

Consensual A-Monogamous Relationships: Challenges and Ways of Coping

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Abstract : Background and Objectives: Little or only partial emphasis has been placed on exploring the complexity of consensual non-monogamous relationships. The term "polyamory" refers to consensual non-monogamy, and it is defined as having emotional and/or sexual relations simultaneously with two or more people, the consent and knowledge of all the partners concerned. Managing multiple romantic relationships with different people evokes more emotions, leads to more emotional conflicts arising from different interests, and demands practical strategies. An individual's transition from a monogamous lifestyle to a consensual non-monogamous lifestyle yields new challenges, accompanied by stress, uncertainty, and question marks, as do other life-changing events, such as divorce or transition to parenthood. The study examines both the process of transition and adaptation to a consensually non-monogamous relationship, as well as the coping mechanism involved in the daily conduct of this lifestyle. The research focuses on understanding the consequences, challenges, and coping methods from a personal, marital, and familial point of view and focuses on 40 middle-aged individuals (20 men and 20 women ages 40-60). The research sheds light on a way of life that has not been previously studied in Israel and is still considered unacceptable. Theories of crisis (e.g., as Folkman and Lazarus) were applied, and as a result, a deeper understanding of the subject was reached, all while focusing on multiple aspects of dealing with stress. The basic research question examines the consequences of entering a polyamorous life from a personal point of view as an individual, partner, and parent and the ways of coping with these consequences. Method: The research is conducted with a narrative qualitative approach in the interpretive paradigm, including semi-structured in-depth interviews. The method of analysis is thematic. Results: The findings indicate that in most cases, an individual's motivation to open the relationship is mainly a longing for better sexuality and for an added layer of excitement to their lives. Most of the interviewees were assisted by their spouses in the process, as well as by social networks and podcasts on the subject. Some of them therapeutic professionals from the field are helpful. It also clearly emerged that among those who experienced acute emotional crises with the primary partner or painful separations from secondary partners, all believed polyamory to be the adequate way of life for them. Finally, a key resource for managing tension and stress is the ability to share and communicate with the primary partner. Conclusions: The study points to the challenges and benefits of a non-monogamous lifestyle as well as the use of coping mechanisms and resources that are consistent with the existing theory and research in the field in the context of life changes. The study indicates the need to expand the research canvas in the future in the context of parenting and the consequences for children.

Keywords : a-monogamy, consent, family, stress, tension

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