

Examining the Impact of Hedonistic Lifestyles on Divorce Rates through Counseling Theories

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of hedonistic lifestyles on marital infidelity and relationship stability. Using a qualitative approach, data was gathered through in-depth interviews with two couples who have experienced the adverse impacts of such lifestyles on their marriages. The research findings highlight that a hedonistic orientation typically undermines both commitment and satisfaction within relationships, potentially leading to infidelity. Analysis suggests that hedonism distracts individuals from long-term relationship goals, fostering a culture of immediate gratification detrimental to marital cohesion. The study recommends integrating cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques in couple counseling sessions to counter these effects. This intervention is aimed at helping couples develop healthier communication patterns and more effective impulse control, which are crucial for maintaining relationship stability. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of proactive therapeutic strategies that focus on enhancing interpersonal connections and managing detrimental lifestyle influences. These findings contribute to understanding how lifestyle choices affect marital dynamics and offer practical approaches for therapists working with couples facing similar challenges.

Keywords: Infidelity; Hedonistic Lifestyle; Counseling Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an institution that serves not only as a union between two individuals but also as a foundational pillar for societal and cultural stability (Karimi et al., 2019). In many cultures, especially within religious contexts like Islam, marriage is seen as a sanctified covenant (Leavitt et al., 2021). It is designed to foster mutual tranquility, love, and compassion, principles deeply embedded within the teachings of the Quran (Quran, 30:21) (Hadi, 2024; Said et al., 2024). Despite its revered status, marriage today faces significant challenges due to shifting societal norms and values, particularly the rise of hedonism.

The modern inclination toward a hedonistic lifestyle emphasizes self-gratification and material success, often undermining traditional commitments such as marriage. According Gu et al. (2022) This shift towards individualistic values threatens the fundamental aspects of marital bonds, typically characterized by mutual support and long-term commitment. The prevalence of such lifestyles raises important questions about the impact of hedonism on marital stability and satisfaction, necessitating a thorough investigation into how these behaviors influence the dynamics of married life. As societies evolve, the increasing endorsement of hedonistic values has sparked a notable increase in marital discord and infidelity (Chai, 2021). This study explores how hedonistic lifestyles affect marital stability and satisfaction, focusing mainly on the emotional and psychological impacts of such lifestyles on married couples.

Extensive research has documented the negative implications of hedonistic lifestyles on relationships. For instance, Wallerstein (2019) highlighted how prioritizing personal fulfillment and immediate gratification can erode the emotional and spiritual connections that form the cornerstone of marriage. Their findings are supported by a broader body of work that links hedonistic behaviors with higher instances of marital dissatisfaction and divorce (Guven et al., 2012; Unanue et al., 2021). These studies suggest that the pursuit of personal pleasure often leads to a neglect of marital duties and a decrease in relationship quality.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that hedonism's impact is confined to personal relationships and extends to legal and social structures. Increases in divorce rates and marital disputes have been associated with the adoption of more liberal lifestyle choices, often influenced by hedonistic values (Yeganeh, 2024). This correlation points to a need for greater focus on how societal norms and values shape marital relationships and, consequently, the overall fabric of society.

However, despite the wealth of research identifying the problems associated with hedonism, there is a noted gap in practical applications of counseling theories that address these challenges. Particularly, the use of rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in marital counseling has been underexplored as a method for mitigating the effects of hedonism. This study seeks to fill this gap by applying REBT principles to understand and counteract the irrational beliefs fueled by hedonistic lifestyles, aiming to enhance marital satisfaction and stability.

METHODS

This study utilizes an interdisciplinary approach that blends qualitative research methods with a legal analytical framework to explore how hedonistic lifestyles impact marital stability (Nikolajev, 2021). By integrating these approaches, the study captures a holistic view of the personal and legal dimensions affecting marriages under the strain of hedonism. The research focuses on in-depth interviews with two carefully selected couples who have encountered significant challenges in their marriages due to hedonistic behaviors (Huda, 2022). These couples were chosen based on their prior involvement in legal disputes or counseling sessions directly linked to the consequences of a hedonistic lifestyle, providing a rich context for personal experiences and legal implications.

