

A Phenomenological Understanding of Adjustment in Remarriage: From Individual Transition to Social Acceptance After Divorce

Maryam. Faraji¹, Hossein. Keshavarz Afshar^{2*}, Asadolla. Vaisi³

¹ Department of Counseling, Sa.C., Islamic Azad University, Sanandaj, Iran

² Department of Counseling, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

³ Department of Counseling, Faculty of Psychology, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: keshavarz1979@ut.ac.ir

E d i t o r

Firouzeh Sepehrianazar
Affiliation: Professor of Psychology
Department, Urmia University, Iran
f.sepehrianazar@urmia.ac.ir

R e v i e w e r s

Reviewer 1: Seyed Ali Darbani
Assistant Professor, Department of Family Counseling, ST.C., Islamic Azad
University, Tehran, Iran
Ali.darbani@iau.ac.ir

Reviewer 2: Fahimeh Namdarpour
Department of Counseling, Kho.C., Islamic Azad University, Khomeinishahr, Iran.
Email: namdarpour@iaukhsh.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The rationale for using descriptive phenomenology requires stronger methodological justification. In the Methods section, the manuscript states that “the present study was conducted using a descriptive phenomenological approach,” and later refers to the use of epoché. However, the manuscript does not sufficiently explain why descriptive phenomenology, rather than interpretative phenomenological analysis, hermeneutic phenomenology, grounded theory, or generic qualitative inquiry, was the most appropriate design for the stated research question. The authors should explicitly connect the epistemological assumptions of descriptive phenomenology to the aim of describing the essence or invariant structure of remarital adjustment, and should clarify which phenomenological tradition informed the study, for example Husserlian descriptive phenomenology. This would strengthen methodological transparency and demonstrate congruence between the research question, design, analytic strategy, and interpretation.

The application of epoché and bracketing is currently described too generally and should be operationalized in greater detail. The manuscript notes that “the researcher applied the principle of epoché, attempting to bracket personal understandings of the

subject,” but it does not specify how this was actually implemented during recruitment, interviewing, coding, theme development, and interpretation. The authors should describe whether reflexive journaling, presupposition statements, bracketing interviews, analytic memos, or peer debriefing were used to identify and manage researcher assumptions. Because the researcher also conducted the interviews and initial analysis, reflexivity is especially important. A brief reflexivity statement describing the researcher’s professional background, prior experience with divorce/remarriage, relationship to the counseling center, and possible influence on data generation would substantially strengthen the credibility of the study.

The sampling strategy needs clearer reporting because the manuscript describes “criterion-based purposive sampling” but does not fully distinguish between recruitment criteria, screening criteria, and final inclusion criteria. The section stating that “thirty-five women voluntarily expressed willingness to participate” should be followed by a transparent participant-flow description specifying how many were excluded at each stage and for what reasons. For example, the authors should report how many failed demographic eligibility criteria, how many scored below the mean on one or more screening measures, how many declined recording, and whether any withdrew after selection. A concise participant-flow diagram or narrative similar to a qualitative recruitment flow would improve reproducibility and allow readers to evaluate possible selection bias.

The decision to include only women who scored “above the mean on all three measures” requires substantial methodological clarification. The manuscript states that “women who obtained scores above the mean on all three measures were selected for inclusion in the qualitative phase,” but it is unclear whether “the mean” refers to normative means, instrument-specific cutoffs, published population averages, or the mean of the 35 volunteers. This distinction is critical. If the sample mean was used, the criterion is inherently relative and sample-dependent; if normative thresholds were used, the manuscript should provide the exact cutoff values and supporting references. The authors should also explain the conceptual rationale for combining the Satisfaction With Life Scale, a marital satisfaction measure, and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale to define “relative adjustment,” as these instruments assess overlapping but nonidentical constructs.

