



Journal Website

**Article history:**

Received 02 February 2025

Revised 20 March 2025

Accepted 13 April 2025

Published online 25 April 2025

## International Journal of Education and Cognitive Sciences

Volume 6, Issue 3, pp 47-58



E-ISSN: 3041-8828

# Theoretical Explanation of the Decision to Separate Among Women Seeking Divorce Referred from Family Courts in Jiroft

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### Article Info

#### Article type:

Original Research

#### How to cite this article:

Majazi Dalfard, M., Vaziri, S., Fallah, M.H., Barzegar Bafrooei, K. (2024). Theoretical Explanation of the Decision to Separate Among Women Seeking Divorce Referred from Family Courts in Jiroft. *International Journal of Education and Cognitive Sciences*, 6(3), 47-58.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijecs.6.3.5>



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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aimed to theoretically explain the decision to separate among women seeking divorce referred from family courts in Jiroft.

**Methods and Materials:** The present research employed a qualitative approach using grounded theory. The study population included women seeking divorce in Jiroft, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 22 women and continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data analysis was conducted using open, axial, and selective coding.

**Findings:** The findings of the study indicated that women's decision to separate is influenced by multiple factors, which can be categorized into three main domains: relational issues, financial and economic problems, and psychological and personality difficulties. Relational issues encompassed a lack of mutual understanding, aggression, and controlling behaviors, while financial problems such as unemployment and financial disputes were also identified as significant factors. Additionally, psychological and personality disorders, infidelity, and interference from the spouse's family were influential factors. The way couples dealt with these issues was predominantly unhealthy, involving withdrawal, aggression, and neglect of each other's needs.

**Conclusion:** The results of this study suggest that women's decision to separate is shaped by multidimensional factors, necessitating special attention from social, economic, and cultural institutions. It is recommended that educational programs be implemented to enhance communication and conflict resolution skills among couples, provide financial and economic support for women at risk of divorce, reduce social stigma associated with divorce, and offer post-divorce counseling services. These measures could contribute to lowering divorce rates and improving the quality of life for divorced women.

**Keywords:** decision to separate, divorced women, grounded theory, relational issues, financial problems, consequences of divorce.



## 1. Introduction

Divorce is one of the most stressful and emotionally challenging events in an individual's life. Since divorce is a major event that disrupts the fundamental structure of society—namely, the family (Arendell, 2023)—sociologists consider it a social pathology. Divorce can be defined as the degree of willingness and interest of spouses in terminating their marital relationship through legal procedures (Mosadegh et al., 2023; Parsakia & Darbani, 2022). This concept has three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension encompasses an individual's perceptions of divorce, while the emotional dimension includes both positive and negative feelings about divorce. Finally, the behavioral dimension refers to an individual's readiness to act in favor of or against divorce. Given the recent increase in divorce rates, this phenomenon has gained more significance (Abazari & Barati Ahmadabadi, 2017).

The decision to separate results from intense internal pressure experienced by at least one spouse. This pressure may stem from unmet needs or goals, ineffective coping strategies, poor management of life events, or an inability to communicate emotions to one's spouse. To some extent, the problems leading to the decision to separate are chronic (Samin et al., 2022), such as the motivation to separate, severe conflicts, and persistent violent incidents. Occasionally, unexpected factors contribute to marital dissolution, such as the revelation of extramarital affairs or when one spouse considers separation and begins doubting their marital life. In addition to intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges, couples may also face various external stressors in their relationship, including employment, social pressures, and extended family dynamics (Balali et al., 2019; Watson, 2023).

The consequences of divorce tend to affect women more negatively. Divorced women face economic hardship, depression, reduced life satisfaction, multiple role conflicts, increased suicide risk, substance abuse, prostitution, theft, social isolation, disrupted social interactions, child custody challenges, intense emotional attachment, and deterioration in both mental and physical health (Kasim et al., 2022). Furthermore, divorce often leads to a disproportionate reduction in household income for women and a significantly higher risk of poverty. Women may also face a greater likelihood of losing homeownership and experiencing limited opportunities for remarriage (Lévy, 2022).