Data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews, each designed to delve into the personal experiences of the couples while also probing the legal challenges they faced, such as financial disputes or issues related to infidelity. The interview format encouraged open discussion, providing insights into how hedonistic values influenced their marital dynamics and legal standing. Alongside the interviews, a thorough legal analysis was conducted to examine relevant marital laws, case law, and legal doctrines within the couples' jurisdictions (Huda, 2022). This legal review aimed to identify the current legal environment's capacity to handle disputes arising from hedonistic behaviors in marriage, highlighting potential gaps and areas for legal reform.

Data from the interviews were processed using thematic analysis, which allowed for identifying recurring themes related to the impacts of hedonism on marital stability. These themes were then correlated with findings from the legal analysis, creating a comprehensive understanding of how personal behaviors and legal contexts intersect in marriages affected by hedonism. This dual-analysis approach ensured that the study's findings reflected the participants' subjective experiences and the objective legal standards that apply to their situations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Divorce is one of the increasing social issues in modern society. This phenomenon is influenced by various factors, including the change in people's lifestyles that increasingly lead to a hedonistic lifestyle (Sa'adah et al., 2024). Hedonism, which focuses on the search for pleasure and instant personal gratification, often leads to imbalances in domestic relationships. According to Kraus (2020), this lifestyle encourages individuals to prioritize worldly desires, such as luxury, entertainment, and self-indulgence, without regard for long-term responsibilities in marriage. In households, hedonic lifestyles are often a source of conflict between couples. Excessive consumptive patterns can result in serious financial problems, while a lack of communication and a mismatch of values between spouses can worsen the situation. Many couples caught up in this lifestyle

find it challenging to maintain a healthy relationship, resulting in divorce being the chosen way out.

Today, breakdown often occurs in a family due to various factors such as economic and social factors, a lack of good communication (distance), and various other reasons. Infidelity can be called to express an unfaithful relationship to a partner, or another opinion states that infidelity is adultery committed by a person to another person who is not a legal spouse (Dariyo, 2004). Married life is a separate autonomy between couples, which means that it should not be interfered with by other parties, especially third parties with infidelity. The presence of a third party in the sacred bond of marriage can create disasters for the integrity of the household (Mandailing, 2013). Marital infidelity refers to an act where one or both partners engage in an intimate or emotional relationship with a third party outside of their marriage. It is a form of unfaithfulness and can have a profound impact on the marital relationship.

Infidelity is often one of the leading causes of divorce in marriages. For many reasons, infidelity can lead to divorce because it involves a breach of fundamental trust in the marriage and the dissatisfaction of a spouse not being able to satisfy a hedonistic lifestyle. A hedonistic lifestyle often causes an imbalance in the domestic relationship. Couples who live this lifestyle may focus more on self-interest than building a healthy and supportive relationship. Financial issues are often the main trigger of conflict, where excessive consumptive patterns result in piles of debt and economic instability in the household. In addition, this lifestyle can also reduce the quality of emotional interaction and communication, so couples tend to experience emotional gaps and loss of intimacy.

Indonesia, as a country experiencing modernization and globalization, is inseparable from the impact of social and cultural changes (Irwandi & Taufik, 2023). One of the most prominent phenomena in the modern era is the increase in hedonic lifestyles among people. Malang, one of the major cities in East Java, faces the significant impact of this change. In Malang, hedonistic lifestyles are increasingly concerning, given their effects on family stability. Based on data from the Malang Religious Court, divorce has become one of the leading social issues that has continued to increase in recent years. Most divorce cases are dominated by reasons of internal conflict, often triggered by economic problems, poor communication, and disharmony of values between spouses. In many cases, a hedonistic lifestyle is the root of the problem that exacerbates domestic tensions.

**Causes of Divorce in Malang Regency
(2024)**

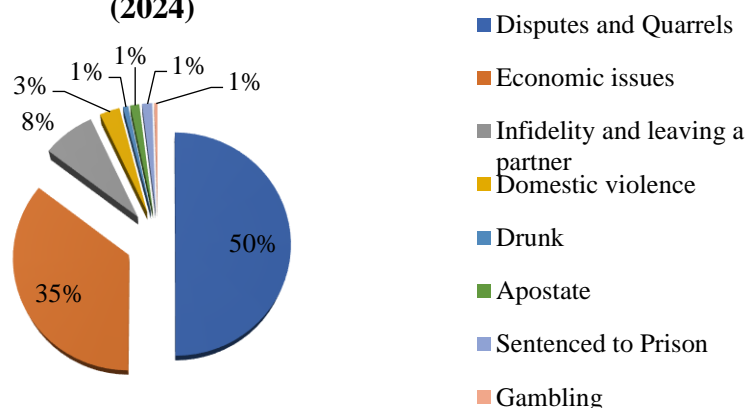


Figure 1. Number of Divorces by Province and Factor, 2024 Religious Court of Malang District