The psychometric instruments used for screening should be reported with greater precision. The manuscript refers to “the Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Olson et al. (1989),” but the exact instrument version is not fully specified, and it is unclear whether the authors used the full ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, a short form, or a culturally adapted Persian version. Similarly, for the Satisfaction With Life Scale and Dyadic Adjustment Scale, the authors should provide the number of items, response format, scoring range, interpretation, and evidence of reliability and validity in Persian-speaking or Iranian populations. Even though these scales were used for screening rather than outcome analysis, adequate measurement reporting is necessary because eligibility for the qualitative sample depended directly on their scores.

The demographic characterization would be more informative if the authors reported relevant family-structure variables that are directly related to remarital adjustment. Table 1 includes age, duration of remarriage, number of children, education, employment, route of acquaintance, and economic status, but omits key variables such as duration of the first marriage, time elapsed between divorce and remarriage, whether children were from the previous or current marriage, whether children lived in the household, spouse’s previous marital history, spouse’s children, custody arrangements, and whether the remarriage created a stepfamily. Given that acceptance of children and stepfamily integration emerged as central findings, the absence of these characteristics limits contextual interpretation. At minimum, the authors should report those variables if they were collected, or acknowledge their absence as a limitation.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The data saturation procedure should be described more rigorously. The manuscript states that “after the fifteenth interview, no new information emerged,” but this is insufficient to demonstrate how saturation was assessed. The authors should clarify whether they referred to code saturation, meaning saturation, thematic saturation, or informational redundancy; who determined saturation; whether interviews were analyzed concurrently; and whether any additional interviews were conducted after the

point of apparent saturation to confirm it. Since the study reports six main themes and 21 subthemes, it would be helpful to indicate at approximately which interview no new codes or subthemes were emerging. This would make the adequacy of the final sample of 15 participants more defensible.

The interview guide should be reported in a more systematic manner. The manuscript provides examples such as “How did you cope with remarriage and the issues that followed it?” and “What factors contributed most to your adjustment after remarriage?”, but readers are not given enough information to assess the breadth, sequencing, or neutrality of the interview protocol. The authors should consider presenting the principal interview questions and representative probes in a supplementary table. They should also clarify whether the guide was pilot-tested, reviewed by qualitative experts, revised during data collection, or adapted in response to emerging findings. Some questions appear oriented toward identifying facilitators of adjustment; therefore, the authors should discuss how they minimized leading participants toward positive or resilience-focused responses.

The description of Colaizzi’s seven-step method should be strengthened by showing exactly how the analytic process moved from raw transcripts to the final six themes and 21 subthemes. The manuscript explains that “significant statements and propositions directly related to the phenomenon... were extracted” and later “grouped into fundamental themes,” but does not report the number of significant statements, formulated meanings, initial codes, or theme clusters generated. Providing an audit trail—for example, an illustrative chain from verbatim quotation to significant statement, formulated meaning, subtheme, and overarching theme—would substantially improve analytic transparency. This is especially important because Table 2 currently moves directly from categories to subcategories and open codes without demonstrating how these levels map onto Colaizzi’s terminology.

There appears to be inconsistency between the stated analytic output and the structure of Table 2. The Findings section states that “six main themes and 21 subthemes” were identified, yet Table 2 presents categories such as “Transition From Divorce to Remarriage,” “Individual Characteristics,” “Spouse Characteristics,” “Marital Skills,” “Family Level,” and “Change in Societal Attitudes Toward Divorce,” while the narrative discussion later describes five numbered themes. The authors should reconcile the exact number, names, and hierarchical levels of themes across the abstract, Findings narrative, Table 2, and Discussion. A revised table should clearly differentiate overarching themes, subthemes, and open codes, and the same terminology should be used consistently throughout the manuscript.

The demographic analysis contains numerical inconsistencies that require correction. The manuscript states that the “mean duration of remarriage was estimated at 4.7 years,” but the values listed in Table 1 appear to yield a different arithmetic mean. The authors should recalculate all descriptive statistics directly from the table and ensure consistency between the table and narrative. Similarly, the statement that “eight participants reported a moderate economic status, four reported a low economic status, and three reported a relatively favorable economic status” should be checked against the tabulated data, where the distribution appears to differ. All demographic summaries should be verified carefully because discrepancies of this kind can undermine confidence in the accuracy of the broader analysis.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.