



Women and Dynamics of self-identity: Divorce experience in Islamabad-e gharb city

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Article Info	Extended Abstract
Article type: Research Article	Objective: The objective of this research is to achieve an understanding of the phenomenon of divorce and women's inclination toward divorce in the city of Islamabad-e Gharb. Although the breakdown of marital life and easy access to divorce are not historically or cross-culturally unprecedented, alongside the modernization of society, rapid and accelerated transformations in this area are taking shape, the prospects and scope of which do not appear entirely clear. Keeping these changes in mind, the present research seeks an understanding from within divorce, derived from the lived experiences of divorced women or women who desire divorce. Therefore, the present research aims to answer this important question: What might be the causes of women's inclination towards divorce in a city like Islamabad-e Gharb? And how can this phenomenon be explained? In the present research, an attempt was made to utilize the theory of Anthony Giddens; a theory that extensively discusses modernity and its formation and development, as well as issues related to personal identity and its dynamics within the context of macro trends in modern life. Beyond the specific complexities of Giddens' theory, within his conceptualization of "late modernity," he employs the concept of the pure relationship to understand personal and marital relationships. He believes that the pure relationship is expanding today. A pure relationship refers to a situation where a social relationship is established solely for the sake of the relationship itself and for what each person gains from sustained association with the other. It continues only as long as both parties are sufficiently satisfied with remaining in it, and for the majority of sexually normal individuals, it becomes linked to sexuality through marriage. Methodology: This research was conducted using a qualitative method through in-depth interviews with 16 divorced women or women on the verge of divorce in Islamabad-e Gharb County. Sampling was purposeful and theoretical, continuing until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data analysis was performed in two stages: primary coding (extracting concepts and forming initial categories) and secondary coding (classifying information and forming final categories). The analysis process involved accurate transcription of interviews, repeated reading to understand experiences, and extracting key statements.
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Findings: The findings identify eight major categories as contributing factors to divorce: The prevailing patriarchy within the family structure, which leads to the disregard of women's opinions and creates a sense of inferiority; lack of initial love and affection or its erosion over the course of married life; women's increasing desire for realizing individuality, independence, and personal flourishing in areas such as education and employment, which sometimes conflicts with traditional roles; the phenomenon of child marriage and early marriages, accompanied by a lack of emotional maturity and readiness to accept responsibility; domestic violence in psychological, verbal, and physical dimensions; forced marriages that occur without individual consent and under family pressure; infidelity, often rooted in a lack of intimacy or attraction in the primary relationship; and finally, conflicts arising from differing gender socialization of spouses, leading to incompatible expectations and attitudes about the roles of men and women. The study concludes that alongside traditional structural factors (such as poverty or addiction), the transition to modernity and the change in values—which have brought about an emphasis on love, individuality, and equal relationships—have reduced women's understanding and tolerance for unequal relationships lacking intimacy, thereby fueling the increase in divorce rates even in a region with a traditional-ethnic fabric.

Conclusion: The conclusion of this research indicates that the phenomenon of divorce in Islamabad-e Gharb County is shaped within the context of a complex interaction between traditional structures and modern values. Based on Giddens' theoretical framework, the traditional functions of the family, such as reproduction and economics, are no longer sufficient, and the "pure relationship" based on mutual love, intimacy, and satisfaction has become a necessary condition for the continuity of married life. The findings suggest that women's increasing desire for independence, the realization of personal identity, and social participation comes into conflict with patriarchal structures, forced marriages, child marriage, and asymmetrical gender socialization. A lack of life skills, domestic violence, and infidelity further contribute to these factors. Ultimately, the research emphasizes that the increase in divorce in this region is not merely a reflection of individual problems but indicative of a larger social transformation; a transition in which women increasingly act as active agents who are less willing to tolerate relationships lacking love, respect, and the possibility for personal flourishing, and this issue poses serious challenges to the foundation of the family in Iranian society.

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