

Psychosocial Variables Influencing Divorce in Marriages Involving Swedish Immigrants and Native Swedes

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Received: October 26, 2022

Accepted: November 23, 2022

Online Published: November 28, 2022

doi:10.5539/ijps.v14n4p45

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v14n4p45>

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of divorced Swedish immigrants previously married to Swedish natives through the lenses of their cultural beliefs. Literature in thematic areas was reviewed. For the methodology, the grounded theory was adopted to provide the theoretical underpinning for the study, and the researcher used a qualitative research approach with a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify and recruit the participants. The research was conducted in three Swedish cities: Lund, Malmö, and Karlstad. The participants consisted of ten different immigrant men and women. The ages of participants ranged from 26 to 58 years. The participants were limited to immigrants who were married to Swedish natives but are now divorced. They were married for more than 2 years and divorced for more than 5 years. The result revealed that attitude change, communication, abuse, controlling behavior, 'studying each other,' cultural acceptance, accommodating each other, and traumatic experiences are associated with the high divorce rates in marriages between Swedish immigrants and native Swedes, as opposed to the comparatively lower divorce rates found in marriages between Swedish-born citizens. It can be challenging when immigrants and native Swedes who are married hold on to their cultural norms and beliefs. The findings will help enlighten would-be spouses on the need to familiarize themselves with the cultural values of their would-be partners before they get into marriage and adds insight into the pattern of divorce commonly experienced among immigrants in Sweden.

Keywords: Perception, marriage, divorce, immigrants Swedish, cultural beliefs

1. Introduction

The first legal divorce was filed in 1643 in the American colonies on behalf of Anne Clarke of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In the Quarter courts of Boston, Massachusetts., The divorce was granted on the grounds of absence and adultery by her husband Danie Clarke. Three children were caught in the divorce problem (History.com Editors, 2020). Since then, divorce has become a common feature in many countries. In Sweden, divorce is quite high, compared to other Western countries like Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (Andersson, Obucina, & Scott, 2015). Sweden is a country where legislation known as "no-fault grounds for divorce", which came into force as far back as 1915, allows divorce if one of the partners desires it even without justification (Andersson, Obucina, & Scott, 2015, p. 33). Thus, Swedish society's approach to divorce is in contrast with what is obtainable in most countries, in that their culture and institutions are more tolerant of divorce and cohabitation than most Western countries.

This perspective of marriage often involves parents determining what they want their children to become in terms of profession, approving whom their children want to marry, and a husband dictating what the wife must do. In terms of rights, women are subordinate to men and do not contest equal rights with men (Furtado, Marcén, & Sevilla, 2013). From this perspective, there is a good reason to associate matrimonial marriage with the Scriptural view of marriage.

1.1 Divorce and Spiritual Well-being

Divorce has far-reaching negative impacts on society, family, personal and spiritual well-being. But for a gender-equal society like Sweden, couples are allowed to negotiate and end their marital relationships, as

business partners may terminate their contract agreement. Given the idea that the dissolution of holy matrimony is unscriptural (Genesis 2:24 says: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”), it becomes necessary that the coming together of a man and a woman from different cultural backgrounds, whose views of marriage are either based on contract or matrimony demands learning and understanding of each party’s social, cultural as well as religious backgrounds before their union in marriage. Sadly, immigrants and their descendants in Sweden, some of whom come from backgrounds where marriage is viewed from the traditional, matrimonial, and scriptural perspectives, have become exposed to the culture, norms, and values relating to marriage among Swedes. Many have even become caught up in the culture of divorce that prevails in Sweden, resulting in the increased risk of divorce.

1.1.1 Divorce in Sweden after Industrialization

The culture of divorce in Sweden changed significantly after industrialization. In the 17th century, divorce in Sweden was based on Christian principles, and it was approved only when adultery or abandonment took place. Most couples in the 19th century constructed stories of abandonment to get a divorce (Moore, 2013). For instance, a partner would travel to another country, at which point the other partner would file for divorce on the grounds of abandonment, and the divorce was approved when the partner in another country was contacted, and it is confirmed that abandonment had occurred. In the 20th century, Sweden endorsed a law that allowed couples to obtain a no-fault divorce, but only when both partners wanted it (Moore, 2013). In Sweden, the divorce law was followed by the doctrine of the Lutheran State Church from 1915 and 1934, which allowed divorce only on grounds of adultery or abandonment.

