

Leaving Violent Marriage and Adjusting to Divorce : Case Study of an Iranian Woman

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Literature Review

- Violence against women is known as a human rights issue and approximately 33% of women have experience intimate partner violence in their lifetimes.
- The prevalence of physical abuse among Iranian women is between 55% to 60% and one out of six marriages ends divorce.
- During the past two decades, attention in some western countries, including the U.S., has been devoted to investigating how women are able to cope with abusive partners and how they leave their violent marriage but there is no information about Iranian women.

Participant

- The participant is 33 years old, has a Masters degree in literature and is a lecturer at a university. She got married at the age of 27 and divorced after one year of the marriage. It has been almost five years since she divorced.

Methodology

Case and unite of analysis: An individual woman in Tehran who experienced physical violence in her marriage before her divorce.

Data: The data came from two interviews, a story she wrote about her life, and a demographic questionnaire.

Method of Analysis: The data were analyzed using phenomenology which aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (Patton, 2005, p. 105).

Research Question: How does this woman describe her experience related to her abusive marriage and her experience of disentanglement from her marriage after divorce?

Findings

Initial Themes

- Girls should marry at a certain age
- Concerns related to remaining single
- Do culture of dating to know each other/no education
- Not looking for professional help (premarital counseling)
- Forgetting about her skills and losing her confidence

Vital Themes

Vulnerabilities Factors

Supporting Quotes

“I was 27 years old and it was alarming for my family and I. As at this age most girls should be married, my father just wanted me to marry someone, no matter who. I completely lost my confidence.”

Initial Themes

- Not recognizing the red flags
- Gender roles /Responsibilities to fix the violence
- Not recognizing the violence cycle
- looking for help
- Friends and religious leaders
- Professional counseling

Vital Themes

Process of dealing with
Violence
(from cognitive strategies to
behavioral strategies)

Supporting Quotes

“However, my husband was so annoying and hurt me but I tried to be more kind changed many things in my life to please him but nothing changed and he was violent.”

“He did not have positive attitudes about therapy and told me that I am the crazy one and I should go and see a psychologist. Based on the conversation between therapist and my husband, the therapist told that my husband has borderline personality disorder and I should make the decision about staying or leaving the relationship.”

Initial Themes

- Doing abortion
- Losing my identity
- Family support (Emotional/
Financial)
- Legal support
- Having divorce right

Vital Themes

Leaving the Violent
Marriage
(from personal motivation to
Macrosystem support)

Supporting Quotes

“I found myself in a situation that I could not recognize myself. The one who I saw in the mirror was not me. I changed everything because of my husband - no school, no friends, different values. No, it was not me. I thought, “Where are all those motivations I had? Where is all that energy, all those going out with friends? I found myself as a doll in my husband’s hands.”

Initial Themes

Assistance

- Family support
- Backing to the job
- Finding her position in society and receiving respect and appreciation
- Believing in herself and feeling confidence

Barriers

- Facing cultural stigmas related to divorce and being a divorced woman
- Emotional and sexual needs

Vital Themes

Healing Process (assistance VS barriers)

Supporting Quotes

“Even before the divorce, I know that as the divorce is not acceptable culturally, I will face many struggles. I was lucky to have my parents’ support to pass all these difficult times. Now, however, being single with all emotional and sexual needs it is not easy, but I feel confident and feel proud of myself and the position I made for myself in society”.

Implications

- These findings may help clinicians be able to modify or develop strategies for helping women.
- Future research should extend these findings by using different methods with other populations of Iranian women.
- Although the sample was a woman living in Tehran, the findings may be applicable to women from different cultures.

Solutions and suggestions

- **Educate society**

- ✓ social media

- can educate people about the importance of premarital counseling

- Making society sensitive about IPV and can make efforts to destigmatize divorce

- ✓ education system can train people about lawful rights, marriage, couple adjustment, and IPV

- ✓ religious leaders can change mistaken religious and cultural beliefs about violence

- **Role of Therapist**

- ✓ help women to be confident about their decisions and challenge cultural components which are judgmental against divorced women

- **Role of women**

- ✓ Asking for the right to divorce and custody of their children and add it to their marriage certificate before officially signing.
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- ✓ Empowering young girls by encouraging them to value education or learning skills which help them to be financially independent.

- **Role of law**

- ✓ laws regarding IPV in Iran are often unclear and it is essential that changes be made in the justice system and police system to meet the needs of victims.

Limitation and suggestion for future studies

- Small sample number/ larger sample size
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- Just focus a woman in Tehran/ use different ethnicity form rural and urban communities
- Include family members to see what was their experience in this process