



The Lived Experience of Iranian Mothers in the Role of Mother-in-law: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the present study was to identify the lived experiences of Iranian mothers from the role of mother-in-law.

Methods: The method of the present study was applied and qualitative descriptive phenomenology. The sample consisted of 14 mothers living in Isfahan who entered the study by convenience sampling method. Semi structured interviews were conducted, then implemented verbatim and analyzed by the Smith and Osborn's method. **Results:** In this study, The role of mother-in-law in 4 main themes including the perception of motherhood after marriage, role-playing requirements, challenges and opportunities, communication skills, 15 sub-themes including supportive and guiding motherhood, conservative motherhood, motherhood Self-sacrificing with personal limitations, desirable traits and characteristics, challenges and opportunities of relationship with spouse, challenges and opportunities of parent-child relationship, challenge of cultural beliefs, an opportunity to respond to basic needs, challenge Care and management responsibilities, emotional challenges, maintaining boundaries, expressive and instrumental investment, joining the family of spouse child, joining the in-law, acting consciously and intelligently, and were estimated 69 codes.

Conclusion: According to the research findings, the role of mother-in-law is defined by the perception of a supportive, conservative and self-sacrificing mother, who is required to have desirable characteristics and traits and use communication skills to fulfill her role. Being a mother-in-law, while creating opportunities, also brings challenges for mothers. In general, facilitating relationships and family cohesion is the common essence of Iranian mothers' experiences the role of mother-in-law.

Keywords: *Mother-in-law, Iranian Mothers, Phenomenology.*

Introduction

It is essential and imperative not only to be satisfied with external findings but also to conduct research focused on Iranian culture. Furthermore, it should explore the perspectives of mothers to identify the roles of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law so that, by extracting results in accordance with the culture of the Iranian family, a deeper and broader understanding of the status and role of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law in Iranian society can be gained. This approach allows for a more informed analysis of the relationships between them and their sons- and daughters-in-law, based on the experiences of Iranian mothers in this area. Therefore, the current study aimed to identify the lived experiences of individuals regarding the role of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law to answer the question: What is the experience of Iranian mothers concerning the role of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law?

Method

The method of the present study was applied and qualitative descriptive phenomenology. The sample consisted of 14 mothers living in Isfahan who entered the study by convenience sampling method. Semi structured interviews were conducted, then implemented verbatim and analyzed by the Smith and Osborn's method.

Results

In this study, The role of mother-in-law in 4 main themes including the perception of motherhood after marriage, role-playing requirements, challenges and opportunities, communication skills, 15 sub-themes including supportive and guiding motherhood, conservative motherhood, motherhood Self-sacrificing with personal limitations, desirable traits and characteristics, challenges and opportunities of relationship with spouse, challenges and opportunities of parent-child relationship, challenge of cultural beliefs, an opportunity to respond to basic needs, challenge Care and management responsibilities, emotional challenges, maintaining boundaries, expressive and instrumental investment, joining the family of spouse child, joining the in-law, acting consciously and intelligently, and were estimated 69 codes.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of identifying the lived experiences of mothers regarding the roles of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. Findings from the analysis of interviews revealed that it is possible to identify four main themes concerning the role-playing of Iranian mothers as mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law: perceptions of motherhood after the child's marriage, role-playing obligations, challenges and opportunities, and communication skills.

One limitation of the current research is that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted by telephone, which may have led to the loss of some non-verbal data. The sample of the current study was mothers residing in the city of Isfahan, which may differ from the experiences of mothers in the capital or in smaller and peripheral areas with different cultural and welfare facilities. Therefore, caution must be exercised in generalizing the results. Additionally, controlling for variables such as mothers' satisfaction with their child, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law, and the stability and quality of their relationships, or variables like the number of children

and sons- and daughters-in-law, which may have influenced mothers' experiences of the mother-in-law and father-in-law roles, represents another limitation of the current research. This study only examined the experiences of mothers; future research is recommended to explore the experiences of fathers regarding the roles of fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law and to consider the differences between mothers' and fathers' experiences in this regard. The results of the current study can be used in family and marriage counseling centers to enrich family relationships, especially the relationships between the spouse's family and the son-in-law and daughter-in-law.

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