

Living Beyond Loss- Reflections of Young Kashmiri Women Experiencing Death of Spouses in their Families

Faheema Aziz and Humera Shafi

University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K, India

Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 28 Jul 2022; Received in revised form: 16 Aug 2022; Accepted: 23 Aug 2022; Available online: 30 Aug 2022</p> <p>©2022 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Bereavement, Challenges, Strengths, Themes, Thematic analysis, Widow, young</p>	<p><i>Widows comprise a large part of the total population (4.6%) in India. Widowhood mostly affects younger women in developing countries. A widow has to experience multiple stressors in her daily life especially when she is parenting her dependent children in the family. The off-time spousal bereavement has the potential to bring multiple disruptions in their lives. It involves changes in their identities and re-evaluation of once-established roles. In Indian societies, the prevailing culture, traditions, and customs present multiple problems for such women. Overcoming such stressors in their lives demands struggle, courage, and strength. The broader understanding of bereavement among such women needs to have an insight into its impact on all the facets of their lives; their personal lives; their family lives and their social lives. This research investigated the challenges faced by such women in their personal and social dimensions and their struggles in overcoming such challenges after experiencing the death of spouses in their lives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven women who experienced spousal death in their lives and were the sole parents of their children. The age of the participants was in the range of 30 to 50 years with a mean of $M=41.6$ years. Time since the death of a spouse was in the range of 2 to 5 years with a mean of $M= 3.1$ years. The data from the participants were analyzed inductively using thematic analysis. The themes revealed that spousal bereavement in Kashmiri women includes “Psychological impact”, “Physical impact”, “Feelings of Deprivation in Family”, “Disrupted Family Processes & Overburdened Responsibilities”, “Changed Social Identity”, “Religious Coping and continued Bonds”, “Social Support”, “Personal Growth” and “Hopes in the Family”. Vulnerabilities faced by widows in India render them the depressed class of society. The findings reveal the significant disruption and challenges they face and the ways they re-construct and re-negotiate their lives. The study has implications for bereavement counselors and calls for looking beyond the victimhood paradigm in women’s studies.</i></p>

1. Background

According to the 2011 census report, widows make up about 4.6% of the total population in India. In developing countries, widowhood is observed to affect younger women who are still rearing their children (World Widows Report, 2015). The prolonged conflict in Kashmir has led to an increase in the number of young widows in the area. In the current environment of conflict and natural disasters, young women are becoming widowed in considerable numbers. The conflict alone has left behind an estimated 32,400 widows in Kashmir (Dabla, 2010).

The disorganization and trauma that follows the death of a spouse are greater for women than for men whenever either loses their spouse. A Widow has to experience multiple stressors in her daily life which keeps her from living happy and fulfilling life like other women in society (Owen, 2001).

Loss of a spouse in the lives of women has been observed to have an impact on physical, psychological, economic, and social dimensions. The psychological and physical implications of young widowhood have been observed in previous studies (Charlton et al., 2001; Shuchter & Zisook, 1993; Stroebe et al., 2007) Depression, loneliness, increased sensitivity, and deterioration in health have been observed among young widows in India (Gill & Singh, 1991; Leonard, 2009). In Kashmir, the mental or psychological problems faced by the widows include feelings of depression, phobia, traumatic disorders, and emotional instability (Farah, 2014; Mir & Somasundaran, 2019; Wani et al., 2016). In Indian societies, young widows are observed to experience abuse, discrimination, disinheritance, and destitution in their lives (Dasgupta, 2017; Owen, 2001). The dependence of women for economic security also prevails in the Indian societies as men remain the principal bread-earner of the family (Mohindra et al., 2012; Trivedi et al., 2009).

Besides the negative implications of loss, the positive adaptation in the face of the crisis and bereavement has also been studied and has been referred to as resilience (Mohammed, 2018; Greeff & Ritman, 2005; Greeff & Human, 2004). The resources or the means of well-being that are observed to influence coping after loss include emotional resources (Van Baarsen, 2002), social resources (DiGiulio, 1992) and socio-economic status (Wilmoth & Koso, 2002).

