

Meaning Reconstruction of Women Headed of Household's Quality of Life: A Qualitative Study

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Introduction

This study aims to explore different aspects of social life of women who are heading their family in Baneh, a bourder city in Kurdistan province in Iran. Women headed household are mostly divorced, widowed and abounded women who head their own family including orphan children. It also includes women how have disable husband. They are one of the most vulnerable groups of women. In a relatively traditional society, living without husband for married women is equal to struggling with different socio-economic problems. Women headed households mostly are considered as those who are poor, low or no income, no private house and finally have poor children. In Iran they are almost under protection of welfare organizations which try to empower them. In Baneh city, due of Iraq & Iran war in 1980s and increasing goods smuggling in 2000s, hundreds of men dead and consequently hundreds of women widowed. On the other hand, during last one and half decade, due to economic transformation, this city encounters different social problems which partly cause to increase divorce, men addiction and death due to car accidents which consequently led to increase the number of women headed household. Because of that in 2016 more than 2000 women in this small city headed household, i.e. 6.9% of entire women population. This research tries to study the quality of life of these women, from their own perspective, in Bane city. The main question was that how women headed households evaluate and interpret their quality of life? This article tried to reconstruct their meaning of this issue.

Material & Methods

Methodologically this research adopted qualitative approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 23 women headed household. They were selected based on chain and snowplow sampling. Theoretical saturation was the main criteria to determine the sample size of study. Based on qualitative content analysis, the authors analyzed the textual transcript data. In many steps we read the transcripts several times precisely, and then coded the transcript interviews. First step was axial coding, (coding or labeling each sentences); second, constructing sub-themes (merging the axial codes into new sub-categories), and finally emerging main themes (merging the sub-categories and emerging main categories or themes) All is done to reconstruct the meaning of quality of life from the women headed household perspective. Finally 86 axial codes and 14 sub-themes emerged. Analysis finally led to

constricting four main categories namely: gradual physical destruction, exclusion and marginalization, redefinition if femininity status, and protection to survive.

Discussion of Results & Conclusions

Findings show that women headed household due to poor economic situation gradually face to physical and mental degradation. Lack of privet home, poverty and doing hard jobs for income are the main problems these women uncouted to. All these problems bring some kind of marginalization and exclusion, in place and interaction as well as economic participations. They live in urban margins, work in low income jobs which are mostly handy jobs, and usually have limited interaction with other people and families particularly with men. Women headed household, after divorce/death of husband, should redefine their femininity situation. Their interaction is under control

from her family as well as her neighbors. So she has to limit and arrange her interactions with others, especially men. Finally women headed household are mostly under protection from welfare governmental organizations and benevolent people. What is remarkable is that these formal and informal protections or helps do not empower them. They mostly remain in that excluded, marginalized and poor situation. Guiding this protective helps to employment area definitely affect their life quality more than paying mere monthly worthless governmental or popular pensions.

Keywords: Women Headed Household, Quality of Life, Social Protection, Kurdistan, Baneh.

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