Additionally, their responsibilities as single parents may further hinder their economic progress. The filing of a divorce petition triggers profound emotional responses in mothers, leading to distress, uncertainty about the future, and negative emotions such as sadness, anger, hostility, suspicion, guilt, confusion, instability, rejection, and feelings of betrayal. These emotional experiences are commonly reported among individuals transitioning from marriage to divorce (Khatibi & Alikhani Pour, 2022; Syarif & Zulhamdi, 2023). Throughout their lives, women experience the stigma of divorce differently than men, primarily due to distinct gender schemas in Iranian society. Moreover, divorce laws further differentiate the divorce experience between men and women. Findings from a systematic review indicate that divorce negatively impacts human development—both as an agent and as a target of development—with particularly adverse effects on women (Trigiyatno & Sutrisno, 2022).

Although divorce is a significant event in family life, it cannot be regarded merely as a single occurrence at a specific point in time. Divorce evolves gradually within the fabric of family relationships, and when conditions for family dissolution become more conducive, spouses are compelled to separate. Consequently, the risk of divorce is always present in all families, varying in intensity, which can be assessed at any stage. By recognizing the degree of risk at different points in time, preventive measures can be taken to protect families from divorce (Afzali et al., 2019). Institutions and systems related to family affairs must first identify, prioritize, and categorize the primary reasons why women seek divorce. These organizations should focus on educating families, identifying the underlying issues that lead to divorce, and implementing preventive strategies.

Accordingly, the present study aims to theoretically explain the decision to separate among women referred from family courts. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

First research question: What are the perspectives of women seeking divorce regarding the concept of separation, and what themes emerge from their experiences?

Second research question: What factors contribute to the decision to separate?

Third research question: How do couples respond to the factors that lead to the decision to separate?

Fourth research question: What are the consequences of the decision to separate and divorce?

## 2. Methods and Materials

The present study employed the grounded theory method, a prominent approach in qualitative research that enables researchers to extract concepts and influential factors directly from the data without relying on predefined hypotheses. The primary objective at this stage was to identify the factors contributing to the decision to separate among women seeking divorce.

The statistical population of this study comprised women seeking divorce referred from family courts in Jiroft County. These women were in various stages of the divorce application process and had different experiences related to the decision to separate. This population was chosen because these women had direct experience with divorce and the factors influencing their decision to separate, providing in-depth insights into the phenomenon.

A purposive and theoretical sampling method was used in this study. This approach allowed the researcher to select individuals or cases with specific experiences or characteristics related to the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, women seeking divorce were purposefully selected based on criteria such as social and psychological conditions, reasons for the decision to separate, and stages of the divorce application process.

Data saturation was reached after 22 interviews with women seeking divorce, and further data collection was deemed unnecessary.

The primary data collection tool in this study was the semi-structured interview. This type of interview provided the researcher with the opportunity to pose predefined questions while maintaining flexibility to explore responses further through open-ended follow-up questions. The purpose of these interviews was to identify the factors influencing the decision to separate and clarify concepts related to divorce risk factors.

For data analysis, the researcher utilized the three main stages of grounded theory coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

### 3. Findings and Results

According to the observed frequency in the sample of participants, 54.6% of the participants were between 20 and 30 years old, while 45.4% were between 30 and 40 years old.

First Research Question: What Are the Perspectives of Women Seeking Divorce Regarding the Concept of the Decision to Separate, and What Themes Emerge from Their Experiences?

