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Motherhood and Redefining of Women Without a Spouse's Gender Identity: a Study in Abbasabad And Afsaria District

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Introduction

For women, motherhood is one of the main elements of identity formation and one of the main challenges of life. Being in the position of a woman who has lost her husband faces her with new experiences about "motherhood" and roles related to it. During the process of facing the phenomenon of missing a spouse, women without a spouse face new feelings and experiences related to their maternal identity. Therefore, it is essential to know how the maternal aspect of women without a spouse (due to death or divorce) affects the redefinition of their gender identity.

Review of the literature

Martin Evans (2016) has addressed the issue of social support for single mothers. He classifies the problems faced by single mothers as follows: 1) guardianship of children, 2) low income, and 3) children's educational problems. Yuma Chakravarty (2013) has addressed the problems of women without a spouse in the field of employment and has concluded that the social norms confirming the behavior of women without a spouse are influenced by their beliefs and motherhood. Reza Hemmati and Masoumeh Karimi (2017) consider the main problem of divorced women to be guardianship of children without the support of their husbands.

Methodology

In this research, I implemented the grounded theory approach. The participants in this research include twenty-one unmarried women who lived in the Afsarieh and Abbas Abad neighborhoods. The research tool was a semi-structured interview and observation. The participants in this research include twenty-one women without spouses who lived in the Afsarieh and Abbas Abad neighborhoods. Initially, the sampling method was purposeful, and gradually, by identifying categories and forming paradigms, it turned into theoretical sampling.

Research findings

The results of the research showed that after the grief period, what distinguishes women without a spouse is the mechanism of their replacement in the position of "woman who has lost her husband." social status, family conditions, and access and control of material and non-material resources available to women and their motherhood affect their position.

Therefore, "women who have lost their husbands" can be classified into the following groups:

1-Happy widows:

A group of women without a spouse is not unhappy with being a "woman without a spouse" and is satisfied with "themselves" and life. There are similarities and differences among happy widows. Happy widows can be classified as follows:

- Dependent happy widows

This group of women is economically and socially dependent, and they live their lives by benefiting from the comprehensive support of those around them (mostly parents). dependent women are not unhappy with the lack of independence and consider the possibility of family support as an opportunity. The critical point is that the dependent women, in addition to benefiting from economic support, also have social and emotional support from the family. The

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dependent widows that we encountered in this research all had children. One of the characteristics of this group of women is their motherhood.

- Happy, independent widows

This group of women has reached a stable position, usually due to having relatively high economic, social, and cultural resources. In the new social conditions, they continue their lives and spend their daily lives with their children; this has become a factor in achieving independence. Independent women regard motherhood as an honor, regardless of this role's responsibilities. They are delighted with motherhood. They always accept the responsibility of motherhood and are satisfied with it.

-Happy warrior widows

"Warrior widows" have established themselves as women without spouses and are satisfied with their position due to access to economic, social, and cultural resources. They mainly define their identity by working in economic and social fields. Generally, having children does not play a significant role in these women's identity and sense of success.

2- Sad widows (dissatisfied)

This group of women wanted more than being in the position of a woman without a spouse. They generally had less access to economic, social, and cultural resources. Sad widows are not able to plan much for the future of themselves and their children. Their view of their future and their children is more deterministic and fatalistic.

3-Wandering widows

Wandering widows have not achieved identity stability as women without a spouse. They still experience wandering and instability caused by the change of position. Perhaps in this group, more than in any other group, the identity of the woman who has lost her spouse can be seen as a situational identity.

Paradigms

We found Five paradigms in the analysis of the lived experiences of "lost spouse" women according to the categories and subcategories mentioned above.

- Victim mother

This category of "lost spouse" women redefine their identity by perishing for their children due to lack of access to economic, social, and cultural resources and lack of support from the first family. They are looking for support for their children in the future and remain in the role of victims.

- Dependent mother

This category of "lost wife" women has accepted the position of a mother without a husband, but due to their lack of access to cultural and economic resources, they seek support from their first family to support their children and live their daily lives. This identity continues after the children mature, in seeking support from them.

- Wandering mother

This category of women is not fixed in the position of "lost spouse," and based on their situation, they accept or deny their maternal identity. The "Wandering mother" is involved in guilt during the process of rejecting and accepting maternal identity. The identity of the "wandering mother" is situational.

- warrior mother

This group of women accepts the position of "lost spouse" and does not deny their maternal identity. However, motherhood is a responsibility for these women, along with other social and economic responsibilities, and it is not a priority. For warrior mothers, achieving economic and social progress and establishing themselves as "successful women" in social and economic fields are more important.

- Independent mother

"Independent mothers" are among the highest categories that women can reach regarding economic, social, and cultural resources. "Independent women" are completely established in the position of a mother without a spouse (single mother). They redefine their identity as single mothers. The important thing is that "being a mother" is considered power for these women.

Summary and conclusion

By considering the patterns of this research, the conclusion is that the identity of a mother for "lost spouse women" does not only include physiological and physical dimensions that continue with the previous procedure after the loss of the spouse; Rather, it is a social construct that is influenced by the socio-economic conditions of women. The women participating in this research, in their life cycle and based on the resources and facilities they had and their lived experiences, redefined their female-maternal identity. The maternal identity of "women who have lost their spouses" is reproduced under their social situation. In this research, what differentiates "women who have lost their spouses" from each other in the possibility of redefining their maternal identity is their access to economic resources as well as modern elements of education and employment.

Key Words: Motherhood, Divorcees, Widows, Redefine gender Identity.