

The Divorce Legacy: Marriage Challenges in Women with Experience of Parental Divorce

DOI: 10.22098/JPC.2024.15074.1233

Abolfazl Hatami Varzaneh^{1*}; Zahra Bagherian²

1. Department of Counseling and Psychology, Faculty of Humanities, Hazrat-e Masoumeh University, Qom, Iran. [Corresponding Author: abolfazlhatami@yahoo.com](mailto:abolfazlhatami@yahoo.com)

2. Department of Counseling, Faculty of Humanities, hazrat-e Masoumeh University, Qom, Iran.

Abstract

Aim: This qualitative study investigates the challenges faced by women with a history of parental divorce in their marriages. It aims to uncover the emotional, psychological, and relational difficulties stemming from parental divorce and their impact on marital dynamics.

Method: Utilizing conventional content analysis, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with sixteen women from Qom Province during the winter and summer of 2024 year, who had experienced parental divorce and were in their first marriages. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data collection involved recording and transcribing interviews, followed by coding and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes.

Findings: The findings indicated six main categories: 1. Unresolved Past Painful Emotions, 2. Marital hurdles of Being a Child of Divorce, 3. Persistent Psychological Insecurity, 4. Deficiency in Skills Due to the Absence of Successful Life Models, 5. The Enduring Echoes of Parental Divorce, and 6. Growth After Experiencing the Trauma of Parental Divorce.

Conclusion: Parental divorce profoundly impacts individuals' emotional and psychological well-being, influencing various aspects of their marital lives. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges, emphasizing mental health support and life skills training. Future research should explore gender differences, partner perspectives, and cross-cultural variations to develop comprehensive strategies for improving the marital experiences of individuals with a history of parental divorce.

Keywords: Parental divorce, Marriage, Challenges, Women.

Introduction

Marriage, a cornerstone of societal structure, is facing heightened challenges due to a significant rise in divorce rates in recent years (Thadathil & Sriram, 2020). The escalating concern about the consequences of divorce has spurred extensive research efforts addressing the impact on individuals and the children of divorced couples (Amato, 2014). Divorce is undeniably a major source of stress in one's life (Sasser, 2006). It can also be characterized as a traumatic experience carrying profound implications for both adults and children (Dreman, 1991). This traumatic event reverberates across various dimensions, casting extensive effects on individuals, families, society, and the children of divorced parents. Notably, it is recognized for its potential to inflict adverse impacts on the mental and physical well-being of all members of the family (Damota, 2019). Research findings indicate that divorce, in its broader context, can exert detrimental effects on both the human and economic capital of society. However, when examined through a gender-sensitive lens, it becomes evident that divorce has the potential to obstruct women from actively participating in the developmental process, ultimately resulting in their marginalization and exploitation (Kalantari et al., 2011).

Divorce can result in a range of adverse effects for those who go through it, such as diminished quality of life, increased psychological distress, and heightened levels of anxiety and depression (Ding, Gale, Bauman, Phongsavan and Nguyen, 2021), The potential for premature and abrupt mortality (Sbarra, Law and Portley, 2011) and the sensation of isolation resulting from alterations in one's social connections (Damota, 2019; hayati and soleymani, 2019; Van Tilburg, Aartsen and van der Pas, 2015) , Economic and financial difficulties and earnings, particularly among women (Rettig, 2007; hayati and soleymani, 2019; Mofradnejad, Monadi and Akhavan Tafti, 2022; Armand and Azhdari, 2019; De Vaus, Gray and Stanton, 2017), social stigmatization (hayati and soleymani, 2019; Mofradnejad, Monadi and Akhavan Tafti, 2022), Coldness of relationships with people around, women being coveted by people, difficulty in remarriage, fear of marriage, lack of opportunity to remarry, women being accused and objectified (instrumental view of divorced women) (hayati and soleymani, 2019), Additionally, the rising number of female caregivers (Banihashemi, Alimondegari, Kazemipour and Gholami Fesharaki, 2020). The repercussions and adverse outcomes of divorce on individuals who have gone through it will undoubtedly impact the children of these families as well.

Divorce also has a multifaceted impact on the children of divorced parents (Sheoran, 2021). Children who experience parental divorce go through a form of distressing loss (Beam et al., 2004), which can be linked to difficulties and issues such as dropping out of school, engaging in addictive behaviors, early involvement in sexual activities (Damota, 2019), a decline and disruption in academic performance (Sheoran, 2021; Amani et al., 2019), feelings of fear and anxiety (Sheoran, 2021; Abbasi et al., 2018), adjustment disorders and depression (Sheoran, 2021; Abbasi et al., 2018; Amani et al., 2019). Furthermore, it can lead to a weakened immune system, increased susceptibility to diseases, and a loss of social interest, resulting in isolation (Sheoran, 2021). Individuals may also experience insecurity in social interactions and economic challenges (Amani et al., 2019), as well as difficulties with social compatibility and independence (Gharedaghi

& Mobini Keshe, 2020). High-risk and delinquent behaviors may emerge (Sheoran, 2021; Damota, 2019), along with decreased life satisfaction and reduced quality of life (Esmaili et al., 2016). Some individuals may also face issues related to socialization disorders (Banihashemi et al., 2020)

Irrespective of a child's age, divorce has a lasting impact when parents separate (Albertini & Garriga, 2011). Furthermore, research conducted by Abbasi Abrazgeh, Sohrabi, and Bourbour (2018) demonstrates that the levels of perceived stress, depression, and anxiety in teenage girls from divorced families are higher than in teenage girls who have experienced the loss of a parent. The prevalence and rising divorce rates in society do not diminish the enduring adverse consequences of divorce, particularly on intergenerational relationships, and these effects do not wane over time (Albertini & Garriga, 2011).

