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Victims' Perceptions of Their Perpetrator and Cultural Context of Abuse in Domestic Violence by Women in Qatar

Lolwa Shaheen M A Al-Kuwari
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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Lolwa Shaheen M A Al-Kuwari

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Victims' Perceptions of Their Perpetrator and Cultural Context of Abuse in Domestic

Violence by Women in Qatar

by

Lolwa Shaheen M A Al-Kuwari

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

There has been evidence of various forms of domestic violence in the Middle East countries, gaps still exist in understanding of the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of intimate partner violence and violence against women (IPV/VAW). This purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women, using Bronfenbrenner's systems theory to explore the environmental aspects within and outside of the victim's control associated with increased risk of IPV/VAW. A qualitative phenomenological research design utilizing semi-structured interviews with purposive sample of eight divorced women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar who had experienced IPV/VAW as adults. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and manually. The findings described the complex interplay between cultural norms, family reactions, and the legal framework in the reporting of domestic violence in Qatar. The findings also addressed the complex interplay of societal and economic factors that influence women's decisions to remain in abusive relationships in Qatar, and revealed the abused women's perceptions of the compatibility of their religious beliefs with IPV/VAW. The findings also revealed the various approaches the survivors could use to overcome difficulties, demonstrated the coping strategies, and various concerns survivors of IPV/VAW may grapple with in making the divorce decision. The study identifies strategies, including education, gender equality, challenging cultural norms, and legal reforms, that can lead to positive social change by reducing IPV/VAW in Qatar.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God for His unwavering guidance, encouragement, and the strength He bestowed upon me. In the face of obstacles, God's divine intervention has steered me towards the successful attainment of my major goal. I am forever grateful for the opportunities you provided, molding me into the scholar I am today.

Secondly, my mother. From the earliest stages of my childhood, you foresaw my future as a doctor and unwaveringly believed in my potential. Your steadfast support and belief in my capabilities have been a constant source of inspiration, propelling me forward in this scholarly pursuit. I also dedicate this work to you my brother Dr. Abdul Razzaq.

Your unyielding belief, unshakeable support, and companionship during the most challenging and uncertain times have been invaluable. Your presence has been a reassuring constant, and I am grateful for the strength you provided on this arduous academic journey.

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Finally, I dedicate this work to myself. Despite the challenges encountered, I remained steadfast in my pursuit, overcoming obstacles and achieving success after 20 years. This dedication is a reflection of the unwavering faith I had in myself, a belief that propelled me to this moment of academic triumph.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Violence against women (VAW) is a serious issue that hurts the wellbeing of women (Al Ghayathin, 2017; Barnawi, 2017). Intimate partner violence (IPV) is one type of VAW prevalent in Arab countries (Alquaiz et al., 2017). In Qatar, while there is no specific law against domestic violence, there is concern over the prevalence and how women deal with experiences of IPV/VAW (AL Meezan, 2020). In this study, I acknowledged the adverse physical, emotional, and psychological effects that women and children could face as a result of unresolved experiences of IPV/VAW (see Huang et al., 2015; Kiesel et al., 2016; Safadi et al., 2018; Vranda et al., 2018). However, in countries such as Qatar, where the law lacks clarity about the penalties for perpetrators of IPV/VAW and protection for victims, women are likely to face challenges when seeking help (AL Meezan, 2020; Evans & Feder, 2016; Novisky & Peralta, 2015; Vranda et al., 2018). Without adequate services to promote help seeking behavior, the risk of adverse effects associated with experience of IPV/VAW increases. Despite this concern, there is limited research regarding the prevalence and experience of IPV/VAW against divorced Qatari women (Al Ghayathin, 2017). The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW.

This chapter provides an introduction to the research topic by anchoring the identified gap within the existing literature. The problem is identified, which then informs the purpose, research questions, and approach that was used to address the problem. The

chapter also describes the significance of addressing the identified problem and the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations associated with the study.

Background of the Study

VAW is a serious issue that hurts the wellbeing of women. The World Health Organization (WHO; 2022) defined VAW, also known as gender-based violence, as violence that can adversely affect females' mental, physical, sexual, and reproductive health. Similarly, the United Nations (1993) defined VAW as acts that contribute to women's physical, psychological, or sexual harm. The term IPV is a form of VAW that is described in various studies (see Elghossain et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2019; Hou et al., 2017). IPV refers to VAW that is perpetuated by partners, and, it is, therefore, a domestic form of VAW (Elghossain et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2019). According to Jahromi et al. (2016), 49.4% ($n = 488$) of women aged 16 to 75 years in Iran have experienced at least one form of IPV/VAW. In addition, Abolfotouh and Almuneef (2019) reported a 44.8% lifetime prevalence of VAW in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Al Ghayathin (2017) indicated that cases of self-reported domestic violence among women in Qatar were reportedly 40%. Other research findings, however, have reflected variability in prevalence (Elghossain et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2019).

There are various forms of IPV/VAW, which vary in prevalence. Madhani et al. (2017) reported that among 1,325 Pakistani women, the forms of abuse that were considered as IPV/VAW by the participants included physical abuse (47%), controlling behaviors by the husband (21%), conflict with in-laws (22%), and verbal abuse (8%). Barnawi (2017) noted that among 720 Saudi women, emotional abuse was the most

common (69%), while the least prevalent abuse was sexual, which was reported by 10% of the participants. The percentages of other types of abuse self-reported by participants were social, economic, and physical abuse at 34%, 26%, and 20% of the participants, respectively. Eldoseri and Sharps (2020) reported that among 200 Saudi women, controlling behavior constituted the highest type of IPV/VAW (37%), and the other forms of IPV/VAW included emotional violence (22%), sexual violence (13%), and physical violence (9%). Elghossain et al. (2019), in a meta-analysis that included 74 records based on 56 different datasets from 22 countries of the Arab League, reported that the prevalence of physical abuse ranged from 6% to 59%, while sexual abuse ranged from 3% to 40%. The researchers also reported that the prevalence of emotional abuse ranged from 5% to 91%.

There are various factors associated with the occurrence of IPV/VAW. Factors related to the victims of IPV/VAW include age, with evidence suggesting younger women such as those under 30 years have a greater risk of experiencing violence (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020; Jahromi et al., 2016). Older women, above the age of 40 years, are indicated to be less likely to experience IPV/VAW (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Jahromi et al., 2016). There is, however, conflicting evidence regarding how the age of women is associated with the likelihood of IPV/VAW, with Safadi et al. (2018) reporting that older women are more likely to encounter the abuse. The number of years since marriage also influences the chances of women having experiences of IPV/VAW, with frequency of abuse increasing with an increase in the number of years of marriage (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Vadysinghe et al., 2018).

The other factors associated with the victims include the education level (Ahmed et al., 2017; Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020; Jahromi et al., 2016; Safadi et al., 2018) and occupation (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Vadysinghe et al., 2018). The factors associated with perpetrators of IPV/VAW include age, educational level, employment status, and addiction (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020; Jahromi et al., 2016). The occurrence of IPV/VAW has also been associated with social-cultural factors such as practice of paying a bride price (Rees et al., 2017), cultural practices that have legitimized patriarchy (Batchelor, 2020; Isgandarova, 2017; Lelaurain et al., 2018), and controlling behaviors (Madhani et al., 2017). Evidence has also suggested that the interpretations of religious beliefs that are highly lenient of abuse in marriages and that favor patriarchal gender roles promote IPV/VAW (Batchelor, 2020; Scarduzio et al., 2017).

Experiences of IPV/VAW has been associated with various adverse consequences. Stöckl and Penhale (2015), in a survey involving 10,264 women from Germany, noted that women who suffered sexual and physical abuse were at a high risk of developing various physical health problems. Safadi et al. (2018) noted that among Jordanian women who experienced abuse from their intimate partners, 72.6% ($n = 342$) of them were fatigued while 45.6% ($n = 215$) suffered headaches. Moreover, Lövestad et al. (2017) reported that 573 Swedish women 45.9% ($n = 216$) of women who were subjected to IPV/VAW experienced depression. Similarly, Mendonça and Ludermir (2017) noted that 44.6% of Brazilian women who endured violence from their intimate partners experienced common mental disorders. Along those same lines, Barnawi (2017)

found that 58% of abused women in Saudi Arabia suffered psychiatric problems while 72% of them experienced medical and behavioral complications. IPV/VAW also harms children, as evidenced by the findings that showed that 90% of the children in homes with domestic violence suffered physiological and behavioral complications (Barnawi, 2017).

Despite highlighted risks associated with experiences of IPV/VAW, some of the affected women have failed to seek help (Vadysinghe et al., 2018). Following analysis of cross-sectional data that were obtained from 720 Saudi women, Barnawi (2017) noted that 41% of women reportedly remained silent following exposure to abuse. Likewise, Vadysinghe et al. (2018) observed that 31% of the participants did not report the abuse to the authorities in a study involving Sri Lankan women. Additionally, Vranda et al. (2018) noted that only a third of abused women chose to leave an abusive relationship. The researchers further noted that 52% of abused Indian women had left their abusive partners but later returned. Also, Al Ghayathin (2017) reported that 60% of the women who reported IPV/VAW in the study in Qatar also chose to remain silent. Of these abused women, only 28% reported this violence to the police.

There are various barriers that hinder women from seeking help. Evans and Feder (2016) reported that one of the barriers is the negative reaction from social support groups. children. Evans and Feder also argued that abused women's fear of living with the guilt of being responsible for the perpetrators' make them avoid disclosing the abuse. According to Madhani et al. (2017), as many as 73% of women in Pakistan have reported remaining silent when subjected to IPV/VAW due to the fear of increased abuse (49.4%),

feeling of helplessness (19%), and the perception that the perpetrators have the right to subject them to the abuse (22%). In Jordan, women who self-reported domestic violence in the study also reported that they did not report the IPV/VAW due to women's justification of spousal violence and the fear of breaking up the family unit (Al-Modallal, 2017).

Problem Statement

The problem that this study addressed related to the issue of domestic violence against divorced Qatari women and especially how the victims perceived the violence and the role of culture-related aspects. The focus on the identified problem was informed by the reported high prevalence of IPV/VAW of up to 43.0% lifetime prevalence in Arab countries (see Alquaiz, et al., 2017). It was noted that the prevalence could even be higher in countries such as Qatar due to the lack of a law against domestic violence, and women use charges such as physical assault and molestation to make criminal complaints (AL Meezan, 2020).

Addressing issues related to IPV/VAW is important because of the association with various adverse physical, emotional, and psychological effects to women and children (Huang et al., 2015; Kiesel et al., 2016; Safadi et al., 2018; Vranda et al., 2018). Evidence has indicated that the abuse is associated with adverse effects on physical and mental health (Mendonça & Ludermir, 2017; Safadi et al., 2018). Exposure of children to IPV has been associated with various undesirable effects such as delinquencies, poor academic performance, and adjustment problems, which highlights the need for effective management and prevention of IPV/VAW (Huang et al., 2015; Kiesel et al., 2016).

The study was also informed by the challenges that affected victims of VAW seeking help. It was noted that victims of the IPV/VAW could be forced by various factors to refrain from seeking help (Evans & Feder, 2016; Vranda et al., 2018). Some of the factors that were identified included attitudes of the police carrying out the mandatory arrest, perpetrators addicted to alcohol or drug use, negative reactions towards attempts to seek help from social support groups, and emotional blackmail by perpetrators (Evans & Feder, 2016; Novisky & Peralta, 2015; Vranda et al., 2018). Muslim men who have often been the perpetrators of IPV/VAW have used their interpretation of culture and principles of the Islamic faith as the basis to control and abuse women (Al Ghayathin, 2017). Therefore, understanding the barriers to help seeking among victims of the IPV/VAW is important in order to provide safe housing and access to other services required by the victims of IPVVAW during their recovery.

Although there has been evidence of various forms of domestic violence in the Middle East countries (Barnawi, 2017; Elghossain, et al., 2019; Madhani et al., 2017), gaps still exist in the understanding of the lived experiences among divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW. It was challenging to draw meaningful conclusions from existing studies because definitions of IPV/VAW as well as methods and procedures varied across studies and settings (see Elghossain et al., 2019). The variation in the prevalence of various forms of abuse in the Arab countries has been associated with differences in the methods and approaches used by various researchers in defining IPV/VAW (Elghossain et al., 2019). Researchers in Qatar and throughout the Middle East have attempted to collect data about IPV/VAW (Abolfotouh & Almuneef,

2019; Al Ghayathin, 2017). However, the research in Qatar about the prevalence and experience of domestic violence against Qatari women has been limited to one study in which university students and psychologists/social workers served as participants (Al Ghayathin, 2017). There was, therefore, no research on IPV/VAW that took into account the voices of Qatar victims of IPV/VAW using qualitative methods with the aim of exclusively describing their experience of IPV in Qatar and whether there was any structure that helped them to recover. More research was therefore needed to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW more broadly using qualitative methods. This was the gap in research findings that the I sought to fill in this research.

Purpose of the Study

The qualitative study explored the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW using a phenomenological approach that focused on the interpretive identification of the phenomenon emerging from the views shared by the participants during interviews (see Creswell et al., 2007). A qualitative phenomenological approach was selected to fill the gap in the literature where in-depth exploration was needed due to the use of quantitative methods in prior studies (Al-Modallal, 2017; Barnawi, 2017; Madhani, et al., 2017). The study focused on how IPV/VAW affected the victims and their children, what the victims believed led to their partners abusing them, and their perspectives on the influence of culture/religion on their partner's abuse. In the study, data were collected using semistructured interviews with divorced Qatari women who had experienced IPV/VAW.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) for this study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Qatari women and IPV/VAW?

RQ2: How do the victims of IPV/VAW perceive cultural influences on IPV/VAW?

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (see Darling, 2007; Ryan, 2001). This theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner to explain the nature of the interaction between the characteristics of the environment and individuals in determining how humans develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). According to the psychologist, a better understanding of how humans develop can be gained through the assessment of the individual in different environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner noted that each of the ecological systems is important because it influences all aspects of the individual's life. The theory argues that someone in the same ecological system could experience different developmental trajectories because their interactions with other systems will be different and unique (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The theory highlights five different environments (layers of the ecosystem), with the first being microsystem, which is considered the smallest and the closest to where the individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The microsystem can include the immediate home of the individual, school, closest friends, and community where the individual lives. The mesosystem is the second layer, which includes the interaction between the different microsystems in which the individuals exist (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The

mesosystem describes the linkages that exist between the microsystems. Good relationships between these two microsystems can lead to positive effects on the individual's development. The lack of good relationships can lead to conflicting emotions (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The third layer is the exosystem, which describes the larger social system, where the individual may not function directly but has influences that the individual may experience with some structures in the individual's microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The fourth layer is the macrosystem, which describes the distant environment that includes cultural values, customs, and values that the individual may not directly interact with. The fifth layer is the chronosystem, which describes the dimension and how it influences the development of the individual. The elements within the chronosystem could be external, such as the death of a close friend or internal such as the timing of an individual's physiological changes (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Existing evidence has shown how the factors in the different layers may influence the occurrence of IPV/VAW, for example factors associated with the woman's microsystem, such as the relationship with in-laws influenced the occurrence of VAW (Madhani et al., 2017). Aspects associated with mesosystem such as the relationship between the individual's parents and the individual's friends could also influence the occurrence of VAW (Madhani et al., 2017). The factors associated with an individual's macrosystem such as community's perception and tolerance towards violence have also been shown to influence the occurrence of VAW (Madhani et al., 2017). Evidence has also indicated that factors associated with the chronosystem, such as the age of married

women, has also been associated with the occurrence of VAW (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Hou et al., 2017).

Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory allowed me to carry out an in-depth assessment of IPV/VAW in Qatar. Based on this framework, I was able to explore influences within the immediate environment where the women interacted with others directly as well as those in their larger social settings. This theory enabled me to approach the study with the view that the environmental aspects associated with increased risk of IPV/VAW were a result of the interaction of environmental aspects within and outside of the victim's control.

Nature of the Study

The approach adopted in this study was informed by the research aim, which was to explore IPV/VAW among women in Qatar. The study was based on a qualitative research design based on phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach guided the development of knowledge regarding experiences of IPV/VAW through the identification of the phenomenon based on the views shared by the participants (see Creswell et al., 2007). The key features of the adopted phenomenological approach included using interviews to collect data and the interpretative role of the researcher (see Creswell et al., 2007). Both of these aspects allowed me to gain an understanding of the phenomenon by relying on the experiences and views of Qatari women (see Kaur & Garg, 2010). The qualitative approach provided an opportunity to explore the contextual aspects associated with the lived experiences of IPV/VAW in Qatar. The study focused on the prevailing circumstances and conditions that influenced the experiences of

IPV/VAW, such as marital status, social status, education level, features of the perpetrator, and surrounding cultural norms. Considering these contextual aspects was important because evidence has suggested that aspects associated with IPV/VAW may vary across different communities and settings (Ochieng, 2009).

The adopted qualitative analytical strategy involved coding the transcribed interview data based on the approaches described by Rosen et al. (2015). I used color codes to identify important text within the transcripts that contributed to understanding the research phenomenon. The coding approach ensured an exhaustive identification and labeling of the texts within the transcripts, allowing for visualization and aggregation of emerging themes (see Weston et al., 2001). The coding process aimed to develop knowledge regarding the perceived influence of culture on the risk of VAW based on the lived experiences and voices of the victims. Nvivo 12 software was used to implement the coding strategy.

Definition of Terms

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory: This refers to a theory developed by Bronfenbrenner. The theory explains the nature of the interaction between the characteristics of the environment and individuals in determining how humans develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Intimate partner violence: This refers to the VAW perpetuated by intimate partners (Elghossain et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2019).

IPV/VAW perpetrator: This refers to a person who carries out IPV/VAW (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020). The percentage of who are intimate partners ranges between 20% to 43.0% (Barnawi, 2017; Elghossain et al., 2019).

IPV/VAW victim: This refers to the person who has suffered IPV/VAW (Vadysinghe et al., 2018).

Middle Eastern countries: This refers to the transcontinental region in Afro-Eurasia that is made up of 18 countries (Barnawi, 2017; Madhani et al., 2017). Qatar is one of the Middle Eastern countries.

Risk factor for IPV/VAW: These are factors that are associated with increased likelihood of VAW (Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020). Examples of the risk factors include age (Jahromi et al., 2016), duration of marriage (Alquaiz et al., 2017), educational level (Jahromi et al., 2016), employment status, and addiction (Jahromi et al., 2016).

Violence against women: This refers to any violence that adversely affect females' mental, physical, sexual, and reproductive health (WHO, 2022).

Assumptions

One of the assumptions made in this study was that it was possible to access and recruit women with experiences of IPV/VAW in Qatar. This assumption was informed by the fact that Qatar was one of the Arab countries with high cases of IPV/VAW (see Alquaiz, et al., 2017). The other assumption related to the willingness of the recruited victims of IPV/VAW to be interviewed for the study. This assumption was relevant given that the research phenomenon focused on a sensitive issue that the Qatari women might not be willing to discuss it openly (see Batchelor, 2020; Isgandarova, 2017). However, I

assumed that this challenge could be addressed by putting in place steps to protect the identity of the participants and communicating it to them through the informed consent process. Additionally, I made the assumption that the interviews could be conducted without any interruptions and bias. I expected the use of semistructured interview questions to enable me to capture the lived experiences of participants regarding IPV/VAW. I also assumed that the participants would give their honest accounts of their experiences with IPV/VAW.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focused only on experiences of IPV/VAW among Qatari women who were 18 and older and divorced. The scope was informed by the identified gap within the literature. Based on the reviewed evidence, there was limited research evidence that has taken into account the voices of Qatar victims of IPV/VAW using qualitative methods, so the scope of this study included experiences of IPV in Qatar and whether there was any structure that helped them to recover. A delimitation of this study related to the fact that the study only included divorced women with experiences of IPV/VAW. This delimitation ensured that the participants had the required experiences that could enable them to construct knowledge regarding the research phenomenon. The study did not include children of victims of IPV/VAW but instead depended on the views shared by the women participants in understanding challenges faced by their children.

Limitations

Given the COVID-19 restrictions, it was challenging to travel, which could have limited the recruitment and collection of data. I addressed this challenge by adopting in-

person and online interviews using Zoom-video conferencing in the collection, preferably phone-based programs with face capability. The limitation with the use of Zoom videoconferencing was the unstable internet connection, which might have interfered with the quality of the video interactions. To address the limitation, I requested that the participants ensured that they were connected to reliable and stable internet.

Given that the research topic was sensitive in Qatar and that the study was qualitative, another limitation was the small number of participants. The small sample size negatively impacts the generalizability of the findings. Transferability is used to describe the applicability of the research outcomes to different settings and contexts (Sinclair et al., 2018). In qualitative studies, transferability is limited due to the small sample size (Sinclair et al., 2018). To enhance transferability in this study, I used thick description, which refers to the comprehensive discussion of the approaches used in the analysis (see Willig, 2019). In the study, I incorporated thick description by maintaining elaborate documentation of the interactions with participants, the responses from the participants, and the behavior of the participants during the interviews.

Various biases could also have limited trustworthiness in the collection of data and analysis. One such bias related to my thoughts regarding the role of Muslim culture, such as the patriarchal system in Qatar, which potentially promoted IPV/VAW. Following the review of literature on IPV/VAW, I developed my own views regarding the effects of IPV/VAW on children and potential negative effects on the victims. To guard against the negative impact of the highlighted biases on the credibility of the

findings, I kept a journal of all activities related to the study that was reviewed by my chair to monitor for potential bias(es).

Significance of the Study

There was a gap in the existing literature in qualitative research about the lived experiences of IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women. The one study (Al Ghayathin, 2017) that focused on the topic was based on data collected from university students and was quantitative in nature. Also, data were collected from university psychologists/social workers and did not include victims of IVP/VAW. Therefore, I sought to provide an in-depth understanding of IPV/VAW in Qatar based on the voices and experiences of the victims (divorced women). By allowing the development of knowledge to be guided by the lived experiences and understanding of the divorced Qatari women with experiences of IPV/VAW, the study sheds more light on the women's interpretation of the causes and consequences of VAW, and what they believed were the best approaches to address such abuses.

The findings of the study provide insights that could trigger a debate throughout Qatar by stakeholders about IPV/VAW and the steps that need to be taken to address precipitating factors and associated adverse effects. By documenting the voices of the victims and ensuring effective dissemination of the findings, I hope to enhance awareness among the relevant stakeholders, such as the human rights protection groups and the public about the pain of IPV/VAW. Qatar society has a strict adherence to cultural traditions that could favor VAW, and so I hoped to shed more light on how such traditions negatively impact women's wellbeing. By doing so, I sought to contribute

towards efforts to encourage society to make policies that guard against IPV/VAW and support those afflicted.

It was expected that the findings of the study would advance information that might have positive social change. At the individual level, it was expected that outcomes of the study could help highlight the challenges faced by the victims and their children and the support they need in navigating the challenges. At the community level, the findings regarding the experiences of IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women could empower the proponents of human rights to focus more on protecting women who are vulnerable to IPV/VAW. At the societal level, the findings could create more awareness about the suffering endured by victims of IPV/VAW and the need for the society to reexamine cultural practices that promote such abuses.

Summary

In this chapter, evidence in the form of the existing literature about the research problem and gap in research findings was briefly summarized. The issue of domestic violence against divorced Qatari women was identified as the research problem, and two RQs that guided the study in addressing the research problem have been identified. The chapter also described the research approach as well as the significance, assumptions, delimitation, and limitations associated with the study. The information presented in this chapter is elaborated in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the existing studies that are related to the focus of this research as well as the theoretical foundation to determine the current research position on IPV/VAW and the gaps that exist in the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem that this study addressed related to the issue of domestic violence against Qatari women and especially how the victims perceived the violence and the role of culture-related aspects. Muslim men who have been perpetrators of IPV/VAW have often used their interpretation of culture, and principles of the Islamic faith as the basis to control and abuse women (Al Ghayathin, 2017). Researchers in the Middle East have reported other negative effects of domestic violence on women and their children. Barnawi (2017) found that 58% of abused women in Saudi Arabia suffered psychiatric problems, while 72% of them experienced medical and behavioral complications. Domestic violence harms children, as evidenced by the findings that showed that 90% of the children in homes with domestic violence suffered physiological and behavioral complications (Barnawi, 2017). Qatar does not currently have a law against domestic violence, and women use charges such as physical assault and molestation to make criminal complaints (Penal Code of Qatar, 2004). However, some researchers in Qatar and throughout the Middle East have been attempting to collect data about IPV/VAW (Abolfotouh & Almuneef, 2019; Al Ghayathin, 2017).

Although researchers have identified domestic violence and IPV/VAW in the Middle East as a major public health issue and human rights concern (Elghossain et al., 2019), there are gaps in the research findings, because the existing studies were quantitative in nature and used health clinic attendees as general participants who indicated simply whether they have experienced domestic violence (Al-Modallal, 2017;

Barnawi, 2017; Madhani, et al., 2017). Thus, more research was needed to explore lived experiences more broadly using qualitative methods. The research in Qatar about the prevalence and experience of domestic violence against Qatari women was limited to one study in which university students and psychologists/social workers served as participants (Al Ghayathin, 2017). However, there has been no research on IPV/VAW that took into account the voices of Qatar victims of IPV/VAW using qualitative methods. This was the gap in research findings that I sought to fill.