The consumptive lifestyle of one spouse often leads to severe financial stress. On the other hand, focusing on personal gratification, such as frequently spending time outside the home for entertainment or socializing, can reduce quality time with your partner and children. This creates an emotional gap that further deteriorates the relationship. In some cases, this imbalance drives couples to choose the path of divorce. On average, it's economic. That's the reason that ranks the highest. Maybe what is trending now is online gambling and online loans to fulfill the needs of a hedonistic lifestyle (Anggraini, 2019). The hedonic lifestyle in Malang can be observed from the high consumption of luxury goods, impulsive shopping patterns, the tendency of people to prioritize entertainment, and the rise of recreational areas and shopping centers that meet the needs of a modern lifestyle. Meanwhile, traditional values that underlie family harmony, such as simplicity, cooperation, and close communication, are often overlooked. These changes have an impact on various aspects of life, including domestic relationships (Khosravi et al., 2021).

Infidelity in the Study of Islamic Law and Positive Law in Indonesia

Infidelity in Islam is considered a solemn and forbidden act. Islam emphasizes the importance of maintaining honor, trust, and moral values in marriage. The act of adultery, or infidelity, is considered a violation of Allah's rules and can have serious consequences. Islam encourages its adherents to establish a legal marriage bond as a platform for the expression of intimacy and love while curbing lustful desires that violate religious norms. It is essential to understand that Islam also emphasizes the values of repentance, forgiveness, and behavioral change for those who commit sins, including infidelity, by sincerely repenting to Allah. This is because Islam sees the importance of family harmony in building a conducive household climate (Al Mansur et al., 2021). In addition, the prophet's hadith also explains that infidelity is despicable behavior, as conveyed through his

words: “Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said: He who cheats a woman of her husband or a slave of his master is not one of us” (Ash’ath, 2008). Islam, as a religion that has values and rules of life, has explained that infidelity is a condition that is not justified and is a prohibited act. Infidelity is a sinful behavior and violates religious rules. As Allah says in Surah al-Isra' verse (32): “Do not approach zina. Verily (adultery) is an abominable deed and the worst way.” (Q.S Al- Isra', 17 ayat: 32).

Infidelity is adulterous behavior because it causes problems in domestic life and keeps the realization of a *sakinah, mawaddah, warahmah* family, so it is appropriate that Allah requires punishment (*hadd*) for the perpetrators in order to maintain their honor, avoid chaos in the bloodline, and create a clean society. Two other bad effects caused by adultery and free sex have also been revealed by Doctor al-Nasimi. The first is the loss of human control in fulfilling their biological needs, instincts and lusts. There is also no doubt that it can cause harm to individual health, destroying the existence of the family as the foundation of the building of society. Secondly, adultery and promiscuous sex will cause a person to run away from legal marriage and the responsibility of building a family which is the foundation of building society. That is what leads to the loosening of the bonds of society and the formation of immoral individuals.(Al-Sayyid, 1998)

Perpetrators who have an affair can be subject to criminal penalties, which are regulated in the Criminal Code Article 284 paragraph 1 letter A, with a maximum imprisonment of nine months (Dhumillah & Windiyastuti, 2024). This rule applies to husbands or wives as well as people involved in the affair. The term *pelakor* or *perebutor laki orang* (Husband stealer), where the woman is the trigger for the breakdown of the relationship or household of people, while *pebinor* or *perebut bini orang* (Wife snatcher), where the man who is the perpetrator triggers the breakdown of the relationship or household of people. Law no. 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage has regulated the Law of Marriage in which Article 1 states that marriage is a physical and mental bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family (household) based on the Almighty God. This means that in order to create happiness and tranquility in the family, it should not involve third parties with infidelity because marriage is a sacred promise and one of the indications of the height of the human degree in accordance with the natural character and social life to achieve a perfect degree (Azzam & Hawwas, 2011).