Following divorce, the parent-child relationship, particularly with the non-custodial parent, often becomes significantly diminished, with weekly contact at best. The relationship between the child and the custodial parent also encounters challenges (Albertini & Garriga, 2011; Mofradnejad et al., 2022). It is noteworthy that approximately 40% of children from divorced families have a strained relationship with their fathers, and nearly 10% have no relationship with their fathers whatsoever. Even a weak relationship with the father post-divorce appears to be somewhat more favorable for life satisfaction compared to having no relationship at all. Conversely, not having any relationship with the father after the parents' divorce reduces life satisfaction (Thuen et al., 2021). The consequences of divorce extend beyond causing various psychological and physical issues for both parents and children and influencing the parent-child relationship. They also have an impact on the marriages of children who have experienced their parents' divorce (Sheoran, 2021). Parental divorce can leave enduring effects on individuals' marriage patterns and partner selection, even in societies where divorce is prevalent and socially accepted (Erola et al., 2012). Compared to children of non-divorced parents, children of divorced parents generally hold more pessimistic attitudes toward their future marriages and the institution of marriage. They are less optimistic about the prospects of maintaining a long-lasting and healthy marriage (Whitton et al., 2008; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Collardeau & Ehrenberg, 2016).

Children of divorce tend to marry at a higher rate up until the age of 20, but if they remain single from this age, their likelihood of marriage decreases compared to their peers from intact families. They may opt to cohabit without formal marriage commitments (Cui & Fincham, 2010; Wolfinger, 2003). This increase in early marriage probability for some children of divorce may be due to diminished educational prospects and subsequent reductions in socioeconomic status (Tasker & Richards, 1994; Sabzehei & Kokabi Zaker, 2023). Additionally, children of divorce often exhibit a more favorable attitude toward divorce (Cui et al., 2011) and are more likely to experience divorce in their marriages. Children of divorce tend to divorce two to three times more frequently than children from families without a history of divorce (Sheoran, 2021; Collardeau & Ehrenberg, 2016). Moreover, children of divorce are less likely to marry highly educated individuals, especially those with college degrees. This could be because highly educated individuals

may be less inclined to accept marriage proposals from children of divorce (Erola et al., 2012).

Adults whose parents have experienced divorce tend to exhibit a lower commitment to their marriages (Whitton et al., 2008; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Cui et al., 2011). They also have reduced confidence in their ability to maintain a happy and successful marriage. Notably, women whose parents have gone through a divorce are more likely to enter marriage with lower commitment and less confidence in the institution of marriage, which could potentially heighten the risk of divorce (Whitton et al., 2008). It is important to mention that factors like religion can play a moderating role and help mitigate the negative effects of divorce on individuals' marriages (Collardeau & Ehrenberg, 2016). For instance, a strong commitment to religion, both in interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects, can enhance couples' adaptability in their relationships and reduce the likelihood of marital instability (Radmehr & Shams, 2019).

Children often observe and absorb interpersonal behaviors, communication skills, and attitudes from their parents. Children of divorced families may be deprived of this valuable learning experience, leading to less effective learning. Consequently, the experience of parental divorce can result in individuals having lower-quality romantic relationships (Shanoora et al., 2020).

Despite the recent increase in the divorce rate in Iran (Safari & Golnvaizi, 2022) and the subsequent rise in the number of children experiencing parental divorce, it is foreseeable that the future will witness an increased prevalence of marriages among individuals who have gone through parental divorce. Acknowledging that divorce is a traumatic event that brings along significant problems and challenges for those involved (Dreman, 1991) and the lack of sufficient studies that investigate the experience of Iranian women with the experience of parental divorce, the current research seeks to address the following question:

What challenges and problems do women with a history of parental divorce experience in their marriage using a qualitative methodology?

Methods

Research Design: In this qualitative study, conventional content analysis was used to explore challenges faced by individuals with a history of parental divorce in their marriages. The study population consisted of individuals with parental divorce experience in Qom Province, and the samples were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The inclusion criteria included having parental divorce experience and being in their first marriage, while the exclusion criteria involved suffering from significant psychological disorders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 participants during the winter and spring of 2024, continuing until theoretical saturation was reached. The method involved semi-structured interviews, allowing insights to emerge directly from participants' unique experiences rather than being limited by preconceived theoretical categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Participants: The research participants, selected through purposive sampling, consisted of sixteen women meeting specific criteria: experiencing parental divorce, being in their

first marriage, and not suffering from significant mental disorders. The average age of participants was 29 years, with an average of four original family members. Eight had one child, two had two children, five had none, and one had three children. Education levels varied, with six having a ninth-grade education, four with a diploma, and six with a bachelor's degree. On average, nine years had passed since their marriage.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Process: The sample, consisting of 16 individuals, underwent semi-structured interviews until reaching theoretical saturation during 2022-2023. Each interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes, was recorded and transcribed with participant consent. The transcriptions were coded for analysis. Open-ended questions explored challenges stemming from parents' divorce experiences, examples of these challenges, their onset, evolution, and the scope of encountered issues.