2. Statement of the Problem

Sweden has different Immigrant groups. Sweden is home to Polish, Czechoslovakian, and Iranian Immigrants, as well as immigrants from Greece, Turkey, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Vietnam, and Chile. There are immigrants from the U.S, China, Uganda, Nigeria, Congo, and other nationalities not stated here (Obućina, 2015). Recent studies indicate that there is a higher rate of divorce among the immigrant population than the native Swedes. Although there is extensive research focusing on establishing the impact of divorce on the Swedish social benefits, employment, and integration; as well as on estimating the factors that facilitate immigrant marriages and divorce in Sweden (Andersson, Obućina, & Scott, 2015; Obućina, 2015). There is minimal research on factors that drive divorce among Swedish immigrants and their perceptions on marriage and divorce in relation to their cultural beliefs and behavior. Previous studies have also directed less attention towards exploring the issue of divorce as it affects immigrants’ wellbeing. As such, there is a need to draw attention to these blind spots-unobservable factors that can likely affect the understanding of immigrants’ challenges when divorce happens. Therefore, the need to explore how Swedish immigrants describe their perception of divorce in terms of their cultural beliefs, and how they relate to their divorce experiences provided the impetus for this study.

3. Purpose of the Study

As is the case with other countries, Swedish immigrants migrated from different countries, each of which has different cultural norms and beliefs. Some of these Swedish immigrants view divorce as a serious issue owing to their cultural beliefs and family dynamics that do not permit divorce. On the other hand, native Swedes have a liberal view of divorce. Unfortunately, when native Swedes are married to Swedish immigrants, the divorce process and experience can come as cultural shocks for the immigrants. Therefore, the impetus for this study is the need to explore how Swedish immigrants who have had a divorce experience perceive the entire process given the differences they have in their cultures. Previous studies have revealed that there is a relationship between marriage, migration, and the risk of divorce, due to the conflict of values, principles, norms, and beliefs that immigrants embraced in their countries of origin and those of their host countries (Andersson, Obućina, & Scott, 2015; Obućina, 2015; Dribe, & Lundh, 2008).

4. Literature Review

Statistics Sweden (2017) reports that the average marriage in Sweden ended in divorce after eleven years, while Andersson, Obućina, and Scott (2015) noted that many divorces happen after four to five years after marriage. Since the year 2000 the divorce rate has also been on the increase, rising from 4.5% to 5.4% in 2013, with the year 2013 alone recording a total of 26,933 marriages that ended in divorce. Andersson, Obućina, and Scott (2015) observed that in Sweden, as marriages have become common, so has the divorce rate increased. Divorce cases have increased dramatically among immigrants and natives in Sweden (Statista, 2021).

4.1 Swedish Cultural Norms and Marriage

Divorce is a life-changing decision that includes various means of focusing on the challenges that lead to divorce before the last legal conclusion (Tanaka, 2010). Semuels (2018) reveals that there are different types of family and marriage systems in Sweden, stating that divorce can be an opportunity in Sweden. Also, Liberal gender dynamics can cause immigrant women to leave their husbands and to be independent. Besides, most immigrants find it hard to adapt to gender norms in Sweden which may contribute to the high divorce rate in Sweden among immigrants who are from traditionally patriarchal countries, compared to native-born Swedes whereas other immigrants from countries where gender norms are related to those in Sweden have lower chances of getting divorced. For instance, seventy percent of sub-Saharan immigrants living in Sweden had divorced within 15 years of marriage, yet in their traditional patriarchal countries, divorce is not accepted. Several studies about divorce issues have been carried out in Sweden. (Semuels, 2018)

4.1.1 Concept of Marriage

Wilcox and Dew (2019) state that divorce is built on the concept that marriage is a social institution. Some cultural beliefs and norms see marriage as a long-time commitment, involving the care of children with a man being the head of the family. Once the wife or husband violates these beliefs and norms, the offended partner tends to leave due to a lack of support and feeling of unhappiness because of the violations (Sayer, England, Allison & Kangas, 2011). In most African cultures, marriage is considered a lifetime commitment, and divorce is not considered a choice because, considering the consequences of the aftermath, family members will address the conflict (Arugu, 2014). Also, divorce is seen as a sin against God, nature, and society. Divorce can only be allowed if there is adultery. Yet, family members will still encourage the couple to forgive each other and stay together (Arugu, 2014). The high divorce rate has changed the family dynamics in society and has affected many people (Bergvall, 2018).