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences divorced Qatari women regarding experiences of domestic violence with a focus on what they thought about the influence of culture/religion and how such abuses had affected them and their children. I used a phenomenological approach to guide the development of knowledge regarding experiences of IPV/VAW through the identification of the phenomenon within the views shared by the participants (see Creswell et al., 2007). Using the phenomenological approach enabled the development of knowledge regarding experiences of IPV/VAW through the identification of the phenomenon within the views shared by the participants (see Creswell et al., 2007).

Although researchers in the Middle East have reported a 44.8% lifetime prevalence of IPV/VAW, such as in Saudi Arabia (Abolfotouh & Almuneef, 2019), some studies have been population-based studies while the other two-thirds have been facility-based (Elghossain et al., 2019). There have been challenges in researching domestic violence in Middle East countries. In studies to date, women have indicated in their self-reported data that they prefer to remain silent and not report domestic violence to the

authorities (Al Ghayathin, 2017; Al-Modallal, 2017; Barnawi, 2017). The one study in Qatar (Al Ghayathin, 2017) that focused on the topic was based on data collected from university students and was quantitative. There was, therefore, a gap in research studies on the lived experiences of IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women that were based on the voices of the victims.

In this chapter, the existing studies related to the focus of this research are reviewed to determine the current research position on IPV/VAW and the gaps that exist in literature. However, the chapter starts with the description of the approaches I used in retrieving the relevant studies from specific databases. The description includes the criteria used in the identification and selection of the studies.

Secondly, the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as the theoretical foundation that guided this research. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory acknowledges that individuals are embedded in social and physical environments that they could directly or indirectly interact with and influence them, which is important in understanding IPV/VAW (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An in-depth description of the theoretical foundation involves the identification of how the theory could be applied to research on IPV/VAW. An in-depth analysis of the assumption and criticisms of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is also provided.

The chapter then provides a discussion of various concepts related to the research topic based on evidence from existing literature. The concepts discussed include the prevalence of IPV/VAW with a focus on Middle Eastern countries and the factors

associated with abuse of women by intimate partners, where factors associated with the victims, perpetrators, sociocultural factors, and religious factors are discussed. I then evaluate the existing evidence on adverse effects associated with the abuse of women with a focus on health effects. The other concepts discussed include help-seeking among victims of IPV/VAW, approaches used in addressing IPV/VAW, and evaluation of methodological approaches used in the assessment of lived experiences of IPV/VAW.

Literature Search Strategy

Studies used to obtain relevant evidence presented in this literature review were retrieved from selected databases. I identified the databases that enabled the retrieval of studies that were comprehensive, reliable, and which contained up-to-date information regarding VAW. The comprehensiveness of the databases was determined based on how well the studies contained in such databases presented evidence from various settings and especially that focused on Middle Eastern countries and Muslim culture. The reliability of the databases was based on the methodological integrity of the studies included with preference being given to databases that contained peer-reviewed studies. The recency of the information in the databases was based on whether it contained recently published studies (not older than 2015). Based on the highlighted considerations, I selected databases that included the following: PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, A Sage Full Text-Collection, PsycCritiques, PsycTests, and SAGE Premier. The search was also conducted in Google Scholar.

The retrieval of relevant articles from the selected electronic databases was carried out using a combination of various search terms. The search terms used were

relevant to the purpose of the study and included the following: *violence against women, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, prevalence, effects, cultural factors, religious factors, perpetrators, helping seeking, social support, voices of the victims, and qualitative studies*. The identified search terms were combined using Boolean operators “OR” and “AND,” which allowed the narrowing and expansion of the search (see Atkinson & Cipriani, 2018). Different combinations of the search terms were then used in the various electronic databases. Additional studies relevant to this literature review were obtained from the references of the articles that were retrieved following search using the identified search terms.

I selected relevant articles from the total number of search outcomes using specific eligibility criteria. The criteria required the relevant studies to be those that provided evidence regarding VAW. The participants of the studies were required to be adults. The studies included were those that were based on English and accessible in full text. The included studies were those that were based on primary data. Only peer-reviewed studies were included in the literature review. The studies excluded were published earlier than 2015 unless the study provided important historical aspects such as in the discussion of the theoretical framework. Using the highlighted eligibility criteria, I selected articles by removing duplicates and subjecting the abstracts and full-text analysis to the eligibility criteria.

Theoretical Foundation

In this study, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory provided the theoretical framework to understand aspects related to IPV/VAW (see Darling, 2007; Ryan, 2001).

This theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner to explain the nature of the interaction between the characteristics of the environment and individuals in determining how humans develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). According to the psychologist, a better understanding of how humans develop can be gained through the assessment of the individual in different environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner noted that each of the ecological systems is important because it influences all aspects of the individual's life. The theory argues that individuals in the same ecological system could experience different developmental trajectories because their interactions with other systems will be different and unique (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The theory highlights five different environments (layers of the ecosystem), with the first being the microsystem, which is considered the smallest and the closest to where the individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The microsystem can include the immediate home of the individual, school, closest friends, and community where the individual lives. The individual interacts with the microsystem through personal relationships. In this layer, the interaction is bi-directional, where the individual influences the environment, and the environment also impacts the individual's behavior and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The mesosystem is the second layer, which includes the interaction between the different microsystems in which the individuals exist (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The mesosystem describes the linkages that exist between the microsystems, such as the relationship between the individual's parents and the individual's friends. Good relationships between the two microsystems can lead to positive effects on the

individual's development. The lack of good relationships can lead to conflicting emotions (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The third layer is the exosystem, which describes the larger social system, where the individual may not function directly but has influences the individual may experience with some structures in the individual's microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The fourth layer is the macrosystem, which describes the distant environment that includes cultural values, customs, and values that the individual may not directly interact with. The fifth layer is the chronosystem, which describes the dimension and how it influences the development of the individual. The elements with the chronosystem could be external, such as the death of a close friend, or internal, such as the timing of an individual's physiological changes (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory acknowledges that individuals are embedded in social and physical environments that they could directly or indirectly interact with and influence them (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The theory, therefore, provides the basis upon which IPV/VAW against divorced women can be studied and understood based on a variety of environmental systemic aspects. According to the theory, IPV/VAW could result from single influences acting alone within the individual's microsystem. Alternatively, IPV/VAW could be the result of the interaction that occurs across different layers (Exner-Cortens et al., 2019). At the microsystem level, women may face abuse from their husbands (Madhani et al., 2017). The abuse faced by women at mesosystem maybe from the in-laws (Madhani et al., 2017). The abuse at the exosystem level could be linked with challenges faced by the husband at his workplace or the

husband's unemployment, which results in him being abusive (Jahromi et al., 2016).

Abuse associated with patriarchy is an example of abuse that can occur at the macrosystem level (Batchelor, 2020). Factors in the chronosystem level associated with abuse of women can include onset of menopause and duration of marriage (Vadysinghe et al., 2018).

Various researchers have used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory in the assessment of aspects related to IPV/VAW. For instance, Voith (2019) used the theory in understanding the predictors and interaction of factors associated with IPV. Based on the analysis of existing literature, Voith was able to identify various factors associated with violence perpetrated by intimate partners that could be related to the different environments identified by the theory. According to the researcher, the social-economic and political context of the families in which cases of VAW/IPV are reported constitutes the macro-level factors. However, the researcher was not able to identify how social-economic and political factors could be related to community influence. Voith noted that the interventions that are taken to address the abuse faced by women in marriages also constitute macro-level factors since they involve community support. According to the researcher, the intervention can only be viewed as a macro-level factor if it is conceptualized as community support for victims of violence. Voith noted that by conceptualizing the interventions as a macro-level factor enables the exploration of cultural factors and how they influence the willingness of women to seek help.

Smith (2016) also used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory in the assessment of the prevalence and scope of violence perpetrated by intimate partners. The

researcher indicated that the theory is best suited to address IPV. Smith argued that the theory allows the understanding of VAW as complex and can only be understood by taking into consideration the multiple social systems in which women reside.

Importantly, the researcher underscored the importance of the theory in enabling the understanding of the behavior of victims of violence perpetrated by intimate partners within a given context and how the victims interact with various factors of the cultural ecology. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Smith was able to identify the complex web of risks associated with the perpetration of IPV/VAW and how such violence is maintained. The researcher was able to carry out the research at different levels that included individual, interpersonal relationship, community, and society.

Mulrenan et al. (2015) also used the theory in exploring the risks of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner using interviews with victims and subsequent thematic analysis. Mulrenan et al. (2015) used the theory to conceptualize the factors that are relevant to IPV. According to the researcher, the theory facilitates the identification of factors that include gender norms that recognize male authority over females, female subordination, and the influence of drug use.

In the preceding paragraphs existing studies that explicitly set out to apply Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, e.g., Voith (2019), Smith (2016), and Mulrenan et al. (2015) were discussed. This paragraph extends the discussion on how the theory is applied using studies that did not explicitly use the theory. Existing evidence shows how the factors in the different ecological layers may influence the occurrence of IPV/VAW. For example, factors associated with the woman's microsystem, such as the

relationship with in-laws, have influenced the occurrence of IPV/VAW (Madhani et al., 2017). The factors associated with an individual's macrosystem such as the community's perception and tolerance towards violence have been shown to influence the occurrence of VAW (Madhani et al., 2017). Evidence has also indicated that the factors associated with the chronosystem, such as the age of married women has also been associated with the occurrence of IPV/VAW (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Hou et al., 2017).

Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory allowed me to carry out an in-depth assessment of IPV/VAW in Qatar. Based on this framework, I was able to explore influences within the immediate environment where the women interact directly as well as those in their larger social settings. This theory enabled me to approach the study with the view that the environmental aspects associated with increased risk of IPV/VAW could be a result of the interaction of environmental aspects within and outside of the victim's control.

Review of the Literature

This section describes research findings about IPV/VAW, primarily in the Middle East but occasionally in Western countries. The reviewed literature is organized into different topics that include prevalence of IPV/VAW in the Middle East; factors associated with IPV/VAW, such as characteristics of victims, perpetrators, sociocultural features and religious beliefs, and gender related issues; adverse effects of IPV/VAW on physical health, mental health, and children; help-seeking by victims; and interventions for IPV/VAW. Each of these topics are discussed below.

Prevalence and Nature of IPV/VAW

Jahromi et al. (2016) carried out a cross-sectional study that assessed the frequency of different forms of IPV/VAW among married women aged between 16 to 75 years in Iran who were sampled using a convenience sampling approach among a population of women who were referred to women clinics in the country. Using a structured questionnaire, Jahromi et al. were able to evaluate different forms of violence, such as physical, sexual, and emotional violence. According to Jahromi et al., 49.4% ($n = 488$) of the women had experienced at least one form of IPV/VAW. Their findings indicated that emotional violence was the most prevalent form of IPV/VAW, having been reported among the 44.4% of the participants ($n = 439$), while sexual violence came second with 18.9% ($n = 187$) of the participants reporting to have experienced such violence. According to Jahromi et al., 16.4% of women have experienced physical violence. Ahmed et al. (2017) noted that 32% of women included in their study experienced physical abuse. The researchers based their observations on a study that included 758 women from Saudi Arabia. Based on the data collected from interviews and self-administered questionnaires, Ahmed et al. reported that forms of physical IPV/VAW ranged from minor violence, such as pushing, slapping, twisting, and pulling of hair, to severe forms of physical violence, such as slamming against the wall, kicking, punching, or even burning.

Madhani et al. (2017) determined how pregnant women in Pakistan defined IPV/VAW, their responses to IPV/VAW, and for those women who remained silent in response to abuse, their reasons for doing so. The researchers collected data using an

observational interview study, which included 1325 women participants. The researchers reported that the forms of abuse that were considered as IPV/VAW by the participants included physical abuse (47 %), controlling behaviors by the husband (21 %), conflict with in-laws (22 %), and verbal abuse (8 %). The researchers, however, noted that only 0.4 % of the women considered sexual abuse as IPV/VAW. Barnawi (2017) used a cross-sectional study that surveyed 720 participants in the assessment of the prevalence of various forms of domestic violence among Saudi women and the associated risk factors, and how women responded to such violence. Of the 720 survey respondents, 20% self-reported having experienced domestic violence in the previous year. They noted that emotional abuse was the most common (69 %), while the least prevalent abuse was sexual, which was reported by 10 % of the participants. The percentages of other types of abuse self-reported by participants were social, economic, and physical abuse at 34 %, 26 %, and 20 % of the participants, respectively.

Ebbeler et al. (2017) reported in their study that analyzed data from 34 countries across the globe with varying cultural practices that IPV/VAW, especially physical abuse, was greater in Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia. Eldoseri and Sharps (2020) also noted 45.5 % of the women reported having been subjected to physical abuse of women by their spouses. Eldoseri and Sharps based their observations on the interviews that were collected from 200 Saudi women selected from those who visited the primary health clinic. According to Alquaiz et al. (2017), controlling behavior constituted the highest type of IPV/VAW (37 %) faced by married women in Saudi Arabia. Other forms of IPV/VAW that were reported by the researchers

included emotional violence (22 %), sexual violence (13 %), and the lowest form was the physical violence that was reported among 9 % of the participants. Alquaiz et al. based their conclusion on data that was collected from 1883 Saudi married women who were aged between 30 years and 75 years. The researchers collected data using a detailed questionnaire WHO questionnaire on IPV (WHO, 2022) that captured social demographics, health-related factors associated with social support, and variables related to the husbands.

Elghossain et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis that consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles and national surveys. Data were obtained from 74 records based on 56 different datasets to evaluate the prevalence of physical, sexual, and emotional domestic violence in 22 countries of the Arab League. The researchers noted that the prevalence of physical abuse ranged from 6 % to 59 %, while sexual abuse ranged from 3 % to 40 %. The researchers also reported that the prevalence of emotional abuse ranged from 5 % to 91 % (Elghossain et al., 2019).

According to the researchers, the variation in the prevalence of various forms of abuse in the Arab countries was associated with the difference in the methods and the approaches used by various researchers in defining the abuse (Elghossain et al., 2019). They noted that the lack of a standardized approach in the determination of prevalence limited the comparability of the findings across the different countries. The researchers also indicated that their findings revealed a lack of data regarding sexual abuse in the region. They attributed the lack of sufficient data to compare various abuses in other

countries to barriers such as political instability and the failure of the relevant governments to commit to addressing abuse towards women (Elghossain et al., 2019).

Factors Associated With IPV/VAW

Victims

One of the factors associated with the risk of violence among women is their age. Women aged between 21 to 40 years have a greater risk of experiencing violence as indicated by Jahromi et al. (2016) in their study, which showed that 32.5 % (n = 321) of the cases of violence that were perpetrated occurred against women ages 21 years to 30 years while 10.6 % (n = 105) of the cases were VAW ages 31 to 40 years. Jahromi et al. reported that older women, above the age of 40 years, were less likely to experience violence, as indicated by the fact that researchers observed only 2.3 % of cases in this age group. Ahmed et al. (2017) also noted that violence decreased with an increase in the age of women as indicated by their findings that showed the cases of physical abuse were high among women 18 to 29 years old (37.9 %, n = 91), but relatively low among the women 30 to 40 years old (31.26 %) and 45 to 64 years (30.6 %). According to Eldoseri and Sharps (2020), women below 30 are more likely to suffer abuse from their intimate partners compared to older women. Alquaiz et al., in their study that included married women 30 to 75 years old, also reported that younger women were more likely to experience IPV/VAW than older women. According to Alquaiz et al., 45.2 % (n = 366) of the women 30 to 40 years old experienced IPV/VAW while 30.0 % (n = 243) of those 41 to 51 years old experienced IPV/VAW. This was higher compared to the number of women 61 to 75 years old (5.8 %, n = 47) and between 51 to 60 years old (19.0 % n =

154) that have experienced IPV/VAW. Vadysinghe et al. (2018), in their study that involved the collection of data from 242 individuals abused by their intimate partners, reported that most of those who were abused were 20 to 40 years old. The researchers collected data from a population of individuals who were confirmed to have been abused by their intimate partners in Sri Lanka between 2005 and 2014. For confirmation of case details, the researcher used reports by the judicial medical officer. Vadysinghe et al. reported that for individuals 21 to 30 years old, the frequency of abuse was 26 % (n = 62), while for those 31 to 40, the frequency is higher (33 %, n = 80). Vadysinghe et al., however, noted that the frequency of abuse was lower among women at the lower and higher extremes of age, i.e., 18 to 20 years and above 50 years old.

There is, however, conflicting evidence regarding how the age of women is associated with the likelihood of them being victims of abuse perpetrated by their partners. Safadi et al. (2018) noted that older women were more likely to encounter psychological and physical abuse, which contradicted the observations made by other researchers (Ahmed et al., 2017; Alquaiz et al., 2017; Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020; Jahromi et al., 2016). Safadi et al. based their conclusions on the data they obtained from 47 women who were recruited from Jordan among which 81.1% were married. It should, however, be noted that Safadi et al. noted that the age of the women at marriage was negatively associated with their likelihood of encountering abuse. Isgandarova (2017), in a qualitative study that collected views from Muslim women in Azerbaijan, noted that abuse was prevalent among women who married young. The researcher reported that

abuse faced by pregnant women was high among those married at the tender ages of 16, 17, or 18 years.

Other factors that have been studied include number of years since marriage and duration of marriage. Both refer to the same variable that identifies the length of time the couple has been married. Alquaiz et al. (2017) noted that the number of years since marriage influenced the chances of women having experiences of IPV/VAW. The researchers noted that those who had been married for more than 30 years had a greater chance of being victims of violence (30 %, n = 248), while considerably low cases of abuse (18.9 %, n = 153) were noted among the women who had been married for less than ten years. Vadysinghe et al. (2018) also noted that the other factor among the victims that influenced the frequency of VAW was the duration of the marriage. Their findings showed a trend where cases of IPV/VAW increased with an increase in the number of years of marriage. Vadysinghe et al. noted that individuals who had married for a period of between 4 to 11 years had a higher frequency of abuse cases. Vadysinghe et al. noted that individuals with the duration of marriage between 4 to 7 years had the highest frequency of cases of abuse (28 %, n = 67) while the individuals who had been married for a period of 8 to 11 years had the second-highest frequency of cases of abuse by their intimate partners (24 %, n = 58).

The reviewed evidence also suggested that educational level is one of the factors associated with the risk of women becoming victims of violence. Jahromi et al. (2016) observed that highly educated women, with a college university level of education, were less likely to experience violence compared to those with lower levels of education.

Ahmed et al. (2017) also noted that cases of violence were frequently reported among women with primary and secondary school levels of education compared to those with a college-level of education. Safadi et al. (2018) also noted that women with a high level of education have less chance of being victims of IPV/VAW. Eldoseri and Sharps (2020) noted that women who had less than 12 years of education were more likely to suffer IPV/VAW (85 %).

Alquaiz et al. (2017) reported data about the associations between levels of education and chances of IPV/VAW that were different than those discussed in the preceding paragraph (Ahmed et al., 2017; Eldoseri & Sharps, 2020; Jahromi et al., 2016; Safadi et al., 2018). Alquaiz et al. (2017) noted women with a higher level of education, such as college graduate/post-graduate, experienced a high frequency of IPV/VAW (39.4 %, n = 319) in Saudi Arabia compared to those with an intermediate and secondary level of education (29.4 %, n = 238). Vadysinghe et al. (2018) reported mixed results regarding how the academic level of the victims influenced their chances of being abused by their intimate partners. According to the researchers, individuals with an ordinary level of education had a frequency of abuse cases of 27 % (n = 65), which was close to the frequency of cases among participants with an advanced level of education (26 %, n = 63). Although Vadysinghe et al. (2018) noted that individuals with university education had the lowest frequency of cases of abuse at 2 %, it should also be noted that only four participants had a university education, which is a small fraction from the 242 participants who took part in Alquaiz et al.'s (2017) study.

The other factor that is associated with an increased chance of experiencing IPV/VAW is the occupation of the women. The reviewed evidence was consistent regarding this factor, especially when the aspect of occupation, employment status, and income earned per month were taken into account. Alquaiz et al. (2017) noted that women who were housewives had a greater chance of being victims of IPV/VAW (57.9 %, n = 469) compared to working women (22.2 %, n = 180) and those who had retired (19.9 %, n = 161). The researchers also noted that women who had a monthly income of less than \$ 2666 were more likely to be victims of IPV/VAW (59.6 %, n = 406). Vadysinghe et al. (2018) also assessed how the victims' monthly income related to the frequency of abuse by their partners. They concluded that women who were not financially independent were more likely to face abuse from their intimate partners. Vadysinghe et al.'s (2018) conclusion was informed by data that indicated a high frequency of abuse cases (65%, n = 156) among women who did not have any income. The researchers also noted that the frequency of abuse cases decreased with an increase in monthly income as evidenced by their findings that showed the number of abuse to be high among women who had not more than 10000 Sri Lankan Rupees (\$54 USD) (54 participants) and low (32 participants) among women who earned more than 10000 Sri Lankan Rupees (\$54 USD).

Perpetrators

In this section, the evaluation of the evidence regarding the factors associated with the likelihood of an individual being the perpetrator of IPV/VAW is based on the understanding that the majority of IPV/VAW that married women in the Middle East face

is perpetrated by their husbands or intimate partners (Ahmed et al., 2017; Jahromi et al., 2016). Therefore, in the evaluation of the literature regarding this topic, the terms abusive husbands/partners and perpetrators of IPV/VAW will be used interchangeably. In their assessment of the data that was collected from 988 women from Iran among whom 49.4% of them had experienced at least one form of IPV/VAW, Jahromi et al. (2016) reported that the factors associated with perpetrators of IPV/VAW included age, educational level, employment status, and addiction. In their study, Jahromi et al. (2016) reported that the husbands were the perpetrators of violence. The researchers noted that the age of the husbands significantly influences the likelihood of them being perpetrators of violence with a high frequency of violence being reported among those aged between 21 years and 40 years. Jahromi et al. (2016), however, noted that the risk of husbands being perpetrators reduced with age.

The other factor that is associated with abusive husbands is employment status. Jahromi et al. (2016), based on the responses obtained from 988 Iranian women with experiences of IPV/VAW, noted that unemployed husbands were more likely to be perpetrators of violence. The researchers observed that 39.2 % (n= 387) cases of violence occurred in families with unemployed husbands, which was higher compared to 10.2 % (n = 101) that were reported among families with employed husbands. Safadi et al. (2018) also noted that unemployed husbands were more likely to cause physical abuse to their intimate partners. Ahmed et al. (2017) also indicated that the husbands' occupations influenced their chances of being perpetrators with those occupying military jobs being more likely to be perpetrators. Ahmed et al. (2017) based their conclusions on the data

that they collected from 758 Saudi women. Although Alquaiz et al. (2017) also reported that 14.2 % of husbands who were in the military were the perpetrators of VAW, the researchers noted that cases of IPV/VAW were higher in families where the husband worked as doctor or engineer (20.9 %, n= 169), skilled worker (26.7 %, n = 216).

The other factor that is associated with the likelihood of husbands perpetrating IPV/VAW is their level of education. According to Jahromi et al. (2016), the educational levels of husbands influenced the likelihood of them being perpetrators with those having college or university levels of education being less likely to be perpetrators compared to those with lower levels of education. Ahmed et al. (2017) also noted that less-educated husbands were likely to be perpetrators of IPV/VAW. Eldoseri and Sharps (2020), based on the data obtained from 200 Saudi women using a standardized survey by the WHO to measure VAW, reported that 91.8 % of husbands who were perpetrators of VAW were those who had less than 12 years of education. Safadi et al. (2018) also noted that the chances of husbands being the perpetrators reduced with an increase in their education level. However, the reviewed literature on the association of the level of education with the likelihood of husbands perpetrating IPV/VAW indicated mixed data. Alquaiz et al. (2017) noted that there was no difference in the cases of IPV/VAW in families where the husbands had graduate levels or a secondary levels of education.

The other factor that is associated with the likelihood of husbands perpetrating IPV/VAW is their history of drug and alcohol abuse. Jahromi et al. (2016) noted that husbands who were addicted to drugs and alcohol were more likely to be perpetrators as shown by the fact that 35.2 % of cases of violence were reported in families with

addicted husbands while only 14.2 % of the cases were reported in families where the husbands were not addicts. Ahmed et al. (2017), in their assessment of data collected from 758 Saudi women, also reported that the majority of women considered addiction to drugs (94.8%) and alcohol abuse (91.3%) as key factors that lead to physical violence by their husbands. Eldoseri and Sharps (2020) also noted that Saudi husbands who were drug abusers were 6.5 times more likely to be perpetrators of violence against their wives compared to non-drug users.

There are other factors that have contributed to IPV/VAW that have been reported by a limited number of researchers. From the analysis of responses obtained from 758 Saudi women, Ahmed et al. (2017) noted that polygamy and lack of employment among husbands increased their chances of perpetrating IPV/VAW. According to Safadi et al. (2018), the age of the husbands was related to their chances of being perpetrators of IPV/VAW towards the wives. The researchers noted that older husbands have a greater chance of being perpetrators of IPV/VAW.

Social-Cultural Factors Associated With the Occurrence of IPV/VAW

Rees et al. (2017) reported that the failure to fully adhere to the cultural practice of paying a bride price to the families of women increased the chances of women being subjected to IPV/VAW. Rees et al. (2017) based their conclusion on data that were collected from a multi-wave inquiry study that included a total of 1672 women from East Timor with 419 who were married. The researchers argued that the practice of not paying the bride price increased the likelihood of women being victims of IPV/VAW, especially in families with a high level of poverty who were not able to honor the practice.

According to Rees et al. (2017) 43.6 % of the women who married into families that were not able to pay the bride-price experienced abuse from their intimate partners compared to 18.0 % cases of abuse reported among the women who married into families that had no problems paying the bride price.