Conventional content analysis includes designing research questions, selecting a sample, defining categories, coding, ensuring reliability, and analyzing findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Using this method, interviews were initially coded, and recurring themes with similar meanings were identified across multiple interviews. This led to the establishment of categories and subcategories, ultimately revealing overarching themes.

Ethical Considerations: Before interviews, participants were briefed on the research purpose, assured confidentiality, and provided consent for recording. The study obtained approval from the University Research Ethics Committee, adhering to ethical guidelines. Pseudonyms were used during transcription to safeguard participants' privacy and identities.

Rigor and Trustworthiness: In qualitative research, ensuring accuracy and trustworthiness is crucial. This study followed specific criteria for enhancing accuracy and trustworthiness. Researchers actively engaged in the study to promote convergence in data interpretation. Reliability in coding was assessed by having another researcher independently code interviews, showing satisfactory agreement. Transferability was supported through detailed participant descriptions to assess applicability to other contexts. Dependability was ensured by meticulously describing sample selection, data collection, and analysis processes with a team approach that contributed to clarity and validity. Reliability was maintained by integrating participants' perspectives and allowing them to provide feedback on identified themes.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study were as follows: 4 participants had completed middle school, 6 had a high school diploma, 4 held a bachelor's degree, and 1 had a master's degree. Two participants were only children with no siblings, while the rest had siblings. Among the participants, 7 had children, and 9 did not. The average age of the participants was 31 years, and on average, they had been married for 7 years.

Upon analyzing the interviews through open coding, six primary categories and their respective subcategories emerged. These findings offer insights into the challenges faced

by women with a history of parental divorce in their marriages. The main categories are as follows: 1. Unresolved Past Painful Emotions, 2. Marital hurdles of Being a Child of Divorce, 3. Persistent Psychological Insecurity, 4. Deficiency in Skills Due to the Absence of Successful Life Models, 5. The Enduring Echoes of Parental Divorce, 6. Growth After Experiencing the Trauma of Parental Divorce.

Category 1: Unresolved Past Painful Emotions

The participants, who have endured parental divorce, grew up in a tense family environment. They faced challenges both during and after the divorce process, grappling with overwhelming and, at times, traumatic negative emotions. This category sheds light on the lasting emotional scars and unresolved feelings that participants carried from their parent's divorce and the strained family environment in which they were raised. These emotions manifested in various ways, such as anger, violence, humiliation, and sadness. This category comprises two subcategories:

1. Externalized Unresolved Emotions Experience of Anger and Aggression. For instance, one woman expressed her anger and violent tendencies by stating, "When my child was born, I even had thoughts of harming them." Another participant described their struggles with unresolved anger, saying, "There are moments when I lose my control. We may be at home, enjoying ourselves, but certain thoughts creep into my mind, leading me to lash out in anger. It is as if I take out my frustrations on my husband, connecting them to my parents' issues."

2. Internalized Unresolved Emotions Experience of Sadness and Humiliation. One participant shared their experience of humiliation, stating, "I might even say that a man must provide for his wife, but if he ever did something for me, I would feel a constant sense of humiliation. It seemed like charity. Perhaps my history of lacking support contributed to this enduring humiliation." Another interviewee expressed feelings of sadness, revealing, "There were moments when I felt utterly disconnected from everyone. I had no desire to be around others." Another participant highlighted the negative comments their father made about their mother, saying, "The derogatory remarks my father used to make about my mother were disturbing. It made me lose faith, not just in my father, but in God, the Prophet, and everyone else. I have had to work on rebuilding myself. I sometimes withdraw into isolation; when my husband tries to engage in conversation, I remain silent and retreat."

Category 2: Marital Hurdles of Being a Child of Divorce

This category underscores the intricate emotional challenges that individuals who grew up as children of divorced parents encounter when navigating ceremonial events and rituals in their marriages. It indicates the impact of parental absence during pivotal life events, the hurdles they confront in expressing their needs, and the disagreements that may arise with their spouses regarding these demands. These subcategories shed light on the wide array of difficulties faced by individuals who have experienced their parent's divorce and how these challenges influence their marriages, ultimately impacting multiple facets of their lives. This main category encompasses four specific subcategories: a. Ceremonies and Rituals Hurdles b. Lack of Parental Support c. Inability to Assert Needs (Due to Low Status Resulting from Parents' Divorce) d. Negative or Adverse Reactions from the Spouse Regarding Financial and Emotional Demands.