4.1.2 Cultural Differences and Marriage

Nevertheless, the impact of the issues is not related to couple adaptation to one another, but the problem is cultural differences, especially in a mixed marriage (Stephan & Stephan as cited in Kibbler & Shienew, 2002; Wong, 2009). In some cases, most mixed marriage couples experience a more significant effect because of the cultural difference. According to Sverige's Radio (2017), marriages between native Swedes and immigrants are more likely to end in divorce compared to marriages between two Swedes because the former requires much more work than the latter. Dribe and Lundh (2011) agree with this view in stating that marriages between a Swede and an immigrant can break up compared to marriages between two Swedes. This probability of a break-up is due to the cultural difference between Sweden and the immigrants' country of origin (Dribe and Lindh, 2011). They argue that the cultural gap is more likely to be wider when immigrants marry Swedes than when they marry non-Swedes.

4.1.3 Understanding Cultural Differences

Dribe and Lundh (2011) also explained that most people from Scandinavian countries, the UK, and France have better chances of successfully marrying native Swedes without divorce. However, immigrants from English-speaking countries like the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are likely to have more difficulties when they marry native Swedes. Sverige's Radio (2017) revealed in the interview conducted by Candace Crenshaw, a Stockholm-based New Yorker, who separated from her Swedish husband that Swede's level of English makes it easy to ignore the cultural difficulties. Candace explains that issues rooted in cultural norms can nevertheless not be ignored. She pointed out that when a person has a relationship or marriage with a native Swede, one may think that it will be easy since most native Swedes understand and speak English. She adds that deeply rooted cultural norms cannot be ignored. Immigrants need to understand the importance of these differences in cultural norms and values.

5. Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework of this study is guided by the existing concept of social integration that emerged in this research. Theoretical presuppositions associated with the concept are Essers's (2001) four basic types of social integration namely: acculturation, placement, interaction, and identification. Whereas acculturation is the dimension of knowledge and the language used by immigrants and natives. interaction is the communication between immigrants and natives, while identification has to do with the identification of the values and norms of immigrants and natives, placement relates to the rights and position of immigrants and natives in their marriage relationship (Esser, 2001). The presuppositions are based on the idea that social integration is the inclusion of immigrants in a host society's institutions and relationships and will be identified by comparing and contrasting

the pattern that emerges during the coding in this research, as compared to concepts described in the literature review.

6. Methodology

6.1 Description of Sample

The study was conducted in three major cities in Sweden. The cities are Karlstad, Lund, and Malmo. The qualitative, grounded theory approach which, according to Charmaz (2010), is based on systematic but flexible rules for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to create theories grounded in the qualitative data, was used in this study. To provide valuable information on the perception of divorced immigrants who were previously married to Swedish-born citizens but are presently divorced.

6.1.1 Approval and Recruitment

The Southern California Seminary approved the IRB form on 06/01/2021. This allowed the researcher to send out the informed consent for the interview. Formal introduction letters were sent to participants through e-mails to introduce the research and gather participant interest. Various means of communication such as phone calls and e-mail were used to contact participants.

6.1.2 Description of Protocol

In this study, the qualitative research approach was used to examine immigrants' perceptions of divorce. This approach gave the researcher more understanding of the research phenomenon. The protocol for qualitative research is discussed in this section. Erickson (2011) states that qualitative studies give information regarding how individuals experience specific dilemmas, especially as it has to do with social norms, socioeconomic issues, gender role, ethnicity, and religion. This facilitates the understanding of the complex reality of the situation.

6.2 Research Design

The researcher engaged the grounded theory approach which was developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1960. This study adopted the Grounded theory approach discussed by Kathy Charmaz. She noted that the grounded theory approaches are based on systematic but flexible rules for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to create theories grounded in the qualitative data. The adoption of the grounded theory in this study provides valuable information on the learned experiences of the divorced immigrants, while the utilization of qualitative research design provides fuller access to the participants' social experiences. In the study, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was conducted to facilitate the understanding of immigrants' perceptions of marriage and divorce and interviews were conducted with ten different immigrants who were previously married to native-born Swedes and are now divorced.