The adaptation to bereavement involves realigning one's roles and responsibilities and realigning one's psychological position with the deceased (Stroebe & Schut, 2010) and making meaning of the loss

(Neimeyer, 2016; Park, 2008). Making meaning of the loss has been found to be associated with faith, religious beliefs spirituality (Doka & Morgan, 2016; Park, 2007; Spilka & Ladd, 2012) and continuing attachments to the deceased (Klass et al., 2014; Stroebe et al., 2005); cultural traditions and customs in family also help in making sense and integrating loss in the lives of bereaved (Osterweis et al., 1984; Shapiro, 1996). Religion and faith has been observed as an important source of emotional and social support in the times of crises (Park, 2007).

Culture exerts a significant influence on the way loss is perceived and experienced. Every culture embodies customs, traditions and values that help in dealing with the death of loved ones and in integrating loss in the lives of bereaved (Osterweis et al., 1984; Shapiro, 1996). Religion has a central or prominent role in the individual lives as well as in the cultural traditions of Kashmir (Kaw, 2010). Along with the bereavement rites like ceremonial gatherings, there are rituals like visiting the grave and praying for the forgiveness and requital of the deceased person collectively as well as at the individual level.

Seeking and receiving social support from family, friends and relatives among widows is common in the social context of Kashmir. They receive and seek help in their social support network for managing finances in their families (Dabla, 2010). The availability of social support network has also been observed in the previous studies (Bhat & Rangaiah, 2015; Hamid & Khan, 2021). The culture of Kashmir embodies the values of social connectedness, cohesion, love and harmony (Kaw, 2010; Bhatt, 1997). These features in our culture facilitate resilience in the face of stress and loss (Bhat & Rangaiah, 2015).

It has also been observed that majority of widows in Kashmir chose not to remarry and spend most of their lives in bringing up their children (Dabla, 2010). Therefore, it is important to know about the challenges such women face in their daily lives and the ways they cope and adapt with such challenges.

2. Current study

The aim of the current study is to address gap in literature on grief and adaptation experiences of women in the social context of Kashmir. Little is known about the challenges they face after the loss of their spouses and the coping process they adopt in surviving through those challenges. The purpose of the present study is to give voice to the sufferings of such women and gain an insight into their stories of

coping with loss in their lives. The study needs to answer the following research questions: How does the loss of a spouse affect the lives of young women in Kashmir? How does it affect their personal, family and social lives? How do they adapt, adjust and cope with the challenges they face in their lives? In order to provide pertinent help to such women, a better understanding needs to be gained about the challenges they face in their lives and the paths they adopt in dealing with such challenges.

3. Methodology

Phenomenology guided in answering the research questions of the present study. The approach is based on the assumption that people construct knowledge through their lived experiences (Creswell, 2017). In-depth interviews were used so as to gain an insightful understanding of the participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The participants were selected through convenience sampling procedures (through social media posts; information from people in the community) and a snowballing strategy. The inclusion/ eligibility criteria on the basis of which they were selected include: a) participants have experienced the loss of the spouse not less than two years prior to participation in the study (to allow some time for coping) b) participants had to have lost their spouses not more than 5 years (so as to maintain consistency across the sample) c) participants are the sole-parents of their children in their respective families d) participants are in the age group of 20 to 50 years.

Proper consent was taken from the participants prior to the interviews. Face to face semi-structured interviews lasted for approximately an hour and took place at mutually agreed locations. A total of 18 questions were asked during the interview and they pertained to challenges faced due to the loss, family disruptions, the reconstruction processes, and the positive changes attained in life. The order and wording of questions were altered as needed during the interview. The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. Field notes and observations about the interview sessions were also written. A great amount of time was taken to gain rapport with participants while taking consent from them and during the interview sessions. Confidentiality and privacy was maintained by the researcher in handling the information gathered from participants. The names of the participants mentioned in the study are the pseudonyms and not the real names of the participants.