1. Ceremonies and Rituals Hurdles. For instance, a participant elaborated on the challenges related to ceremonies and rituals, stating, "It was New Year, and we were invited to my uncle's house. I was sitting at the table with my father, my husband, my son, and so on. I found myself questioning why my mother was not at this table or why my brother could not sit here." Another participant's account highlights the hurdles related to ceremonies and rituals, as they expressed, "I still hold a grudge against my husband's family. Why did they invite me to Pagosha[1] and not invite my father? For instance, when they hosted a celebration, they invited everyone, so why didn't they invite my father?" Similarly, another participant revealed their feelings, stating, "My father did not participate in our matchmaking, and it left me with a very negative feeling."

2. Lack of Parental Support. One participant recounted, "I am the eldest daughter born in 1990, and when it was time for me to get married, my father refused to provide a dowry. I insisted that a girl cannot get married without a dowry; it is considered improper, and it diminishes your dignity. Amid various challenges and hardships, I had to sell my savings and everything I had to help my sister get a dowry. That is what happened to me." Another participant explained, "When a girl gets married, she typically asks her father for a dowry; I thought that my grandparents on my father's side would contribute to this dowry. 'Sesame[2]' was arranged for me by my aunts. I did not have a good relationship with my father. When I mentioned 'sesame' to him, he questioned why he should provide it, even though I had come to believe that we should confront our challenges and maintain our dignity despite the circumstances."

3. Inability to Assert Needs (Due to Low Status Resulting from Parents' Divorce). A participant conveyed their experience, stating, "Because I came from a family that may not have been ideal in many ways, I could not express specific expectations to my spouse. If I needed attention, they would often say that they had noticed a lack of affection in their own family and wanted to make up for it with me, or they were compensating for something."

4. Negative or Adverse Reactions from the Spouse Regarding Financial and Emotional Demands. : One woman shared their experience, saying, "Their perspective on fulfilling requests was quite different. It felt as if they were not doing things out of love but rather as if they were compensating for your deficiencies. For example, I did not hear affectionate words, and I could not buy a particular dress." In a similar vein, another participant remarked, "Because I came from a family that may not have been ideal in many ways, I could not express specific expectations to my spouse. If I needed attention, they would often say that they had noticed a lack of affection in my family and wanted to make up for me". Another participant added, "There are times when I ask my husband to buy me a gift or contribute money to the household, and he responds by saying, 'You had none of these things when you lived with your grandmother, and yet you are still unsatisfied, be grateful.'"

Category 3: Persistent Psychological Insecurity

Individuals who experienced their parents' divorce during a stressful process as children often grapple with enduring feelings of insecurity in three main areas. These include ongoing insecurities regarding acceptance and affection, fears related to the sustainability and stability of their marriages, and doubts about their abilities and self-sufficiency in

maintaining successful marriages and parenthood. This category consists of three subcategories:

1. Insecurity in the Field of Acceptance and Affection: Participants expressed ongoing insecurities regarding acceptance and affection. They still grapple with feelings of being unloved and unwanted. For example, One participant shared, " I still have this feeling, even though I have children. When we went somewhere, I would see that, for example, my uncle was playing with his children, and I felt very bad. I used to miss a lot, and I kept saying to myself, why wasn't this love for me? I was jealous and said that they are doing well." Another participant reflected, "My father did not know how to love his children at all. He associated love with money, believing that providing money equated to love. He did not express verbal affection at all." Similarly, another participant mentioned, "For example, when I'm walking down the street now, I sometimes catch myself thinking that maybe I'd feel better with a different partner."

2. Insecurity in the Field of Durability and Consistency of Life. Participants expressed fears related to the sustainability and stability of their marriages. They continue to be haunted by anxieties stemming from their parent's divorce, dreading the possibility of their divorce. For example, One participant confessed, "A very bad effect of my parental divorce was that I am always afraid of the word that maybe they will divorce me or I will get a divorce because divorce is not a beautiful thing." Another participant said, "I am still afraid of divorce."

3. Insecurity in the Field of Self-Sufficiency. Participants also harbored doubts about their abilities and self-sufficiency. The divorce experience in their families left them questioning their capabilities to maintain successful marriages and parenthood. For instance, one participant revealed, "What worried me before having a child was that when I have a baby, I wouldn't have the nerve, I wouldn't have the skills." Another participant admitted, "When I wanted to have a child, I couldn't. I always thought that I couldn't, that I'd get a divorce, and I'd end up like my mother, leaving my children behind. I had these self-doubts about having a fulfilling marriage."

Category 4: Deficiency in Skills Due to the Absence of Successful Life Models

Research participants faced deficiencies in both individual and couple skills as a result of lacking proper role models due to their early assumption of adult responsibilities. This shortage of skills included resilience, tolerance for disturbances, and the ability to make informed choices in selecting a spouse, resulting in emotional fatigue and communication challenges in their current relationships. This category encompasses two subcategories:

1. Deficiency in Individual Skills. Participants experienced a lack of personal skills, including resilience and tolerance for disturbances. The absence of proper role models forced them to take on adult responsibilities at a young age, resulting in emotional fatigue and a sense of weariness. For instance, one participant revealed, "I was a 14 or 15-year-old child, responsible for my two sisters. I had to work to support their education. I couldn't endure it. I am now 35 years old, but I feel mentally exhausted and disinterested in life." In terms of deficiency in individual skills related to conscious spouse choice, a participant remarked, "I am satisfied with my current marriage, and my husband is very good. However, the issue of understanding each other has become a problem. I married without specific standards or knowledge."