6.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Participants for the study were carefully selected through the purposive and snowball sampling methods. Before the interviews, the researcher sent out the interview procedures to the participants in English and Swedish for consent and booked dates for the interviews. Before the interviews, there was an explanation of the purpose of the study to participants and they were assured that their identity would be completely anonymous, and their responses kept strictly confidential. Participants consist of immigrants between 26 to 58 years and were married for a period of 2 to 10 years. Their ethnic backgrounds were Nigeria, China, Zambia, Ethiopia, Mexico, South Africa, Egypt, and Iran. The instruments used for data collection were audio recording of the face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, and note-taking. Each interview session was 60 minutes. The interview was transcribed within 30 days and the coding was carried out.

6.4 Qualitative Rigor

According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011), rigor in qualitative research creates trust in the research findings. It lets the researcher establish consistency in the methods used. It also provides a correct explanation of the people studied. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) state that trustworthiness is the researcher's ability to convince the reader that the data and findings of the research are accurate descriptions of the individuals and the situations studied. Furthermore, Creswell (2007) observes that researchers use the validity and reliability of the term to certify qualitative rigor. According to Conable (2015), qualitative researchers usually do not subscribe to or use the term validity. Rather, qualitative researchers invoke the term credibility, which implies that the information provided concerning the fieldwork is transparent and accurate. Since this is a qualitative study, validity was assessed in terms of trustworthiness. The research provided accurate information regarding data and sources of data.

6.5 Credibility

Credibility lets others acknowledge the experiences included in the research through the explanation of participants' experiences. To prove credibility, a researcher must review individual transcripts, looking out for similarities among all participants. Approaches used to establish credibility include peer debriefing, time spent with participants, and participants' words used in the report (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In this research, credibility was established by peer debriefing, the time spent with the participant, and the use of participants' words.

6.6 Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability is the ability of researchers to transfer research findings from one group to another. This is equivalent to external validity. So, creating transferability is to provide explanations regarding the people studied by explaining the demographics and geographic boundaries of the research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The main idea is to enable the reader to choose how well the study can be transferable for related processes in their setting. In this research, a description of the participants' experiences with detailed data regarding the situation was described to enhance the possibility of transferability.

6.7 Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Due to the sensitivity of the subject of the study and the questions involved, the researcher maintained an anonymous status for each of the participants. To create this anonymous status, the researcher did not reveal the real names of the participants. This is in line with the position of the American Psychological Association (2020) that the main guiding principles of research are respecting human participants, autonomy, justice, and beneficence.

7. Results

Based on the grounded theory model, one may surmise that Cultural beliefs and behaviors are functional contributors to divorces among Swedish immigrants to natives as indicated in the data analysis. This study aimed at exploring the experiences and the perceptions of divorced immigrants who were formerly married to Swedish-born citizens about divorce. Interviews were conducted with ten participants, and from the transcripts of the interviews, eight categories and other minor codes emerged. The assumption builds on Esser's basic types of social integration namely. The tables below demonstrate the alignments between the components of Esser's social integration framework and the outcomes of the research question.

The participants were 5 women and 5 men. The symbol K is used to represent the women and J is used for the men as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Demographic Information of the 5 Female Immigrant's Participant

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5
Age	58	34	45	26	40
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Ethnicity	Africa	Asian	Africa	South America	Africa
Education	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Graduate	Undergraduate	Graduate

Table 2. The Demographic Information of the 5 Male Immigrant's Participant

	J1	J2	J3	J4	J5
Age	45	37	50	47	44
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Ethnicity	Africa	Africa	Africa	Africa	Africa
Education	Undergraduate	Graduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Graduate

Table 3. The Demographic Information of the 5 Female Immigrant's Participant

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5
Married (years)	5	4	4	5	5
Divorced (years)	12	8	9	5	8
Children	0	2	0	0	2

Table 4 The Demographic Information of the 5 Male Immigrant's Participant

	J1	J2	J3	J4	J5
Married (years)	15	3	16	4	5
Divorced (years)	5	3	6	5	5
Children	3	0	2	1	1

7.1 Emergent Categories

Eight conceptual categories were constructed from the data relative to the issue of interest in this study. These are attitude change, communication issues, abuse, controlling behavior, studying each other, cultural acceptance, accommodating each other, and traumatic experiences. This discussion will serve to ground the categories constructed from the data, which are: attitude change, communication, abuse, controlling behavior, studying each other, cultural acceptance, accommodating each other, and traumatic experiences.