Lelaurain et al. (2018) modeled the data that were obtained from 235 participants from the south of France aged between 18 and 80 years and noted that there were various cultural practices that promoted IPV/VAW. Using the structural equation model, the researchers noted that cultural practices that legitimized patriarchy were associated with increased chances of abuse towards women. The researchers also noted that the cultural practices that blamed the victim of domestic abuse and exonerated the perpetrator increased the chances of IPV/VAW. Lelaurain et al. (2018) also noted that cultural practices that promoted ambivalent sexism resulted in increased cases of VAW. According to the researcher, ambivalent sexism consisted of conflicting sets of attitudes and beliefs that on one hand view women as needing care and protection but on other hand view women as manipulative and controlling, and this view corresponds with hostility towards women.

Based on qualitative research that focused on Muslim women in Australia, Batchelor (2020) acknowledged that the Muslim traditional culture allows patriarchy in which the husbands have the prerogative to determine what activities women engage in and their mobility. The researchers noted that women who did not have the support of males found it hard to travel, get medical treatment, or even obtain official papers. Batchelor (2020) however cautioned against simply associating patriarchy with Islamic

religion by indicating other factors such as cultural factors that needed to be taken into consideration. The researcher highlighted the Muslim cultural practices that advocate for the treatment of women as subservient as examples that go against Islamic religion. By providing the example of Malay women, the researcher noted that cultural practices that encouraged victims to suppress evidence of violence could play a part in perpetuating abuse associated with the patriarchal system of family. Batchelor (2020) provided the example of Pashtunwali culture where the patriarchal system of family advocates for the seclusion women. According to the researcher, such Islamic cultures empower the husbands and the in-laws to take control of their wives and to define their role within the community and the limits of what women can achieve in terms of education and employment.

A Pakistani cultural practice that allows male-dominance was also highlighted by Madhani et al. (2017) as the cause of the high frequency of controlling behaviors, which, according to them, resulted in more devastating effects. The conflicts with the in-laws were noted by the researchers to be associated with dowry-related matters and the fact that women had to move into in-laws' houses where they had to obey the husband and the in-laws. According to the researchers, the failure of women to report abuse was attributed to their dependence on husbands for their subsistence. They also noted that the response of women to abuse indicates a society that requires women to be tolerant of violence.

Religious Beliefs Associated With the Occurrence of IPV/VAW

Batchelor (2020) carried out qualitative research that sought to explore IPV/VAW among Muslim women in Australia. The researchers interviewed a religious leader

(Imam), Islamic Scholar, Muslim women leader, and a government social worker.

Batchelor (2020) reported evidence that supported that Muslim culture is highly lenient of abuse in marriages, which, according to the researcher, is linked to the fact that the religion acknowledges patriarchal gender roles. Batchelor (2020) noted that the classic Qur'anic tafsir identified women as inferior. The researchers also mentioned the teachings of the Prophet, which allowed men to beat their wives; however, limited the provided concession. The Prophet, according to the researcher, allowed men to beat their wives in cases in which they noted that the women were disloyal and of ill-conduct (al-Nisa' 4:34, Second Part). Islamic teachings also allow men to discipline their wives in cases in which the women rebelled (Verse 4:34).

This is unlike in western society where violence perpetrated by male spouses towards women is unacceptable. In a US study, Scarduzio et al. (2017) argued that male violence that was directed towards females was unacceptable since women were viewed to be of lesser strength compared to men. Scarduzio et al. (2017) based their study on data that was collected using open-ended questions from 296 participants who were sampled from an undergraduate communication course at a US University. However, it should be noted that Scarduzio et al. (2017) did not focus on the views of married women; therefore, it has limited generalizability to the violence faced by married women in the Middle East. Isgandarova (2017) also pointed to the patriarchal system of the family in their study in Azerbaijan as one of the perpetrators of abuse against women that is facilitated by Islam. However, the researchers noted that the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Islam concerning the system of family is the main reason for the

perpetuation of VAW. Isgandarova (2017) argued that the correct position of Islam teachings is to use gender inclusivity that entails having both the husband and the wife participate in decision making. Isgandarova (2017) noted that Islam teachings when correctly interpreted protect women against violence.

Gender Support of Violence

Doku and Asante (2015) provided evidence in their Ghana study that showed that women have contributed to IPV/VAW. The researchers noted that there are women who approved of the physical abuse of wives by their husbands. Doku and Asante (2015) based their conclusions on a nationally representative survey that involved 10607 participants who were selected from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey. Doku and Asante (2015) sought to determine whether the participants perceived it to be justifiable for husbands to beat their wives under various circumstances. According to Doku and Asante (2015), 39 % of the participants approved the physical abuse of wives by their husbands. The researchers also noted that women with a low level of education were three times more likely to approve of the abuse of wives by their husbands. Doku and Asante (2015) also reported that women who were recently married were 1.3 times more likely to view the abuse of women by their husbands to be okay compared to the women who have never married. Doku and Asante (2015) also noted that compared to Christian women, Muslim women were 2.1 times more likely to approve of abuse of wives by their husbands.

Other Factors Associated With the Occurrence of IPV/VAW

Evidence suggests that the length of the marriage is one of the factors that influence the likelihood of VAW. Women who have been recently married have a greater chance of experiencing violence compared to those in older marriage. Jahromi et al. (2016) noted that the frequency of violence was high (25.2 %) among women in marriages that were not less than five years old compared to the marriages that were 6-10 years old (14.9 %), 11-15 years old (3.7 %) and those with older than 16 years (5.6 %).

Another factor reported by researchers was the setting, where women who live in urban areas are reported to have a greater chance of suffering psychological abuse (Safadi et al., 2018). Eldoseri and Sharps (2020) noted that families where husbands controlled the financial capacity were three times more likely to have cases of VAW. Alquaiz et al. (2017) noted that obese women were more likely to suffer VAW (57.8 %, n = 468) compared to those with normal weight (12.3 %, n = 100). Alquaiz et al. (2017) also reported that women who did not receive social support had higher chances of reporting violence. Isgandarova (2017) also reported that women considered the issue of the gender of their baby to be one of the factors associated with the occurrence of IPV/VAW. Isgandarova (2017) noted that women were blamed for the sex of the baby, and they were sometimes forced to go through selective abortion due to giving birth to female children. Isgandarova (2017) also shared values from participants regarding women who get pregnant out of wedlock. The researcher noted that such women were subjected to discrimination and violence from the society as well as their immediate family while men responsible for the pregnancy were not touched.

Adverse Effects of IPV.VAW to the Abused Women

Adverse Physical Health Effects

Stöckl and Penhale (2015) carried out a cross-sectional study that used data that were obtained from a nationally representative survey involving 10264 women from Germany. Stöckl and Penhale (2015) randomly sampled the participants from registration lists that contained 250 projects and randomly-selected German communities. The ages of the women ranged between 16 years and 86 years. Upon sampling, the researchers categorized women into three groups based on their ages. The age categories included those between the ages of 16 years to 49 years (n = 4448), the second group were those between the ages of 50 years and 65 years (n = 2030), and the third group were those between the ages of 66 years and 86 years (n = 779). According to the researchers, the women aged between 50 years and 65 years were perceived to be those who were still in the labor market and enjoyed financial independence, which allowed them to make the decision to leave abusive partners. Therefore, the researcher viewed the participants in the second group to have the capability to leave. The researchers indicated that those between the ages of 66 years and 86 years were more dependent on the partner's income and pension, which complicated their decision to leave an abusive relationship. Based on the data collected from the participants, Stöckl and Penhale (2015) reported women who suffered sexual and physical abuse were at a high risk of developing various physical health problems that included gastrointestinal syndromes, excessive weight gains, and pelvic problems. The researchers noted that the effects of physical abuse that women suffered due to IPV/VAW varied based on the age of the victims. The odds of

gastrointestinal syndromes were higher among women aged 16 years to 49 years who experienced sexual and physical abuse, while among those who experienced emotional abuse, the odds of gastrointestinal syndromes was higher among those aged 50 years to 65 years. For pelvic problems, the odds were higher among women aged 50 years to 65 years who experienced sexual and physical abuse, while among those who experienced emotional abuse, the odds of were higher among those aged 16 years to 49 years. For weight problems, the odds were also higher among women aged 50 years to 65 years who experienced sexual and physical abuse, while among those who experienced emotional abuse, the odds of were higher among those aged 16 years to 49 years.

Safadi et al. (2018) reported that women subjected to psychological and physical abuse were more likely to suffer various health problems that included fatigue, headache, and injuries such as bruises. The researchers noted that among women who experienced abuse from their intimate partners, 72.6 % (n = 342) of them were fatigued while 45.6 % (n = 215) suffered headaches. Eldoseri and Sharps (2020) also noted that among 500 women who took part in the study, 18.5 % of them suffered physical injuries due to IPV/VAW.

Adverse Psychological/Mental

Depression has been one of the adverse psychological effects associated with VAW. Lövestad et al. (2017) carried out a cross-sectional population-based study that obtained data from 573 Swedish women with the aim of determining the association between sexual and physical VAW and the chances of developing depression. The participants were between the ages of 18 to 65 years, with an average age of 42.7 years.

The researchers collected data using self-report questionnaires. The researchers reported that abuse of women that involved controlling behavior was associated with depression among 38.5 % of the abused women. The researchers also noted that the odds of developing depressive symptoms were high among physically (odd ratios OR 3.78) and sexually (OR 5.10) abused women. Safadi et al. (2018) also reported that 45.9 % (n = 216) of women who were subjected to IPV/VAW experienced depression.

Mendonça and Ludermir (2017) carried out a prospective cohort study that included 390 women who were selected from the Family Health program in Brazil. The participants who took part in the study were aged between 18 years and 49 years. The researchers collected data using self-report questionnaires that focused on the mental health of the participants. Among the included participants, Mendonça and Ludermir (2017) noted that 20.8 % of them had experiences of violence from intimate partners with the most frequent form of violence being psychological violence. According to Mendonça and Ludermir (2017), 44.6 % of women who endured violence from their intimate partners experienced common mental disorders. The researchers noted that women who experienced physical and sexual abuse had a higher risk ratio (RR: 3.1) of having mental health disorders, while those who experienced psychological violence only had a risk ratio of 1.8.

Stöckl and Penhale (2015) collected data from 10264 women in Germany who had experienced sexual or physical abuse. The odds of psychological problems were higher among women aged 16 years to 49 years compared to those aged 50 years and 65 years.

Effect of IPV/VAW on Children

Jouriles and McDonald (2015) carried out a study in the US that sought to explore how coercive control that occurs in a relationship where women are physically abused by their intimate partners influenced their children's adjustment. The researchers were able to report various adjustment problems among children from families where mothers were physically abused by their husbands. Jouriles and McDonald (2015) based their study on data that was collected from 107 mothers who had children aged between seven years and ten years. The researchers included only those mothers who had reported exposure to physical violence perpetrated by their husbands not more than six months before enrollment in the study. The assessment of child adjustment problems was carried out using the threat subscale of *Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale for Younger Children (CPIC-Y)*. According to the researchers, coercive control that occurred in families with a history of IPV/VAW increased the odds of a child having externalizing behavior problems such as stealing, destruction of property and aggression.

Huang et al. (2015) assessed how the exposure of children to IPV/VAW in the US resulted in delinquent behavior at young ages. The researchers based their assessment on the first five waves of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. Huang et al. (2015) sought to determine whether delinquent behavior by the children was associated with parental involvement, physical punishment, and child neglect. Based on the data that they obtained from 2410 mothers 20 U.S. cities, the researchers noted that the exposure of children to IPV/VAW between the ages of 1 and 3 increased the likelihood of delinquent behavior at the age of 9. Huang et al. (2015) further noted that parental

involvement, child neglect, and physical punishment at age five also contributed to delinquent behavior later in childhood.

Kiesel et al. (2016) reported that US children who were exposed to IPV/VAW faced the risk of poor school performance. The researchers based their conclusions on the longitudinal examination of the influence of IPV/VAW from data that were obtained from 2914 children in Minnesota, US. The researchers noted that there was a significant relationship between adverse experiences of IPV/VAW and the children's suppressed school attendance and performance. Children who were exposed to IPV/VAW performed poorly and had a higher frequency of absenteeism.

Boeckel et al. (2017) reported in their study conducted in Brazil that assessed the impact of IPV/VAW on the risk of post-traumatic disorder among children that the violence resulted in a higher risk of post-traumatic symptoms and strained maternal bonds. Boeckel et al. (2017) based their conclusion on data that were collected from a cross-sectional study that involved two categories that included 36 mother-child dyads with experiences of IPV/VAW and 27 control mother-child dyads who did not have any experience of IPV/VAW. Although the researchers could not directly link the observed post-traumatic symptoms among children of mothers who were exposed to IPV, they noted that compared to control group, the symptoms were higher among children of mothers with IPV/VAW experiences.

Help-Seeking by Victims of IPV/VAW

Help-Seeking Tendencies Among Victims

Vadysinghe et al. (2018) carried out a study in Sri Lanka that sought to identify the behavior of individuals who were abused by their intimate partners. In their study, which showed that most of those who were abused faced physical and verbal abuse, the researcher noted that 79 % of them had previously been assaulted. Vadysinghe et al. (2018) observed that 31 % of the participants did not report the abuse to the authorities. The researchers further noted that among those who reported cases of abuse only 29 % of them were able to receive interventions from the authorities (police). Isgandarova (2017) conducted a study of views of Muslim women in Azerbaijan, and the researchers noted that the women who underwent abuse did not feel comfortable reporting such abuses to the police or caregivers. Vadysinghe et al. (2018) noted that in Sri Lanka the chances of victims reporting the abuse to the authorities reduced with an increase in the frequency of abuse that they faced. They also reported that women with high-income levels were less likely to seek an intervention following abuse. Vadysinghe et al. (2018) also reported that more than half of the abused women were willing to accept the perpetrators back into their lives. According to Isgandarova (2017), abused women's fear of being shamed is the main reason for the reluctance to report.

Factors That Hinder Help-Seeking

Batchelor (2020) reported in his study in Australia that focused on IPV/VAW among Muslim women that factors that hindered help-seeking behavior included the cultural practices that encouraged the victims of abuse to suppress evidence of such abuse

within their homes. The researcher highlighted what he termed as recommendations given to Muslim women that encouraged women to remain veiled and confined within their homes, which prohibit women from seeking help for difficulties faced on failed marriages. The researcher argued that this recommendation instilled fear among women at a very young age of the shame associated with failed marriages. According to Batchelor (2020), based on the highlighted recommendation, failed marriages are a testimony of the inadequacies among women as wives. The researcher pointed to this perspective in explaining what makes women suppress anything that could damage their marriage even if it causes them pain, which leads to the abused women not taking help-seeking initiatives.

In a study that involved 101 women in the US, Novisky and Peralta (2015) reported various factors that influenced the likelihood of women reporting cases of abuse. According to the researchers, the odds of the police carrying out mandatory arrest of the perpetrator of abuse significantly influenced the likelihood of women reporting cases of abuse, with high odds of mandatory arrest resulting in increased reporting. Novisky and Peralta (2015) also noted that the likelihood of women reporting abuse was influenced by factors associated with the perpetrator and especially substance use. The researchers noted that the women who were abused by perpetrators addicted to alcohol or drug use had a higher tendency of reporting the abuse.

Vranda et al. (2018) carried out a cross-sectional study with data that were obtained from 100 women in a tertiary care hospital in India. The researchers noted that 52 % of abused women had left their abusive partners but later returned. Vranda et al.

(2018) noted that only a third of abused women chose to leave an abusive relationship. The researchers also suggested that women who reported cases of abuse tended to receive punishment from the perpetrators upon returning to them. They noted that women who had left an abusive relationship in the past were highly likely to experience severe abuse and mainly sexual abuse compared to those who did not attempt to leave such relationships in the past.

According to the findings obtained by Evans and Feder (2016) in the UK, abused women faced various barriers in disclosing the abusive relationship. One of the barriers that the women identified was the negative reaction they received following attempts to seek help from social support groups. According to the researchers, women were unable to seek help while they were still in a relationship with the perpetrators because they would end up being abused even more. Evans and Feder (2016) also noted that the women highlighted emotional blackmail as one of the reasons for not seeking help. According to the researchers, emotional blackmail refers to threats by the perpetrators of violence to cause self-harm or to harm the children. Evans and Feder (2016) noted that the abused women's fear of living with the guilt of being responsible for the perpetrators' misfortunes or poor health and depression pushed them not to seek help or report the abuse.

It also emerged from the interviews carried out by Evans and Feder (2016) that the women's role as mothers triggered their eagerness to keep their family together. They noted that abused women choose to conceal abuse because of fear of what their children may be forced to undergo following potential separation of the abusive partners. Evans

and Feder (2016) also identified self-blame as one of the barriers that hindered women from seeking help. According to the researchers, self-blame made women perceive the abusive tendencies displayed by their partners as being due to their actions and not the perpetrator's fault. Evans and Feder (2016) noted that women who shared their views regarding self-blame associated such tendencies with social isolation, which hindered their willingness to clearly identify the perpetrator's behavior as abusive. The researchers also linked the abused women's depressive states and low self-esteem to self-blame. Evans and Feder (2016) reported that abused women felt that by disclosing abuse by their partners, they might end up being a burden or a bother to family members and may likely disrupt the existing equilibrium bringing shame and embarrassment to the family. The researchers also noted that women did not disclose abuse because they were not ready to leave the perpetrators.

Evans and Feder (2016) reported that abused women who had family members who were in prison or child care as a result of abuse did not trust the ability of the available support system to solve their issues with abusive partners. Researchers noted that such women have internalized IPV/VAW as an inevitable part of society. Evans and Feder (2016) also noted that women who had previous unhelpful disclosures hesitated to seek help from professionals.

Based on their findings, Madhani et al. (2017) identified the importance of changing social attitudes and perceptions regarding the abuse of women in Pakistan. They recommended that formal and informal services should be made available to encourage women who have been abused to seek help. The researchers also

acknowledged the need to effectively enforce the laws that protect women against abuse. The researchers noted that future studies should focus on improving the mental health of abused women by examining effective ways of measuring coping strategies used by abused women (Madhani et al., 2017).

Given the effects of abuse on women and their children, Barnawi (2017) argued that there is a need to provide primary care physician services to Saudi women and their children. The researcher also noted that the care providers should address both the physical, logical and physical impact of violence. The researcher noted further that the relevant legal authorities should be made aware of the effects of abuse on women and children. Recommendations were made to put in place interventions for zero tolerance of abuse and to provide women with the required support services.

Interventions for IPV/VAW

Social Support

Vranda et al. (2018) reported that abused women in India require various forms of support for them to overcome the distress and the effects of suffering abuse perpetrated by their partners. Vranda et al. (2018) noted that one of the important services that women require is counseling services, as evidenced by their findings that indicated that 90 % of women who were abused by their intimate partners needed the services to overcome psychological distress. Vranda et al. (2018) recommended that social support should include a multi-faceted team that incorporates mental health professionals with experience in counseling, stress management, and anger management. Vranda et al. (2018) also highlighted stress management support and the help from police as some of

the assistance required by abused women. The researchers also noted that support offered should include shelter care facilities, as evidenced by their findings that indicated that 22 % of women required shelter. From the interviews with abused women, Evans and Feder (2016) in the UK were able to identify what the women perceived to be an important social support structure that could facilitate effective handling of IPV/VAW. The researchers noted that professional agencies play a key role in facilitating effective support for abused women. Evans and Feder (2016) noted that professional agencies facilitate the provision of safe housing and refuge for abused women, especially those who are not financially well-off. Such organizations also

Evans and Feder (2016) noted that informal support, especially from friends, is important. The researchers noted that women were more willing to disclose their challenges to friends because they viewed them as being willing to offer emotional support. Evans and Feder (2016) also noted that work colleagues provided informal support in terms of emotional support to abused women. The researcher also noted that informal support from friends and workmates also provided an avenue for abused women to access professional bodies that address domestic violence.

Evans and Feder (2016) noted that healthcare professionals are also important sources of support to women with the experiences of IPV/VAW. The researchers noted that women who have suffered serious assaults as a result of violent abuse from their intimate partners require healthcare attention. However, Evans and Feder (2016) reported that most of the women who took part in their study perceived health care professionals to lack skills to identify signs of abuse. Women also perceived the healthcare

professionals to lack the ability to effectively engage with them concerning social support for domestic violence. The researchers also noted that women were particularly uncomfortable with male healthcare professions.

Alquaiz et al. (2017) used a validated social support survey scale in the measurement of various functional support items available for victims of VAW. The researchers noted that among the 1883 married women in Saudi Arabia exposed to VAW, 73 % of them received social support that involved being taken to the doctor. The researchers also noted that 67 % of the women who took part in the study noted that they received help in carrying out daily chores as a form of social support, while 62 % of them received emotional support in terms of positive social interaction.

Given the reported high prevalence of violence, the researchers argued that there is a need to effectively implement the laws that protect women against violence (Alquaiz et al., 2017). They also noted that there is a need to encourage the formation of formal and informal groups that offer social support to women. The researchers also argued that they need to strengthen policies and legislation that improve multifactorial response to the issue of IPV/VAW.

Legal Support and Islamic Teaching

Islam et al. (2018) provided an in-depth analysis of the Islamic religious perspective of restorative justice as it relates to IPV/VAW in Muslim countries. According to the researchers, Islamic restorative justice acknowledges IPV/VAW as private crimes, especially when perpetrated by intimate partners. Islam et al. (2018) noted that the Quran provides various avenues through which abused women can access justice.

One of the approaches that the researchers identified is based on the Qur'an, 4:34, which advocates for a peaceful conversation between husband and wife about the problem and arriving at an amicable solution. Islam et al. (2018) also noted that Islamic religious laws allow for mediation of the husband's and wife's conflicts with the aim of reaching reconciliation. The researchers indicated that in Islam, the emphasis is on the amicable settlement of family disputes. Whether an amicable resolution of conflict works for abused women and their perpetrator is yet to be determined. Islam et al. (2018) highlighted Qur'an, 65:2 as the basis upon which abused Muslim women can seek divorce. The researchers noted that the approaches that have been adopted by Islamic countries as a means of addressing IPV/VAW is consistent under Islamic religious law. The approaches that were highlighted by Islam et al. (2018) included the use of Sharia courts, mediation by family members, neighbors, and village heads. Islam et al. (2018) warned about the misapplication of restorative justice in Islamic countries when dealing with IPV/VAW. The researchers raised concerns over the failure of restorative justice to recognize the abuse as a public crime. Islam et al. (2018) also raised concern over the involvement of the community in administering restorative justice given the fact that Islamic culture leans towards a patriarchal system of the family that recognizes the authority of husbands over their wives.

Methods and Procedures in Qualitative Phenomenological Research of IPV/VAW

Various researchers have adopted the phenomenological methodological approach in the exploration of lived experiences amongst victims of IPV (Baloushah et al., 2019; Flasch et al., 2017; Vella et al., 2017). In this section, the methodological procedures of

studies that have adopted this approach will be discussed to gain an understanding of how the phenomenological methodological approach is applied and challenges and strengths associated with its use. Discussion of the research procedures of the phenomenological methodological approach here has been carried out as means to support the methodology proposed to address this study's RQs.

Flasch et al. (2017) used a phenomenological research approach in understanding the experiences of survivors of IPV who were in the recovery process. The study included a total of 123 survivors from 31 states in the United States. According to the researchers, the use of the phenomenological method enabled researchers to get to the heart of the experiences of the victims, which supports the assertion made by Creswell et al. (2007) that this methodology is appropriate for exploring lived experiences. Using the phenomenological approach, Flasch et al. (2017) were able to map the experiences of the participants with the focus on what the victims believed to be the processes that enabled them to overcome or recover from their abuse and how they understood the recovery processes. The researchers recruited the participants using a purposive convenience sampling approach, which involved the use of social media sites, emails, and personal and professional contacts since the study was done via an online platform.

Flasch et al. (2017) did not use the traditional approach to phenomenological studies, which typically involves the use of interviews (Creswell et al., 2007). Instead, the researchers adopted an online narrative survey questionnaire for the collection of data. The researchers acknowledged that the use of online questionnaires led to the loss of the intimate nature of phenomenological studies that are attained when face to face

interviews are used. However, they made the choice to use a narrative online survey questionnaire, because they believed that it provided them extensive rich and diverse data from multiple sources since they were able to include a large number of participants. Flasch et al. (2017) also argued that the use of a narrative survey questionnaire enabled the study to achieve transferability. Further, the researchers argued that the use of the online approach enabled the research to be anonymous, which was important in overcoming the challenge of accessing the participants due to the stigma that is attached to survivors of IPV/VAW.

Flasch et al.'s (2017) approach in the use of an online narrative survey questionnaire involved the creation of an open-ended narrative survey that captured the experiences of the victims of abuse, and the survey was hosted on a secure online platform (Qualtrics). In order to overcome the challenges of low response rate that can often affect online surveys, the researchers used incentives for participants who completed the full questionnaire that consisted of eligibility to be placed in a drawing to win store gift cards worth \$50. The researchers ensured that the participants were provided with informed consent, and they only participated in the survey if they met the eligibility criteria. The online narrative survey tool that was used by the researchers enabled the participants to fully express themselves because the questions were open-ended. The language used in framing the questions encouraged in-depth responses from the participants. The questionnaire used words such as, "please share", "in your own words", "in your experiences," and "what you think?" The highlighted phrases were not only polite but also put the participants at ease, which therefore encouraged them to

answer the questions according to how they felt and based on their understanding, which is important in achieving the aim of phenomenological methodology to encourage the participants to develop meaning using their voice and views (Creswell et al., 2007).