Description of Participants

Eleven participants who fit the inclusion criteria were interviewed for this study. The participants were in the age range of 30 to 50 years with a mean of $M=41.6$ years. The time since the death of a spouse was in the range of 2 to 5 years with a mean of $M=3.1$ years. All the participants were the sole parents of their children in their families. Five participants had 2 children; three participants had a single child and three participants were single parents of three children. The majority of the participants belonged to the urban area and a single participant was from a rural area. Six participants had passed the college education out of which four were working as an employee in government departments. Three participants had passed high school and two participants were illiterate. The monthly income of participants was in the range of 7000 to 30,000 INR.

Data Analysis

After listening to the audio-recorded interviews, the researcher transcribed them verbatim. The qualitative information was analyzed from a phenomenological perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Phenomenological analyses require the researchers to "bracket", or suspend their biases to be open to experience and get to the essence of the phenomenon without judgment. The researcher had not experienced such a kind of death in her life; therefore no potential bias was brought into the interviewing or the analysis process.

The technique of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) was used to process the qualitative information. It allows for a systematic way of processing the qualitative data using 'coding'. The following steps of analysis were followed: 1. Data Familiarization: the data was transcribed, reading and re-reading were done and major ideas were noted down for each transcript. 2. Generating initial codes: it involves coding the features of data in a systematic fashion and collecting data relevant to each code. 3. Generating themes: The codes sharing similar meanings were clustered together to obtain the theme. The theme represents a level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). 4. Reviewing themes: The themes were reviewed and the connection across them was sought out. The themes that clustered together were placed under super-ordinate themes. 5. Producing the report: the vital statements representing the data are presented to showcase the resulting outcomes.

4. Findings

The journeys of women in their lives after experiencing death of their spouses are portrayed under the following themes; 1) "Psychological impact" 2) "Physical impact" 3) "Feelings of Deprivation in Family" 4) "Disrupted Family Processes & Overburdened Responsibilities" 5) "Changed Social Identity" 6) "Religious Coping and continued Bonds" 7) "Social Support" 8) "Personal Growth" 9) "Hopes in the Family".

Psychological Impact

The participants described an emotional journey they experience throughout their lives. They expressed despair, devastation, helplessness, and deprivation in their lives.

"Life is not same now. I talk to people. I attend parties and functions, I carry on with all the activities of daily life but there is always something inside of me that is in deep pain."

(Tehmeena, 45 years)

"The death came like a huge storm which ended everything in my life. Every kind of happiness is lost with it."

(Shaista, 35 years)

"Nothing works here, your money, your prayers, nothing can bring the person back in your life and his absence is always felt."

(Rafiqah, 45

years)

"At the time of my husband, I was least concerned about my savings or about other people in my life. His death changed my life altogether. I lost all the securities and comforts I used to enjoy earlier."

(Parveena, 47 years)

Some participants described the negative impact on their mental health.

"The following year after his death, I was diagnosed with depression. I am still taking medicines for my mental health."

(Tasleema, 47 years)

Physical Impact

The bereavement had repercussions on the physical health of the participants. They stated that they experience reduced health and functionality in

their lives. They noted that they have many physical illnesses after experiencing loss in their lives.

"It is something which reduced my health. Earlier I used to manage a lot of household chores and now I feel too tired even with the small amount of work I do."

(Tehmeena, 45 years)

"I feel like an old person. Whenever I meet my friends, they seem to be in their early youthful days. The problems one has to face in life steals all the beauty you have."

(Parveena, 47 years)

"I am taking a lot of medicines for my high blood pressure and thyroid problem. It had large effect on my health. It is something which ended my life, physically, mentally and in every aspect" (Shakeela, 48 years)

Feelings of deprivation in family

The participants described death of their spouses as a prevailing deprivation and the loss of a sense of security in their families. They stated that there was a prevailing void in the lives of their children. Some of the participants who belonged to low financial status described uncertainty they have for the future of children in their families.

"The father is like a backbone of the family who not only meets the financial needs of his children but is a great support for them throughout their lives. It feels like a shelter less family."