7.2 Category 1: Attitude Change

The first category, which is attitude change, emerged from participants' description of what they perceived to be attitude change in their spouses:

What was your relationship while you were married?

K1 stated: "His attitude changed when he started coming up with different strategies towards our marriage by checking my phone to know who is calling, checking my email, and forcing me to stop my job."

K2 said: "Things started to change when my husband changed his attitude by blaming me for having children and making it difficult for him to go out with his friends."

J1 According to this participant, "Things became complicated. My wife's attitude changed in that I felt my wife began to control me."

J2 His response was "My wife's attitude changed as I started seeing restrictions and power control."

7.2.1 Category 2: Communication Issues

The category "communication issues" emerged from participants' experiences of communication problems in their marriages as their statements indicate below.

What led up to your divorce? If you could recall, how did it happen?

K1 stated: "Our communication was very poor during our marriage. He was taking decision alone without involving me. He wanted me to quit my job and sell my property, but it is against my cultural belief to sell my personal property because the property is passed from one generation to another in my culture."

K2 stated that "We started having communication issues. In the beginning, we had good communication but after we had children, he started throwing hurting words on me like: it is because of you I can no longer go out with my friends."

J1 said: "Initially; we were communicating more, but things started changing as we started having arguments over little things, and also communicating less with each other. Also, we began to experience irritation towards each other."

J2 "When I met my wife, our communication was excellent. After we got married, our communication changed. She started to question anything I did, and I questioned my manhood as she degraded my dignity as a man. It was not proper because I never had the freedom to do what I wanted to do anymore."

7.2.2 Category 3: Abuse

The category “Abuse” illustrates the experiences of the participants while they were married as seen in their responses below:

What led up to your divorce? If you could recall, how did it happen?

K1 “My ex-husband emotionally and verbally abused. He invaded my private space like my email, phone calls and messages. He wanted me to do catering instead of cleaning, and he used to say that I am a useless woman. I worked as a cleaner in a cleaning company. However, he wanted me to quit and sell my property in Africa to protect our marriage. It was a challenging decision for me. He then decided to get a divorce because I did not agree to quit my cleaning job and sell my house in Africa.”

K4 stated “I was physically, sexually, and verbally abused by my husband on a day-to-day basis. He forced me to have sex with him, even though I did not want to have sex. He choked, hit, kicked and pushed me. He also and verbally abused me by name-calling, threatening, intimidating, and isolating me from friends and family.”

J5: mentioned “I faced emotional abuse where every time I came back home from school, my wife would start checking my trouser, school bag and phone to know whom I had been in contact with or talked to in school and she accused me of flirting and cheating on her.”

7.2.3 Category 4: Controlling Behavior

The participants' reactions to the category “controlling behavior” as shown below were mainly with negative emotions, devastation, and despair which were what they experienced in their marriage. Every participant interviewed for this study expressed loss of hope and loss of their identity as individuals.

What led up to your divorce? If you could recall, how did it happen?

K1 According to this participant “My husband has a controlling personality. He wanted to control everything I did. He was constantly checking my phone, and email, and he tried to manipulate me to sell my house in Zambia.”

K2 stated “My husband is very controlling man and he always used controlling methods to belittle and blame me in front of the children. I experienced trauma before and after marriage. I am not even sure I will get married again because I am happy to be alone with my kids”

J2 said “There was power control as I could not call my family as I wanted and nor went out with friends or classmates. My wife was overprotective and questioned everything I was doing. For example, if I speak with my family on the phone with my native language, she would want to know everything I said. That bothered me as an African man. My wife acted like a boss instead of a wife and made me question my manhood being that she degraded my dignity as a man.”

J3 “My wife is so full of herself, had control behavior and believes that Swedish culture is better than my culture.”