The data analysis approach that was used by Flasch et al. (2017) involved a hierarchical emergent coding strategy that involved reading and re-reading the transcripts with subsequent highlighting of important statements and quotes. This process was carried out by two researchers working independently. They then compared the outcome of their coding and consolidated the final list of codes, which were then used in the development of themes.

Flasch et al. (2017) noted that determining trustworthiness is important in qualitative research. The researchers defined trustworthiness as measures that are used to enhance the validity of the data, as indicated by Moustakas (1994). Flasch et al. (2017) used various approaches in enhancing the trustworthiness of the study, and it included bracketing of their input, which included their own experiences and assumptions. To minimize the possible influence of their prior knowledge regarding the topic on data collection and analysis process, the researchers only completed the literature review after they had finished the data analysis process, which is in line with the recommendations provided by previous researchers (Creswell et al., 2007).

Vella et al. (2017) also used a phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences among female victims of severe IPV in the US. The researchers used the approach as a means of developing an understanding from a feminist perspective regarding IPV/VAW survivors' lived experiences. Vella et al. (2017) adopted the

phenomenological approach because they believed that the process was appropriate in producing an aggregate description of their research phenomenon. The researchers acknowledged that in using the phenomenological approach, researchers are able to set aside their biases, views, and stereotypes and depend upon the participants' interviews in the generation of knowledge and the description of research phenomenon, which is in line with the comments made by Clark Moustakas (1994) regarding the methodology. However, the researchers acknowledged the assertions made by Clark Moustakas (1994) regarding the challenge faced in ensuring complete eradication of researchers' influence when using the phenomenological approach, since the methodology embraces an interpretative approach in the analysis of data. Despite the highlighted possible influence of the researchers, Vella et al. (2017) noted that adoption of a phenomenological approach is important in addressing sensitive and poorly understood topics such as IPV/VAW, which require input from an accurate representation of voices of participants victimized by IPV/VAW.

Vella et al.'s (2017) study involved a total of 13 participants and they were able to adopt the recommended approach to phenomenological studies, which involved the collection of data using interviews (Creswell et al., 2007). The researchers ensured that all the participants received informed consent forms, which were later collected and safely kept in a locked office in order to adhere to participants' confidentiality. The interviews were carried out by one of the researchers, the first author, alone, and she guided the process by welcoming the participants and reminding them of their right to participate or quit the study. Data collection during interviews was carried out using

audio recording, and the researcher ensured that the participants were comfortable with being recorded.

Interviews were guided by an overarching question and additional seven sub-questions that were used by the researcher to encourage participants to give additional information and to clarify their responses, as needed, which is in line with the recommendations by Creswell et al. (2007). The RQs focused on the exploration of the context in which the included participants (women) were oppressed and marginalized and their lived experiences under abject fear. The interview questions used were developed from the RQs, and they were open-ended. Each of the sub-questions encouraged the participants to provide responses based on their knowledge and experiences.

I addressed potential concerns regarding the possible influences of perceptions, previous understandings, and views regarding the research phenomenon through the use of bracketing as recommended by Creswell et al. (2007). The researcher carried out bracketing by writing down her beliefs, attitudes, and experiences regarding the topic of research before engaging in data analysis. She had another researcher read what she had written to monitor for potential bias. This approach was termed as *epoche* by Moustakas (1994) who noted that the approach facilitates the researcher to look at the information provided by the research participants with unfettered stance. Vella et al. (2017) noted that it is important for researchers who investigate domestic violence for them to acknowledge their thoughts and feelings and how they react to the literature and interviews because the topic is emotive and includes the depiction of traumatic situations.

Vella et al. (2017) analyzed the data using two steps with the first being the textural phase, where the primary researcher read through the transcripts two times while highlighting the phrases of interest and the sections of data that were relevant to the research phenomenon. The researcher then reorganized the statements by clustering them into themes and used the developed themes in generating textural descriptions of the experiences shared by the participants. The second phase was the imaginative variation or structural case where the investigator sought to reveal underlying meanings of the developed descriptions. This allowed the interpretation of the views shared by the participants from a broader lens, which was achieved by establishing the links between the themes.

Vella et al. (2017) also noted that the validation of the findings is an important step in phenomenological research. The researchers adopted the recommendations provided by Creswell et al. (2007) regarding the validation process, which included peer review, clarification of the researcher's biases, rich thick description, and member checking. In line with peer review, the findings of Vella et al.'s (2017) study were examined by the 2nd author, the dissertation chair, who carried out peer review by checking the steps used in data analysis to determine fidelity to the phenomenological approach. The researcher also carried out member checking, which involved meeting 11 of the 13 participants five weeks after the interviews and engaging them in reviewing their interview transcript findings with the aim of checking the accuracy, the correctness of the information, and the analyzed findings. The researcher who was the first author also adopted a rich, thick description where a detailed description of participants'

experiences was provided. Vella et al. (2017) noted that the detailed and rich description of the participants' experience was important in contributing to the transferability of the findings to other people and settings, as indicated by Creswell et al. (2007).

Baloushah et al. (2019) also used a phenomenological approach in investigating the lived experiences of Palestinian women who were victims of IPV. Baloushah et al.'s (2019) phenomenological approach was guided by steps proposed by Van Manen (2016), which focus on the use of lived experiences to investigate the understanding of participants regarding their experiences and the identification of themes that emerge from the interviews that facilitate the description of the phenomenon. Their study included 11 participants and data was collected using interviews. Baloushah et al. (2019) used a purposive sampling approach in selecting the 11 women from the Gaza strip. The researchers used social support centers that provided psychological and legal counseling to the victims of IPV/VAW for the recruitment of the participants. The researchers approached psychosocial workers to facilitate participants' involvement in the study. Using this approach, the researchers ensured that they did not engage participants who were unwilling to be contacted. The researchers only engaged the participants who showed a willingness to take part in the study after they had been approached by psychosocial workers. Baloushah et al. (2019) also obtained informed consent from the participants.

Baloushah et al. (2019) collected data using semi-structured interviews that were conducted by the principal investigator working alone. The interview questions that were used by Baloushah et al. (2019) to conduct the interviews were open-ended, and they

were developed from the main RQ which explored the “lived experiences of Palestinian women who suffered domestic violence by an intimate partner” (page 2333, Baloushah et al., 2019). According to Baloushah et al. (2019), the principal investigator only posed the question after the participants had exhausted the response to the previously asked question. The researchers indicated that this approach enabled participants to provide in-depth and uninterrupted views concerning their experiences with IPV/VAW. The responses obtained from the participants were recorded using audio typing after which they were transcribed verbatim. Baloushah et al. (2019) analyzed the data collected from the interviews using the thematic analysis approach.

The researchers ensured trustworthiness by using member checks and peer reviews to ensure credibility. Baloushah et al. (2019) also carried out an audit trail in order to achieve dependability and confirmability. The researchers indicated that they achieved transferability by ensuring that the included participants were those who had experiences that were relevant to the phenomenon that they were investigating, IPV/VAW.

In conclusion, this discussion of the methodological procedures in phenomenological studies that have explored IPV/VAW strongly suggests that the method is appropriate for answering RQs that focus on lived experiences of IPV/VAW. Baloushah et al. (2019) used the phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences regarding domestic VAW while Vella et al. (2017) used the methodology to explore lived experiences of oppression and marginalization of victims of IPV/VAW. The RQs of these studies were (a) What are the lived experience of Palestinian women who suffered

domestic violence by an intimate partner (Baloushah et al., 2019) and (b) What are the lived experiences of female survivors of severe IPV that involved strangulation? (Vella et al., 2017). These RQs have similar structure and content with the proposed study's RQs which focus on the lived experiences of married Qatari women of their IPV/VAW and their perceptions regarding cultural influences on the IPV/VAW that they have experienced. This study included many of the same research procedures used by the researchers in the studies described here, and these procedures are described in the next chapter.

Summary

Based on the reviewed literature, there is evidence of various forms of domestic violence in the Middle East countries (Barnawi, 2017; Madhani et al., 2017). The types of IPV/VAW have included physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. The research findings, however, indicated that definitions of IPV/VAW as well as methods and procedures varied across studies and settings (Elghossain et al., 2019). The variation in the prevalence of various forms of abuse in the Arab countries was associated with the difference in the methods and the approaches used by various researchers in defining IPV/VAW (Elghossain et al., 2019).

Despite the reported variation in the prevalence of the various forms of IPV/VAW in the Arab countries, the reviewed evidence indicated that the abuse is associated with adverse effects on physical and mental health (Mendonça & Ludermir, 2017; Safadi et al., 2018). Evidence also suggested that the exposure of children to IPV has resulted in various undesirable effects such as delinquencies, poor academic performance, and

adjustment problems, which highlights the need for effective management and prevention of IPV/VAW (Huang et al., 2015; Kiesel et al., 2016).

The review also indicated that victims of the IPV/VAW are forced by various factors to refrain from seeking help (Evans & Feder, 2016; Vranda et al., 2018). Some of the factors that were identified included attitudes of the police carrying out the mandatory arrest; perpetrators addicted to alcohol or drug use, the negative reaction towards attempts to seek help from social support groups, and emotional blackmail by perpetrators (Evans & Feder, 2016; Novisky & Peralta, 2015; Vranda et al., 2018). Despite the highlighted challenges to help-seeking, evidence indicated that social support that included a multi-faceted team that incorporated mental health professionals with experience in counseling, stress management, and anger management was more effective. Evidence also highlighted the importance of professional agencies that facilitates the provision of safe housing and access to other services required by the victims of IPVVAW during their recovery. It should be noted that this review did not identify any research study that exclusively described the experience of victims of IPV in Qatar and whether there was any structure that helps the victims to recover.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides the theoretical framework for understanding aspects related to IPV/VAW (Darling, 2007; Ryan, 2001). The use of the theory provides a framework for understanding the predictors and interaction of factors associated with IPV/VAW (Voith, 2019). The theory also provides a lens through which interventions that are taken to address the abuse faced by women in marriages, such as community support for victims of violence can be conceptualized (Voith, 2019).

The theory also facilitates the understanding of VAW as a complex phenomenon that can only be understood by taking into consideration the multiple social systems in which women reside (Smith, 2016). The theory also enables the understanding of the behavior of victims of IPV within a given context and how the victims interact with various factors of the cultural ecology (Mulrenan et al., 2015; Smith, 2016).

Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the evidence indicates that phenomenological methodology provides an appropriate approach for exploring the lived experience of women regarding IPV/VAW. The methodology enables researchers to get to the heart of the experiences of the victims (Creswell et al., 2007). The phenomenological methodology allows the voices of the victims to be heard. Therefore, in the subsequent chapter 3, a detailed description of the methodology and how it was used to address the highlighted lack of evidence regarding experiences of victims of IPV in Qatar and whether there is any structure that helps the victims to recover is provided.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

VAW is a serious issue that hurts the wellbeing of women (Al Ghayathin, 2017; Barnawi, 2017). However, there is limited research regarding the prevalence and experience of IPV/VAW against divorced Qatari women. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW. This chapter describes the methodological approach, starting with the qualitative phenomenological research design and the rationale for adopting the design. The section also addresses the population, sample and sampling criteria, material used for data collection, data collection procedure, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the adopted design along with the reasons for its choice. The appropriateness of qualitative phenomenology is discussed along with a brief discussion of the reasons why alternative research designs were not adopted. This section concludes with the central phenomenon to be studied.

RQs

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Qatari women and IPV/VAW?

RQ2: How do the victims of IPV/VAW perceive cultural influences on IPV/VAW?

Qualitative Phenomenology as a Research Tradition

As observed from the stated RQs, I explored the lived experiences regarding IPV/VAW. To address the two RQs, I relied on qualitative research guided by phenomenological research tradition (see Alase, 2017). I based the choice of the qualitative research design instead of quantitative options on the need to focus on contextual aspects in addressing the RQs. Unlike qualitative alternatives, quantitative research designs are objective (Queirós et al., 2017). This means that the quantitative research approaches focus on obtaining a world view and conclusive facts regarding the research interest that can be generalized across the various population (Eyisi, 2016). The challenge with this objective view of the world and the need to develop conclusive facts is the tendency to avoid focusing on individual experiences, which are important in providing a unique insight into the feelings and person-specific factors associated with such observations. The quantitative research approaches, therefore, do not present the actual voices of the individual participants (Queirós et al., 2017).

The adopted qualitative research is based on the subjective view that provides an exploration of the research phenomenon based on contextual factors (Alase, 2017; Eyisi, 2016). The subjective view of the research phenomenon is based on the thinking that there is more than one truth (Alase, 2017). Using the subjective approach, the views shared by the participants and their understanding regarding their lived experiences are considered as the contextual truth and no attempts are made to identify an absolute truth (Alase, 2017). Qualitative research approaches through the use of semistructured interviews allow participants to express their versions of truth regarding the research

phenomenon, where the participants are not questioned about the validity or the trueness of the experiences they share (Eyisi, 2016). The use of a qualitative research approach allowed me to take into account the participants' views regarding lived experiences, and, in this case, those of IPV/VAW survivors. The qualitative research, therefore, aligned with the study purpose and the RQs and was appropriate for the study.

The use of a phenomenological type in this study was important because it provided the framework upon which the knowledge and meaning regarding the phenomenon of interest was understood based on the views of the participants (see Alase, 2017). The adopted phenomenological research is based on the philosophical assumptions that consider the experiences as narrated by individuals to be the basis upon which truths can be understood (Van Manen, 2016). Based on this philosophical background, the meanings attached to lived experiences are based on the participants' consciousness, which, therefore, considers the participants' interpretation of experiences to be supreme (Alase, 2017). This was important in understanding the experiences of IPV/VAW based on Qatar women's understanding, who were at the receiving end of such experiences. The phenomenological research tradition, therefore, enabled me to provide insights regarding IPV/VAW that go beyond the common knowledge held by other stakeholders in Qatar by presenting the voices of those who have suffered the abuse. The use of phenomenological research tradition allowed the collection of data using face-to-face interviews and subsequent analysis using a thematic data analysis approach (see Van Manen, 2016). These approaches ensured that the voices of the participants permeated through the findings of the study and the conclusions (see Alase, 2017).

It should be noted that there are other different types of qualitative research approaches that were not chosen for this research. One of the types is the grounded theory, which I did not consider for this study because it is based on the development of a new theory using a systematic collection of data analysis (see Chun Tie et al., 2019). I did not choose the narrative type because the approach focuses on the collection and reporting of data in chronological order, which was not a requirement for this study (see Rosiek & Snyder, 2020). Moreover, I did not choose ethnography because the approach considers cultural aspects rather individual experiences to be important (see Engel et al., 2017). In addition, I did not choose the case study approach because it focuses on selected cases represented by multiple different types of data (see Ospina et al., 2018). For the study, the only data collected were in-depth interview responses along with observations of participants.

Central Phenomenon of the Study

The central phenomenon of the study were the experiences of IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women. Qatar lacks a law against domestic violence and women, which raises concerns over the likelihood of women being subjected to IPV/VAW (Penal Code of Qatar, 2004). Reviewed articles have suggested that the rate of IPV/VAW varies between 6% and 43% in the region (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Graham et al., 2019). The potential effects of IPV/VAW on women's physical, psychological, or sexual wellbeing inform the focus on this phenomenon (United Nations, 1993; WHO, 2022). Abused women may suffer adverse psychological effects (Barnawi, 2017; Lövestad et al., 2017; Stöckl & Penhale, 2015). Furthermore, cases of behavioral complications resulting from

IPV/VAW have been reported (Barnawi, 2017). The abuse also results in adverse physical health effects (Safadi et al., 2018; Stöckl & Penhale, 2015). In addition, experiences of IPV/VAW have been associated with adjustment problems among children (Boeckel et al., 2017; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015; Kiesel et al., 2016). Moreover, in Muslim culture, such as that practiced in Qatar, there are various cultural factors associated with the occurrence of IPV/VAW (Batchelor, 2020; Rees et al., 2017). Cultural norms such as patriarchy, which allows male-dominance and practices that make women subservient to men, have been associated with experiences of IPV/VAW (Batchelor, 2020; Lelaurain et al., 2018; Rees et al., 2017).

In this study, the central phenomenon was IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women. I sought to understand how divorced Qatari women experience the phenomenon. I also explored how the IPV/VAW among divorced Qatari women manifested in terms of the causes, consequences, and available support system.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I played the role of the observer of the phenomenon that was developed from the semistructured interviews with the participants based on their views. This role placed me as part of the data collection process and specifically as the main tool for data collection (see Patton, 2002). I accomplished the stated role by conducting participant recruitment, the collection of data using interviews, and thematic analysis. My overall role was to use the phenomenological approach in facilitating the development of a deeper understanding of IPV/VAW. For me to fully deploy the phenomenological approach, there was the need to adopt mutual engagement with the participants

throughout the process of interviews (see Alase, 2017). As I carried out the different roles in the research and during the subsequent interpretation of the findings, there was the likelihood of bias associated with my perspectives and experiences regarding the topic of research (see Alase, 2017). To address the likelihood of bias, I played the additional role of identifying my input in the research and my opinions through bracketing (see Dörfler & Stierand, 2020).

I also played an important role in managing power differentials (see Engel et al., 2017). Strategies such as maintaining mutual engagement with the participants and agreement on aspects of the interviews, acknowledging the importance of the participants and their views and contributions to the research, and adopting transparency concerning how data were used, stored, and protected were used to ensure the power differential did not favor me at the expense of the participants. Through mutual engagement, I was able to empower the participants and built a good rapport which minimized power differentials. The engagement between myself and the participants was achieved by allowing the participants to verify my interpretations of the views they shared (see Engel et al., 2017).

I occupied the outsider position during the engagement with participants because I had limited personal experience with IPV/VAW (see Alase, 2017). Acknowledging the important role that I played in the development of meaning and interacting with the participants, I embarked on the role of understanding the participants' viewpoints and educated myself about IPV/VAW based on the existing literature (see Amrulloh et al., 2020). I considered the need to educate myself to be important to avoid the likelihood of

wrongful interpretations of the views shared by the participants as a result of my outsider position (see Attia & Edge, 2017).

I did not select participants with whom I had previous personal or professional relationships. This avoided breach of principle 3.05 Multiple Relationships in the American Psychological Association code of ethics (APA, 2017). Principle 3.05 identifies multiple relationships and the potential negative effect to the researchers and participants. The principle identifies these types of relationships as potentially damaging to trustworthiness, competence, and effectiveness of the researcher in the collection of data (APA, 2017).

Methodology

This section provides detailed information regarding the approach used in the identification and recruitment of the participants. The section also provides information regarding the material used in the collection of data and the procedures used in data collection. Data analysis is also described. Throughout this section, I identify approaches I used to ensure adherence to ethical considerations.

Participant Selection Logic

Population

The target population for this research was women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar who have experienced IPV/VAW as an adult. I chose this population because it was relevant in addressing the study's RQs. Based on the purpose of the research and the RQs, the individuals that were explicitly highlighted were the divorced Qatari women with experiences of IPV/VAW. Additionally, I sought to address lived

experiences concerning being subjected to IPV/VAW and the perceived cultural influences, which made the identified population ideal and relevant for this study.

Sample and Sampling Strategy

The determination of the sample size for this study was guided by the previous studies that adopted a phenomenological research approach. Unlike quantitative research-based studies, qualitative phenomenological studies do not require large sample sizes (Malterud et al., 2016). Evidence has indicated that sample size ranges between 10 and 25 participants is adequate for phenomenological logical studies (Arbour & Wiegand, 2014; Kornhaber et al., 2015). The overall guideline that guided me in the selection of sample size was the need to attain data saturation (see Arbour & Wiegand, 2014; Larsson et al., 2019). In qualitative studies, data saturation is attained when additional participants do not yield information that leads to the development of new themes. In this study, I intended to recruit a total of 12 participants, but it was possible to include fewer or more participants based on when saturation was reached. The purposive sampling approach was deemed appropriate for the study because the target population was relatively small and hard-to-reach. The use of the purposive sampling approach also enabled me to recruit participants with specific qualities that enabled them to share views that answered the RQs. It should also be noted that the identified sampling approach has been widely used in qualitative studies (Barratt et al., 2015). I also used a convenience sampling approach in the selection process. The participants were conveniently selected based on whether they were frequent clients at selected clinics and on whether they visited social media platforms.

The sampling approaches were accomplished through the use of well-defined selection criteria. The study only included participants who had experienced IPV/VAW as an adult; were above the age of 18 years; were from Qatar; and had stable mental health defined as none of the following in the previous 6 months: suicidal ideation or behavior, manic episode, or psychosis. Individuals were excluded from the study on the following grounds: (a) Those who were not comfortable to give information about the experiences of IPV/VAW, and (b) those who did not meet the previously stated eligibility criteria.

It should be noted that the recruitment of the participants was only carried out after approval was obtained from the dissertation faculty committee and from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). I provided the IRB with the required application documents. The proposal also described the approaches used to uphold ethical considerations and ensure that the participants were not subjected to risks and violations of their rights.

The first step in the recruitment of the participants involved obtaining permission from agency gatekeepers to place recruitment flyers (Appendix B) at their agency to attract participants. For this study, healthcare practitioners involved in caring for victims of IPV/VAW in Qatar and especially those who offered care for psychological disorders were the gatekeepers. Obtaining permission from the gatekeepers was important in enhancing access to the target participants (see Wilson, 2019). I reached out to the healthcare agency director using a request letter that explained the nature of the study, its purpose, the involvement of the respondents in the study, and how they were protected

and safeguarded. The letter also explained the benefits of the study to the participants and society in general and how the information would be disseminated to the interested parties. Included in the request letter was also my description and the affiliated institution.

Upon obtaining permission from the agency director and the IRB, I placed stacks of flyers in the common waiting rooms of agencies. The recruitment flyer listed the eligibility requirements for participants and their role as participants. The participants were also reassured of confidentiality and were informed of their right to quit the study at any time. The recruitment flyer also described me and the affiliated university and provided a contact email and phone number that were to be used by the participants to ask questions or express their willingness to participate (Appendix C).

I then sent a brief eligibility questionnaire that listed the eligibility requirements to the interested participants who contacted me. The eligibility questionnaire is included in Appendix D. Each participant completed the eligibility questionnaire and returned it by email to me. I then sent two informed consent forms to the prospective participants who met the eligibility requirements: one for general consent and one for audio recording consent. The general informed consent form had sufficient information regarding the nature of the study, associated benefits and risks, the approaches used in data collection, the participants' involvement in the study, and the approaches used to safeguard the data and uphold their rights as participants. The informed consent forms also described me and the affiliated university and provided the contact email that was to be used by the participants who agreed to take part in the study. Individuals who agreed to take part in

the study were requested to reply to the email that contained both consent forms by stating that “I Consent to both the study and audio recording.”

After receiving an informed consent with consent and before the interview, a questionnaire was sent to the participants to complete (Appendix D). The questionnaire was made up of background and demographic questions. The participants were required to indicate their age, marital status, number of children, highest level of education, and their employment status. The purpose of this data collection was to describe the participants’ characteristics as a group.

Instrumentation

Data collection in the study was carried out using semistructured interviews. See Appendix F for interview questions. A semistructured interview is one that has open-ended questions that allow me to further explore the participants’ responses. To facilitate the execution of interviews, I used the open-ended questions to engage with the participants. The questions were formulated by me and guided by existing literature including the prior thesis completed in Qatar about IPV/VAW (see Al Ghayathin, 2017) and other studies about IPV/VAW that have been conducted in the Middle East (see Al-Modallal, 2017; Barnawi, 2017; Madhani et al., 2017). I ensured that the formulated questions were relevant to the study’s RQs. Therefore, questions were developed that are aimed at addressing aspects related to the first RQ on lived experiences of divorced Qatari women about IPV/VAW and the second RQ on how victims of IPV/VAW perceived cultural influence on the abuse.

The semistructured interview procedure also contained elements that promoted engagement between me and the participants during the interview. I built engagement and trust by asking questions to explore how they liked to spend their free time. The semistructured format included follow-up questions that enabled me to request clarity regarding the views shared by the participant. I took steps to ensure that the developed semistructured interview questions were credible and effective in facilitating the in-depth collection of data from the participants while being sensitive to the psychological well-being of the participants. I depended on peer review. The dissertation chair and second committee member were requested to give opinions regarding the formulated questions. The participants were asked about past experiences of abuse. Therefore, without proper care and caution during interviews, there was a likelihood that the questions asked could put the participants in an uncomfortable position by triggering the recall of painful past experiences (Dempsey et al., 2016). Therefore, to avoid such ethical concerns and the risk of psychological and emotional discomfort among the participants, I ensured that the questions asked were appropriate and sensitive to the well-being of the interviewees. Steps that were taken to ensure appropriate questions were asked included triangulation, where I referred to the existing literature as a guide in the formulation of interview questions. I was also guided by the dissertation chair and the second committee member in ensuring the formulation of sensitive and credible interview procedures.

I also carried out pretesting of the semistructured interview to ensure that the open-ended questions that were included assessed the study's RQs. Pretesting of the semistructured interview was carried out using first two interview participants. Before

interviewing any participants, I also practiced role-playing the interview first with my chair and then friends/family who volunteered for the role-play. Therefore, there was no separate invitation of pretest participants. The obtained data were thematically analyzed to determine whether the responses addressed the two RQs. Adjustments were made to the semistructured interview questions, if necessary, in consultation with the faculty dissertation committee.