(Tehmeena, 45 years)

"Everyone was happy when he was with us. We lost a great support in our lives. His death made us lose our home. It was like as if we came on the street."

(Parveena, 47 years)

The void was felt in their lives despite living in a joint family, as is evident in the following account:

"They (children) are loved by their uncle more than their father. Everyone cares

about them. But the void left by their father will always remain.” (Shakeela, 48 years)

The low financial status brought feelings of uncertainty for future in the family.

We have to achieve a lot yet in our lives. The younger one is in high school yet. Our financial conditions are not good. My children and I are not able to make it out how we will be able to achieve so much in our lives.

(Rehana,40 years)

Disrupted family processes and overburdened Responsibilities

The participants expressed the financial change they had to face in their families after the death of their spouses. Those participants who had low financial status described the financial overburden in their families. The participants who were parenting their children alone in the family expressed that they were overburdened with such responsibilities. Those who shared the responsibilities of parenting with other members in the family described that they were less overburdened with parenting their children. Some participants described that there were increased concerns for safety of themselves and their children in the family.

The participants described the financial change that was brought in their families despite having a good financial status.

“The salary of their father got reduced to half. It had to be endured by us. I was not qualified enough to have the same amount of salary their father had but we try to manage everything on the amount of the income we have in the family.”

(Saleema, 46years)

The participants who had low financial status described financial difficulties and over-burden in their families.

“Had their father been alive, they would have the satisfaction that there is someone to bear the responsibility of their education and the expenses of their marriages. They

are facing a lot of difficulties to manage the finances for themselves.”

(Shakeela, 48 years)

“We were satisfied with whatever he could provide for us. His death had a lot of effect on my children. Now my son is the only male member who has to take the responsibility of earning for his family.”

(Shameema, 48 years)

The participants also expressed concerns for security in their families as is evident in the account of the participant who was living alone with her only adolescent son in her home.

“At the time of the day it is managed somehow but during night I get very cautious and concerned about our safety.”

(Ruqaya, 40 years)

The participants described being overburdened with parenting their children alone and earning for family at the same time.

“Sometimes I want to stay at home and look after the stuff at my house, but I have a family to feed. I have to look after my children and care for them both as their father as well as their mother.”

(Parveena, 47 years)

The participants who were non-earning also stated inadequacy in parenting their children alone in the family.

“Children don’t fear their mother. They can’t be questioned repeatedly. They get disturbed. They can go to any extreme step if they get annoyed.”

(Rafiq, 45 years)

Changed social identity

The women who had lost their spouses described the exploitation, abuse and negative judgment at the hands of in-laws, relatives and other people in society. They also stated the unnecessary intrusion of relatives in their family. Some participants also stated that they experience the fear of society after the death of their spouses.

“My relatives also have a close look at all the actions of my children and they leave no

stone unturned to always talk negatively about me and my children.”

(Tehmeena, 45 years)

“A woman gets exploited by others in a number of ways. People are good to you only when they need any kind of benefit from you. These people have too much intrusion in my life and in the lives of my children.”

(Parveena, 47 years)

The women also described being negatively judged by people around in the society.

My going out of the house and my ways of dressing, all these things are questioned after my husband’s death. Some say that she was waiting for her husband to die so that she could live her life her own way...My daughters also hesitate to come out of their home too much.

(Shameema, 48 years)

“There is a drastic change in my personality. I never used to wear burqa, now even if I have to travel a small distance; I go out wearing a burqa.”

(Ruqaya, 40 years)

Religious coping and continued bonds

The participants mostly described their religious beliefs in making sense of the loss. They stated their beliefs like keeping faith in God, belief in fate and superstitious beliefs like belief in evil eye to make sense of death in their lives.

“Whatever happens in life is from only God. I have to bow down my head to His decree. I cannot challenge Him.

Tehmeena (45 years, 4 years since loss of her husband)

“When he(husband) was ill, we had to spend a large amount of money for his treatment. I don’t know how God helped us and today we have the enough for survival.”