7.2.4 Category 5: Cultural Acceptance

Category 5, which is cultural acceptance depicts the participants' cultural acceptance experiences while they were married. They indicated that they had problems with issues relating to cultural acceptance in their marriage. They mentioned that most couples in Sweden face several difficulties with cultural acceptance. The way couples should deal with these problems is to accept the way they live, and if they keep being biased and want to have their way in everything, they will have conflicts. But if they are open to accepting each other unique culture, then marriage between immigrants and native Swedes will not experience so many conflicts and divorce.

What were major challenges experienced in their marriages relative to their cultural?

K1 stated “my ex-husband never accepted my culture. For example, concerning my language and food, he never wanted to learn my language and eat my native, but wanted to know more about Swedish food and language. We only cooked Swedish food in the house when we married and never my native food. He always had a false belief about my culture. He wanted me to assimilate into Swedish culture; that is why he wanted me to sell my house back home.”

K3 “My ex-husband and his family neither accepted nor saw me as a human being. They did not accept my cultural values either. That is why he always saw me as a monkey living in a tree in Africa. He had a wrong perception and belief about immigrant people. He saw them as poor people, on whom the Swedish government is spending money to help. That is one of the reasons he sees me as a monkey living in the tree. He feels that if

they are not poor, then they would not come to Sweden. He has the wrong mindset toward my culture. We would have a more beautiful marital life together if he appreciated me with all my cultural practices.”

J1 stated: “I believe my wife wanted me to assimilate into Swedish culture totally without considering my race as an African man and without considering our children too. She wanted me to lose my identity and roots. Instead of her to allow me and our children to experience Swedish culture and still keep the unique cultural markers of South Africa such as language, food, and other customs. My children never spoke the language nor traveled to South Africa. Each time I discussed the issue with my wife, she gets mad.”

J2 mentioned “Accepting each other culture with respect rather than one partner thinking their culture is superior to their spouse's culture was our major problem. My wife always thought that her culture is better than and superior to my culture.”

Marriage to native Swedes can be complicated for most immigrants due to differences in norms and beliefs. Marriages between native Swedes and immigrants are likely to end in divorce due to cultural gaps compared to marriages between Swedes. Mixed marriages become challenging when each of the parties in the marriage holds on to their cultural norms and beliefs. If the couples involved have children, it may sometimes have an effect on the children's upbringing and influence their identity with time (Sverige's Radio, 2017; Dribe & Lundh, 2011). From the data presented above, it is evident that the participants experienced issues with cultural acceptance in their marriage.

7.2.5 Category 6: Studying Each Other

The category “studying each other” emerged as participants expressed their experiences on issues relating to couples having to learn about one another in marriage. Participants in the study suggested that it is important for couples to keep learning something new about each other, to help them overcome some problems. They observed that for a couple to maintain a healthy mixed marriage, they need to study each other, to know more about each other's values, religion, and cultures before getting married. Participants noted that if couples understand the values of their partners, then they can deal with conflicts effectively.

What would you do differently if you could do it a second time?

K1 explained “If I have to re-marry, I will need to study the person because I did not study my ex-husband. I was carried away by my emotions because the secret to maintain a healthy mixed relationship is to study each other very well. One should learn about the values, religion, and cultures before establishing the relationship.”

K3 responded “Couples need to study each other. Practicing cohabitation, understanding and respecting each other cultural norms, values, and beliefs before marriage is important. I did not study my husband before I got married to him. I believe this is the right approach to bring cultural integration into marriage.”

J1 “If I have to marry the second time, I will have to study the person before I marry her because I did not take time to study my ex-wife.”

J2 “If I must do it again the second time, I will study the person and learn about her values, religion, and cultures before establishing any relationship. I did not take enough time to study my ex-wife.”

In all, the participants in the study had a feeling of guilt and regretted that they did not study each other before they got married. This finding is consistent with studies by Obucina (2014), Semuels (2018), and Andersson, Obucina, and Scott (2015) in which they found that immigrants who came to Sweden married may have higher divorce risks than immigrants whose marriages were established in Sweden. Most immigrants find it easy to adjust to Sweden's gender norms, others do not. This can cause a high divorce rate in Sweden among immigrants, especially those from patriarchal countries, compared to native-born Swedes.