2. Deficiency in Couple Skills. Participants struggled with deficiencies in skills required for maintaining a successful marriage, as they lacked adequate role models to guide them. This deficit impacted their ability to communicate effectively with their partners and navigate the complexities of a relationship. For instance, one participant admitted, "I didn't know how to communicate with my partner, and I still don't. This is causing significant problems for me now. My partner struggles to understand that I didn't have parental mentors to teach me the right way to navigate life." Another participant voiced a similar concern, "If I had learned from my parents, I might have handled life's challenges differently. Currently, tension is gradually building with my life partner. Our differences are emerging, and I don't appreciate this development."

Category 5: The Enduring Echoes of Parental Divorce

The profound and lasting consequences of growing up as children of divorced parents impacted multiple life dimensions, including early marriage, education, career, and personal life. These effects encompass early marriage, disrupted education, career choices, and the enduring stigma associated with parental divorce, significantly influencing the participants' life trajectories. This category is further divided into four subcategories:

1. Compelled into Marital Union at a Young Age: Several participants expressed that they had to marry early as a consequence of their condition. For example, One participant stated, "I began contemplating marriage when my sister left our grandmother's house, leaving me feeling lonely. My suitor visited frequently, and my grandmother often remarked that as a girl matures, she should marry. The circumstances didn't allow for any objections, so I found myself wed at the tender age of fourteen." Another participant shared, "Consider when your parents cannot provide for you, and you find yourself married at the age of 16. You still don't grasp that you've grown up or even that you're a teenager. Your entire childhood seems lost because your parents have separated, and so on. By the time you realize you're still young, you already have two children by your side, and the burden of a more significant life is placed upon your shoulders."

2. Compelled to Discontinue Education. One of the participants remarked, "You know, I might not have been compelled to wed my life partner, but in a broader sense, I felt pressured to marry at a young age. Otherwise, I could have pursued higher education like other girls, focused on my studies, relished my life, and postponed marriage." Similarly, another participant shared, "Regarding my education, had I remained at my father's home, I could have persisted with my studies and wouldn't have entered into matrimony at such a young age. I would have strived to continue my education. I married at the age of fourteen, and had I not done so, I would have pursued my academic aspirations."

3. Forced into Early Employment: The consequences also had implications for the participants' working lives, with many having to engage in employment from a young age. The need to financially support their families and contribute to household expenses took precedence over their aspirations for higher-paying jobs. In the context of the consequences of early involvement in the workforce and letting go of aspirations for a job with better prospects, one of the participants stated, "Like many other girls, I wanted to study and enter university to have a good job in the future. But from an economic perspective, the situation forced me to work and help my mother in her daily life. That's

why I didn't go to university and started working early." Another participant described a similar experience, "My sister wanted to go to university, but she didn't have the university fees. I had to work and contribute."

4. Family Stigma: The consequences also extended to the lives of their current families, where they faced the challenge of dealing with the stigma and judgment associated with their parents' divorce. Even those who were not aware of the divorce could learn about it during this period of marriage, leading to uncomfortable situations. Concerning the repercussions that affected the well-being of their present family, which had encountered numerous challenges, a participant expressed, "Every time I accompanied my spouse to my family's residence or other gatherings, I would overhear comments like 'This is the girl whose parents went through a divorce.' These matters weighed heavily on me. Even those who were unaware of my parents' divorce became informed during my marriage. It felt as though everywhere I went, people were subtly highlighting the fact that I was the individual whose parents had experienced a divorce."

Category 6: Growth after Experiencing the Trauma of Parental Divorce

Despite the challenges posed by parental divorce, some participants demonstrated personal growth, resilience, and the ability to revise their attitudes and standards to adapt and flourish in life. This category comprises four subcategories. These subcategories highlight the positive transformations and shifts in priorities that participants underwent after enduring the trauma of parental divorce.:

1. Prioritizing Peace and Love over Financial Prosperity in Marriage: In terms of seeking peace and love, one participant emphasized, "Even at the time of marriage, the situation and financial conditions weren't my primary concern. I had experienced life both with prosperity and without it. What mattered most to me was peace. I told my husband that all I desired was that inner peace. I didn't want to compromise my peace for the sake of money. It's what matters most to me now."

2. Using Psychological Services to Self-Improve: Regarding self-improvement and personal growth, a participant shared, "I've been attending counseling sessions for a year, and it has made a significant difference. I feel much better, and my anxieties have significantly reduced."

3. Spirituality as a Nurturing Influence: The participants stated that spirituality played a significant role in their growth. One interviewee stated, "For instance, the practice of prayer was essential for me. My father never prayed or fasted, so my husband needed to practice these religious rituals. Belief in God and the Prophet became a pivotal aspect of my life. I derive substantial support from my faith."