**Table 1**

*Open Coding Related to the First Research Question in the correct format:*

Initial Codes Derived from Interviews
When we argue, he never tries to understand me; he always assumes he is right.
Instead of standing by me during our problems, my husband always blames me, which makes me feel lonely.
My husband always acts aggressively in our interactions, and on multiple occasions, our arguments have turned physical.
His controlling behavior knows no limits; for instance, he does not even allow me to spend time with my friends.
I have felt for a long time that I am merely tolerating this relationship, with no intimacy left between us.
Whenever I express my distress, he reacts with anger instead of listening.
My husband and I do not understand each other; it feels like we are from two completely different worlds.
When I ask him to reflect on our problems, he insists there is no issue and that I am the only problem.
Sometimes, I cannot control my emotions during our conflicts, which makes everything worse.
I have tried multiple times to resolve our problems through conversation, but every discussion turns into a fight.
Our sexual life is practically non-existent; he shows no interest in this part of our relationship.
Whenever I bring up sexual issues, he acts as if they do not matter at all.
There has been no intimacy between us for a long time, not even affectionate glances.
We can never reach a mutual decision; one of us always blames the other.
When we argue, I do not understand why he becomes so angry and refuses to listen to me.
Many times, I feel like I do not even know how to act to minimize our conflicts.
My husband is constantly suspicious of me, believing that all my actions are part of a scheme against him.
We cannot even resolve the smallest everyday matters without an argument.
I feel like I am the only one who tries to solve our problems, while he makes no effort to improve things.
Our relationship is no longer the same; there are no feelings left between us.
I have endured these problems for a long time, but he refuses to change.
Many times, I have felt insulted by him, as he questions my character.
Our problems started when he stopped showing any interest in being with me.
We never learned how to manage our issues properly; our arguments always reach a dead end.
Most of the time, I feel like I am the only one making an effort in this relationship.

Whenever I bring up our issues, he says it is all normal and that I should not complain.  
Our sexual relationship has grown completely cold, and I cannot even understand why.  
I have suggested seeing a counselor multiple times, but he always refuses.  
Instead of feeling empathy when I am upset, I feel judged by him.  
I am exhausted by all the suspicion and control; he even checks my phone constantly.  
When I bring up our problems, he dismisses them as unimportant and tells me not to dwell on them.  
In our marriage, I feel like I can never be myself—I always have to hide something.  
I have tried resolving issues through conversation, but he always accuses me instead.  
I have lost hope that anything in this marriage will ever change; it feels predetermined.  
Our sexual problems have reached a point where I cannot even discuss them.  
Sometimes, I feel like he does not even want to understand me—he only thinks about himself.  
When he gets angry, he breaks whatever is within reach, which is very difficult for me.  
Sometimes, I feel like I am imprisoned in this relationship with no choices for myself.  
We never learned how to communicate our emotions; we always avoided discussing them.  
Our marriage has reached a point where we cannot even agree on the smallest matters.  
Whenever sexual topics come up, he tries to ignore them.  
We no longer laugh together like we used to; everything feels like an obligation.  
Throughout this entire time, I have felt like I have no value to him.  
Our arguments never lead to resolution; instead, they create more misunderstandings.  
I feel like he does not understand my needs at all—he only thinks about himself.  
This marriage is continuing purely out of obligation; there is no love left.  
Many times, I have left the house just to get some peace and avoid seeing him.  
He believes he must control me, even in the smallest decisions.  
We can no longer trust each other; everything has turned into suspicion and doubt.  
Our sexual relationship has become a chore rather than a mutual need.  
Whenever I ask him to change, he insists that the problem is with me, not him.  
This marriage has reached a point where I do not even know why I am still in it.  
Even our simplest conversations now end in arguments.  
I feel like he has lost all interest in me; he only thinks about himself.  
We have never been able to resolve our disagreements properly; we have always just ignored them.

As indicated in the table above, 55 recurring initial codes were derived from the interview process and open coding for the first research question.

**Table 2**

*Selective Coding Related to the First Research Question*

Subcategories	Themes	Main Categories
Lack of mutual understanding	Communication problems	Relationship issues
Absence of empathy and intimacy		
Verbal and physical aggression		
Controlling behavior and suspicion		
Emotional dysregulation	Emotional and life skills problems	Emotional issues
Weakness in decision-making and problem-solving		
Lack of self-awareness in conflict situations		
Sexual disinterest	Sexual problems	Sexual issues
Coldness in the relationship		
Dysfunction in sexual performance		

Second Research Question: What Factors Contribute to the Decision to Separate?