Data Collection Procedures

The collection of data was carried out using in person face-to-face interviews and through Zoom video conferencing. The adoption of online face-to-face interviews was necessitated by the restrictions imposed due to Covid-19 (Dodds & Hess, 2020). The restrictions call for social distancing as a means of reducing the likelihood of infection (Dodds & Hess, 2020). It should be noted that various researchers have used online-based data collection approaches for qualitative phenomenological studies (Archibald et al., 2019; Lobe & Morgan, 2020). The use of online platforms has been shown to enhance efficiency, convenience, and practicability while reducing the resources required to carry out research, such as cutting down the cost of travel and booking of interview venues (Archibald et al., 2019; Lobe & Morgan, 2020). Evidence also suggests that the use of online methods improve traditional face-to-face in-person interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Terry et al., 2017). I also adopted online platforms because it offered the opportunity to engage and communicate with participants who are geographically dispersed utilizing the limited resources (Archibald et al., 2019).

Zoom is an online cloud-based video conferencing platform that allows collaboration and group meetings. The platform contains features that facilitate real-time communication. However, unlike Skype, Zoom allows users to record the interviews and store the recordings without the need for third-party software (Archibald et al., 2019). This feature is important for research since it enables the researcher to ensure that highly sensitive data is safeguarded and the identity of the participants protected (Archibald et al., 2019). Zoom also allows for user-specific authentication, which means that only the invited recruited participants will be able to participate in the interviews, which enhances privacy (Archibald et al., 2019). Evidence also indicates that the use of Zoom video conferencing for qualitative data collection is not impeded by significant technological challenges and is perceived by the participants to be easy to use and safe (Archibald et al., 2019). The in-person face to face interviews were carried in a private room at Qatar National Library, which ensured the interviews were confidential.

To prepare for the interviews, the participants and I agreed on the exact time for the interviews. I then reminded the participants about the interviews a day before the interviews. The interviews were carried out based on the agreement between the participants and me, particularly on aspects related to the timing of the interviews. I advised the participants to position themselves in a silent and private room to avoid disturbance and avoid any other person hearing their interviews. For the case of in-person face to face interviews, I informed the participants about the location and access. I also informed the participants that I was the only person present in the interview. The participants were also advised to obtain a stable and secure internet connection.

Participants were advised against use of WiFi as means to access the internet because of security concerns. Before the interviews, I reminded the participants about the purpose of the research and their rights to withdraw from the research at any point. I obtained verbal consent from the participants before commencing the interview.

I used the semistructured interview questions to ensure that the interviews were relevant and focused on the experiences of IPV/VAW. I ensured that each participant was asked a similar set of questions. During the interviews, I allowed the participants to respond fully to the questions based on their understanding and experiences. The follow-up questions were only used when appropriate to seek clarity on the responses provided by the participants or to nudge the participants to provide detailed responses. Interviews lasted for between 45 minutes to 60 minutes, and it was projected to be carried out for two weeks. Interviews were recorded using the digital audio recorder. The participants were informed prior of the voice recording and required to provide informed consent. I also recorded facial expressions and other signs in a note book that was kept confidential and that did not contain personal contact information of the participants.

At some intervals during the interviews, I inquired whether the participants were comfortable and willing to continue with the interviews. During the interviews, the participants were reminded of the right to skip any question that makes them uncomfortable. The participants were also reminded of their right to terminate the interviews at any point. At the end of the interview, I asked the participants if they had anything they would like to add to any of their responses, questions regarding the interviews, or any aspects of the study. After addressing the participant's concerns, I

thanked the participants and ended the interview. I stored the recorded interviews in an encrypted file on a password-protected laptop. The notebook with the recorded facial expressions was kept in a locked cabinet accessed only by me.

Data Analysis Plan

After the interviews, the recorded interviews were processed. The processing steps included the transcription of the interviews and reviewing the transcripts to ensure content similarity with the interview questions. The transcription process was done verbatim. I worked alone to manually transcribe the audio recorded interviews word by word. This process involved listening and writing the participants' responses in a Word document. The entire interview, including questions I posed, was transcribed along with the follow-up questions. I also indicated where the participant paused, sighed, or had any other expressions during the interviews according to observation notes. After transcribing the interviews, I shared the transcription and my interpretation of the interview with the participants to get their feedback on her interpretation of individual transcripts, a process termed member checking (see Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). I made sure that this request was included in the informed consent, and before sending the interpretation.

The analysis of data was carried out using a thematic data analysis approach. This process involved several steps that included familiarization, coding, and finally, the development of themes. In this study, the thematic analysis was carried out based on the process and guidelines described by Terry et al. (2017). The researchers indicated that the thematic analysis process is made up of six different steps, with the first being the familiarization with the data (the content of the transcripts). The second step is the

development of codes, while the third step is the development of themes. The fourth step is the revision of the developed themes, while the fifth step involves the finalization and the definition of the developed theme. The final step in thematic analysis involves the reporting of the generated themes and subthemes.

I familiarized myself with the transcribed data by reading the transcripts. Two to three cycles of reading were carried out based on the requirements. After the familiarization with the transcribed data, I embarked on the second step, where codes were developed and applied to the transcribed data. The development of codes was carried out by reading the transcribed data and highlighting the sections of the participant's responses, such as the short phrases or several lines that provided relevant information that was deemed important in addressing the RQs. The developed codes were checked and organized to ensure nonrepetitiveness. If necessary, codes were combined or deleted. The third step of developing themes was carried out by assessing the codes to aggregate the codes that had similar information about the RQs. After the development of themes, the initial list of themes was assessed by reorganizing, combining similar themes, or deleting redundant themes. The first step of finalizing and defining themes involved the identification of major and minor themes. I also identified the subthemes that emerged from the developed themes. The developed themes were then reported in Chapter 4 through the description of the interconnection between concepts and how the different themes respond to the RQs. For the case of discrepant data, I discussed the interview responses with my dissertation chair to determine the likelihood that the

participant did not understand the questions. If so, the data were dropped from the data collection.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, trustworthiness relates to aspects of validity and reliability, which are terminologies usually used in quantitative studies (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, in this study, instead of referring to validity and reliability, issues of trustworthiness were discussed (see Nowell et al., 2017). I ensured enhanced trustworthiness by improving on the four aspects of the study that included improving dependability, transferability credibility, and confirmability.

Credibility

In qualitative studies, credibility is an aspect of research that relates to internal validity in quantitative studies (Flynn, & Korcuska, 2018). To enhance the credibility of the study, I adopted different approaches that included triangulation, member checks, reflexivity, and peer review. Peer review involved the determination of interpretational accuracy by the participants. I requested the participants to offer their opinion regarding the interpretation made from their responses (see Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). The use of data triangulation in enhancing the credibility of the study was carried out by relying on various sources of data for evidence. The different sources of data I used included the transcribed interviews and audit trails. I also incorporated follow up conversation in the triangulation process. The use of follow-up questions aimed at collecting in-depth and comprehensive data to enhance the reliability of the interpretation.

Transferability

Transferability is a qualitative concept that is used to explain what quantitative researchers refer to as external validity (Sinclair et al., 2018). Therefore, the term transferability was used to describe the applicability of the research outcomes to different settings and contexts (Sinclair et al., 2018). I ensured improved transferability by providing a “thick description” for the analysis. The thick description refers to a comprehensive discussion of the approaches used in the analysis. It should be noted that the use of interviews and particularly the semi-structured interviews is associated with the production of thick and rich information (Willig, 2019). I, therefore, ensured that I maintained documentation of the interactions with participants, the responses from the participants, and the behavior of the participants during the interviews. By providing audit trails, I ensured that there was transparency, and readers would identify the aspects of research attributed to me and that which were attributed to the participants. Transferability was important in ensuring that future researchers and other readers were able to determine the applicability of the findings while also enabling them to replicate the study (see Sinclair et al., 2018; Willig, 2019).

Dependability

In qualitative research studies, the dependability of the study is used to describe what quantitative researchers refer to as reliability (Nowell et al., 2017). Dependability in qualitative studies is based on how well the methods used in obtaining findings are documented. One of the approaches used in enhancing dependability is through the provision of an audit trail. The use of an audit trail enhanced the dependability by

providing the basis for determining the procedures and the outcome that was relevant to research (Ang et al., 2016). I also enhanced dependability by ensuring consistency during interviews. This was achieved through the use of the same semistructured interview questions for all the interviews. The fact that I carried out all the interviews also enhanced the consistency.

Confirmability

I enhanced the confirmability of the research by ensuring that conclusions were based on the collected data (see Nowell et al., 2017). I identified the personal subjectivities or bias. Additionally, my interpretation and views were identified through bracketing. An elaborate audit trail was also used to enhance the confirmability of the study (see Nowell et al., 2017). Inter-observer reliability was carried out with help from another researcher who was another Walden dissertation student. A sample of transcribed interview data was sent to the student to code. I then compared the student's codes against my own to determine the level of similarity.

Ethical Procedures

This research adhered to ethical procedures that ensured the protection of participants during data collection, analysis, interpretation, and the presentation of the findings. First, I obtained clearance from the University IRB, and the research procedures approved by the IRB were not altered without the permission of the IRB. To obtain ethical clearance from the IRB, I presented the completed application along with other details such as flyers and data collection material. I also presented the informed consent documents to the IRB. In case I needed to change the procedures such as data collection

procedures, procedures for analysis and presentation of the data, and procedures for the recruitment of the participants, I was required to present such changes to the review IRB and obtain clearance beforehand.

There were various ethical considerations that the research adhered to. One of the considerations related to the protection of the participants' confidentiality. In scientific research, researchers needed to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was upheld. Confidentiality refers to the protection of the identity of the participants (Surmiak, 2018). The adherence to the confidentiality principle was achieved through various approaches, such as ensuring that the data collection process did not include any information that could be used to link the data to the participants (see Anderson & Munoz Proto, 2016). I ensured that the questions asked during interviews did not require the participants to give their exact names or addresses. Additionally, identification of the recorded and transcribed interviews was done using numerical pseudonyms. The use of pseudonyms ensured that no particular interview or transcripts were associated with any specific participants (see Allen & Wiles, 2016). During the presentation of the findings, I also used pseudonyms in identifying the participants and the quotes used.

The other important ethical consideration was the protection of the participants' data. Researchers need to ensure that data are only accessed by permitted individuals. I also ensured the protection of the data using a secured laptop that I owned and could only be accessed by me in communication with the participants. The interview recording was safely stored in an encrypted file on a password-protected laptop. The printed transcripts were safely stored in a locked cabinet that was only accessed by me and the committee

chair upon request. I also ensured that data analysis was carried out on a secured laptop. The fact that I carried out data collection, data analysis, and the presentation of the findings facilitated efforts to ensure that only I had access to the data.

This study also adhered to voluntary participation. It should be noted that scientific research needs to ensure that the participation of participants is voluntary and based on adequate knowledge of the study (Sil & Das, 2017). To ensure that the participants had a good understanding of the study, researchers are required to provide informed consent. The informed consent documents described the objective and the purpose of the study, the benefits associated with the study, and the risks associated with the study, if any. Informed consent also described me and affiliate institution. The participants were required to read and understand the informed consent and provide affirmation by indicating that they agreed before committing to taking part in the study. I was available to answer any questions that were asked by the participants regarding informed consent.

Although I obtained informed consent before including the participants in the study, participants had the right to withdraw from the study. Throughout the recruitment and data collection, I ensured that the participants' rights to withdraw from the study were upheld. I reminded the participants of their rights to withdraw or even skip any of the questions before commencing the interviews. I also reminded the participants that the collection of data would be carried out using voice recording and would allow them to withdraw if they were not comfortable with voice recording. Ethical considerations were also adhered to in the analysis of the data to ensure that the findings presented emerged

from the obtained data. I also ensured that the findings of the study were disseminated to interested parties using accessible platforms. The participants received a summary of the findings on request. Finally, I ensured that data were used only for the purpose intended and will be destroyed after the completion of the research. The data are securely stored for 5 years in a password-protected laptop and locked cabinet for the case of paper documents, as required by the Walden University procedures and the principles of the American Psychological Association ethics code.

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the methodological approach used in the assessment of the experiences of Qatar women regarding IPV/VAW. The population and sample are identified along with the procedures for sampling, data collection, processing, and analysis based on the qualitative phenomenological design. Issues associated with trustworthiness and ethical consideration are also described. This chapter provides the basis upon which the findings presented in Chapter 4 of the dissertation were understood and also informs the discussion and interpretation of the findings in Chapter 5 of the dissertation.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

VAW is a serious issue that hurts the wellbeing of women (Al Ghayathin, 2017; Barnawi, 2017). There is limited research regarding the prevalence and experience of IPV/VAW against divorced Qatari women. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW. Using the qualitative phenomenological research design, the following RQs were addressed:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Qatari women and IPV/VAW?

RQ2: How do the victims of IPV/VAW perceive cultural influences on IPV/VAW?

The outcomes obtained from the thematic analysis of the views shared by the participants are presented in Chapter 4. A description of the pretest instrument's outcome is briefly provided to demonstrate the rigor in protocol development. The study demographics and details regarding the settings are also described to facilitate replication. Data collection and analysis are presented to demonstrate trustworthiness in results. The results are reported in meticulous detail, followed by a succinct summary.

Pretest

The first two interview participants participated in pretesting of the semistructured interview. The obtained data were thematically analyzed to determine whether the responses addressed the two RQs. The family members were provided with thematic interpretations and verified pieces of information prior to finalizing conclusions.

Adjustments were made to the semistructured interview questions based on the pretest outcome. The adjustment after the pretest was made to enhance participant comprehension during data collection. The language used in the questions was also simplified to ensure that participants could easily understand the inquiries and feel at ease when sharing information.

Setting

The study was approved through Walden University committee chair, second committee member, and a URR member. Permission was obtained from the healthcare agency director before the recruitment of the participants using flyers. Additionally, an approval was obtained from the Family Consulting Center (Wifaq), which is supervised by the Qatar Foundation for Social Work affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development and Family. Semistructured interviews through audio recorded Zoom video calls were the approved methods for data collection. Eligible participants were selected through self-disclosure and voluntary response to flyers. Criteria for recruitment were listed as divorced women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar who had experienced IPV/VAW as adults. Participants were identified using fake names to ensure anonymity.

Demographics

The eight women described in this section participated in this study. These eight participants, identified using pseudonyms, provided a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, offering valuable insights into the lived experiences of domestic violence by women in Qatar, with variations in the nature of abuse, age, education, employment, and family situations. Munera was a 39-year-old woman who had experienced both

physical and psychological abuse. Munera had divorced her ex-husband nearly 8 years before the time of the interview. She was a mother of two children and held a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Munera was employed as an administrator in a government school. The second participant was Fatema who was 52 years old. She had endured psychological, emotional, and physical abuse. Fatema had been divorced for almost 12 years. She had four children and held a bachelor's degree in Arts, with a focus on sociology and social work. Fatema worked as a teacher in a public school.

The third participant, Umm Saleh, was 29 years old and had suffered from psychological abuse characterized by verbally threatening language laden with violence. She had been divorced for 6 years, had no children, and held a bachelor's degree in Arts Education. Umm Saleh worked in a government school. Badriya was the fourth participant. She was 31 years old and had initially experienced psychological abuse, which later escalated to physical abuse. It had been 4 years since her divorce, and she had no children. Badriya held a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and worked in an administrative position at a government center. The fifth participant was Umm Saqr, a 48-year-old woman who had experienced psychological, emotional, and sometimes physical abuse. She had been divorced for 8 years and was a mother of two children. Umm Saqr had a secondary certificate/high school diploma and worked as an administrator at a public school.

The sixth participant was Nahid, a 50-year-old woman who had experienced both psychological and physical abuse. Nahid has been divorced for 6 years and was a mother of five children. She had a secondary certificate/high school diploma and worked in one

of the government ministries. The seventh participant was Aisha, a 45-year-old who had experienced psychological and physical abuse; it had been 3 years since her divorce. She was the mother of 11 children and held a bachelor's degree in Education, specifically in Islamic Studies. Aisha worked at a government school. The eighth participant was Umm Yousif, a 43-year-old woman who had experienced psychological abuse followed by physical abuse. She had been divorced for 5 years and was the mother of eight children. Umm Yousif held a bachelor's degree in Arabic language and worked at a government school.

Data Collection

Participants were eight women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar who had experienced IPV/VAW as adults. The individuals were divorced Qatari women. I obtained permission from healthcare agency director to place recruitment flyers at their agency to attract participants. Stacks of flyers were then placed in the common waiting rooms of agencies. Interested participants expressed their interest via my contact email and phone number included in the flyers. Interested participants then received a brief eligibility questionnaire, completed it, and returned it by email to me. The eligible participants then received two informed consent forms: one for general consent and one for audio recording consent. Individuals who agreed to take part in the study were requested to reply to the email that contained both consent forms by stating that “I consent to both the study and audio recording.” Semistructured interviews were audio recorded using Zoom video conferencing and lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews took place as scheduled.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and manually by listening and writing the participants' responses in a Word document. The analysis of data was carried out using a thematic data analysis approach. The first step was the familiarization with the data (the content of the transcripts). The second step was the development of codes, while the third step was the development of themes. The fourth step was the revision of the developed themes, and the fifth step involved the finalization and the definition of the developed theme. The final step in the thematic analysis involved the reporting of the generated themes and subthemes. To ensure the credibility and validity of the analysis, I consistently maintained documentation of my own personal experiences and biases throughout the data analysis process. Additionally, transcripts and preliminary findings were shared with the study participants for member checking, resulting in a 37.5% response rate. Thematic conclusions were further refined and validated by comparing them to participant quotes. The results and significant quotes are presented in detail, followed by a comprehensive analysis of any identified discrepant cases.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Peer review was one of the methods I used to bolster the credibility of the research. The participants were actively involved in this process, where they were asked to provide their opinions on the interpretations derived from their responses (see Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). This collaborative approach allowed for an assessment of interpretational accuracy. Triangulation was another technique used to enhance the

credibility of the study. Multiple data sources were employed, such as transcribed interviews and audit trails. Follow-up conversations were also included in the triangulation process to gather in-depth and comprehensive data, ultimately improving the reliability of the interpretation.

Transferability

A key strategy was providing a thick description of the analysis, which entailed a comprehensive discussion of the analytical approaches employed. The use of semistructured interviews contributed to the generation of rich information, and meticulous documentation of interactions with participants, their responses, and their behavior during interviews further facilitated transferability. Audit trails were maintained to ensure transparency, allowing readers to distinguish between my contributions and those of the participants.

Dependability

To enhance dependability, the research methods were thoroughly documented. An audit trail played a crucial role in improving dependability by providing a clear record of the procedures and outcomes relevant to the research (see Ang et al., 2016). Consistency was also ensured during interviews by employing the same semistructured interview questions for all participants and having me conduct all of the interviews. This approach added to the dependability of the study by minimizing potential sources of variation.

Confirmability

I identified the personal subjectivities or bias. My interpretation and views were identified through bracketing. An elaborate audit trail was also used to enhance the

confirmability of the study (see Nowell et al., 2017). Interobserver reliability was carried out with help from another researcher who was another Walden dissertation student. A sample of transcribed interview data was sent to the student to code. I then compared the student's codes against my own to determine the level of similarity.

Results

Part 1: Results Related to the Second RQ

How do the victims of IPV/VAW perceive cultural influences on IPV/VAW?

Theme 1: Women's Position in Qatari Families

The theme women's position in Qatari families illustrates the multifaceted nature of women's positions within Qatari families. There are three subthemes under Theme 1 that shed light on the complex dynamics of women's roles and status within Qatari families. Collectively, the subthemes provide insights into the perceptions and experiences of women in Qatar concerning their roles, legal protection, and cultural attitudes within the family context.

Subtheme 1a: Respected and Significant Position

Muneera's perspective highlighted that women are viewed as the foundation of Qatari families and play a pivotal role in ensuring family stability. Muneera stated, "A woman is the basis\ foundation of the Qatari family. She is the source of family stability." The views shared by Muneera suggests that women hold a significant and revered position within the family structure. Similarly, Fatema emphasized the commitment of the Qatari government to educate women, substantiating "the significant and esteemed role that women hold within Qatari society and the family." Aisha's views also

underscored the role of Qatari women as educators, responsible for shaping the intellectual and educational growth of future generations. Aisha noted, “Qatari women serve as educators in schools, shaping the intellectual and educational growth of generations,” implying that women are actively involved in the educational development of their families and, by extension, society.

Subtheme 1b: Position Protected Legally

Muneera mentioned that women have rights such as education and work, although the extent of these rights can vary depending on individual family beliefs. According to Muneera, “Women have rights such as education and work. However, these rights vary according to the thoughts of each family.” The views shared by Muneera suggest that while legal rights exist, their implementation may vary according to cultural and familial norms. Badriya also pointed out that Qatari law is there to protect women's rights, especially when they face challenges in their private or professional lives. Badriya argued, “If they face problems in their private or professional lives, the Qatari law will maintain their rights,” highlighting the legal safeguards in place to support women's rights. Nahid's perspective reaffirmed the legal and social preservation of women's rights, particularly in areas such as education and healthcare. According to Nahid, “Women’s rights such as education and health care are legally and socially preserved,” which underscores the legal framework in Qatar that protects women's fundamental rights.

Subtheme 1c: Position Influenced by the Cultural Attitudes

Based on the views shared by the participants, the position held by women in the family could be influenced by the prevailing cultural attitudes. Illustrating this point,

Fatema noted, “It's not common for wives to hold their husbands accountable for their actions.” Fatema’s observation points out that it may not be common for wives to hold their husbands accountable for their actions, indicating that cultural attitudes can affect women's agency and ability to question their husbands. Muneera also suggested that the position of women in the family could be influenced by the nature of the relationship between the husband and wife. Muneera observed, “It depends on the kind of relationship between the husband and wife... I did not have a problem asking my ex-husband any questions during our marriage,” implying that the dynamics within a marriage could shape a woman's role and status. Similarly, Umm Saqr, on the other hand, asserted that women do not possess the entitlement to hold their husbands accountable for their conduct, reflecting a more traditional view of women's roles within the family. Umm Saqr noted, “She does not possess the entitlement to hold her husband accountable for his conduct.” However, Badriya believed that women have the right to question their husbands for the sake of preserving their marriage and interests. Badriya observed, “I think a woman has the right to question her husband for his interest and for preserving the interests of their marriage,” suggesting a more empowered perspective on women's roles within the family.

Theme 2: Social and Cultural Norms Regarding Disciplining of Women by Their Husbands

Theme 2 provides a nuanced understanding of the social and cultural norms surrounding the disciplining of women in Qatar and the various factors that influence these norms.

Subtheme 2a: Cultural Norms Prohibit Physical and Psychological Abuse

Subtheme 2a highlights the strong societal norms against physical and psychological abuse within Qatari culture. Women in Qatar perceive such behavior as entirely unacceptable, with significant implications for the honor and reputation of the wife's family. Fatema and Aisha both emphasized that physical violence, threats, and psychological abuse are considered public humiliations of the wife's family. According to Fatema, “physical violence, threats, and psychological abuse... are completely unacceptable.” She further noted that “such behavior is seen as a public humiliation of the wife's family, conveying the message that they failed in raising her properly.” Aisha agreed with Fatema indicating that “in the majority of Qatari families, such behavior (physical and psychological abuse) is not condoned. The wife's family typically rejects it as it diminishes the role of her own upbringing.”

Subtheme 2b: Dialogue and Guidance Are Preferred

Subtheme 2b addressed the preference for resolving issues through dialogue and guidance rather than resorting to physical or psychological abuse. It acknowledges the potential role of mental health issues in abusive behavior and the importance of maintaining the established family leadership structure. Muneera shared her own experience, mentioning that her ex-husband had psychological issues that made him reluctant to assume familial responsibilities. Reflecting on her experience, Muneera noted, “In my specific case, my ex-husband grappled with a psychological condition...His reluctance extended to failing to assume familial responsibilities,” thus highlighting the need for understanding underlying causes of issues rather than resorting to abuse. Umm

Saqr indicates that in her and her husband's families, dialogue and guidance are preferred, she noted, "In both my family and my husband's family, this approach is not upheld in our familial life; instead, we rely solely on dialogue and guidance."

Noting the importance dialogue, Umm Saleh suggested that physical and psychological abuse could be associated with individuals exhibiting weakness in character or suffering from mental health issues. According to Umm Saleh, verbal reprimand and direct verbal guidance could be adopted in cases of deviation from the family's leadership structure. Umm Saleh responded,

Physical and psychological abuse is often associated with individuals who exhibit weakness in character or may be suffering from mental health issues. However, it's worth noting that verbal reprimand and direct verbal guidance may exist in cases where there is a deviation from the family's established leadership structure.

Subtheme 2c: Education and Gender Equality Play a Role

Subtheme 2c highlights the relationship between education, gender equality, and the unacceptability of disciplining women through abuse. Based on the views shared by the participants, it is evident that educated women are less likely to accept abusive behavior. Abusive actions viewed are also considered as tarnishing a man's prestige and standing. Badriya underscored that discipline is not suitable for educated women in Qatar, she noted, "Discipline does not suit educated women in the State of Qatar, where most women at least have completed their secondary school." Therefore, education seems to empower women to resist abusive behavior. Aisha points out that the husband's family

rejects such abusive actions, as it reflects ignorance and a lack of personal strength. Aisha noted,

In the majority of Qatari families, such behavior (where a husband disciplines his wife) is not condoned. The wife's family typically rejects it as it diminishes the role of her own upbringing. Likewise, the husband's family rejects it because it tarnishes the man's prestige and standing, as resorting to physical discipline reflects ignorance and a lack of personal strength.