4. Guarding the Family Unit: A Lesson in Prioritization: In terms of safeguarding the family from harmful influences, an interviewee reflected, "I witnessed how my father prioritized his friends over his family. He remains the same to this day. I've learned from these experiences and am very cautious about this aspect."

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the marriage challenges of women with a history of parental divorce. The findings, derived from in-depth content analysis, revealed six key categories:

1. Unresolved Past Painful Emotions, 2. Marital Hurdles of Being a Child of Divorce, 3. Persistent Psychological Insecurity, 4. Deficiency in Skills Due to the Absence of Successful Life Models, 5. The Enduring Echoes of Parental Divorce, and 6. Growth After Experiencing the Trauma of Parental Divorce

The initial category highlights the persistent emotional struggles of children of divorce, extending into their marriages. This emotional burden, comprising "anger and violence" and "sadness and humiliation," underscores the enduring impact of divorce on their well-being, emphasizing its role as a potent stressor for the next generation (Damota, 2019). Studies reveal that children often experience more emotional distress, including increased anxiety and depression, from parental divorce compared to the death of a parent (Abbasi Abrazgeh et al., 2018). Our findings, consistent with Damota (2019), Sheoran (2021), and Amani et al. (2019), affirm that children of divorce often confront emotions like anxiety, sadness, and distress. The challenging upbringing in an environment marked by parental discord impedes the establishment of lasting psychological security. The aftermath of divorce introduces various social, economic, and psychological complexities affecting family members, leading to emotional instability. Participants in this study similarly faced these emotions, manifesting externally as anger and violence in their marriages or internally as feelings of sadness and humiliation.

The second category, 'Marital Hurdles of Being a Child of Divorce,' encompasses challenges like ceremonial and ritual hurdles, lack of parental support, difficulty asserting needs due to lower status post-parental divorce, and adverse reactions from spouses regarding financial and emotional demands. It is crucial to note that divorce disrupts social connections (Hayati & Soleymani, 2019; Damota, 2019) and carries social stigma (Hayati & Soleymani, 2019), impacting financial stability (Armand & Azhdari, 2019; De Vaus, Gray, and Stanton, 2017). This fragmentation leads to challenges in parental coordination for the next generation's life, resulting in issues such as lack of support, impacting events like dowry preparations and ceremony expenses. These challenges contribute to psychological negatives, such as enduring psychological insecurity and negative emotions. Ceremonies and rituals pose challenges during courtship due to a lack of parental companionship and societal perceptions of divorce. The diminished social status may lead to unsuitable partner choices or deter some from pursuing marriage. Notably, if a parent is notorious, resistance may arise during ceremonies, adding to negative psychological effects. Participants also mentioned the challenge of 'not being able to assert needs,' stemming from reduced social status and powerlessness. Attempts to express emotional needs may face negative reactions, stifling their ability to communicate effectively (Albertini & Garriga, 2011; Thuen et al., 2021).

The third category, 'Persistent Psychological Insecurity,' branches into three subcategories: insecurity in acceptance and affection, durability and consistency of life, and self-sufficiency. D'Rozario and Pilkington's (2022) research aligns with our findings, highlighting that individuals with a history of divorce may develop an abandonment schema, leading to anxious or avoidant insecure attachment in adulthood. Children of divorce, having experienced family tension and insecurity, lack the stability of a nurturing family environment. This life experience, marked by challenges from parental divorce, significantly influences their cognitions of security, acceptance, and lovability, fostering

deep-seated insecurities. The absence of successful parental role models diminishes their self-confidence, impacting even their roles as parents. This enduring psychological insecurity poses challenges in relationships and contributes to discontentment in their marriages.

The fourth category examines the impact of the absence of successful life models on skill deficiencies, divided into deficits in individual and couple-related skills. The experience of parental divorce, coupled with its consequences like persistent psychological distress, economic hardships, and educational challenges, leads to pronounced skill deficiencies. In the individual dimension, this manifests as low self-confidence, limited resilience, and impatience. In the couple's realm, these deficiencies result in challenges with family planning, communication, establishing boundaries, and patience in child-rearing (Shanoora et al., 2020).

This study explores the consequences of parental divorce, including early marriages, discontinued education, early employment, and family stigmas. These outcomes align with existing research (Cui & Fincham, 2010; Wolfinger, 2003; Erola et al., 2012; Tasker & Richards, 1994; Sabzehei & Kokabi Zaker, 2023), highlighting the prevalence of early marriages among children of divorce, often driven by economic and psychological challenges. Additionally, findings indicate a tendency for these individuals to discontinue education due to adverse family conditions, leading to early entry into the workforce. Premature employment negatively impacts educational and professional standing, exposing them to social stigma and limiting marriage prospects, thus influencing family life adversely (Damota, 2019).

