In this context, partners are confronted not only with the fact of infidelity itself but also with uncertainty regarding the extent to which other information may still be concealed. Consequently, disclosure does not necessarily resolve the issue; rather, it often unveils additional layers of relational tension that are more complex and difficult to manage.

This privacy turbulence manifests in various forms of uncertainty and conflict. Partners receiving the disclosure frequently begin to question the overall honesty of the perpetrator, extending even to matters that were previously considered unproblematic. The erosion of trust generates a heightened demand for access to further information as a means of reducing uncertainty. At the same time, perpetrators face a new dilemma concerning the extent to which they should continue to disclose without entirely relinquishing their private space. This situation produces ongoing tension, as both parties attempt to renegotiate informational boundaries under unstable conditions. In other words, the relationship enters a liminal phase, wherein established rules no longer apply, while new norms have yet to be fully constructed.

Within the framework of Communication Privacy Management (CPM), this condition can be understood as a form of privacy turbulence, defined as a disruption in the management of private information resulting from violations or shifts in previously agreed-upon rules (Zhang & Li, 2025). However, the present findings suggest that turbulence in the context of infidelity is particularly intense, as it involves a fundamental breach of trust. Not only are informational boundaries violated, but the moral legitimacy and relational commitments underpinning the relationship are also called into question. Accordingly, the turbulence observed is not merely communicative in nature but also structural within the relational context itself.

Furthermore, this situation may be conceptualized as a form of information governance crisis at the micro level. Under normal conditions, marital relationships operate with implicit rules governing who has access to specific information, when such information may be shared, and under what circumstances. However, once infidelity is disclosed, these rules become obsolete or subject to contestation. The absence of clear guidelines forces individuals to reconstruct systems of information management from the ground up. This reconstruction process is often characterized by intense, emotionally charged negotiations, frequently accompanied by conflict.

During this phase of reconstruction, various emergent practices reflect attempts to address the crisis. For instance, affected partners often demand heightened transparency, including access to personal devices, communication histories, or daily activities. In response, perpetrators may comply with these demands as an expression of accountability and as an effort to rebuild trust. Nevertheless, such practices do not always yield the anticipated stability. In some cases, increased transparency generates new tensions by blurring the boundary between trust and control. This indicates that the reconstruction of information governance is not a linear process, but rather one marked by continuous negotiation and adjustment.

These findings suggest that information management within intimate relationships should not be understood as static, but as a dynamic system inherently vulnerable to crisis. When such crises occur—as in the case of infidelity disclosure—individuals are confronted not only with communicative challenges but also with the need to redefine rules, roles, and expectations within the relationship.

Relational Renegotiation: Extreme Transparency and the Emergence of New Forms of Control

Following the disclosure of infidelity, marital relationships do not simply revert to their prior state; instead, they enter an intensive phase of renegotiation concerning rules, boundaries, and expectations. The findings of this study indicate that the moment of disclosure constitutes a critical turning point that compels partners to redefine what counts as trust, openness, and commitment. In contexts where trust has been significantly eroded, affected partners tend to demand heightened levels of transparency as a precondition for relational continuation. Such transparency is no longer merely symbolic or normative, but is enacted through concrete practices that penetrate deeply into the most personal dimensions of everyday life.

One of the most salient manifestations of this renegotiation is the emergence of practices of extreme transparency, including the sharing of digital account passwords, granting full access to personal devices, and the use of location-tracking applications. In addition, communicative openness intensifies significantly, with partners demanding more detailed accounts of daily activities, social interactions, and even thoughts and emotions that may not have previously been explicitly shared. For some informants, these practices are perceived as a renewed form of commitment aimed at rebuilding damaged trust. In this sense, transparency becomes a form of “relational currency” through which sincerity and accountability are demonstrated.

However, the findings also reveal a more problematic dimension of such practices. Extreme transparency does not function solely as a mechanism of relational repair; it simultaneously generates new forms of control within the relationship. Access to personal information—previously considered private—becomes normalized as a relational demand in the post-infidelity context. Under these conditions, the boundary between trust and surveillance becomes increasingly blurred. What initially emerges as an effort to rebuild trust

can gradually transform into sustained and intensive monitoring practices. This suggests that transparency is not inherently synonymous with trust; rather, it may operate as a provisional substitute characterized by control-oriented dynamics.

This phenomenon aligns with findings in studies of digital communication and intimate relationships, which indicate that technological affordances often intensify monitoring practices, particularly when trust has been disrupted (Zhao et al., 2025; Zulkffli et al., 2022). In this context, technology functions not only as a medium of communication but also as an instrument of surveillance that enables real-time monitoring of a partner's activities. Such practices reflect a broader shift in the management of intimate relationships—from those grounded in implicit trust to those increasingly reliant on continuous verification.

Moreover, these dynamics can be understood as a form of informal governance within intimate relationships. Relationship management is no longer based solely on implicit norms but begins to resemble a system characterized by explicit rules, monitoring mechanisms, and potential sanctions in the event of violations. Through this process of renegotiation, partners actively reconstruct their “relational regime,” including determining who has access to particular information, how such information is shared, and what consequences follow from breaches of these arrangements. In this sense, intimate relationships can be conceptualized as arenas in which governance operates at the micro level, embedded within everyday interactions shaped by negotiation and power.

It is important to note, however, that this process does not always produce the desired stability. In some cases, extreme transparency generates emotional fatigue for both the perpetrator and the affected partner. Perpetrators may experience a loss of private space, while partners may continue to feel insecure despite extensive access to information. This suggests that excessive control cannot fully substitute for lost trust and may instead give rise to new tensions within the relationship. Thus, post-disclosure renegotiation should not be understood as a linear or straightforward process, but rather as one marked by ambiguity and persistent dilemmas between the need for openness and the preservation of individual autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the disclosure of infidelity within marriage is not a spontaneous act driven solely by moral honesty, but rather a complex, strategic social process shaped by emotional and relational calculations. The motives underlying disclosure are found to be dual in nature, reflecting an interplay between internal cathartic impulses and external pressures that constrain individual control over private information. In practice, perpetrators actively construct communicative strategies through incremental disclosure in order to manage the intensity of conflict and preserve the possibility of relational continuity. However, this process simultaneously generates significant privacy turbulence, which compels partners to renegotiate boundaries, rules, and mechanisms of control within the relationship. These findings suggest that the management of information in marital relationships constitutes a

form of dynamic micro-level governance, wherein transparency, trust, and control are continuously negotiated, particularly under conditions of crisis. Accordingly, the disclosure of infidelity should not be understood merely as a moral dilemma of honesty, but as a transformative moment in the structure of intimate relationships. More broadly, this study offers a novel perspective by positioning family relations as arenas of complex and contextually embedded social governance.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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