**Table 3***Open Coding for the Second Research Question*

Initial Codes Derived from Interviews
He has not had a stable job for a long time, and I am forced to work to cover our living expenses.
Our financial disagreements began in the early days of our marriage, and we never managed to reach an understanding.
My husband does not even provide for our basic needs, and I have to seek help from my family.
When I discovered that he was involved with another woman, all my trust in him was shattered.
His emotional infidelity deeply hurt me; he spends all his time with someone else and ignores me.
Our main issue is that my husband has personality disorders and exhibits irrational behavior daily.
He is narcissistically self-centered and only cares about his own desires, disregarding my emotions.
His unpredictable behaviors sometimes make me feel like I am living in an entirely unstable environment.
He was diagnosed with bipolar disorder but refuses to seek treatment.
From the beginning of our marriage, his family constantly interfered in our lives, and he never stopped them.
There are no boundaries between our life and his family; it is as if my opinions and rights do not exist.
Our problems worsened when I found out he was using drugs and refused to quit.
His alcohol consumption has spiraled out of control, leading to severe arguments.
Our marriage was forced upon me by my family, and I never had any interest in this life from the beginning.
We come from two completely different cultures, and these differences have always led to conflicts.
I married at a very young age without understanding the challenges of married life.
My husband's lack of income has made me bear the entire financial responsibility.
He constantly argues with me over money and never contributes to household expenses.
The main issue between us was his infidelity; once I found out about his secret affair, I could no longer trust him.
I have felt for a long time that he is involved with someone else, but I have no proof.
His behavior is completely irrational, and he starts fights over trivial matters.
His selfishness has reached the point where he only thinks about his needs and disregards me entirely.
He experiences extreme mood swings, and I never know how to handle him.
His borderline personality traits have made our life unbearable.
His mother constantly makes decisions for our life, and he never objects.
His family never allowed us to become independent and constantly interfered.
After discovering his addiction, I lost all trust in him; he promises to quit but always relapses.
His methamphetamine addiction has destroyed our lives, and he does not realize the harm he has caused to me and the children.
He has replaced his family with alcohol and no longer pays any attention to us.
Our marriage was arranged by our families, and I never had any real feelings for him.
Our cultural differences have always caused serious disagreements.
Marrying at a young age prevented me from making informed decisions.
When he lost his job, everything got worse, and he made no effort to recover.
Our financial disputes have escalated to the point where we argue over even minor purchases.
He has long focused solely on his own needs and completely neglects our family.
His infidelity was unbearable for me; I felt like I had lost everything.
Whenever a problem arises, instead of apologizing, he blames me.
His psychological disorders have turned our life into a nightmare.
His aggression and irrational behavior have destroyed all peace in our home.
His mother constantly tells me what to do, and he never speaks up for me.
His alcohol addiction has led him to neglect all responsibilities in the household.
He has refused treatment, and his behavior keeps worsening.
I could never adapt to his family's culture, which has always been a source of conflict.
Our marriage was a huge mistake; we have nothing in common.
He makes no effort to improve our life, and I am the only one struggling.
His selfishness and irresponsibility have left me hopeless about this marriage.
He only thinks about himself and never considers my needs.
His betrayal was a devastating blow to my life; I could never trust him again.
His drug use has destroyed our life, and he refuses to seek help.
When I found out about his affair, I lost all trust in him.
His personality disorders have made our life full of constant tension.
He always believes he is right and never admits his mistakes.
His mother's interference has affected our entire marriage, and he never supported me.
His methamphetamine addiction has reached the point where I can no longer endure it.
We were never compatible for marriage, but family pressure forced us to continue.



He constantly argues over trivial matters and does not care about our peace.  
His family never accepted me and always tried to humiliate me.  
His addiction led to the loss of everything we had, even our mutual respect.  
I was not ready for marriage when it happened; everything was forced upon me.  
Every time financial issues arise, he blames me while making no effort himself.  
Alcohol addiction has destroyed our family; he no longer cares about me or the children.  
Our cultural differences always lead to fights, and we can never reach a resolution.  
His infidelity was a huge shock to me; it felt like my entire life was a lie.  
His behavior is entirely unpredictable, and I can never trust him.  
His addiction has left him completely irresponsible, making me bear all the burdens.  
Marrying at a young age meant I never truly found myself in this relationship.  
He never accepts that he has problems and always blames others.  
His family's interference prevented us from ever achieving independence.

