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Iranian Women's Experiences of Spousal Abuse

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Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the Iranian women's experiences of spousal abuse. The study followed a qualitative and phenomenological research design. 23 Iranian women age-ranged between 17 and 58 formed the sample population of the research. The seven-step Colaizzi procedure was applied for data analysis. The following 5 main themes were developed. The first main theme was deprivation; the second main theme was humiliation; the third main theme was forgotten love; the fourth main theme was assault; and the fifth main theme was patriarchy. All these five themes represented the women's life experiences of spousal abuse.

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1. Introduction

Violence is regarded as an intentional behavior which aims at hurting oneself or the others (Mirzaee & Kamrani, 2008). Defining different types of violence including family and social violence, domestic violence is a serious social damage which still shows off in the society despite all the cultural advancements (Payne & Wermeling, 2009).

The most amount of domestic violence is against women. Violence against women is a phenomenon in which the women are forced to do what they are told to and her rights are abused by their husbands just due to their gender (Shams, Emamipour & Sadralasadat, 2012). According to the reports by World Health Organization (WHO),

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violence against women is a universal phenomenon and has crossed over the borders of culture, social and economic classes, education, ethnicity, and age. The previous studies indicated that 30-35% of the American women are physically hurt by their husbands and more than 3.5 million women are badly behaved by their spouses per year; moreover, 50% of them are the victims of violence in their life in other ways. The amount of spousal abuse against women have been reported to be 34% in Egypt, 45% in Ethiopia, 31% in Nigeria, 13% in South Africa, 40% in Mexico, 29% in Canada, 58% in Turkey, and 20% in Thailand (WHO, 2013).

The reports of General Principles of European Union agency for fundamental rights (FRA), showed that the amount of spousal abuse in the countries of European Community ranged from 13% to 32% in 2014 (European Union agency for fundamental rights, 2014).

Violence against women is a social dilemma in Iran as well as other countries (Khorasani. 2010); however, there is no valid statistics available about violence against women. The primary findings concerning the amount of physical violence against the women among those who have referred to the forensic centers demonstrate that these women are mostly villagers and their level of educational attainment is primary school or lower. With respect to their jobs, most of them are housewives; further, their husbands are villagers, too, and their level of educational attainment is guidance school or lower. They are mostly involved in agriculture (Gramizadegan & Behboodi, 2013).

Although women can be violent against men, as well, the results of different studies show that women rather than men are more exposed to violence by their spouses. Of the types of violence, physical violence or assault and battery is one of the most common types of misbehavior towards women and girls throughout the world (Keeling & Wormer, 2012). It is rooted in the men's beliefs about the possession of the woman's body, their work strength and carte blanche. Likewise, it is a medium which men apply to take women under their own control; they even consider it as a lawful task (Dekeseredy, 2011).

Men's violence against women has various dimensions, of which, physical violence (hurting parts of the body, beating, and assault and battery), psychic violence (threat, humiliation, verbal blame, and obscenity), social violence (controlling the woman's behaviors, making her socially isolated, banning communicating with others), and sexual violence can be pointed out (Narimani & Valizadeh, 2011).

As per the reports presented by the World Bank, rape and domestic violence, more than such diseases as breast cancer, painful deliveries, and accidents; on the one hand, cause the health of women 15-44 years of age to be ruined; and on the other hand, violence against women has negative effects on other important health preferences including mother's health and immunity, planned parenthood, prevention of sexually-transmitted diseases, AIDS, and mental health (Morgan & Chadwick, 2009).

Of other consequences of this cultural, social, and health problem, negative social outcomes such as increase of health-care costs resulted from women's catching physical and mental diseases due to violence as well as decrease of women's mileage and work strength can be mentioned (Barnett & Miller-Perrin, 2011).

Although several quantitative studies have been conducted concerning men's spousal abuse and violence against women, it seems that not many studies have been carried out in terms of the women's life experiences of spousal abuse. Comprehension of the individuals' experiences makes us be able to see the world the same as the people whose experiences we have investigated see (Boswell & Cannon, 2014). Such comprehension will lead to the production of science and will help us actually understand the real worries of women who have experienced family violence as well as the spousal abuse phenomenon (Morgaine, 2011). Thus, the present research aims at recognizing and describing Iranian women's experiences of spousal abuse.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted following a qualitative research design. A qualitative research following a systematic and conceptual procedure is carried out to describe the life experiences and comprehension of their meanings (Boswell & Cannon, 2014). Polit and Beck (2014) hold that phenomenology investigates the experiences of people. A researcher who carries out phenomenological studies believes that there exist entities in life phenomena and experiences which can be comprehended and explored. Such researchers investigate the conceptual phenomena since the substantial entity of the realities exist in them covertly.

The sample population of the current study was composed of all Iranian women who have experienced spousal abuse. Sampling procedure was a purposive one and the participants were selected from the women who were

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