



## Lived Experience Representation of the Divorced Women Children in the Process of Their Mothers' Potential Re-wedding: Qualitative Study in a Cultural Context

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### Abstract

The present study object was the lived experience representation of the divorced women children in the process of their mothers' potential re-wedding in the cultural context. The research statistical population included adolescents aged 12 to 18 residing in the city of Qom, whose parents had been divorced for at least one year. The sample embraced 14 adolescent participants whom were selected through purposive sampling procedure till achieving theoretic saturation. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach and thematic analysis method based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. The data were collected via semi-structured interview and analyzed by thematic and then analyzed using the stages of thematic analysis. The data analysis led to the extraction of eight main themes, which were as follows: internalization of negative stereotypes about stepfathers; resistance to changing family roles and structure; emotional and moral conflicts in facing the mother's re-wedding; deep fear of helplessness and vulnerability in the new family; feelings of loneliness, identity loss, and rejection; desire to return to the original family; need for affection, security, and active parental presence. In general, the results indicated that children of divorced women were not only directly affected by the possibility of their mothers remarrying, but also, as emotional and social analysts, showed multi-layered reactions to such complex transformation and their attitudes were influenced by cultural stereotypes, deep existential fears, and the need for affection and emotional security. These reactions ranged from negative internalization of the stepfather and feelings of rejection, to conditional hope that the situations would improve if the mother had healthy and supportive marriage.



## Extended abstract

**Introduction:** Family, as the most fundamental social institution, plays a unique role in shaping the emotional, psychological, social, and identity development of its members, especially children. However, with the increasing divorce rate in many societies, including Iran, the traditional structure of the family has undergone profound changes, one of which is the occurrence of remarriage among divorced parents. Re-wedding is one of the common consequences of divorce, which could bring about profound transformations in family structure and in the lived experiences of children. Re-wedding is not merely a single event but a complex process involving multiple transitions that occur before, during, and after the union. While parents often view re-wedding as a means to restore psychological, economic, or social stability, adolescents may perceive it as an ambiguous, stressful, or even threatening experience. Despite the growing body of research on remarriage, most studies have focused on parental perspectives or professional viewpoints, leaving the lived experiences and internal perceptions of children—especially adolescent daughters—largely unexplored. The children from remarried families generally experience lower levels of psychological well-being and academic performance compared to their peers in two-parent or single-parent households. The parental remarriage does not necessarily improve psychological conditions for adolescents but may instead weaken their sense of autonomy, reduce social acceptance, and create confusion regarding familial roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, the present study object was the lived experience representation of the divorced women children in the process of their mothers' potential re-wedding in the cultural context.

**Method:** The research statistical population included adolescents aged 12 to 18 residing in the city of Qom, whose parents had been divorced for at least one year. The sample embraced 14 adolescent participants whom were selected through purposive sampling procedure till achieving theoretic saturation. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach and thematic analysis method based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. The data were collected via semi-structured interview and analyzed by thematic and then analyzed using the stages of thematic analysis.

**Results:** The data analysis led to the extraction of eight main themes, which were as follows: internalization of negative stereotypes about stepfathers; resistance to changing family roles and structure; emotional and moral conflicts in facing the mother's re-wedding; deep fear of helplessness and vulnerability in the new family; feelings of loneliness, identity loss, and rejection; desire to return to the original family; need for affection, security, and active parental presence. In general, the results indicated that children of divorced women were not only directly affected by the possibility of their mothers remarrying, but also, as emotional and social analysts, showed multi-layered reactions to such complex transformation and their attitudes were influenced by cultural stereotypes, deep existential fears, and the need for affection and emotional security. These reactions ranged from negative internalization of the stepfather and feelings of rejection, to conditional hope that the situations would improve if the mother had healthy and supportive marriage.

**Conclusions:** The findings of this study revealed that adolescent children of divorced



women exhibit complex, contradictory, and sometimes resistant reactions toward the potential remarriage of their mothers. These responses are shaped by various factors such as cultural stereotypes, fears of repeating traumatic experiences, and the need for emotional security. In the Iranian cultural context, where the family is perceived as the primary source of identity, meaning, and psychological safety, structural changes in the family could lead to feelings of threat and loss of affection. Understanding these lived experiences is crucial for developing effective counseling programs, educational strategies, and targeted interventions aimed at reducing internal tensions and improving the quality of relationships within remarried families. These insights could also guide policymakers, counselors, and family planners in better incorporating the psychological and social rights of children into family decision-making processes.

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