7.2.6 Category 7: Accommodating Each Other

Participants revealed that their partners did not accommodate them. They reported further that couples should accommodate each other because if they have different views on the same issues and cannot accommodate each other's uniqueness, then there is bound to be problems. Also, they agreed that couples must give up their stereotypes and appreciate each other's differences to have a healthy marriage, have fun and be adventurous if they accommodate each other. Their responses provide further insights into their views regarding the issue of accommodating each other.

What do you think is a valuable way to solve the high divorce rate between immigrant and native Swedish?

K3 “My husband did not accommodate my needs. It was a goal that I expected may bring something we desire. For example, suppose one couple wants comfort, and another wants excitement, accommodation becomes necessary, because climbing a mountain carrying a mattress with feather pillows on one back is difficult.”

K4 “My husband did not accommodate my need; he was a selfish man and was concerned only about meeting his needs and not my own need as well. I believe a couple should accommodate each other’s needs.”

J2 “My wife acted like a boss instead of a wife, and she was not ready to accommodate my needs and wants.”

J4 “My wife was more interested in satisfying and accommodating her sexual needs than her marriage, which is why she had sex with another man.”

Andersson and Scott (2010) believe that migration can increase divorce by creating room for couples not to accommodate each other. Post-migration changes in a family's power relations are the major cause of family instability for most immigrant couples in Sweden because it makes couples not to accommodate each other (Darvishpour, 2002). Candace Crenshaw, a Stockholm-based New Yorker who has divorced her Swedish husband, stated that there are problems rooted in cultural norms that cannot be ignored. She concluded that, immigrants need to understand the importance of these differences in cultural norms and values (Radio Sverige, 2017).

7.2.7 Category 8: Traumatic Experiences

Participants reported that they experienced trauma in their marriage, thus drawing attention to the eight categories which are traumatic experiences

How would you describe the person you were then and now?

K1 “I experienced trauma in my marriage because of my husband's constant emotional and verbal abuse, which caused me to not trust men again.”

K2 “I faced trauma before and after my marriage, and I am not even sure I will get married again because I am happy to be alone with my kids.”

K3 “I am going through severe trauma that caused me to now hate Swedish men.”

J4 “My marriage was very traumatic due to my wife's sexual issues. She lacked self-control in matters concerning sex issue. I felt my vulnerability was taken for granted. It scared me and made me feel ashamed of myself as a man.”

J5 “I experienced overwhelming trauma, and it affected my body, mind, and emotions made it challenging to be open with people. This impact is hard to think about, and it is also challenging to articulate.”

8. Discussion of Findings

This study aimed at exploring the experiences and the perceptions of divorced immigrants who were formerly married to Swedish-born citizens about divorce. Interviews were conducted with ten participants, and from the transcripts of the interviews, eight categories emerged.

The first category, attitude change, emerged. Participants’ descriptions of what they perceived to be an attitude change in their spouses: The participants’ ex-spouses had unresolved issues that manifested in the form of alterations in their attitudes. In their study, Popenoe and Whitehead (2010) stated that attitude changes occur when a person expresses a dramatic change in actions and feelings. Thus, Erikson (1950) states that adults in their stage of development experience identity formation versus role confusion as they search for a sense of self and personal identity during certain stages. They do this by intensely exploring personal values, beliefs, and goals.

According to Esser’s (2001) concept of social integration, placement indicates the acquisition of rights related to positions and the opportunity to create social relations and win cultural, social, and economic capital. Esser’s (2001) concept of social integration will attribute attitude change to participants’ experiences in relationship with their spouses’ failure to navigate through transitions in placement regarding their role in their marriages. It may lead to changes in the structure of the relationship, which may have adverse effects that cause divorce. The categories that emerged from the findings presented here indicate that attitude change was a problem in the participants’ marriages.

The second category was communication issues that emerged from participants’ experiences of communication problems in their marriages as their statements Cox (2010) states that the core cause of many divorces among couples is poor communication. In the same line, Tembe (2010) stresses that failure to communicate makes it

hard to resolve emotional and financial issues. The statements presented by the participants indicate that communication was indeed a problem in their marriages

Esser (2001) revealed that interaction regarding communication is the pattern of relationships and networks by persons who share mutual orientations in friendships, romantic relationships, marriages, and similar typical social group associations. Esser's concept of social integration, thus, draws attention to the fact that participants experienced poor communication that led to problems in their marriages.