As shown in the table above, 68 recurring initial codes were derived from the interview process and open coding for the second research question.

**Table 4**

*Selective Coding Related to the Second Research Question*

Subcategories	Themes	Main Categories
Unemployment	Financial problems	Economic issues
Financial disagreements		
Failure to meet basic needs		
Extramarital affairs	Infidelity and betrayal	Marital issues
Emotional infidelity		
Narcissistic personality disorder	Psychological and personality disorders	Mental health challenges
Borderline personality disorder		
Bipolar and schizoid disorders		
Direct family interference	Problems with in-laws	Family conflicts
Lack of healthy boundaries with the family of origin		
Use of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine	Substance abuse and alcohol consumption	Addiction issues
Excessive alcohol consumption		
Forced and unwanted marriage	Unsuccessful and incompatible marriage	Marital incompatibility
Cultural differences		
Marriage at a young age		

As shown in the table above, the process of interviews, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding resulted in six main categories and fifteen subcategories for the second research question.

Third Research Question: How Do Couples Respond to the Factors Leading to the Decision to Separate?

**Table 5**

*Open Coding Related to the Third Research Question*

Initial Codes Derived from Interviews
Every time we argue, he stops talking to me for days.
Our conflicts usually end with shouting and breaking objects.
When a problem arises, instead of talking, he leaves the house and abandons me.
I feel like my needs and desires do not matter to him at all.
When there is a disagreement, instead of resolving it, he continues to be aggressive.
We have never been able to sit down and logically discuss our problems.
Every time we need to make an important decision, we disagree and cannot reach a resolution.
Even for minor issues, he shows no willingness to negotiate or cooperate.
When I am upset, he responds with anger, making things worse.
There has been no intimacy or emotional warmth between us for a long time.

He always reacts with anger and never tries to calm the situation.  
When we fight, he acts completely indifferent as if he does not care.  
Whenever a problem arises, he turns to his friends and ignores me.  
When he is upset, instead of talking to me, he drinks alcohol.  
Sometimes, after an argument, he leaves the house and does not return for the night.  
When our arguments escalate, we both try to blame each other.  
We have never found a way to solve our problems; we only engage in endless arguments.  
When there is a conflict, he shows no interest in conversation or finding a solution.  
He constantly criticizes me and never acknowledges his own mistakes.  
When we argue, he ignores all my emotions and only thinks about himself.  
Whenever I bring up an issue, he gets angry and accuses me.  
We never learned how to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation.  
When a disagreement arises, he immediately becomes angry and turns the argument into violence.  
When we have problems, he acts cold and completely indifferent.  
He always goes out with his friends instead of addressing our issues.  
When he is upset, instead of talking, he starts being aggressive and says hurtful things.  
When financial problems arise, he turns to alcohol.  
He has made no effort for a long time to get closer to me and has distanced himself.  
When a disagreement happens, instead of discussing it, he withdraws and leaves me alone.  
Sometimes, when we have problems, he spends all his time on his phone or outside the house.  
He never learned how to manage his anger and always blames me.  
Instead of working to resolve conflicts, he only expresses his frustration through retaliatory behavior.  
When an issue arises, he starts yelling and does not let me speak.  
When we argue, he constantly threatens me, saying that if I am unhappy, I can leave.  
Whenever we have a disagreement, he never listens to me and only insists on his own opinion.  
He never agrees to discuss our problems and only engages in retaliatory actions.  
When we fight, he deliberately does things to upset me even more.  
Every time we have a problem, instead of helping resolve it, he distracts himself with leisure activities.  
When I express my feelings, he ignores me and makes excuses.  
We have never been able to reach an agreement on serious marital issues.  
When we argue, he leaves the house and ignores me for days.  
When a problem arises, he immediately attacks me verbally and blames me for everything.  
When our conflicts become severe, he turns to alcohol.  
We never learned how to express our emotions with respect for one another.  
He is always indifferent to me and completely withdraws when a problem arises.  
When I express my concerns, he responds with anger and refuses to listen.

