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A Qualitative Sociological Study Of Domestic Violence Manifestations Among Married Couples In The Metropolis Of Tabriz

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify, analyze, and typologize the manifestations of domestic violence among married individuals residing in the metropolis of Tabriz. The research employed a qualitative methodology based on grounded theory. Data were collected through document analysis and in-depth exploratory interviews with 30 married participants, selected via purposive-theoretical sampling using the snowball technique. Data analysis was conducted through the constant comparative method across three coding stages: open, axial, and selective coding. The findings revealed that domestic violence manifests in physical, health-related, psychological, verbal, economic, social, sexual, cultural, and legal forms. Causal conditions such as socioeconomic status, addiction, cultural capital, age differences, virtual spaces, neurological disorders, secrecy, self-esteem, communication skills, depression, frustration, mistrust, retaliatory behaviors, lack of self-control, legitimization of violence, and women's submissiveness contributed to the emergence of violence. Contextual conditions, including patriarchal attitudes, lack of support for women, poverty, and the enculturation of violence, as well as intervening conditions such as male dominance and authoritarianism, spousal stereotypes, gender discrimination, and family power structures, played significant roles in the reproduction of domestic violence.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Violence is a deeply rooted phenomenon in human history, manifesting in diverse forms and intensities. While historically, the focus was predominantly on physical violence, contemporary research recognizes its psychological, emotional, economic, and social dimensions. Domestic violence, in particular, is a major social harm threatening not only individual victims but also family foundations and societal well-being. As the primary social institution, the family is expected to provide a safe and peaceful environment; however, when it becomes a site of violence, it can reproduce aggression and insecurity. The World Health Organization defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, or the threat thereof, against others, leading to outcomes ranging from psychological and social harm to death. Thus, domestic violence encompasses not only physical harm but also verbal, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse. Evidence from East Azerbaijan province, especially the metropolis of Tabriz, indicates a rising number of domestic violence cases, signaling concern for judicial and social institutions. In this context, a scientific investigation of patterns and mechanisms of domestic violence among married couples is essential to gain deeper insight and inform effective policy and interventions. Accordingly, the central research question is: What are the patterns and processes of domestic violence among Tabriz couples, and which factors influence its occurrence? It is assumed that these manifestations emerge from the interaction of causal, contextual, and moderating factors, with significant individual and social consequences.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative grounded theory approach to identify and analyze domestic violence manifestations among married couples in Tabriz. Given the limitations of existing theories and the necessity to develop a contextually appropriate model, this approach was considered most suitable. The study population comprised married couples in Tabriz, selected through purposive–theoretical sampling with the snowball technique. Initially, individuals with experiences of domestic violence were identified and, with their consent, participated in in-depth interviews. Subsequently, new participants were recruited via referrals to achieve theoretical saturation. Data were collected through 30 in-depth interviews, conducted by same-gender interviewers to ensure participants' comfort and confidentiality, with recording or note-taking. Data analysis followed three coding stages: open, axial, and selective coding, with iterative comparison and review to extract categories and relationships. To enhance validity and reliability, member checking was conducted, themes were evaluated by three independent reviewers, and semantic unit agreement was assessed by six sociology PhD students. The final Cohen's kappa coefficient was 0.82, indicating high reliability.

Results And Discussion

Analysis of in-depth interviews revealed that domestic violence among married couples in Tabriz manifests as a multidimensional and systemic phenomenon, arising from the complex interplay of individual, familial, and societal factors. The study identified 189 initial categories, organized into six interconnected axes: manifestations of domestic violence (physical, psychological, emotional, verbal, economic, social, sexual, cultural, and legal forms), causal conditions (addiction, age differences, depression, poor communication skills, mistrust, and socioeconomic challenges), contextual conditions (patriarchal attitudes, poverty, emotional instability, and lack of public education), intervening conditions (male dominance, gender stereotypes, and family power structures), strategies (perpetuation of violence, learned violent behaviors, and role incompatibility), and consequences (anxiety, depression, reduced self-esteem, emotional coldness, emotional divorce, and harm to children). The central phenomenon, conceptualized as a "coerced bond," integrates all axes, illustrating that domestic violence is not an isolated occurrence but the outcome of interdependent factors operating at multiple levels. Low socioeconomic status, addiction, age differences, depression, poor communication skills, and mistrust, combined with contextual elements such as patriarchal norms, poverty, emotional instability, and insufficient public education, reinforce the likelihood of violence, while intervening factors including family power structures, male dominance, and gender stereotypes shape its form and intensity. These dynamics lead to strategies that perpetuate the cycle of violence and exacerbate role incompatibility, resulting in consequences that extend beyond individuals—such as anxiety, depression, diminished self-esteem, and emotional divorce—to undermine family foundations and facilitate the reproduction of violence in society. Overall, domestic violence among Tabriz couples emerges as a self-reinforcing, systemic, and multidimensional phenomenon, emphasizing the urgent need for preventive policy measures, public education, enhanced social support, and structural reforms addressing cultural and gender norms as essential prerequisites for its mitigation.