Hedonistic Lifestyle and Its Effect on Infidelity in Genengan Village, Pakisaji, Malang and Its Legal Review

Hedonism is a view that considers that every pleasure and enjoyment in the form of material is the main goal in one's life (Lelkes, 2021). A hedonistic lifestyle is a lifestyle that focuses on seeking unlimited pleasure and satisfaction, without considering the aspects of needs and priorities. People who have a hedonistic lifestyle tend to be dissatisfied with what they have, and always want to get better, more, and more expensive things. People who have a hedonistic lifestyle also often

ignore good moral, religious, and social values, and only follow their lust. A hedonistic lifestyle can have a negative impact on life, especially on financial aspects, health, and interpersonal relationships such as husband and wife (Sholeh, 2017). People who have a hedonistic lifestyle can experience problems such as wasteful, consumptive, selfish, individualistic, lazy, irresponsible, and easily fall into deviant behavior. There is literature that suggests that hedonism is the goal of a person's life which ends up getting pleasure and enjoyment alone, which can be understood that hedonism is a person's style of seeking pleasure and that is his life goal (Sayyaf & Robbie, 2021).

A hedonistic lifestyle that emphasizes the search for pleasure and personal satisfaction can affect various aspects of family life. Broadly speaking, there are two factors behind the emergence of a hedonistic lifestyle in a person, namely individual intrinsic factors, both experience and character, while the next factor is extrinsic factors such as the influence of the environment or family itself (Sayyaf & Robbie, 2021). As for psychologically, there are several factors towards a person's hedonic lifestyle that may have an impact in the context of family life:

1. **Individual Priorities:** Hedonic lifestyles often place priority on individual satisfaction. Family members who embrace this lifestyle may tend to focus more on personal needs and desires rather than the needs of the family as a whole.
2. **Consumptive and Material:** A hedonic lifestyle can be associated with consumptive behavior and a tendency to seek happiness through material goods. This can have an impact on family finances and cause economic stress if family needs do not align with consumptive urges.
3. **Importance of Appearance, Entertainment and Recreation:** Families adopting a hedonic lifestyle may place a high priority on entertainment and recreation. This could include travel, social activities, or other experiences aimed at increasing enjoyment and satisfaction.
4. **Lack of Focus on Family Values:** Family members who strongly embrace a hedonic lifestyle may tend to pay less attention to or focus less on more traditional family values, such as responsibility, mutual support and continuity of relationships.

There are many cases of infidelity that occur due to unfulfilled desires and lifestyle demands in the family, including those experienced by the family of Mr. AF (35) and his wife LA (31) who are located in Genengan, Pakisaji, Malang. AF (35) and his wife LA (31) who live in Genengan, Pakisaji, Malang. He is a hard worker who prohibits his wife LA (31) from working, on the grounds that he is able to meet and support the needs of his family's life and until he is blessed with 1 daughter by living with his wife's mother-in-law. (interview with Mr. AF, August 2024)

Table 1. Summary of Marital Issues from Interviews

Name	Location	Summary	Date
Mr. AF	Genengan, Pakisaji, Malang	Divorced after his wife's infidelity and extravagant spending led to a pregnancy with another man.	August 2024
Mr. AR	Unspecified	Relationship deteriorated due to wife's debt-fueled luxurious lifestyle influenced by social media, causing trust issues.	August 2024

Source: Interview (2024)

At first their household was going well, but with the wife's habit of living extravagantly and always wanting to be seen in the eyes of others and always feeling less with what is in her (lack of gratitude), whatever she does for her personal needs, even though the husband has tried his best to fulfill it until he is rarely at home because of work. Over time with this lifestyle, the wife felt that what her husband gave her was still insufficient and somehow met another man named, KS. With this KS, LA was fulfilled all her needs and what she wanted until finally she was caught pregnant but not with her legal husband. Because the husband was already hurt by the wife's actions, which were considered very outrageous and crossed the line, AF finally filed for divorce from his wife LA.

The same thing happened to the couple AR (32) and his wife YN (28). The couple's household life, which initially seemed harmonious, began to deteriorate when the wife YN felt trapped in an increasingly consumptive pattern. The wife had a lifestyle that was heavily influenced by social media trends and social norms that demanded a luxurious and perfect look at life. She began to feel that she had to follow various trends, ranging from vacations abroad, shopping for luxury goods, to attending prestigious social events. For this reason, YN is willing to go into debt to fulfill her desired lifestyle.