As shown in the table above, 46 recurring initial codes were derived from the interview process and open coding for the third research question.

**Table 6**

*Selective Coding Related to the Third Research Question*

Subcategories	Themes	Main Categories
Withdrawal from communication	Communication issues in conflict resolution	Relational problems
Aggression and retaliatory behavior		
Ignoring each other's needs and emotions		
Inability to resolve conflicts	Lack of conflict management skills	Conflict resolution difficulties
Lack of negotiation and joint decision-making ability		
Outbursts of anger and negative emotional reactions	Inappropriate emotional responses	Emotional issues
Emotional detachment and distancing from the spouse		
Resorting to substance use or alcohol consumption	Avoidant behaviors	Maladaptive coping strategies
External interactions and extramarital affairs		

As shown in the table above, the interview process, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding resulted in four

main categories and nine subcategories for the third research question.



#### Fourth Research Question: What Are the Consequences of the Decision to Separate and Divorce?

**Table 7**

*Open Coding Related to the Fourth Research Question*

Initial Codes Derived from Interviews
Since deciding to separate, I constantly feel anxious and stressed about my future.
One reason I decided to separate is that I believe divorce will make me feel free again and allow me to make my own decisions.
I have developed severe depression and feel like I have lost everything in my life.
After deciding to separate, I feel like I can get to know myself better and live for myself.
The psychological pressure of separation was so intense that I needed counseling.
After this decision, I lost my self-confidence and felt like my value in others' eyes had diminished.
I feel like divorce has given me the chance to rebuild my life from scratch.
My concerns about my children's future have doubled since deciding to divorce.
After deciding to separate, my relationship with my in-laws was completely severed, which made me feel lonely.
My family has distanced themselves from me since this decision, as if they are withdrawing from my life.
The final decision to separate made me feel like I lost my previous social support.
Friends and acquaintances communicate with me less, as if they are judging me.
When I decided to divorce, I realized that some people around me rejected and abandoned me.
People constantly spread rumors about me, making my social life more difficult.
The social stigma of divorce made me feel uncomfortable at gatherings and family events.
My decision to divorce led to a different perception of me at work, as if people trust me less.
After deciding to divorce, I became completely financially dependent on my family, which was very difficult for me.
I feel like my financial capacity has significantly decreased, and I struggle to provide for myself and my children.
I had to take jobs I have no interest in just to cover living expenses.
Most of my income is spent on rent and my children's needs, leaving me in financial distress.
After this decision, I had to seek financial assistance from government organizations and charities.
I feel like there is no societal support for divorced women.
After deciding to separate, even daily shopping became difficult as I constantly worry about running out of money.
Divorce forced me to move back in with my parents, which restricted my independence.
My children constantly ask me why I decided to divorce, and I do not know how to explain it to them.
The final decision to separate made me feel that I need emotional support from others more than ever, but I receive less of it.
In family gatherings, the judgmental looks and opinions of others are very distressing for me.
Some of my friends distanced themselves from me after my divorce, as if they can no longer relate to me.
After deciding to separate, my children became more dependent on me, making my responsibilities even heavier.
After deciding to divorce, I felt that society does not accept me as an independent woman.
The judgmental stares and gossip in my neighborhood made me stay home more often.
Divorce reduced my chances of remarrying because people judge me.
After deciding to divorce, I had to find a job, but due to societal perceptions, securing employment became more difficult.
I feel like divorce placed new responsibilities on me that are very challenging.
After deciding to separate, people trust me less, which has restricted my social life.
Divorce led to increased isolation for me and my children, distancing us from others.
I feel like my children have developed behavioral issues at school since the divorce.
After deciding to separate, I constantly face challenges I had never considered before, such as finding suitable housing.
Divorce made me feel like I have to rebuild my identity from scratch.
After my decision to divorce, my family trusts me less and is constantly worried about my decisions.
Divorce made me focus more on my individual skills and abilities so I can manage my life independently.