Tasleema (50 years, 3 years since loss)

“It is pre-written. For some people life is full of roses and for some it is only thorns. Everyone is helpless before his fate and nothing works here.”

Parveena

(50 years, 5 years since loss)

“Everything was good. We had a good life. It was as if the evil eye of people took him away from us.”

Ruqaya(40 years, 2 years since loss)

Some participants described that expressing emotions in prayers pacified them.

“I cry before my God on the prayer mat. Yesterday I listened to daily Islamic programme and the speaker was talking about the rewards of widow women. It calms my heart.”

Saleema (46years, 3 years since loss)

The participants also described that they maintained bonds with the deceased by means of beliefs and practices in the family. Some participants described that they have dreams about deceased and they share such dreams with each other in the family.

“It seems like such people have somewhere concern about us. At times the voice is heard.. at times they advise in the dreams. My children too share having dreams about their father.”

Rehana (40 years, 2 years since loss)

Some stated that they talk about the moments spent with deceased and have remembrance of deceased at special events and anniversaries.

My children have the habit of remembering their father anytime they are sitting together. They have the habit of imagining if their father would have been at this moment, he would have said this or he would have done this... it is very hard to forget such a person.

Tasleema (47 years, 3 years since loss)

It has always been a tradition in our families that we remember the death

anniversaries of our dear ones. We continue with the tradition and do charity and distribute food on his death anniversary.

Saleema (46years, 3 years since loss)

Some described practices like visiting the graves of the deceased and keeping pictures of deceased in the family.

“My children do not forget the anniversary of their father. They visit the grave of their father frequently.”

Rafiq (45 years, 3 years since loss)

“We love to keep his picture in the living room. It makes us feel proud that such a humble and good person was a member of our family.”

Shakeela (48 years, 4 years since loss)

Social support

The participants who had low financial status described the help they received from relatives and friends outside of their household in managing the financial expenses.

Keeping good ties with relatives is of great help. My brothers (who have their own family) have a lot of concern about me. Yesterday my brother placed money in my account without my asking for it... whenever he finds that my phone is switched off, he secretly recharges my phone.

(Shakeela, 48 years)

The participants who had concerns for safety and security of their families described that social connections help ease out those concerns.

One needs to keep ties with everyone for survival. Throughout the day I am all alone and at nights my fears increase. My niece and my sister call me throughout day. At night my nephew stays with us (me and my son).It eases my fears a lot.

(Rehana, 40 years)

Some participants described that their neighbors and relatives provide them the necessary emotional support in their lives.

“My neighbors have great regards for me. They picked me up from the pain of his death. Whenever I meet them, they always comfort me with their kind words.”
(Saleema, 46years)

I have many acquaintances at my office who also are single parents to their children. When I listen to their ways of handling affairs in their lives, it helps me a lot. The feeling of connectedness and support we receive from each other is valuable.

(Parveena, 47 years)

Personal Growth

The participants described that the hardships they faced in their lives made them grow as a person. It changed their perspective towards the life, made them learn new lessons in their lives and turned them into a strong individual. The long-term adjustments they had to make in their lives also made them learn new life skills. They stated that hardships left no other choice for them in their lives which led to their increased patience towards the life.

The death of my spouse made me realize that life has a harsh face too. The earlier days after his loss were very difficult for me to bear. Now I feel that my heart has grown so strong that I can face any kind of difficulty in my life.

(
Ruqaya, 35 years)

Those people who seemed friends to me created problems in my life. It changed the way I used to look at life. One needs to be smart and wise enough to deal with such problems in life. Dealing with those difficulties makes you learn a lot about your life.

(Parveena, 47 years)

As the life unfolds it makes you deal with different problems which are much severe than earlier ones. If one stays patient, one can handle them easily. The only weapon

that makes you win in your life is gaining courage and staying patient.

