

Afghan Women's Definitions, Perceptions and Experience of Domestic Violence, a Qualitative Study with Afghan Women in Australia

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Abstract : The main aim of this study is understanding Afghan women's perception of domestic violence and their experience of abuse by their family members. The voice of Afghan women has not been heard much particularly in Australia. Their families and communities have silenced some of them in the name of family honour and reputation, and others have not had the opportunity to talk about the issue. Although domestic violence is an issue in every country, research suggests that this is more likely to be considered acceptable behaviour in Afghanistan than elsewhere. Given the high public visibility of initiatives which aim to tackle domestic violence in Australia, it is entirely possible that Afghan women's perceptions and beliefs about domestic violence will have changed since their arrival in this country. Thus, their understandings, perceptions and their experience of domestic violence have been investigated to improve the Afghan women's situation in Australia. Methods: This qualitative study has been conducted among Afghan women who have lived in Australia less than ten years. Semi-structured interviews either face to face or by phone have been used to collect data for this study. The interviews have been audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Nvivo software has been used for data analysis. Findings: Participants' definitions of domestic violence vary. They defined domestic violence in relation to their educational levels, their personal life and experience of domestic violence. Some women tended to change the definitions to be more relevant to their own life and experience. Many women had the knowledge of different domestic violence acts that have been distinguished as violent acts in Australia or other western countries. Some of the participants stated that they had the experience of domestic violence from their partner or one of the family members. Those who have been abused, their experiences were diverse and had been perpetrated by different family members. Majority of participants revealed the story of other women in their family and community that have been abused. Conclusion: Moving to Australia helped women to be aware of the issues and recognising that they are in the abusive relationships. However, intersecting multiple identities in a complex system of oppression, domination or discrimination makes the experience of domestic violence more complicated among Afghan community in Australia that cannot be addressed easily.

Keywords : domestic violence, intersectionality, immigration, afghan women

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