As shown in the table above, 40 recurring initial codes were derived from the interview process regarding this research question.

**Table 8**
*Selective Coding Related to the Fourth Research Question*

Subcategories	Themes	Main Categories
Anxiety, depression	Mental health issues	Individual consequences
Increased independence and sense of freedom		
Effects on child-rearing and children's well-being	Family-related consequences	Family consequences
Reduced family connections		
Change in social status, e.g., rejection by others	Social consequences	Social challenges
Social stigma associated with divorce		
Financial decline among women	Economic consequences	Financial instability
Dependence on financial support from family or institutions		

As shown in the table above, four main categories and eight subcategories were derived through open, axial, and selective coding for this research question.

**Figure 1**
*Final Model of the Study*


As illustrated in the above tables, the process of open, axial, and selective coding was conducted for the four main research questions in the qualitative phase of this study, resulting in 209 initial codes in the form of statements from interviewees, 32 subcategories, and ultimately 17 main categories. The integration process was carried out with careful consideration under the supervision of academic advisors and mentors. Based on these findings, the extracted and proposed model of this study is outlined in the next section, presenting 17 main categories.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to theoretically explain the decision to separate among women referred from family courts and used grounded theory for data analysis. The study population included women seeking divorce in Jiroft, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding. The study addressed four primary research questions: (1) What are the perspectives of women seeking divorce regarding the concept of separation, and what themes emerge from their experiences? (2) What factors contribute to the decision to separate? (3) How do couples respond to the factors leading to the decision to separate? (4) What are the consequences of the decision to separate and divorce?

In response to the first question, findings revealed that women seeking divorce primarily attributed their decision to marital communication and emotional problems. Lack of mutual understanding, aggression, controlling behavior, and suspicion were among the main factors driving women toward separation. Additionally, sexual problems and emotional detachment were identified as significant reasons. Overall, three main categories (communication problems, emotional and life skills difficulties, and sexual problems) and ten subcategories were extracted from this question.

Regarding the second question, the factors contributing to the decision to separate were highly diverse and multidimensional. Financial problems (such as unemployment and financial disputes), infidelity and betrayal (such as extramarital affairs and emotional infidelity), psychological and personality disorders (such as narcissistic and borderline personality disorders), issues with in-laws (such as direct family interference), substance abuse and alcohol consumption, and unsuccessful and incompatible marriages (such as forced marriages and cultural differences) were among the most significant factors

leading women toward divorce. In total, six main categories and fifteen subcategories were identified.

In response to the third question, the way couples dealt with the factors contributing to the decision to separate was largely unhealthy and ineffective. Common coping strategies included withdrawal from communication, aggression, neglecting each other's needs and emotions, poor conflict management skills, and avoidant behaviors (such as turning to substance use or alcohol consumption). Overall, four main categories and nine subcategories were extracted.

Regarding the fourth question, the consequences of the decision to separate and divorce were extensive and multidimensional. Women experienced psychological distress (such as anxiety and depression) but also reported feelings of increased independence and freedom. The impact of divorce on children and reduced family connections were among the most significant consequences. Additionally, women faced social stigma and rejection from others, which affected their social lives. Economic challenges were also among the major difficulties encountered by women after deciding to divorce. In total, four main categories and eight subcategories were extracted.

This study demonstrated that women's decision to separate is influenced by various factors, ranging from communication and financial issues to psychological and personality disorders. The way couples respond to these factors plays a crucial role in either intensifying or alleviating marital conflicts. The consequences of divorce for women are highly complex and require special attention from social, economic, and cultural institutions. Implementing practical solutions to reduce divorce rates and improve the quality of life for divorced women appears essential (Fadil et al., 2024).