Subtheme 2d: Variability in Family Practices

Subtheme 2d acknowledges the variability in family practices and cultural norms within Qatar. According to the views shared by the participants, some families may condone abusive practices. The acceptability of such behavior depends on individual family cultures and upbringing. Umm Saqr indicates that individual circumstances could deviate from broader cultural norms. Although that Umm Saqr acknowledged that in her and her husband's families, dialogue and guidance were preferred, she observed that her ex-husband differed due to alcoholism. Umm Saqr noted, “However, my ex-husband differs from them in this regard as he is an alcoholic...Nevertheless, in certain social cultures, certain families may condone such practices.” Muneera added that the acceptability of abusive practices depends on the type of family culture and the man's upbringing. She noted, “However, this also depends on the type of family culture and the way the man is raised.” Muneera’s views underline the role of family-specific dynamics in shaping norms and practices. Umm Yousif highlighted the existence of families where husbands discipline their wives as part of their family tradition, regardless of their

education or social standing. Umm Yousif observations reflect the complexity of cultural practices within Qatar. Umm Yousif observed,

Despite the foregoing, there are few groups of families where husbands discipline their wives and commit abuses towards them, as part of their family tradition, even if they are well-educated and their male members obtain reputable positions in the country.

Theme 3: Vulnerability of Women to Abuse by Their Husbands

The theme vulnerability of women to abuse by their husbands demonstrates the complex interplay of cultural norms, family dynamics, and the potential transmission of violence that contribute to women's vulnerability to abuse in the context of domestic violence in Qatar. The theme emphasizes the importance of addressing these multifaceted issues to support and protect women in such situations.

Subtheme 3a: Role of Cultural Expectations and Gender Roles

Subtheme 3a explains the participants' views regarding the role of cultural expectations and traditional gender roles in exacerbating the vulnerability of women to abuse by their husbands. Munera expressed that some individuals within the culture believe that women pursuing education and careers are wasting their time and opportunities for marriage and motherhood. She noted, "They think that science wastes the girl's time as well as her opportunities to get married and have children." Munera's perception suggests that women could be pressured into early marriages or accepting abusive situations, fearing societal judgments. Badriya highlighted that some families prioritize public opinion and reputation over their daughters' well-being. According to

Badriya, such families may be more concerned with how their family appears to others than the harm inflicted by abusive husbands. Badriya noted, “Some families are concerned with people’s opinions and talk more than the harm caused to their daughters by their abusive husbands,” which suggests that women may be deterred from seeking help or support.

Subtheme 3b: Role of Family Members

The views shared by the participants discussed the influence of family members on women's vulnerability to abuse within marital relationships. According to Aisha, some parents may side with the husband even when a he is abusive towards his wife, potentially enabling the continuation of abuse. Aisha observed, “Even if a husband is abusive toward his wife (their daughter), some parents may side with him,” reflecting the importance of familial loyalty and the potential for parents to prioritize their relationship with their son-in-law over their daughter's safety. Umm Yousif observed that some families prioritize public opinion and satisfaction, even if it means disregarding their daughter's health and safety. Umm Yousif noted, “There are families who care about people's judgment and satisfaction, regardless of their daughter’s health and safety.” Umm Yousif views suggests that families may maintain a facade of a happy family, discouraging women from leaving abusive relationships.

According to Munera, extended family members are involved in perpetuating abuse as evident by her experience with her husband's mother who silently encouraged mistreatment and supported his husband’s decision to halt her education. Munera responded, “His mother silently encouraged him to mistreat me and permanently

supported his decision to stop me from completing my education.” Umm Saleh revealed how her ex-husband's mother played a substantial part in her mistreatment and eventually sped up the split-up process. Umm Saleh noted, “Her influence was a major factor in speeding up the divorce, as she was the reason behind the mistreatment I experienced from my ex-husband,” illustrating the influence that extended family members can have in either worsening the misery encountered by women in abusive marriages.

Subtheme 3c: Transmission of Violence Across Generations

The experiences shared by the participants also highlighted concerns about the transmission of violence across generations, further continuing the vulnerability of women to abuse by their husbands. Fatema expressed her worry that her daughters might face harm from their future husbands due to the mistreatment they witnessed from their father. Fatema responded, “I worry that my daughters might face harm at the hands of their husbands due to their past experiences and the mistreatment they endured from their father.” Nahid pointed out that if a husband notices that his wife is mistreated by her own family, it may expose her to further abuse within the marital relationship. Nahid observed, “If a husband notices that his wife is abused by her family, this will expose her to being mistreated and abused by her husband,” suggesting that family dynamics and experiences can intersect and intensify the vulnerability of women to abuse by their husbands.

Theme 4: Influence of Cultural and Social Norms on Reporting of IPV

The theme influence of cultural and social norms on reporting of IPV provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between cultural norms, family dynamics,

and the legal framework in the reporting of domestic violence in Qatar. The views shared by the participants shed light on the various factors that influence women's decisions to seek help and their experiences in doing so. The three subthemes that constitute Theme 4 are described in this section.

Subtheme 4a: Reporting Supported by Legal Framework

Subtheme 4a focuses on the responses of the women regarding the role of legal authorities and the legal framework in Qatar in addressing domestic violence. The women in the study expressed varying degrees of support from the legal framework and government authorities in Qatar. Munera highlighted the fairness and legal protection provided by the court and police, emphasizing how they preserved her rights and those of her children. She noted, “The court and police were fair and preserved my rights and my children’s rights legally.” Fatema acknowledged the intervention by authorities, which rescued her from her ex-husband’s malevolence and safeguarded her rights through official documentation, she replied “This intervention by the authorities rescued me from the clutches of my ex-husband’s malevolence and safeguarded my rights through official documentation.” Umm Saleh praised the security authorities for their cooperativeness and swift response, indicating a positive relationship with law enforcement. Umm Saleh observed, “The security authorities are highly cooperative and swift in their response.” Aisha observed that government authorities in Qatar had a strong and supportive stance regarding women's rights, promoting a sense of security and advocacy for victims. She noted, “Government authorities in Qatar demonstrate a strong and supportive stance regarding women's rights.”

Subtheme 4b: Family Reaction

Subtheme 4b delves into how family reactions can either support or discourage women from reporting domestic violence. Family reactions play a significant role in shaping women's decisions to report abuse. According to Munera, “Some families support their abused daughter’s decision, and some families prevent her from resorting to the police,” highlighting the diversity of family responses, with some families supporting their abused daughters' decisions to seek help from the police, while others may actively prevent them from doing so. Fatema noted that women reporting abuse often face blame from their own families, highlighting the challenges of familial support. She noted, “The woman reporting abuse can often encounter blame from her own family.” Umm Saqr mentioned that some families might refuse to support their daughters' actions due to concerns about the potential harm to the family's reputation. Umm Saqr observed, “Some families may refuse such actions, as they may associate their daughter's complaint with potential harm to the family's reputation.” Umm Yousif emphasized that in conservative families focused on societal satisfaction and reputation, daughters who report abuse may face condemnation. Umm Yousif noted, “Some conservative families, who care about people’s satisfaction, condemn their daughter victim of violence for resorting to the police after being subjected to abuse from her husband.”

Subtheme 4c: Discouraging Cultural and Social Norms

Subtheme 4c explores the cultural and social norms that discourage women from reporting domestic violence and seeking help. The views shared by the participants shed light on the cultural and social norms that discourage women from reporting abuse.

Fatema pointed out that the prevailing expectation is for a daughter to endure abuse at the hands of her husband, reflecting the societal pressure to maintain the status quo. Fatema noted, “If a daughter experiences abuse at the hands of her husband, the prevailing expectation is for her to endure it.” Umm Saleh shared her experience in a conservative family that doesn't permit women to drive, highlighting the patriarchal customs and traditions that limit women's autonomy. Umm Saleh noted, “I come from a conservative family that doesn't permit women to drive due to my father's customs and traditions.” Badriya noted that some families tend to hide domestic violence issues to present a perfect, problem-free public facade, further perpetuating the silence around abuse. Badriya observed, “Some families tend to hide these kinds of problems and highlight a beautiful problem-free identity as a strong flawless public facade.”

Theme 5: Reasons for Nonreporting

The theme reasons for nonreporting shed light on how cultural and social norms, family and in-law reactions, and the fear of the husband's responses are interconnected factors that influence women's decisions not to report instances of IPV in Qatar. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing these barriers in order to support and empower women who are experiencing abuse. The three subthemes that constitute Theme 5 are described below.

Subtheme 5a: Fear of Shame, Stigma, and Social Repercussions

Subtheme 5a highlights the influence of cultural and social norms on women's decision not to report incidents of IPV. The women in the study shared their experiences and thoughts on this aspect. Munera mentioned that her father's family believes that filing

a complaint against one's husband is disgraceful and shameful. Munera observed, "My father's family believes that it is disgraceful and shameful to file a complaint against the husband...Some women may also fear their families' punishments." She noted that some women may fear punishments from their families, which discourages them from reporting the abuse. Fatema expressed her hesitation to report abuse to the authorities because of the fear of potential consequences that her ex-husband might inflict upon her or her daughters. Fatema responded, "I hesitated to report the abuse to the authorities out of fear of the potential consequences that my ex-husband might inflict upon me or my daughters." The fear of retaliation highlighted by Fatema is a significant factor in non-reporting. Badriya pointed out that women may expect blame from their own families if they report their husband's abuse to the authorities. The fear of being criticized by their family members acts as a barrier to reporting IPV. Badriya observed, "She would expect to be blamed by her family if she reported her husband's abuse to the authorities." Umm Saqr highlighted how the fear of shame and stigma can be compounded if the husband isolates the woman from her family. Umm Saqr noted, "This fear can be compounded if the husband isolates her from her family." The isolation noted by Umm Saqr may make women even less likely to report the abuse. Nahid shared that the abused woman may belong to a conservative family that associates reporting abuse with disgrace. Cultural norms and expectations about women's behavior can significantly deter them from reporting IPV. Nahid stated, "The abused woman may also belong to a conservative family that thinks this behavior is associated with disgrace."

Subtheme 5b: Family and In-Law Reactions

Subtheme 5b focuses on the reactions and attitudes of the woman's own family and in-laws when they consider reporting abuse. Munera mentioned that some women may fear their family's punishments, suggesting that families might not support or protect the women when they report abuse. Munera noted, "Some women may also fear their families' punishments." Umm Yousif spoke of in-laws' aggressive reactions and their tendency to justify the husband's abusive behavior as a reaction to the woman's alleged improper conduct. This can create an environment where women are hesitant to seek help. Umm Yousif, "For example, her in-laws' aggressive reactions...and justifying her husband's abusive behavior as nothing but a reaction to her improper conduct."

Subtheme 5c: Fear of Husband's Reactions

Subtheme 5c focuses on the fear women have regarding their husbands' reactions if they report the abuse. Umm Saleh explained that women might fear their husband's and his family's reactions if they were to report the abuse. The fear of retaliation from the abuser is a strong deterrent to reporting. Umm Saleh replied, "They might fear the reaction of the husband and his family." Aisha highlighted that fear is often the predominant reason for not reporting abuse, and for some women, silence may seem like the safest option. This fear of their husband's response plays a significant role in their decision to remain silent. Aisha, "Fear is often the predominant reason...silence may be the best solution for her."

Theme 6: Reasons for Staying in an Abusive Relationship

The theme reasons for staying in an abusive relationship collectively reveal the complex interplay of societal, and economic factors that influence women's decisions to remain in abusive relationships in Qatar. The participants offered insights into safety factors that influence women's decisions to remain in abusive relationships in Qatar. The responses described in Theme 6 provide essential insights for designing effective interventions and support systems for victims of domestic violence in this cultural context.

Subtheme 6a: Fear of Societal Stigma and Family Disintegration

Subtheme 6a of fear of societal stigma and family disintegration underscores the powerful influence of cultural norms and expectations on women's choices to remain in abusive relationships. These women feel compelled to prioritize the preservation of the family unit and avoid judgment from their communities. Fatema expressed how the fear of societal stigma linked to divorce played a role in her decision to stay with her abusive husband. She was concerned about the impact of divorce on her children, as she believed that they needed both parents for their well-being. Fatema noted, “The fear of societal stigma associated with divorce... concerns about our children growing up without both parents.” Umm Saleh highlighted that some women choose to endure an abusive relationship because they perceive it as a better option compared to the social stigma associated with divorce. She also mentioned that family dynamics, such as having a cruel brother or stepmother, can influence this decision. Umm Saleh observed, “Some women

may believe that staying with the abusive husband is preferable to facing the stigma of divorce... if she has a cruel brother or stepmother.”

Subtheme 6b: Lack of Education and Employment

The lack of education and employment options places women in a vulnerable position, making it difficult for them to break free from abusive relationships. These women often prioritize the welfare of their children and their financial stability, which can lead them to stay with their abusive partners. Aisha mentioned that incomplete education or the absence of stable employment can hinder a woman's ability to leave her abusive partner. Her primary concern was the well-being of her children, as she struggled to provide for them. Aisha replied, “Incomplete education or lack of employment... concerns for her children's well-being.” Umm Yousif revealed that women who cannot find employment may find it incredibly challenging to make the decision to leave their abusive husbands. Economic dependence on the abuser further limits their options and freedom. Umm Yousif noted, “Wives who cannot find a job... the decision to leave my abusive ex-husband was hard.”

Subtheme 6c: Concern for Children and Fear of Harm

The concern for children's well-being and the fear of harm intertwines in the decision-making process of women facing domestic violence. They prioritize the safety and stability of their children, and the potential harm they might suffer from the abusive partner deters them from leaving. Munera emphasized that some women feel compelled to accept severe conditions in the abusive relationship because they fear being deprived of their children. The threat of losing custody or access to their children serves as a

powerful motivator to stay. Munera noted, “She has to yield and accept these severe conditions... fears to be deprived of them (children).” Umm Yousif noted that her fear of facing divorce and the potential harm she might endure kept her in the abusive relationship. The fear of retaliation or harm from the abusive ex-husband can paralyze a woman, preventing her from leaving. Umm Yousif replied, “The main reason was residing in the fear of facing divorce after leaving him... threatened with harm.” Aisha pointed out that the absence of her mother or other support networks in the event of divorce can make the decision even more distressing. Women may be isolated and feel alone in their struggle. Aisha replied, “In some cases, it may be related to the absence of her mother... reasons can be even more distressing than the challenging circumstances she faces with her abusive husband.”

Theme 7: Religious Views Regarding IPV

Subtheme 7a: Religious Beliefs Do Not Support IPV

Subtheme 7a reflects the perceptions of some of the women participants regarding the compatibility of their religious beliefs with IPV. Participants in this sub-theme strongly assert that their religious beliefs do not condone or support any form of abuse or violence in intimate relationships. They view their faith as a source of guidance and moral grounding. Muneera observed that "not at all, religion does not support abuse" reflects her belief that her religion is unequivocally against any form of abuse within intimate relationships. According to Fatema, "No, religious beliefs do not endorse or support abusive behavior," which emphasizes that her religious beliefs promote non-abusive and non-violent behavior, aligning with her personal convictions.

Umm Saleh stated "I do not agree. The religious beliefs do not endorse or support abusive or violent treatment by any person in general." Umm Saleh's statement stresses her disagreement with the idea that religious beliefs could be interpreted to support abusive or violent treatment by anyone. Badriya indicated "The religious side is innocent of these accusations," which reveals her firm belief that religion remains blameless in the context of accusations related to IPV, highlighting her trust in her faith's teachings. Underscoring her belief that religious principles actively discourage and oppose abusive behavior within intimate relationships, Umm Saqr stated, "In fact, the religious principles do not support or encourage abuse."

Subtheme 7b: Misuse of Religious Beliefs

In Subtheme 7b, participants discussed the idea that religious beliefs could be manipulated and misused for personal or cultural reasons. The participants suggested that certain individuals or groups may exploit religion to further their own goals and to justify behavior that contradicts the true teachings of their faith. Indicating the misuse of religion Badriya noted, "There are certain groups of individuals who claimed and created that to achieve their goals related to the social and cultural norms in which they believe." Badriya implied that there are individuals or groups who manipulate religious beliefs to serve their own interests, particularly related to social and cultural norms. Aisha also suggested that religion has been misused by some families, intertwined with social and cultural norms to serve their own purposes, indicating a discrepancy between the true teachings of their faith and their actions. Aisha noted, "I believe that the name of religion

has been misused and intertwined with the social and cultural norms of a select few families."

Part 2: Results Related to the First RQ

What are the lived experiences of Qatari women of coping with IPV/VAW?

Theme 8: Starting a New Life After IPV

Subtheme 8a: Positives of Starting a New Life

Subtheme 8a highlights the positive experiences and actions taken by the women who have experienced domestic violence in Qatar. Muneera expressed how she focused on her education and used her free time to learn another language. This illustrates her commitment to personal growth and self-improvement. Muneera noted, "I focused on my education...spend my free time learning another language." Umm Saleh actively pursued psychological counseling, which contributed to her contentment in her present life, emphasizing the importance of seeking professional help in healing from the trauma of domestic violence. She noted, "I actively pursued psychological counseling...contentment in my present life." Badriya's focus on administrative self-development gave her a new beginning and a sense of hope for a better future, indicating that personal development can be a source of strength and resilience. Badriya observed, "I focused on my administrative self-development...gave me a beginning for a new life." Fatema found peace and security after the absence of her troubled ex-husband from their lives. Her experience reflects how removing the perpetrator from the equation can lead to a sense of safety and well-being. Fatema noted, "The absence of my troubled ex-husband from our lives brought us peace and security." Umm Saqr shared her success in leading an

independent, stable, and secure life with her daughters, highlighting the achievement of self-sufficiency and a safe environment for her family. Umm Saqr stated, “I lead an independent, stable, and secure life with my daughters.” Umm Saleh acknowledged the crucial role her family played in supporting her. Her family's support was a significant factor in her ability to start anew after experiencing IPV. Umm Saleh noted, “My family played a crucial role in supporting me...were impacted by the threats my ex-husband had posed.” Umm Yousif's elder sister provided support and sympathy, emphasizing the importance of a strong support system in helping survivors rebuild their lives. Umm Yousif observed, “My elder sister was very supporting and sympathizing with me.” Nahid's decision to engage in water sports and contact the Wifaq Family Consulting Center reflects her commitment to saving her family from disintegration and finding alternative solutions to the challenges she faced. Nahid observed, “I started doing water sports...called Wifaq Family Consulting Center...to save my family from disintegration.” Aisha found a sense of peace, stability, and relief from tension and anxiety in her new home, underscoring the importance of a safe and supportive environment for recovery. Aisha noted, “This home granted us a sense of peace, stability, and relief from tension and anxiety.”

Subtheme 8b: Difficulties (Overcoming Emotional Trauma) of Starting a New Life

Subtheme 8b sheds light on the emotional challenges faced by survivors as they transition to a new life. Muneera pointed out that the most difficult aspect of starting a new life was overcoming the emotional trauma she had experienced. This highlights the long-lasting impact of IPV on survivors' emotional well-being. Muneera indicated, “The

most difficult thing in starting a new life is overcoming the emotional trauma that I faced.” Fatema grappled with daily self-blame for the terrible experiences her children endured at the hands of their father, showcasing the self-blame that survivors may experience even after leaving an abusive relationship. She noted, “I grapple with daily self-blame for the terrible experiences they endured at the hands of their father.” Umm Saqr mentioned that coping with the trauma she experienced due to the violent scenes witnessed from her husband was the most difficult part of her journey, indicating the lasting psychological effects of witnessing abuse. Umm Saqr observed, “The most difficult thing in starting a new life was coping with the trauma I experienced due to the violent scenes I witnessed from my husband.” For Nahid, leaving the house where she gave birth to all her children was the most challenging aspect, underscoring the emotional attachment survivors may have to their homes, despite the abusive environment. Nahid stated, “Leaving the house in which I gave birth to all my children was the most difficult part.”

Subtheme 8c: Difficulties (Concerns for Children) of Starting a New Life

Subtheme 8c explores the challenges and concerns that women face regarding their children in the process of starting a new life after experiencing IPV. Fatema expressed her constant worry about her children's situation following the divorce. This highlights the ongoing concern that survivors may have for the well-being and safety of their children. Fatema noted, “I constantly worry about their situation following the divorce. I engage in extensive psychological counseling and explore alternative solutions for them.” Umm Yousif's decision to schedule her children's visits to their father every

weekend indicates her efforts to ensure her children's continued connection with their father while also ensuring their safety and well-being. Umm Yousif observed, “Regarding my children's visits to their father, I scheduled the visits to be every weekend.”

Theme 9: Overcome Difficulties

The theme overcome difficulties reveals the multifaceted ways in which the participants overcame the difficulties they faced as victims of domestic violence, encompassing cultural and religious resources, family support, professional assistance, acceptance, and the support of their children.

Subtheme 9a: Seeking Support From Cultural and Religious Resources

In Subtheme 9a, the participants expressed their reliance on cultural and religious resources as a means to overcome the difficulties they faced. Fatema found solace in her faith, stating, “I turned to prayer, worship, and seeking solace in God. I continuously implore God for assistance in addressing challenges that are beyond my control and can only be remedied by divine intervention.” Her faith served as a source of strength and resilience. Muneera described how she sought help from a specific cultural resource, noting, “I was keen on following up with 'Wifaq Family Consulting Center,' which reduced my psychological stresses.” This cultural support center played a crucial role in her journey to recovery.

Subtheme 9b: Family Support and Acceptance

In Subtheme 9b, participants highlighted the pivotal role their families played in helping them overcome domestic violence. Umm Saleh emphasized the support of her

family, stating, “My family played an instrumental role as well. I am part of a loving and supportive family that never treated me with bias or underestimated me, especially after my divorce.” Her family's unwavering support was a cornerstone of her recovery. Umm Saqr spoke about her brothers' support, indicating, “Regarding my family, my brothers have been incredibly supportive and cooperative, providing me with excellent assistance.” Her family members played a crucial part in her healing process.

Subtheme 9c: Professional and Psychological Support

In Subtheme 9c, participants described the role of professional and psychological support in overcoming the challenges they faced due to domestic violence. Badriya discussed the importance of psychological consultants, stating, “Psychological consultants helped me a lot to overcome that hard challenge and recover my psychological health.” Professional help was essential for her recovery. Umm Yousif shared her experience, saying, “I was able to get over them by following up with a family counselor and conducting a few visits to the Hamad Medical Corporation's Psychiatry Department.” Her utilization of professional services was instrumental in her journey to healing.

Subtheme 9d: Acceptance and Closure of the Past

In Subtheme 9d, participants emphasized the significance of accepting their past and finding closure as a means to overcome their difficulties. Nahid highlighted the importance of acceptance, stating, “By accepting my present situation... We agreed that we would not speak about the painful past. We closed this file.” Acceptance and a conscious decision to move on played a crucial role in her healing process. Aisha found

empowerment in her children, saying, “The peace and contentment I see in the eyes of my children have alleviated my psychological pain and empowered me to overcome these difficulties.” Her focus on the well-being of her children facilitated her journey toward recovery.

Subtheme 9e: Support from Children

In Subtheme 9e, participants emphasized the support they received from their children as a vital source of strength. Badriya shared her experience, stating, “I talk about it with my sisters. They really supported me, listened to me a lot, and kept my personal problems safe and confidential.” Her sisters provided a confidential space for her to share her struggles. Umm Yousif highlighted the role of her children, saying, “I overcame such an ordeal with my children’s support, which gave me hope and drove me forward to have a better life.” Her children's support and hope were integral to her recovery process.

Theme 10: Coping Strategies

The theme coping strategies highlights the diverse coping strategies employed by women experiencing domestic violence in Qatar, ranging from initial shock and silence to seeking support, legal intervention, and prioritizing the safety of their children. Each participant's response reflects her unique journey towards addressing the abuse and ensuring her own well-being and that of her family. The identified strategies reflect the complexity of the participants’ experiences and the multifaceted nature of their responses to abuse.

Subtheme 10a: Shock and Silence

The experiences of the participants in this study revealed that many of them initially coped with domestic violence through a reaction of shock and silence. They were deeply unprepared for the abuse and responded with a sense of fear and speechlessness. Muneera described her initial reaction as follows: "I was not expecting... went into a stage of fear and silence." This response highlights the profound shock and fear that she experienced when confronted with the violence. Nahid also expressed her shock, stating, "I was shocked. My mind stopped working for days." Her reaction illustrates the cognitive and emotional paralysis that can result from such traumatic experiences. Aisha shared her experience, saying, "I was in shock... my initial reaction was silence." She, like the others, went through a period of silence, where words seemed inadequate to express the intensity of her emotions. Fatema, too, chose to endure in silence, stating, "I chose to endure in silence... no choice but to accept them." In her case, silence became a way to endure the abuse, even if it meant accepting it. This highlights the complexity of coping mechanisms employed by victims.

Subtheme 10b: Seeking Support and Intervention

As the shock and silence began to wane, some participants in the study turned to seeking support and intervention as a coping strategy. They recognized the need to involve their families and even authorities in addressing the abuse. Umm Saqr took the initiative, sharing, "I decided to inform my brothers... and call the police." Her actions demonstrate a proactive approach to seeking assistance from both family members and law enforcement. Aisha decided to inform her family and make the difficult choice of

separation, saying, "I made the decision to inform my family... and decided to separate." Seeking family support and taking steps toward separation were crucial coping strategies for her. Muneera explained, "I started to talk to my ex-husband, explaining that I do not accept this behavior from him, and then I started to talk to my family." In her case, communication and seeking support were the initial steps toward coping with the abuse. Badriya also chose to discuss the issue with her father and brothers, emphasizing, "I confirmed that I totally refuse this matter." Her determination to involve her family in addressing the issue highlights the importance of familial support in the coping process.