This study identifies the transformative growth following parental divorce, focusing on attitude and value corrections. Subcategories include prioritizing peace and love over financial prosperity, using psychological services for self-improvement, embracing spirituality, and safeguarding the family unit. Similar to findings by Bahonar, Etemadi, and Salehi (2023) and Collardeau and Ehrenberg (2016), individuals may undergo post-traumatic growth, fostering resilience, psychological fortitude, and a healthier lifestyle. Witnessing unsuccessful parental behaviors becomes a catalyst for learning, guiding individuals away from detrimental attitudes and behaviors. This shift encourages prioritizing peace and adaptability, often achieved through seeking psychological services or embracing spirituality. The result is an embrace of inner peace and a more balanced lifestyle. This qualitative research delves into the challenges faced by children of divorce in their marriages, with a caveat about the limited generalizability of findings. This study has a narrow focus on a specific gender and lacks consideration for cross-cultural variations and partner perspectives. The absence of gender diversity limits the generalizability of the findings, as the experiences of men and women with a history of parental divorce may differ significantly.

Additionally, the study's qualitative approach does not capture quantitative aspects of unresolved emotions, psychological insecurity, and academic-occupational challenges, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these issues. Future studies should consider gender diversity, explore the perspectives of partners, and examine cross-cultural variations. Incorporating quantitative methods can offer insights into key aspects

like unresolved emotions, psychological insecurity, academic-occupational challenges, and post-divorce growth factors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parental divorce significantly impacts the next generation's psychological well-being, manifesting in emotional instability and the internalization or externalization of emotions, resulting in detrimental consequences across various life domains. Addressing these complexities requires a comprehensive approach, emphasizing the need for well-considered plans and interventions by relevant authorities. Prioritizing the overall health and well-being of possibly some generations affected by parental divorce can help them navigate their marital journeys with reduced challenges and increased prospects for success. The goal is to break the cycle of marital difficulties stemming from parental divorce, fostering healthier and more fulfilling relationships for future generations.

The practical implications highlight the need for life skills training, emphasizing mental health support for individuals lacking parental role models. Professionals should be attuned to the unique challenges these individuals bring into their marriages and offer tailored support, therapy, and skill development for building healthier, more secure, and fulfilling relationships.

Disclosure Statements

All authors declare to have no financial or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the research described.

ORCID

0000-0002-2351-1634

References

- Abbasi Abrazgeh, M; Sohrabi, M. & Bourbour, V. (2018). Comparison of perceived stress, depression, and anxiety in adolescent girls from divorced families and experienced parental death. *Afaq Humanities Journal*, 27, 83-100. [In Persian].
- Albertini, M., & Garriga, A. (2011). The effect of divorce on parent-child contacts: Evidence on two declining effect hypotheses. *European Societies*, 13(2), 257-278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2010.483002>
- Amani, Z., Zahrakar, K., & Kiamanesh, A. (2019). The identification of the consequences of parents' divorce on children: A qualitative study. *The Women and Families Cultural-Educational*, 14(47), 59-81. <https://dori.net/dor/20.1001.1.26454955.1398.14.47.4.0>
- Amato, P. R. (2014). The consequences of divorce for adults and children: An update. *Društvena istraživanja-Časopis za opća društvena pitanja*, 23(01), 5-24. <https://doi.org/10.5559/di.23.1.01>

- Armand, M.A. & Azhdari, A.(2019). Women's life after divorce with a qualitative approach (case study: Shahindej city). *Sociological Researches*, 12(3.4), 7-25. https://soc.garmsar.iau.ir/article_674447.html?lang=en
- Bahonar, F., Etemadi, O., & Salehi, K. (2023). Dimensions of Post-Traumatic Growth Resulting from Parental Divorce among Young Iranian Women. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2023.2236018>
- Banihashemi, F., Alimondegari, M., Kazemipour, S., & Gholami Fesharaki, M. (2020). Exploring the Causes, Consequences, and Strategies of Decreasing Divorce in Iran Using Delfi Approach. *Journal of Social Sciences Ferdowsi University of Mashhad*, 17(1), 232-195. <https://doi.org/10.22067/social.2021.59083.0>
- Beam, M. R., Servaty-Seib, H. L., & Mathews, L. (2004). Parental loss and eating-related cognitions and behaviors in college-age women. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 9(3), 247-255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325020490458336>
- Collardeau, F., & Ehrenberg, M. (2016). Parental Divorce and Attitudes and Feelings toward Marriage and Divorce in Emerging Adulthood: New Insights from a Multiway-Frequency Analysis. *Journal of European Psychology Students*, 7(1), 24–33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/jeps.341>
- Cui, M., & Fincham, F. D. (2010). The differential effects of parental divorce and marital conflict on young adult romantic relationships. *Personal relationships*, 17(3), 331-343. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01279.x>
- Cui, M., Fincham, F. D., & Durtschi, J. A. (2011). The effect of parental divorce on young adults' romantic relationship dissolution: What makes a difference? *Personal Relationships*, 18(3), 410-426. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01306.x>
- Damota, M. D. (2019). The effect of divorce on families' life. *Journal of Culture, Society, and Development*, 46, 6-11. <https://doi.org/10.7176/JCSD/46-02>
- De Vaus, D., Gray, M., Qu, L., & Stanton, D. (2017). The economic consequences of divorce in six OECD countries. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 52(2), 180-199. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.13>
- Ding, D., Gale, J., Bauman, A., Phongsavan, P., & Nguyen, B. (2021). Effects of divorce and widowhood on subsequent health behaviors and outcomes in a sample of middle-aged and older Australian adults. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 15237. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-93210-y>
- Dreman, S. (1991). Coping with the trauma of divorce. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 4(1), 113–121. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.2490040109>
- D'Rozario, A. B., & Pilkington, P. D. (2022). Parental separation or divorce and adulthood attachment: The mediating role of the Abandonment schema. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 29(2), 664-675. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.2659>
- Erola, J., Härkönen, J., & Dronkers, J. (2012). More careful or less marriageable? Parental divorce, spouse selection, and entry into marriage. *Social forces*, 90(4), 1323-1345. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos073>
- Esmaili, A., Rastegar, L., & Afshari, A. (2016). Life satisfaction and quality of life in children of divorce. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 7(2), 54-64. https://psyedu.tonekabon.iau.ir/article_590867.html?lang=en