During interviews, women seeking divorce frequently highlighted communication and emotional challenges in their marriages. Many participants cited lack of mutual understanding, aggressive behavior, controlling tendencies, and distrust as primary reasons for their decision to separate. For example, one participant stated: "Whenever we argue, my husband never tries to understand me; he always assumes he is right." This statement reflects how the inability to establish effective communication and resolve conflicts in a healthy manner was a key factor in marital distress. Additionally, some women mentioned sexual problems and emotional detachment. Another participant noted: "There is no intimacy left between us, even our sexual relationship has

completely faded.” This finding underscores the role of sexual dissatisfaction as a contributing factor to separation.

Regarding the factors leading to the decision to separate, women pointed to financial struggles, infidelity, psychological and personality disorders, and interference from in-laws. For instance, one participant stated: “My husband has not had a stable job for a long time, and I am forced to cover all living expenses by myself.” This statement illustrates how financial difficulties and failure to meet basic needs placed significant stress on women. Additionally, some women cited their husbands’ infidelity. One participant shared: “When I discovered that he was involved with someone else, I lost all trust in him.” This highlights how betrayal and the violation of marital commitment were major contributors to the decision to separate.

Regarding how couples responded to the factors leading to separation, women reported unhealthy patterns such as withdrawal, aggression, and neglecting each other's needs. One participant stated: “Every time we have a disagreement, my husband withdraws and refuses to speak to me for days.” This statement reflects the role of poor conflict management skills and lack of constructive communication as key challenges in marital relationships.

In terms of the consequences of the decision to separate and divorce, women mentioned psychological distress, reduced family connections, social rejection, and economic struggles. For instance, one participant noted: “After the divorce, I constantly feel anxious and worry about my future.” This illustrates the deep psychological impact of divorce on women. Additionally, some women cited financial difficulties. Another participant stated: “After the divorce, I had to take a job I did not like just to cover my living expenses.” This highlights how economic challenges became one of the primary struggles for divorced women.

The findings of this study align with several psychological theories. For example, family systems theory (Minuchin) emphasizes that the family, as a system, consists of interconnected subsystems, and interactions between them influence the overall well-being of the family. The results of this study showed that communication and emotional difficulties between spouses played a central role in the decision to separate. This finding aligns with family systems theory, which highlights the importance of healthy and effective interactions within the family.

Additionally, attachment theory (Bowlby) can also help explain the findings of this study. This theory emphasizes the importance of secure attachment in marital relationships

and suggests that a lack of secure attachment can lead to communication and emotional difficulties. The results of this study indicated that lack of empathy and emotional intimacy were among the primary factors contributing to the decision to separate (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2009). This finding is consistent with attachment theory, which underscores the significance of establishing secure and stable emotional bonds.

Moreover, marital conflict theory (Gottman) can also explain the findings of this study. This theory asserts that the way marital conflicts are managed significantly impacts relationship quality. The results of this study revealed that poor conflict management skills and an inability to negotiate and make joint decisions were major challenges in the marriages of the participants. This finding is in line with marital conflict theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning conflict resolution skills (Gottman, 2023).

Given the significant role of communication difficulties and conflict resolution deficits in the decision to separate, it is recommended that educational programs be designed for couples to enhance skills such as active listening, emotional expression, and anger management. These programs could help reduce marital tensions and improve relationship quality.

Additionally, given that financial problems are one of the main factors contributing to the decision to separate, it is recommended that support programs be developed for women at risk of divorce. These programs could include direct financial assistance, job training, and employment opportunities for women to alleviate economic pressures.

Furthermore, considering the social rejection and negative judgments that divorced women face, awareness-raising programs should be implemented in society to reduce stigma against divorced women. These programs could include media campaigns and community discussion sessions.

Finally, given the psychological distress experienced by women after divorce, it is recommended that specialized counseling centers be established for divorced women. These centers should provide psychotherapy, individual and group counseling, and emotional support services to help women cope with post-divorce challenges in a healthier way.

### Authors’ Contributions

This article is derived from the first author's doctoral dissertation. All authors significantly contributed to this study.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

## Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all individuals for participating and cooperating us in this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

## Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

## Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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