The statements of participants suggest that the participants experienced abuse in their marriage. Abuse is one of the causes of divorce, and it happens in all age groups. It comes in different forms, ranging from physical to sexual abuse, as well as verbal, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse (Preller, 2014). For participants, this theme emerged several times throughout the interviews when discussing abuse in terms of not having rights related to their position in their marriage. In relation to this, Esser (2001) states that placement indicates the acquisition of rights related to positions and the opportunity to create social relations and win cultural, social, and economic capital. In this data, participants cite abuse as the reason for their divorce.

The data presented suggests that the participants experienced controlling behavior from partners in their marriage. Control and power are core factors for sexual and other types of violence in an intimate relationship (Jewkes, 2002; Johnson, 1995). Also, in intimate relationships, control can be theorized as a problem of one partner using intimidation and emotional abuse to retain control on the other spouse (Stark, 2007; Johnson, 2006). Controlling behavior is more common in relationships than physical or sexual violence (DeKeseredy, 2000; Burks, 2006).

Marriages between native Swedes and immigrants are likely to end in divorce due to cultural gaps compared to marriages between Swedes. Mixed marriages become challenging when each of the parties in the marriage holds on to their cultural norms and beliefs. If the couples involved have children, it may sometimes have an effect on the children's upbringing and influence their identity with time (Sverige's Radio, 2017; Dribe & Lundh, 2011).

In all, the participants in the study had a feeling of guilt and regretted that they did not study each other before they got married. This finding is consistent with studies by Obucina (2014), Semuels (2018), and Andersson, Obucina, and Scott (2015) in which they found that immigrants who came to Sweden married may have higher divorce risks than immigrants whose marriages were established in Sweden. Most immigrants find it easy to adjust to Sweden's gender norms, others do not.

Andersson, Obucina, and Scott (2015) believe that migration can increase divorce by creating room for couples not to accommodate each other. Post-migration changes in a family's power relations are the major cause of family instability for most immigrant couples in Sweden because it makes couples not to accommodate each other (Darvishpour, 2002). Candace Crenshaw, a Stockholm-based New Yorker who has divorced her Swedish husband, stated that there are problems rooted in cultural norms that cannot be ignored. She concluded that, immigrants need to understand the importance of these differences in cultural norms and values (Radio Sverige, 2017).

9. Limitations of the Study and Delimitations of the Study

The limitations of this study included issues surrounding immigrants' perception of divorce. Participants' responses may have reflected what they believed was the reason for the high divorce rate in marriages between immigrants and natives, compared to marriages among naïve Swedes. Since the result is not based on statistical analysis, the findings may not predict or explain the divorce between immigrants and native Swedes to a given significance level. There is no comparison of perception between Swedish immigrants and native Swedes. The emphasis is to make sense of and provide an understanding of the phenomenon as perceived among Swedish immigrants. This study did not cover divorced native-born Swedish citizens, as they would undoubtedly experience divorce differently from divorced immigrant Swedish men and women. Also, the study does not apply to divorced men and women formerly married to native Swedes who are not residents of Sweden. It focuses only on divorced immigrant Swedes who were married to native Swedes and are residents in Sweden

10. Conclusion

The study explored the perception of divorced immigrants formerly married to Swedish-born citizens regarding divorce, their challenges, and the role the differences in their cultures played in their divorce experience. The findings of this qualitative grounded theory approach research are consistent with the available literature. The literature reviewed revealed that marriages between native Swedes and immigrants are likely to end in divorce compared to marriages between two native Swedes due to cultural gaps. As available literature further shows, mixed marriages can be challenging when couples hold on to their cultural norms and beliefs (Dribe & Lundh,

2011). The main issues that emerged based on the study findings are attitude change, communication, abuse, power control, studying each other, acceptance, accommodating each other, and traumatic experiences. These corroborate the results of other studies like those of (Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2013), who reported that couples in mixed marriage could experience are lack of commitment, communication, controlling issues, cultural acceptance, trauma, financial issues, couple accommodating each other, infidelity, constant argument and domestic violence, and substance use. There is a need for more study to help proffer solutions to problems of this nature plaguing marriages in Swedish society.

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