- Gharedaghi, A., & Mobini Keshe, F. (2020). comparison of self-concept clarity, role gender, and emotional maturity in children with and without experience of divorce in parents. *Counseling Culture and Psychotherapy*, 11(42), 231-260. <https://doi.org/10.22054/qccpc.2020.49446.2302>
- hayati, M. & soleymani, S.(2019). The consequences of divorce for the divorced person: a qualitative study. *Rooyesh-e- Ravanshenasi Journal*, 7 (11), 273-288. <http://dorl.net/dor/20.1001.1.2383353.1397.7.11.19.8>
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Kalantari, A., Roshanfekar, P., & Javaheri, J. (2011). Consequences of Divorce A Systematic Review of Current Literature with an Emphasis on Gender-Related Issues (1997-2011). *Woman in Development & Politics*, 9(3), 111-131. https://jwdp.ut.ac.ir/article_23652.html?lang=en
- Mofradnejad, N., Monadi, M., & Akhavan Tafti, M. (2022). A qualitative study of divorced women's experiences of the consequences of divorce (case study: divorced women in Behbahan). *Journal of Psychological Science*, 21(116), 1539-1561. <https://doi.org/10.52547/JPS.21.116.1539>
- Radmehr, H., & Shams, J. (2019). Examining the association between religious commitment and marital stability among divorce-seeking and normal couples in Tehran. *Journal of Research on Religion & Health*, 4(5), 77-86. <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v4i5.15324>
- Rettig, K. D. (2007). Divorce injustices: Perceptions of formerly wealthy women of the stressors, crises, and traumas. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 12(3), 175-198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434610600854103>
- Sabzehei, M. T., & Kokabi Zaker, S. (2023). Reasons, contexts, and consequences of underage marriage from the standpoint of married school girls. *Two Quarterly Journal of Contemporary Sociological Research*, (in press). <https://doi.org/10.22084/csr.2021.23958.1949>
- Safari, E., & golnvazi, P. (2022). Comparing the Causes of Divorce from the Point of View of Men and Women Applying for A Consensual Divorce. *Clinical Psychology Achievements*, 8(3), 135-144. <https://doi.org/10.22055/jacp.2023.44343.1301>
- Sasser, D. D. (2006). The Cooperative Extension Service System: Response and Educational Resource in the Field of Stress and Families. *Stress, Trauma, and Crisis*, 9(3-4), 247-262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434610600854384>
- Sbarra, D. A., Law, R. W., & Portley, R. M. (2011). Divorce and death: A meta-analysis and research agenda for clinical, social, and health psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(5), 454-474. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611414724>
- Shanoora, A., Hamsan, H. H., Abdullah, H., & Mohd, A. (2020). Which is worse; divorce or conflict? Parental divorce, interparental conflict, and its impact on romantic relationship quality of young dating adults in the Maldives. *Sciences*, 10(15), 325-339. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i15/8253>

- Sheoran, J. (2021). Effects of divorce on children: a critical analysis. *Elementary Education Online*, 20(1), 6439-6444. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.01.665>
- Tasker, F. L., & Richards, M. P. (1994). Adolescents' attitudes toward marriage and marital prospects after parental divorce: A review. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 9(3), 340-362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074355489493004>
- Thadathil, A., & Sriram, S. (2020). Divorce, families, and adolescents in India: A review of research. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 61(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2019.1586226>
- Thuen, F., Meland, E., & Breidablikk, H. J. (2021). The effects of communication quality and lack of contact with fathers on subjective health complaints and life satisfaction among parental divorced youth. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 62(4), 258-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2021.1871835>
- Van Tilburg, T. G., Aartsen, M. J., & van der Pas, S. (2015). Loneliness after divorce: A cohort comparison among Dutch young-old adults. *European Sociological Review*, 31(3), 243-252. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu086>
- Whitton, S. W., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2008). Effects of parental divorce on marital commitment and confidence. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(5), 789. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0012800>
- Wolfinger, N. H. (2003). Parental divorce and offspring marriage: Early or late? *Social forces*, 82(1), 337-353. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2003.0108>