Subtheme 10c: Legal and Institutional Intervention

For some participants, coping with domestic violence involved seeking legal and institutional intervention. As they realized the gravity of the situation, they turned to relevant authorities for help. Umm Saleh reflected on her decision, saying, "Over time, as I became certain that the situation was beyond anyone's control, I decided to seek help from the relevant authorities." Her acknowledgment of the situation's severity drove her to involve legal and institutional support. Umm Saqr stressed the significance of addressing violence through law enforcement, stating, "By notifying the security authorities. Addressing violence can only be achieved through the enforcement of the law." This perspective underscores the role of legal measures in coping with domestic violence. Aisha detailed her experience, explaining, "I sought assistance from the police while he was drunk and showing behavioral violence. Subsequently, I moved to my father's home and initiated divorce proceedings after gathering the necessary evidence to

support the legal process." Her coping strategy included not only seeking immediate police assistance but also taking legal steps to secure her safety.

Subtheme 10d: Prioritizing Children's Safety

Some participants revealed that their coping strategies were closely tied to ensuring the safety of their children. When the perpetrator's behavior began to endanger their children, they took action. Nahid shared, "When he tried to abuse my children, and repeatedly hit my leg with a stick." Her response was driven by the need to protect her children from harm. Aisha expressed her concern for her daughters, saying, "When he began to abuse my daughters with hurtful words and the threat of physical abuse. I witnessed the anxiety and fear in my daughters' eyes." Her coping strategy prioritized her children's emotional and physical safety, motivating her to take action.

Theme 11: Concerns in Making the Divorce Decision

The theme concerns in making the divorce decision reflects the multifaceted nature of the concerns and emotions experienced by women in Qatar when making the difficult decision to divorce in the context of domestic violence.

Subtheme 11a: Emotional Turmoil and Difficult Decision Making

In Subtheme 11a, participants expressed the emotional turmoil and the arduous nature of the decision to divorce. Their quotes reflect the complexity of their feelings and the profound impact this decision had on their lives. Muneera shared, "The decision to divorce was very difficult for me. I never thought that my marriage would end in this tragic way." Her views underscore the emotional weight of the decision, highlighting the unexpected and tragic turn her marriage had taken. Aisha remarked, "The decision to

divorce consumed a significant amount of time... initially seemed impossible to me."

Aisha's statement emphasizes the prolonged struggle she faced in making the decision to divorce, initially feeling overwhelmed by the seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Subtheme 11b: Safety and Well-Being Concerns

Subtheme 11b illuminates the participants' concerns regarding their safety and overall well-being in the context of an abusive marriage. Their quotes underscore the

contrasting feelings of safety and danger within their marriages. Fatema noted, "We felt safe and secure, which was a stark contrast to the immense pain he had caused us."

Fatema's quote highlights the paradox of feeling safe within the marriage while enduring immense emotional pain, indicating the complexity of her situation. Umm Saleh shared, "I had been living in a social environment filled with conflicts and problems, and I had to defend myself daily. My mental health became my top priority." Umm Saleh's quote reveals her need to prioritize her mental health as a result of living in a constant state of conflict, underscoring the pivotal role her well-being played in her decision-making process.

Subtheme 11c: Social Stigma and Fear of Divorce

In Subtheme 11c, participants discussed the emotional stress related to the fear of social stigma associated with divorce. Their quotes reveal the internal struggle they faced

when contemplating the decision to divorce. Badriya stated, "It is emotionally stressful. However, I thought a lot and I chose between losing my husband or losing my health."

Badriya's quote illustrates the emotional stress tied to the decision and the difficult trade-off she had to make between her health and her marriage. Umm Yousif shared, "My

biggest fear was how to live as a divorced woman... shame in my mind." Umm Yousif's statement highlights the pervasive fear of societal judgment and the sense of shame that can accompany the decision to divorce.

Subtheme 11d: Gradual Erosion of Trust and Transformation

Subtheme 11d explores the gradual erosion of trust and the transformation of the participants' perceptions of their spouses. Their quotes emphasize the pivotal role played by these changes in their decision-making process. Umm Saqr commented, "This dramatic change in his character, without any gradual progression, shattered the trust that initially drew me to him." Umm Saqr's statement reflects the sudden and dramatic change in her spouse's behavior, which led to a loss of trust and her ultimate decision to divorce. Nahid expressed, "I was thinking of other solutions to end this crisis. But I felt that the place was no longer ours when my children were exposed to more dangerous violence." Nahid's quote underscores the impact of escalating violence on her decision to divorce and the sense that her home was no longer a safe space for her children.

Subtheme 11e: Maternal Instinct and Protection of Children

In Subtheme 11e, participants discussed the influence of maternal instincts and the need to protect their children in their decision-making process. Aisha mentioned, "My daughters became the focal point of my existence, and their protection became paramount." Aisha's quote highlights the shift of focus towards her children's safety and well-being, making their protection a top priority. Nahid reiterated, "I was convinced to make the decision to divorce when my children were exposed to more dangerous

violence." Nahid's statement reinforces the importance of protecting her children from the escalating violence as a key factor that led her to the decision to divorce.

Theme 12: Sources and Nature of Support During Divorce Process

The theme sources and nature of support during divorce process sheds light on the multifaceted sources of support and the independence exercised by women in Qatar when navigating the divorce process in the context of domestic violence.

Subtheme 12a: Family Support and Encouragement

Several participants highlighted the pivotal role of their family in providing support and encouragement as they embarked on the challenging journey of divorce. Muneera expressed her gratitude for her mother and younger sister, emphasizing their unwavering support, stating, "My mother and my younger sister were the two people who suffered the most for me. They totally supported me when I made the decision to divorce." Similarly, Fatema drew strength from her children, sharing, "My daughters and my son provided unwavering support for my choice to divorce," reflecting the vital role of her immediate family in her decision-making process. Umm Saleh acknowledged her parents' instrumental role in reducing the emotional turmoil associated with divorce, affirming, "My father and mother played a crucial role in supporting me. Their attitude helped me feel less troubled about the divorce." In the case of Badriya, while her father may have been saddened by her decision, her sisters' support was a significant source of encouragement. She remarked, "My sisters supported me a lot. Although my father was sad about my decision, he did not object." Umm Yousif recognized the supportive role played by her husband's parents, stating, "I also think that my husband's parents played a

role too, by respecting my children whenever they come to visit or stay for the weekends," indicating the broader familial network's role in her divorce journey.

Subtheme 12b: Siblings' Support

The influence of siblings, particularly brothers, in the divorce process emerged as a sub theme. Badriya revealed the challenges she faced with her brother's initial resistance, saying, "My extreme brother bothered me for a while after the divorce, for example, he did not want me to go out and connected this with the stigma of divorce." Conversely, Umm Saqr found solace in her older brother's understanding and support, sharing, "I discussed this choice with my older brother, who granted me the freedom to decide."

Subtheme 12c: Children's Support

The support of children, both sons and daughters, emerged as a prominent source of strength during the divorce process. Fatema's daughters and son played a central role in her journey, offering unwavering support. She reflected, "My daughters and my son provided unwavering support for my choice to divorce," highlighting the crucial role of her children. Nahid's sons also provided support, as she explained, "My sons also supported me to make this decision," indicating the diverse ways in which children can be a source of encouragement. Aisha's experience emphasized the complexity of children's responses to divorce, with a recognition that some male children may have struggled, while her daughters and other male children were supportive. She expressed, "While some of my male children may have struggled with this decision, my daughters and male children were supportive of my choice to divorce."

Subtheme 12d: Independence in Decision Making

Some participants highlighted their independent decision-making process, demonstrating agency and self-determination. Badriya took charge of her own decision to divorce without involving her family, asserting, "I decided to divorce by myself without sharing it with any member of my family," exemplifying the autonomy and self-reliance in her decision. Nahid similarly asserted her independence in making the decision to divorce, stating, "I made the decision to divorce on my own," highlighting the importance of self-driven decision-making in her case. Aisha's experience showcased her comprehensive exploration of alternatives, ultimately leading to her decision to divorce. She explained, "I explored all solutions with him. However, I found that there was only one viable solution left, which was separation. Thus, the decision to divorce became inevitable," underscoring the carefully considered and self-driven nature of her choice.

Theme 13: Children and Divorce Dynamics

The theme children and divorce dynamics underscores the participants' determination to shield their children from witnessing domestic violence and the subsequent positive changes in their children's well-being after divorce. The theme emphasizes the paramount importance of protecting children in situations of domestic violence and highlight the potential for positive outcomes when victims take steps to secure their children's safety and emotional health.

Subtheme 13a: Protecting Their Children From Witnessing the Violence

In Subtheme 13a, the participants emphasized the importance of shielding their children from witnessing the violence they endured in their abusive relationships. Munera

expressed the significance of this aspect, stating, "The most important thing is that they did not witness the violence I suffered." Her views underscored the critical role of safeguarding children from the traumatic experience of witnessing domestic violence. Umm Saqr echoed a similar sentiment, asserting, "My children are very young. The most important thing is that they did not witness the violence I suffered." Umm Saqr's sentiment illustrates how the age of the children played a vital role in shaping the participants' determination to protect them from the harrowing effects of domestic violence.

Subtheme 13b: Improved Well-Being for Children

In Subtheme 13b, the participants shared their experiences of how divorce led to an enhancement in their children's well-being and overall quality of life. Fatema reflected on the positive changes in her family dynamic post-divorce, noting, "We made an effort to spend as much time as possible together within the confines of our own home. It took some time for my family members to accept and adapt to the reality of my divorce." Fatema's account suggests that, despite initial challenges, the transition brought about positive changes for her and her children, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a supportive family environment. Nahid provided insights into her children's emotional well-being post-divorce, revealing, "After the divorce and settling in the new house, I saw psychological relief in my children's eyes, eating and even sleeping." Her observation highlighted the positive impact of a stable and violence-free environment on the psychological well-being of children, with improved eating and sleeping patterns serving as indicators of their enhanced emotional state.

Aisha's account further reinforced the benefits of divorce for her children, stating, "My children now live with me in a peaceful and healthy environment, free from arguments and issues." Aisha's views underscored how the absence of conflict and violence can create a more serene and nurturing atmosphere, promoting her children's physical and emotional health. Umm Yousif shared her experience of witnessing her children's stability and happiness after making the decision to divorce, affirming, "My children became stable and happy when I decided to get divorced and move to another home where safety and respect are prevailing." Umm Yousif's statement highlighted the transformative effect of a safe and respectful environment on children's emotional well-being, emphasizing the importance of protecting them from witnessing violence.

Theme 14: Government Role During Divorce

Theme 14 offers insights into the multifaceted role of the Qatari government during divorce proceedings for victims of domestic violence. The government's support and intervention, emphasis on documentation and evidence, provision of counseling and support services, and empowerment of women were prominent sub themes within the broader context of government involvement. These subthemes underscore the significance of the government's role in addressing domestic violence and providing assistance to victims during the divorce process.

Subtheme 14a: Government Support and Intervention

Women in the study recognized the positive and supportive role of the Qatari government in addressing issues related to domestic violence during divorce proceedings. Munera shared her experience, stating, "Definitely, the government played a positive

supportive role in this subject... Competent authorities of the Qatar government helped me ward off harm." Munera's views highlighted the proactive assistance she received from the government, underscoring the vital role they played in her case. Similarly, Fatema emphasized the government's significance, affirming that, "The government played a significant and supportive role in this matter... The competent authorities of the Government of Qatar indeed supported me in addressing the harm inflicted upon me." Umm Saleh reflected on the government's role in ensuring that victims' rights are protected and that their grievances are appropriately, stating, "Indeed, the government played a positive role in supporting me through the grievance complaint process... ultimately safeguarding my rights and resolving the situation."

Subtheme 14b: Documentation and Evidence

Participants in the study highlighted the importance of documentation and evidence in their divorce proceedings, with government authorities playing a crucial role in this aspect. Munera emphasized the significance of documenting her experiences, stating, "I recorded all I went through in photos and documented it with a medical certificate... There is evidence of being physically abused during my pregnancy." Munera's actions, supported by government authorities, showcased the importance of gathering evidence to substantiate claims of abuse. Aisha reinforced the necessity of official documentation in divorce proceedings, noting, "I filed for divorce with accompanying police reports and medical documents detailing the physical abuse." Umm Yousif emphasized the government's commitment to supporting victims by verifying the authenticity of their claims through the collection of evidence. She stated, "They

requested to provide evidence or reports from the relevant authorities... Indeed, the competent authorities of the Government of Qatar supported me to ward off such harm."

Subtheme 14c: Counseling and Support Services

Government authorities in Qatar were instrumental in providing victims with counseling and support services during the divorce process. Umm Saqr underscored the government's role in offering emotional and psychological support to women experiencing domestic violence, mentioning that, "They provided me with counseling services from dedicated specialists to carefully reconsider the matter of divorce." Nahid indicated the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being and safety of victims by providing the necessary counseling and support services. She noted, "After reviewing the police and medical reports as well as the pictures of signs of violence on me and on my children, they strongly and evidently supported us."

Subtheme 14d: Empowerment and Confidence

Government support in Qatar extended beyond legal and administrative assistance to empower women and boost their self-confidence. Badriya highlighted the government's role in helping victims regain their self-assurance and overcome the challenges they face post-divorce. Badriya said, "The government supported me greatly and enhanced my self-confidence... supported me and encouraged me not to be afraid of my brother's strictness after the divorce." Aisha added, "I legally safeguarded my rights and the rights of my children," emphasizing the empowerment that government intervention can bring, ensuring that women like her can protect their rights and those of their children during and after divorce.

Theme 15: Influence of Religion on Divorce

Theme 15 demonstrate the multifaceted influence of religion on the divorce decisions of women who experienced domestic violence in Qatar. Religious leaders and authorities played supportive roles, encouraged reconciliation, but ultimately respected women's autonomy and choices in the process of divorce, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the intersection of religion and domestic violence within the cultural context.

Subtheme 15a: Supportive Role

Subtheme 15a reflects the positive influence of religion on divorce decisions for the women in the study. Participants conveyed experiences where religious leaders and authorities played a supportive role in facilitating divorce proceedings in cases of domestic violence. Munera highlights the role of religious authorities in respecting her choice to divorce, especially when the cause was physical violence, stating, "They respected my decision, especially since my divorce was based on physical violence... Therefore, the divorce procedures were completed." Similarly, Fatema mentioned that religious leaders respected her determination not to return to her abusive spouse and did not hinder the divorce process, noting, "They ultimately respected my unwavering refusal to return to him... they did not impede the divorce proceedings in any way."

Subtheme 15b: Encourage Reconciliation

The sub-theme explores instances where religious authorities encouraged women to consider reconciling with their abusive partners. While there was encouragement for reconciliation, some women in the study declined these efforts. Umm Saqr illustrated the

influence of religious leaders in suggesting reconciliation, but she chose to respectfully decline the advice. She recalled, "They advised me to consider giving my ex-husband another opportunity... However, I respectfully declined their request." Nahid's refusal to reconcile, despite the encouragement from religious authorities, emphasizes that women's experiences and preferences were valued and respected, even when reconciliation was suggested. Nahid stated, "He said that he would be better than before, but I had had enough of what I experienced with him, and I did not have the desire to go back to him."

Subtheme 15c: Respect for Women's Autonomy and Choices

Subtheme 15c highlights the overall respect that women received from religious leaders in their decisions regarding divorce. Fatema emphasized that religious leaders, in general, did not support or condone abusive behaviors, which in turn facilitated the divorce process. She remarked, "In general, they do not condone abuse and domestic violence, and, therefore, they did not impede the divorce proceedings in any way." Aisha declined the suggestion of reconciliation and persisted with her pursuit of divorce reflecting the autonomy and respect accorded to women in making choices aligned with their best interests, even when such choices deviated from reconciliation advice. Aisha noted, "I cannot trust him once more. Consequently, I declined the suggestion and insisted on pursuing a divorce."

Theme 16: Life After Divorce

The theme life after divorce highlights the multifaceted support systems that women in Qatar rely on as they navigate life after divorce. Family members and

professional counseling services are crucial sources of support in helping survivors of domestic violence rebuild their lives and regain their self-esteem.

Subtheme 16a: Family as Primary Support

In Subtheme 16a, the participants highlighted the significance of their family as the primary source of support following their divorce from abusive relationships. They shared how their family members, such as parents and siblings, played a pivotal role in helping them heal and rebuild their lives. Munera expressed how her mother and sister listened to her and provided emotional relief from the pains of sadness that lingered after her divorce. She stated, "My mother and sister symbolized safety for me... they listened to me and relieved my pains of sadness." Fatema acknowledged the crucial support her daughters provided in her journey of overcoming psychological depression. She noted, "My children, and especially my daughters, played a crucial role in helping me overcome the psychological depression." Umm Saleh highlighted the support she received from her parents, particularly her mother, as a comfortable and emotionally supportive presence in her life. She shared, "My social support system includes my father, mother... She's a comfortable person and a great source of emotional support for me." Umm Yousif expressed her gratitude for her elder sister, who spared no effort in making her and her children feel comfortable during the challenging transition of divorce, stating, "My elder sister... spared no effort to make me and my children feel comfortable." Nahid shared her experience of mutual respect within her family, particularly with her children, which contributed to her regaining self-confidence. She conveyed, "My family, my children...

We greatly respect each other, and this was the reason for recovering my self-confidence."

Subtheme 16b: Psychological Support and Counseling

Participants also revealed the role of psychological support and counseling services in their post-divorce lives. They shared how seeking professional help and counseling played a significant role in their recovery process. Fatema emphasized the support she received from the psychiatry section, which played a crucial role in helping her break free from the cycle of violence and psychological distress. She stated, "Initially, the psychiatry section provided me with significant assistance in breaking free from the cycle of violence and psychological distress." Umm Saqr discussed the importance of seeking advice from competent authorities, particularly the 'Wifaq' Family Consulting Center. She highlighted her approach, saying, "Whenever I needed advice, I contacted the competent authorities only, such as 'Wifaq' Family Consulting Center." Aisha shared her experience of seeking psychological counseling through family counseling services, specifically the Wefaq Center. She described how these family consultations were instrumental in addressing her case, and she continued to rely on them for support during moments of anxiety or concerns. Aisha explained,

Given the psychological pressure I experienced, I sought psychological counseling through family counseling services...The family consultations provided by the Wefaq Center were instrumental in addressing my case... Even now, when I encounter anxiety or concerns, I reach out to them by phone to seek advice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW. To address the two RQs, I relied on qualitative research guided by phenomenological research tradition. Semistructured interviews were carried out with eight divorced women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar who had experienced IPV/VAW as adults. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and manually by listening and writing the participants' responses in a Word document. The findings that addressed the second RQ, how the victims of IPV/VAW perceive cultural influences on IPV/VAW, described the perception of women's roles and status within Qatari families, and how cultural influences shape their positions, the social and cultural norms that surround the disciplining of women in Qatar, factors that contribute to women's vulnerability to abuse within marital relationships, and the complex interplay between cultural norms, family reactions, and the legal framework in the reporting of domestic violence in Qatar. The findings also addressed the reasons why victims of IPV in Qatar chose not to report their experiences, the complex interplay of societal and economic factors that influence women's decisions to remain in abusive relationships in Qatar, and the abused women's perceptions of the compatibility of their religious beliefs with IPV.

The findings that addressed the first RQ about the lived experiences of Qatari women of coping with IPV/VAW provided insights into the experiences of starting a new life after IPV, revealed the various approaches the survivors use to overcome difficulties,

and demonstrated the coping strategies and various concerns survivors may grapple with in making the divorce decision. The results also showed how the Qatari women coped with IPV/VAW and support available during divorce process, offered insights into the impact of divorce on children and how women in Qatar strive to protect their children from witnessing domestic violence, revealed the multifaceted involvement of the Qatari government in divorce proceedings for victims of domestic violence, and showed that the influence of religion on the divorce decisions of women coping with IPV/VAW in Qatar. In this chapter, I interpret the findings , and I identify the limitations, implications, and the recommendations.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study provided various insights into the perceived cultural influences on IPV/VAW. Theme 1 addressed the perception of women's roles and status within Qatari families and how cultural influences shape their positions. The findings indicated that women are generally respected and hold significant positions within the family, emphasizing their role as educators and stabilizers of family life. However, the study findings also suggested that cultural attitudes and the dynamics of the husband-wife relationship can influence women's roles, with some women having more agency than others, which supports the views shared by Evans and Feder (2016), indicating the women's role as mothers triggers their eagerness to keep their family together. Being stabilizers of family life, women may choose to conceal abuse because of fear of what their children may be forced to undergo (Evans & Feder, 2016).

The study provided insights into the social and cultural norms that surround the disciplining of women in Qatar. Theme 2 emphasized the strong societal norms against physical and psychological abuse and the importance of preserving the honor and reputation of the wife's family. The findings also highlighted the preference for resolving issues through dialogue and guidance rather than resorting to abuse, with a focus on understanding the underlying causes. The study also showed the relationship between education and gender equality, with educated women being less likely to accept abusive behavior. The observations regarding the influence of education aligns with the conclusions made by Jahromi et al. (2016), who observed that highly educated women with a college university level of education were less likely to experience violence compared to those with lower levels of education. Ahmed et al. (2017) also noted that cases of violence were frequently reported among women with primary and secondary school levels of education compared to those with a college-level of education. Furthermore, Safadi et al. (2018) noted that women with a high level of education have less chance of being victims of IPV/VAW. This result also acknowledges the variability in family practices, illustrating that some families may condone abusive practices based on individual family cultures and upbringing, which could be linked to the culture inspired education of women to preserve the reputation of the family (Evans & Feder, 2016).

The research revealed various factors that contribute to women's vulnerability to abuse within marital relationships, focusing on cultural expectations, gender roles, family dynamics, and the potential transmission of violence across generations. Theme 3

highlighted the role of cultural expectations and traditional gender roles in exacerbating women's vulnerability to abuse. The findings support Batchelor's (2020) that Muslim culture is highly lenient of abuse in marriages, which seems to be linked to the fact that the religion acknowledges patriarchal gender roles. Importantly, the study provided novel findings that showed concerns about the transmission of violence across generations and how family dynamics and experiences can intensify women's vulnerability to abuse by their husbands.

Based on the study result, there is complex interplay between cultural norms, family reactions, and the legal framework in the reporting of domestic violence in Qatar. Theme 4 revealed varying degrees of support from the legal framework and government authorities, with some women receiving legal protection and advocacy. However, it should be noted that previous researchers have raised concerns regarding the fact that countries such as Qatar lack the required legal clarity about the penalties for perpetrators of IPV/VAW and protection for victims (AL Meezan, 2020; Evans & Feder, 2016; Novisky & Peralta, 2015; Vranda et al., 2018). The findings also emphasized the role of family reactions in either supporting or discouraging women from reporting abuse, with some families prioritizing societal reputation over their daughters' well-being. Prioritizing of societal reputation over the married women safety could be associated with Madhani et al.'s (2017) views that women move into in-laws' houses where they have to obey the husband and the in-laws. It was also evident from the outcome that cultural and social norms could discourage women from reporting abuse, including societal pressure to endure abuse and patriarchal customs that limit women's autonomy. The observations

support previous findings by Madhani et al. (2017), highlighting male-dominance as the cause of the high frequency of controlling behaviors, which has resulted in more devastating effects. Isgandarova (2017) also pointed to the patriarchal system of the family in their study in Azerbaijan as one of the perpetrators of abuse against women that is facilitated by Islam.

Based on this study, there are various reasons why victims of IPV in Qatar may choose not to report their experiences. Theme 5 revealed that the fear of shame, stigma, and social repercussions is a key factor in preventing women from reporting IPV. The reported stigma and fear of shame corroborate Evans and Feder's (2016) observation that abused women felt that by disclosing abuse by their partners, they might end up being a burden or a bother to family members and may likely disrupt the existing equilibrium bringing shame and embarrassment to the family. It also emerged from Theme 6 that the fear of societal stigma and the disintegration of the family unit is a powerful influence on women's decisions to stay in abusive relationships. It was also evident from this study that family and in-law reactions significantly impact a woman's decision to report abuse further supporting the previous reported prioritization of the family and husbands' concerns over the safety and wellbeing of married women (also see Evans & Feder, 2016; Madhani et al., 2017). Some women feared their family's punishments, which suggests that families may not be supportive or protective when reporting abuse. According to Vrandić et al. (2018), women who reported cases of abuse tended to receive punishment from the perpetrators upon returning to them. Evans and Feder also noted that women were unable to seek help while they were still in a relationship with the perpetrators.

because they would end up being abused even more. In-laws' aggressive reactions and justification of the husband's abusive behavior as a reaction to the woman's alleged misconduct create an environment where women hesitate to seek help. According to Madhani et al. (2017), the failure of women to report abuse has been attributed to their dependence on husbands for their subsistence.

The study revealed the complex interplay of societal and economic factors that influence women's decisions to remain in abusive relationships in Qatar. Theme 6 noted the lack of education and employment options leaves women vulnerable, making it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships. The highlighted role of unemployment corroborates Alquaiz et al.'s (2017) views that women who were housewives had a greater chance of being victims of IPV/VAW. Vadysinghe et al. (2018) also concluded that women who were not financially independent were more likely to face abuse from their intimate partners. Additionally, the concern for children's well-being and the fear of harm are intertwined in women's decision-making processes when facing domestic violence. The finding aligns with Evans and Feder's (2016) conclusions that abused women choose to conceal abuse because of fear of what their children may be forced to undergo following potential separation of the abusive partners.