However, this pressure did not come without consequences. To finance her hedonistic lifestyle, YN began to rely on online loans. Initially, pinjol was considered a quick solution to fulfill consumptive needs, but over time, high interest rates and the inability to pay made them trapped in a never-ending circle of debt. Pinjol bills eventually began to come even to her husband, which made him angry and started a long quarrel. The growing financial burden affected their emotional relationship. The couple argued frequently over financial matters, with one party feeling depressed and the other anxious about a future filled with debt. Whenever one of them tried to prioritize debt repayment, the other was frustrated that they

could no longer enjoy the lifestyle they wanted. Tensions mount, communication between the two becomes poor, and eventually, the trust between them begins to erode.

Under these stressful circumstances, there is no longer room for productive discussions or joint solutions. The desire to make things right is often replaced by blame and an inability to address problems together. The lifestyle that was once considered an achievement now turns into a burden that destroys the foundation of their household. The existence of this communication is expected for both of them to always have openness and honesty so that what is a problem can be resolved together. Abdul (2021) examined the reasons for infidelity between couples after a long marriage. People usually use the reasons why they have an affair is because of boredom factor, authoritarian attitude, possessive nature, sex, financial, lack of communication actor, work factor, child, and violence.

But even so, the main problem in this case is the wife's personality and lifestyle, which we see that there is no mental readiness and commitment that must be built in marriage, in essence, two people become one unit, hard and happy to be together, no one is one-sided. There are three aspects of commitment to the marital relationship, namely (Wulandari, 2009):

1. High level of satisfaction. High commitment is characterized by high levels of satisfaction with the partner and the marriage itself. This means that the marriage fulfills the individual's most important needs, such as intimacy, sexuality and companionship.
2. Reduced choices outside the marriage. Other options outside of marriage are not very attractive to individuals, so individuals will not be interested in fulfilling the needs they consider most important outside of marriage, for example, the desire to cheat.
3. Increasing investment. Commitment to marriage is said to be high if a number of important resources are directly or indirectly associated with marriage, such as time, effort, property, and friendship networks that were once privately owned are now increasingly owned and carried out with a partner. In other words, the individual becomes "richer" with the partner, has more friends, more money, more relationships.

Legal Review and Counseling Theory on Hedonism Lifestyle that Triggers Infidelity

The reason behind the wife having an affair is only because she feels that her livelihood and needs are not met. This cannot be justified because the wife's right to *nafkah*, which is the husband's obligation, has clear provisions in Islamic law and positive law in Indonesia. In Islamic law, the husband's obligation to provide for his wife is absolute regardless of the wife's financial condition, whether rich or poor, this applies since the husband and wife have been together and have

had conjugal relations, which is also called the term “*tamkin*” according to the majority of scholars (Azalia, 2022). Although some scholars such as the Zahiriyah scholar that the obligation of maintenance begins with the marriage contract. As for the amount of maintenance that a husband is obliged to give to his wife (Nur et al., 2024), Imam Qurtubi argues that the amount of maintenance is determined according to the husband's circumstances and the wife's needs are determined according to local custom (Armansyah, 2020).

The obligations given to husbands towards their wives include the fulfillment of both external and internal nafkah, where the majority of scholars agree that the external nafkah at issue in this context is in the form of basic needs of clothing, shelter and food as found in many arguments in the Qur'an and hadith (Karimi et al., 2019; Nurkholifah, 2016). In addition, there are also additional needs beyond the basic needs such as beauty products, hygiene products, perfumes and so on. Such is the scope of maintenance that is imposed on the husband and must be given to the wife, while its fulfillment in the form of quality and quantity returns to the husband's economic condition.

As for positive law in Indonesia regulating husband's maintenance as Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974, article 34 paragraph 1, states that “the husband is obliged to protect his wife and provide everything necessary for household life according to his ability.” This article stipulates that the husband has responsibility for all the needs of his family, but does not specify the extent of these needs, including food, clothing, or shelter. Therefore, in this context, positive law does not provide an explanation of the amount of maintenance that a husband must provide to his wife according to his ability to meet the needs of the family (Rahman, 2022). The right to maintenance indicates that the claim to the right is obtained after the fulfillment of certain obligations. The husband is expected to provide protection and fulfillment of the wife's needs in household life. Meanwhile, the wife has a crucial role in managing household affairs well after receiving protection and fulfillment of needs from the husband.