The study also revealed the abused women's perceptions of the compatibility of their religious beliefs with IPV. Based on Theme 7, the religious beliefs do not condone or support any form of abuse or violence in intimate relationships. The study further indicated a discrepancy between the true teachings of their faith and the actions of some individuals or groups noting that religious beliefs could be manipulated and misused for

personal or cultural reasons. Batchelor (2020) also reported evidence that supported that Muslim culture is highly lenient of abuse in marriages, which, seems to be linked to the fact that the religion acknowledges patriarchal gender roles. Batchelor noted that the classic Qur'anic tafsir identified women as inferior. Isgandarova (2017) also argued that the correct position of Islam teachings is to use gender inclusivity that entails having both the husband and the wife participate in decision making. Isgandarova noted that Islam teachings when correctly interpreted protect women against violence. Islam et al. (2018) also noted that Islamic religious laws allow for mediation of the husband's and wife's conflicts with the aim of reaching reconciliation.

The study provided insights into the experiences of starting a new life after IPV. Theme 8 demonstrated that survivors are committed to personal growth and self-improvement focusing on education, seek professional help, and engage in self-development. Evans and Feder (2016) also noted that professional agencies link the women with police and other victim support agencies along with facilitating access to the required health care intervention. However, it was also reported in this study that survivors suffer long-lasting impact of IPV on their emotional well-being such as grappling with self-blame and traumatic memories, which aligns with Lövestad et al.'s (2017) observations that depression is one of the adverse psychological effects associated with VAW. Safadi et al. (2018) also reported that women subjected to IPV/VAW experience depression. Evans and Feder noted that women who shared their views regarding self-blame associated such tendencies with social isolation, which hindered their willingness to clearly identify the perpetrator's behavior as abusive. Additionally, it

was indicated that survivors have ongoing worries about their children's situation following the divorce and take active steps to ensure their children's safety and well-being.

The research revealed the various approaches the survivors use to overcome difficulties. According to Theme 9, survivors rely on faith as a source of strength and resilience, and cultural support centers play a crucial role in their recovery. It was noted that family members provide unwavering support, and siblings, in particular, offer a safe and confidential space for survivors to share their struggles. The role of psychological consultants and counselors in the recovery process was also noted to be essential for survivors to overcome challenges related to IPV. The study further highlighted the importance of the survivors accepting their past and consciously deciding to move on, which facilitates their healing process. The study also emphasized the vital role their children play in their journey toward recovery. There are various coping strategies highlighted in this study. Theme 10 recognized the need to involve their families and authorities in addressing the abuse. It was also evident that seeking legal and institutional intervention is a coping strategy used by survivors to address challenges related to IPV. The study also revealed that survivors may cope by focusing on ensuring their children's emotional and physical well-being.

The study revealed various concerns survivors may grapple with in making the divorce decision. Theme 11 showed that survivors may grapple with emotional turmoil and the challenging nature of the decision to divorce. It was noted the survivors have to navigate the contrast between feeling safe and experiencing emotional pain within their

marriages. Survivors may also need to deal with the emotional stress related to the fear of social stigma associated with divorce. The survivors also need to address the maternal instincts and the need to protect their children when making the divorce decision. The study further noted the Qatari women coping with IPV/VAW get support during divorce process from various sources. Theme 12 shows that Qatari women coping with IPV/VAW during the divorce process rely on a combination of familial support, sibling dynamics, children's support, and their own independence in making decisions. Their families provide emotional support and encouragement, highlighting the importance of familial bonds in helping them make the decision to divorce. Siblings, particularly brothers, play a role in the divorce process, although it can be both supportive and challenging. The support of children, both sons and daughters, emerges as a prominent source of strength during the divorce process.

The study offered insights into the impact of divorce on children and how women in Qatar strive to protect their children from witnessing domestic violence. Theme 13 underscores the importance of protecting children from witnessing domestic violence and the positive impact of divorce on children's well-being. It emphasizes the role of women in ensuring the safety and emotional health of their children in the context of IPV/VAW. Jouriles and McDonald (2015) also reported various adjustment problems among children from families where mothers were physically abused by their husbands. According to Jouriles and McDonald, coercive control that occurred in families with a history of IPV/VAW increased the odds of a child having externalizing behavior problems such as stealing, destruction of property and aggression. Kiesel et al. (2016) reported that U.S.

children who were exposed to IPV/VAW faced the risk of poor school performance. In addition, Boeckel et al. (2017) assessed the impact of IPV/VAW on the risk of posttraumatic disorder among children and found that the violence resulted in a higher risk of posttraumatic symptoms and strained maternal bonds.

The study findings also revealed the multifaceted involvement of the Qatari government in divorce proceedings for victims of domestic violence. Some of the highlighted roles include verifying the authenticity of the claims of abuse through the collection of evidence, offering counseling and support services during the divorce process, and helping women regain their self-assurance and protect their rights during and after divorce is highlighted. Novisky and Peralta (2015) reported that the likelihood of women reporting cases of abuse is influenced by the odds of the police carrying out mandatory arrest of the perpetrator of abuse. Madhani et al. (2017) acknowledged the need for authorities to effectively enforce the laws that protect women against abuse. Barnawi (2017) also argued that there is a need to provide primary care physician services to Saudi women and their children.

The study also showed that the divorce decisions of women coping with IPV/VAW in Qatar could be influenced by religion. Theme 15 illustrated the complex relationship between religion and divorce decisions for women in Qatar, with religious leaders and authorities playing both supportive and encouraging roles while ultimately respecting women's autonomy and choices. Batchelor (2020) also argued that recommendations given to Muslim women that encouraged women to remain veiled and confined within their homes instilled fear among women at a very young age of the

shame associated with failed marriages. Batchelor (2020) pointed to this perspective in explaining what makes women suppress anything that could damage their marriage even if it causes them pain, which leads to the abused women not taking help-seeking initiatives. Regarding the survivors' life after divorce, Theme 16 showcased the importance of family support and professional counseling services in helping women cope with the aftermath of divorce and recover from the impacts of domestic violence. Evans and Feder (2016) also noted that professional agencies facilitate the provision of safe housing and refuge for abused women, especially those who are not financially well-off.

Limitations of the Study

One of the inherent limitations in this qualitative research was the issue of transferability. However, in this study made efforts to address this limitation such as ensuring data saturation and the production of rich descriptions based on participant accounts, as outlined by Peart et al. (2019). Furthermore, purposeful criteria-specific participant selection was employed to enhance transferability. In the course of this qualitative study, several limitations were encountered, which warrant discussion. Firstly, the global COVID-19 pandemic imposed considerable restrictions on travel, thereby challenging the recruitment and data collection process. This limitation necessitated the utilization of a combination of in-person and online interviews, primarily conducted through the Zoom video conferencing platform. The instability of internet connections during these online interactions constituted a potential impediment to the quality of the

video interviews. Efforts were made to mitigate this limitation by advising participants to ensure reliable and stable internet connectivity.

Secondly, potential biases introduced by my own perspectives and preconceived notions were identified as a limitation. My pre-existing views regarding the role of Muslim culture, particularly the patriarchal system in Qatar, in promoting IPV/VAW, could have introduced bias into the data collection and analysis. To mitigate potential issues related to researcher bias, careful documentation of reflexivity processes was employed. I maintained a reflective journal, detailing all activities related to the study. This journal was subsequently reviewed by the Chair to monitor for potential biases and ensure the trustworthiness of the research outcomes. Intercoder agreement was established to enhance confirmability, and thematic findings were continuously compared to participant transcripts to maintain alignment with participant cognition and reduce the risk of bias in drawing conclusions.

Participants may have been hesitant to express criminal temptations or behaviors in detail, and assumptions were made regarding the honesty of their disclosures. These potential limitations may exist within self-report data in qualitative research. It is essential to acknowledge that generalizability is inherently limited in qualitative studies. This study was designed with a methodological focus on obtaining rich data, necessitating smaller datasets for deeper exploration. The sensitive nature of the research topic, situated in the cultural context of Qatar, led to a constraint in the form of a relatively small number of participants. This limitation inherently reduced the generalizability of the study's findings. Transferability, a concept encompassing the

applicability of research outcomes to various settings and contexts, was thereby constrained, particularly within the framework of qualitative research. To enhance transferability, I employed a strategy of thick description, encompassing comprehensive documentation of interactions with participants, participant responses, and participant behavior throughout the interviews, drawing upon the work of Willig (2019).

Recommendations

Various recommendations emerge from the findings of the research addressing the complex interplay of cultural influences on IPV/VAW in Qatar and promote a safer and more supportive environment for victims and survivors. Given that educated women were found to be less likely to accept abusive behavior, it is recommended that efforts be made to promote gender equality and provide educational opportunities for women in Qatar. Encouraging women's empowerment and education can help reduce their vulnerability to abuse. The study revealed varying degrees of support from the legal framework in Qatar. It is recommended that Qatar work on providing clear legal guidelines and penalties for perpetrators of IPV/VAW and enhance protection for victims. This includes ensuring that the legal system offers adequate support for victims of abuse and addresses the issue comprehensively.

Family reactions were shown to have a significant impact on women's decisions to report abuse. It is recommended that awareness campaigns and support services be provided to families to encourage them to prioritize the safety and well-being of their daughters over societal reputation. Educating families about the negative consequences of abuse and the importance of supporting survivors is crucial. The fear of shame and social

repercussions was a significant factor preventing women from reporting IPV. Efforts should be made to reduce societal stigma and encourage open discussions about domestic violence. This can be achieved through public awareness campaigns and educational programs that aim to change societal attitudes. Lack of employment options was identified as a factor that leaves women vulnerable to abuse. It is recommended that initiatives be implemented to support women's economic empowerment and financial independence. These initiatives may include job training programs and opportunities for women to enter the workforce. The study showed a discrepancy between the true teachings of faith and cultural interpretations. Efforts should be made to promote a more gender-inclusive and accurate interpretation of religious teachings, ensuring that they do not condone or support abuse in intimate relationships.

Survivors of IPV/VAW may suffer from long-lasting emotional and psychological impacts. It is recommended to provide comprehensive support services, including professional counseling and psychological support, for survivors to help them overcome the emotional trauma and build a new life after abuse. The study highlighted the role of the Qatari government in divorce proceedings and support for victims. It is recommended that the government continue to play a significant role in providing evidence collection, counseling, and support services to victims of domestic violence. The police should also ensure the mandatory arrest of perpetrators when required. The support of family members, siblings, and children was found to be crucial during the divorce process. It is recommended that families and communities continue to provide emotional and practical support for women coping with IPV/VAW. Encouraging open

dialogue and understanding within families can help survivors during this challenging period. Religious leaders and authorities play a role in divorce decisions. It is recommended that religious leaders encourage women's autonomy and choices, respecting their decisions while providing support and guidance in accordance with the true teachings of faith.

Implications

Positive Social Change Implications

The study's findings offer various strategies aimed at reducing IPV/VAW in Qatar that could have the potential to lead to positive social change by addressing and preventing VAW in the Qatari context. The study highlighted the role of education and gender equality in reducing the acceptance of abusive behavior. Based on the study, highly educated women are less likely to experience violence, which suggests that promoting education for women can have a positive impact on reducing IPV/VAW. The research also revealed the influence of cultural expectations and traditional gender roles in exacerbating women's vulnerability to abuse. This understanding could inform efforts to challenge and transform harmful cultural norms that perpetuate VAW. The findings demonstrated that religious beliefs, when correctly interpreted, do not condone or support abuse in intimate relationships. Therefore, there is a need to promote a more accurate and positive understanding of religious teachings to reduce the misuse of religion to justify violence.

The study highlighted the importance of family support for survivors of IPV/VAW. Efforts to foster more supportive family dynamics could be beneficial in helping

women report abuse and seek assistance when needed. The research revealed the complex interplay between the legal framework and societal attitudes in reporting domestic violence, which could inform policy changes and legal reforms aimed at providing better protection and support for victims, as well as raising awareness about existing laws. The study emphasized the need to protect children from witnessing domestic violence and the positive impact of divorce on children's well-being, which prompt initiatives to prioritize the safety and emotional health of children in situations of IPV/VAW.

The research underlined the significance of psychological consultants and counselors in the recovery process of survivors. Promoting access to professional counseling services could be crucial in helping survivors cope and recover. The study highlighted the role of cultural support centers in aiding survivors' recovery. Encouraging the establishment and support of such centers can provide essential resources for survivors. The findings suggested that women's financial independence reduces their vulnerability to abuse. Initiatives promoting gender equality and economic empowerment for women could therefore contribute to a reduction in IPV/VAW. The study provided insights into the reasons why victims of IPV in Qatar choose not to report their experiences, which include fear of shame and stigma. Efforts to raise awareness about the consequences of abuse and challenge societal attitudes could contribute to reducing the fear of reporting and promoting social change.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of the findings within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasize the complex interplay of factors at multiple environmental levels that contribute to the occurrence of IPV/VAW. The study demonstrates how factors within the microsystem, such as the individual's immediate family, in-laws, and close community, can influence the occurrence of IPV/VAW. Understanding the role of these microsystem elements is crucial for addressing and preventing VAW. The findings also offered further understanding of the mesosystem relationships showing that the quality of relationships and interactions between different microsystems can have a significant impact on IPV/VAW. Positive relationships between various microsystems can lead to better outcomes for individuals, while conflicts and strained relationships can contribute to violence. The study also highlighted the role of the exosystem, which represents the larger social system where the individual may not directly function but is influenced by external structures. In the context of IPV/VAW, factors related to community perceptions and tolerance towards violence are shown to be influential. The macrosystem, representing cultural values, customs, and norms, was demonstrated to have an impact on the occurrence of IPV/VAW. Understanding the cultural context and values that may contribute to or perpetuate violence is essential. The study indicated that elements within the chronosystem, such as the age of married women, can influence the occurrence of IPV/VAW. This dimension highlights the dynamic nature of an individual's development and the evolving risk factors over time. Recognizing the

influence of time-related factors could inform interventions and policies that are sensitive to changes in circumstances and life stages.

Practice Implications

Professionals working with victims of IPV/VAW, such as counselors, social workers, and law enforcement, should receive training to enhance their cultural competency. This training could help them better understand the cultural nuances and specificities influencing the experiences and perceptions of Qatari women facing IPV/VAW. Secondly, there is a need to develop and implement educational and awareness programs targeting Qatari women and their communities. Such programs should focus on promoting gender equality, challenging harmful cultural norms, and educating women about their rights, available resources, and the consequences of IPV/VAW.

Thirdly, the findings highlighted the need to increase the availability and accessibility of culturally sensitive counseling and support services for survivors of IPV/VAW. These services should address the psychological, emotional, and social needs of victims and provide them with safe spaces to share their experiences and seek help. The fourth is the need for advocacy efforts should be directed towards legal reforms that provide clearer penalties for perpetrators of IPV/VAW and stronger legal protections for victims. Collaboration with legal authorities and policymakers is crucial to ensure the enactment and enforcement of protective laws. The fifth is the need to implement community engagement initiatives that actively involve families, religious leaders, and local organizations in challenging harmful cultural norms and promoting gender equality.

Such initiatives can include workshops, dialogues, and awareness campaigns to facilitate norm change within the community.

Conclusion

This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of IPV/VAW. The study emphasized the significance of cultural sensitivity when providing support and services to victims of IPV/VAW in Qatar. Professionals must receive cultural competency training to understand the unique cultural factors that shape victims' experiences and perceptions. By acknowledging and respecting these cultural nuances, professionals can build trust and rapport with victims and offer more effective support. Education and awareness programs tailored to Qatari women and their communities are of paramount importance. These programs should focus on promoting gender equality, challenging harmful cultural norms, and educating women about their rights, available resources, and the consequences of IPV/VAW. By empowering women with knowledge and fostering discussions within communities, these programs can contribute to changing attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate violence. The study underscored the need for readily accessible and culturally sensitive counseling and support services for survivors of IPV/VAW. These services should address the unique psychological, emotional, and social needs of victims, providing them with safe spaces to share their experiences and seek help. Additionally, advocating for legal reforms that provide clearer penalties for perpetrators of IPV/VAW and stronger legal protections for victims is crucial. Collaboration with legal authorities and policymakers can ensure the enactment and enforcement of protective laws. Community engagement initiatives that

actively involve families, religious leaders, and local organizations are essential for challenging harmful cultural norms and promoting gender equality. Workshops, dialogues, and awareness campaigns can help facilitate norm change within the community. By engaging key stakeholders and influencers within Qatari society, a broader movement can be fostered to support victims and combat IPV/VAW.

The interpretation of the study conclusions should take into consideration the several inherent limitations including issues of transferability, potential researcher bias, hesitancy of participants to disclose sensitive information, and the small sample size due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. Despite the highlighted limitations, this research study has provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics of IPV/VAW in the Qatari context, offering practical recommendations, and highlighting its implications for positive social change, theoretical understanding, and practical interventions to reduce and prevent VAW in Qatar. It is essential that these findings guide future efforts to create a safer and more supportive environment for victims and survivors of IPV/VAW in Qatar.

Addressing the identified link between education and reduced acceptance of abusive behavior, future research can delve deeper into effective strategies to promote gender equality and enhance educational opportunities for women in Qatar. Secondly, given the significant role of societal stigma in preventing women from reporting IPV, future research could focus on developing and assessing the impact of interventions aimed at reducing societal stigma and fostering open discussions about domestic violence.

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Appendix A: Permission Letter to the IRB

I am writing to invite you to request your permission for me seek permission from the Director of the agency to post a recruitment flyer at their agency. My name is Lolwa Al-Kuwari I am a Ph.D. student at Walden University studying Forensic Psychology. The research study is titled "Lived Experiences of Domestic Violence by Women in Qatar: A Phenomenological Study of Victim's Perceptions of their Perpetrator and Cultural Context of their Abuse." The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of domestic abuse.

To carry out this study I will need the director to post recruitment flyers at the agency to facilitate participant recruitment. The posting of flyers will enable me to identify the participants were willing to take part in the study and to provide them with the informed consent and screen them before being included in the study.

The target participants for this research are women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar with experiences of domestic abuse as an adult. I will only recruit those who have stable mental health. I strongly believe that patients of domestic abuse who have sought services from you likely meet these stated criteria.

I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you

Yours sincerely,

Lolwa Al-Kuwari

Date:

Appendix B: Permission Email to Agency Gatekeepers to Post Recruitment Flyer

Dear Sir/Madam

Subject: Permission to post recruitment flyer for research participants.

I am writing to request your permission to post a recruitment flyer for research participants to invite them to participate in the research that I will conduct. Also, I am requesting that you allow me to place flyers at the common waiting rooms in your institution. My name is Lolwa Al-Kuwari. I am a Ph.D. student at Walden university studying Forensic Psychology. I am carrying out a study titled "Lived Experiences of Domestic Violence by Women in Qatar: A Phenomenological Study of Victim's Perceptions of their Perpetrator and Cultural Context of their Abuse." The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of domestic abuse. The study seeks to shed light on the abuse of women in Qatar, the influence of culture, and recommend ways in which the affected women can be supported to overcome experiences of abuse.

My study has been approved by both my faculty dissertation committee and the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB that reviews and monitors all proposed research to ensure that ethical principles are being upheld.

The target participants for this research are women above the age of 18 years living in Qatar with experiences of domestic abuse as an adult. I will only recruit those who have stable mental health. I strongly believe that patients of domestic abuse who have sought services from you likely meet these stated criteria. I wish to state that the confidentiality

and the privacy of the participants will be upheld. I will also ensure that the participants will not be harmed in any way and they will have the right to skip or discontinue their participation in the study whenever they feel uncomfortable or when they choose. I will also not disclose your identity as a gatekeeper.

I also commit to share with you the findings of this study and with the participants upon request. I look forward to your positive response.

You can reach me through the email address XXX@waldenu.edu or this telephone number XXX You can also reach my instructor/chairperson through XXX@mail.waldenu.edu or the IRB at IRB@mail.waldenu.edu.

Thank you

Yours sincerely,

Lolwa Al-Kuwari

Date:

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

A RESEARCH STUDY SEEKS QATARI WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED HUSBAND'S PAST EMOTIONAL ABUSE OR VIOLENCE AS A MARRIED ADULT.

KINDLY volunteer to take part in this study. The outcome could be used to help many women like you who have been emotionally or physically abused.

I will uphold your confidentiality and privacy and ensure that you are not harmed in any way

WHO

- A Qatari divorced woman
- Above 18 years old
- Have experienced past domestic abuse or violence by ex-husband
- Have stable mental health with no episodes of suicidal behaviour
- Have already discussed husband's abuse or violence with a professional such as a counsellor
- Have developed different social circle for support since divorcing the husband

TO DO

Complete the participation forms and audio recorded interviews in-person or via Zoom video conferencing taking a total of 2 to 3 hours

INTERESTED?

You can reach me Lolwa Al-Kuwari through this telephone number XXXX

Appendix D: Participant Eligibility Questionnaire

I am Lolwa Al-Kuwari. I am a PhD student at Walden University studying Forensic Psychology. The research study is titled "Lived Experiences of Domestic Violence by Women in Qatar: A Phenomenological Study of Victim's Perceptions of their Perpetrator and Cultural Context of their Abuse." The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of divorced Qatari women regarding their experiences of domestic abuse.

The questions posed below are meant to you check if your history and experiences are relevant to the purpose of this study and that you are a good match to answer the research questions. I will keep all the information confidential. Please note that you have the right not to answer any question that sounds uncomfortable to you.

For each of the following statements, Kindly answer YES or NO.

Are you a Qatari woman?

Are you above the age of 18 years?

Have you experienced domestic abuse as a married adult?

Do you feel you have experienced past abuse in any way from your ex-husband (this could be emotional, physical, mental or any kind of abuse that you feel you experienced)?

Upon receipt of your feedback, I will provide you with feedback concerning your eligibility. Thank you.

Lolwa Al-Kuwari

Appendix E: Questionnaire

Demographic Questions *(these will be put in a form completed by the participant prior to the interview to shorten actual interview time)*

1. How old are you?
2. What is your marital status?
3. Do you have children? How many?
4. What is your highest education level?
5. Are you currently employed? Where?

Appendix F: Semistructured Interview Questions

Part 1; Interview items related to the second research question: How do the victims of IPV/VAW perceive cultural influences on IPV/VAW? N=9 interview questions

The following questions are asked first, because they are less personal than the questions in Part 2, and they give each participant a chance to express views about their culture before they make personal disclosures.

1. According to your understanding, what is the position of women in Qatar families?
(Madhani et al., 2017)
2. How appropriate is it for a woman to question the actions of her husband?
(Isgandarova, 2017)
3. Based on your understanding, do social and cultural norms allow women to be disciplined by their husbands? If yes, kindly explain. (Lelaurain et al., 2018; Batchelor, 2020)
4. According to your views, do you think the position of women in Qatari families makes them vulnerable to abuse or violence by their husbands? If yes, kindly explain. (Madhani et al., 2017)
5. According to social and cultural norms, tell me what you think happens to women who report their husband's abuse or violence to authorities (Evans & Feder, 2016; Lelaurain et al., 2018; Batchelor, 2020)?

Prompt a: How do the authorities treat the woman?

Prompt b: How does her family treat the woman?

6. When women do not report their abusive or violent husband to authorities, what do you think their reasons are? (Islam et al., 2018)

7. When women do not report their abusive or violent husband to their family, what do you think their reasons are? (Batchelor, 2020; Isgandarova, 2017)

8. Why do think women do not leave their abusive or violent husband? (Batchelor, 2020; Isgandarova, 2017)

9. Do you think religious beliefs support abusive or violent treatment of the wives by their husbands? If yes, kindly explain. (Islam et al., 2018)

Part 2: Interview items related to the first research question: What are the lived experiences of Qatari women of coping with IPV/VAW? N=7 interview questions

Before proceeding, ask the participant how she is doing and whether she would like to take a brief break before continuing.

1. Tell me about your experiences “starting a new life” away from your abusive or violent ex-husband. (Madhani et al., 2017)

Prompt a) What about starting a new life was the easiest for you?

Prompt b) What about starting a new life has been the most difficult for you?

Prompt c) How have you been able to overcome difficulties?

2. Tell me about your experiences with coping with what has happened between you and your abusive or violent ex-husband. (Barnawi, 2017; Elghossain et al., 2019)

Prompt a) How did you first cope when your ex-husband became abusive or violent?

Prompt b) How has your coping changed over time?

3. Tell me about your experiences with making the decision that you and your abusive or violent ex-husband need to divorce. (Islam et al., 2018)

Prompt a) How long did this decision take and what kinds of feelings and thoughts did you have when you were making up your mind?

Prompt b) Who helped you and how did they help you?

Prompt c) What would you tell a woman to help her who is in the same situation you were in before you made the decision?

4. How were your children impacted by your decision to divorce your abusive or violent ex-husband? (Huang et al., 2015)
5. What role, if any, has the government played in supporting your decision to divorce your abusive or violent ex-husband? (Elghossain et al., 2019)

I will then explain that I will be asking about her “social support system.” I will explain to her that by social support system, I mean family members, friends, or professionals like counselors or doctors who have accepted her without judgment as a divorced or soon to be divorced woman and who have been quick to offer emotional support when she has been distressed. I will explain that she does not need to mention anyone by name, but refer to them as a family member or friend, or counselor.

6. Tell me about the “social support system” you have now to help you adjust to living without your ex-husband? (Alquaiz et al., 2017; Vranda et al., 2018)
7. What role, if any, have religious leaders played in your decision to divorce your abusive or violent ex-husband? (Islam et al., 2018; Batchelor, 2020)