From the legal review of the husband's obligation to support his wife, which is an absolute obligation, is the fulfillment of rights which are basic needs including clothing, shelter and food, while beyond that it looks at the situation and condition of the husband whether his economy is able and capable. Therefore, not with the husband's economic limitations in providing the wife's needs, especially the needs that are merely pleasurable, can justify the wife having an affair because in marital ties there are ethics that must be followed. The morality and ethics associated with each relationship can vary significantly depending on cultural values, religion and individual views. However, in many cultures and value systems, infidelity is considered a violation of ethics and trust in a relationship, regardless of financial circumstances. If there are problems or dissatisfaction in a marriage, it is advisable to seek solutions through communication and other ways that can strengthen the relationship, not through actions that can undermine trust, such as infidelity.

Counseling theory refers to a conceptual framework or systematic approach used by a counselor or therapist to understand and help individuals overcome personal, emotional, or interpersonal problems. Various counseling theories have been developed by psychologists and counselors, and each theory has its own unique approach to understanding client problems and how to provide support. Based on the above case, the author assumes that the counseling technique needed is to use a Behavioral technique approach, this approach is a basic part of rational-emotive therapy in family counseling. Family members are given homework assignments that must be done in real situations in the family and not just fantasized about (L.Gipson & Mitchell, 2010).

Falloon (2014) explains the special behavioral strategy in the family that family members learn how to give other members recognition and approval of desired behaviors and not deviant behaviors. Therefore, the process of changing behavioral possibilities is the basic principle of behavioral counseling in the family. In this approach, it intends to correct attitudes that have deviated from the obligations of each partner so that a household is formed that runs properly according to what was envisioned at the beginning. Apart from the above approach, the author also argues to use the Directive Counseling method, which is a method where the counselor helps counseling in overcoming its problems by exploring the thinking power of each married couple, changing the behavior of married couples who may be too based on feelings and impulsive urges must be replaced with more rational behavior. This method is applied by counselors using the Rational Emotive Therapy approach, namely family members are given homework assignments that must be done in real situations in the family, and not just fantasized about (Nurkholifah, 2016).

It is important to note that the law can also view infidelity seriously, and in many jurisdictions, it can affect divorce proceedings, property division and child custody. Therefore, if there are any dissatisfactions or problems in the relationship, they should be addressed in ways that strengthen communication and promote mutual understanding. If the situation gets difficult, consult a marriage professional or counselor for more appropriate help and guidance. Poverty or financial hardship in a marriage is not considered a justification or license for infidelity within generally accepted ethical norms. In situations of financial hardship, couples are expected to find solutions together, communicate openly, and support each other.

In addition, it is important to remember that each family is unique and has its own challenges as the situation, location and living conditions of the family vary, hence the outcome of family counseling may vary depending on the family's cooperation, openness, and commitment to change which in this context is by limiting excessive lifestyle needs for the sake of pleasure or by seeing someone's hedonistic life and then wanting to follow suit. Hence the need for family counselors as family counseling can be a valuable tool to strengthen and support harmonious family relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed the profound impact of hedonistic lifestyles on marital stability, highlighting how self-gratification and material pursuits compromise the foundations of marital commitment and satisfaction. Interviews with two couples who have experienced these challenges firsthand provided crucial insights, illustrating the strain hedonistic behaviors place on relationships, notably in promoting infidelity and financial irresponsibility. The integration of rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) within counseling sessions showcased its effectiveness in addressing the irrational beliefs that underpin hedonistic lifestyles. These findings suggest that cognitive-behavioral approaches, particularly REBT, are valuable tools for therapists aiming to mitigate the negative impacts of hedonism on marriages, offering a promising direction for enhancing marital counseling practices.

The implications of this research extend into both counseling practice and marital law policy. For practitioners, the study underscores the importance of incorporating strategies that address hedonistic influences within marital therapy to improve communication, financial responsibility, and overall marital commitment. Legally, the findings advocate for reforms that more directly address and mitigate the impacts of lifestyle choices on marital stability. Future research should consider exploring a broader demographic to validate these findings and examining the long-term effects of specific therapeutic interventions, thereby providing a more empirical foundation for the development of targeted counseling methods and legal reforms designed to support marriages against the backdrop of evolving societal norms.

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