(Saleema, 46years)

“Earlier I had no skill of managing the tasks like buying the things for home, dealing with vendors outside. I am more like a man now. I do all such tasks which a man does for his family.” (Tehmeena, 45 years)

Family as the hope

The participants described that their concern towards their family had grown since the loss in their lives. Some stated that commitment towards their family is the sole purpose of their lives. The participants also described that hopes in the future of their children is the sole motivation of living their life.

Had I been alone I would have survived in a single little room of mine but my children have to progress in life. I would have managed on the meager income of my late husband but I cannot let my children suffer. My concern for their well- being has increased since their father left us.

(Saleema, 46years)

After I lost my husband, I was insisted by my parents to get married again and start another life. But I could never do that. I do not want to leave any regrets that I could not provide my son with everything he needed in his life.

(Rahila, 35 years)

We have seen the bad days of our life and I wish they never come back in our lives again. I never gave up on my life. I sold my ear rings to provide good education to my children. If I can do some good to them today, their future will be good tomorrow. It gives me the power to survive.

(Shakeela, 48 years)

5. Discussion

Majority of the participants described negative emotional impact of loss in their lives and expressed the feelings of despair, hopelessness and devastation. Such a symptom of grief is often cited in literature (Charlton et al., 2001; Shuchter & Zisook, 1993;

Stroebe et al., 2007) and the current study supports the evidence of such an outcome of grief.

Most of the women reported reduced functionality and physical illnesses. Women usually experience more stressors than men after losing their spouse. Such a symptom can be related to the additional stressors alongside their grief that befell them. Such a physical impact of grief is often cited in the literature (Ball, 1977; Shuchter & Zisook, 1993; Stroebe et al., 2007). Such a finding also adds to the grief literature on other age groups where an impact on health is observed.

The perceptions of loss that the women expressed for their families extend the literature on grief emphasizing the individual perspective of loss. The feeling of deprivation was felt despite receiving the love and care from close ones. The use of metaphors by participants such as feeling like a ‘shelterless family’ and ‘coming on the street’ gives an indication of the fact that women look upon their spouses as protective figures for their families. The finding supports the evidence from the previous studies that observe the protective role played by men in the lives of women in Indian societies and the loss of protection and fear experienced by them after the death of their spouses (Dasgupta, 2017; Gill & Singh, 1991; Owen, 2001).

Some of the participants expressed the feelings of uncertainty for the future of children in their families. It is indicative of the fact that such women had little opportunity to prepare for such an untimely loss. The concern about the financial security of their children gives an idea that women are still financially dependent upon their spouses in their families. Majority of the participants described loss of a spouse as loss of the primary financial support in their lives. Those participants who were financially insecure described the financial difficulties in their families and struggles of their children in managing the expenses. It again supports the evidence that women are vulnerable to financial change and insecurity after the death of their spouses in Indian societies (Mohindra et al., 2012; Sahoo, 2014; Trivedi et al., 2009). Some participants explained struggles with finding employment so as to replace the income of their husband. They described that the effort and energy to care for the financial needs along with parenting adds to their burden and drains them of the energy for self care. It is consistent with the previous findings that losing a partner involves losing a portion or the whole of the household income

young widows in India (Chen, 1998; Mohindra et al., 2012).

Loss of spouse means the loss of a social status of women. Majority of participants described that they were vulnerable to abuse and negative judgment of people. Some described that they had strained relations with their in-laws. Some participants described that they had to suffer exploitation and unwanted intrusion in their family lives. Some participants also reported the social fear that prevails in their lives. Such attitudes towards the widows indicate the backwardness that still prevails in our society. The findings support the evidence from previous studies observing a negative attitude towards widows in Indian societies (Chen, 1998; Gill & Singh, 1991; Jensen, 2005).

Majority of the participants described their religious beliefs in making sense of the loss in their lives such as belief in God, belief in fate and superstitious beliefs like evil eye leading to the death of their spouses. Some participants described that prayers helped them pacify emotions in their lives. It is consistent with the previous findings observing the role of religious coping in dealing with crisis and loss (Hays & Hendrix, 2008; Webb et al., 2011; Wortmann & Park, 2008). Majority of the participants described that bonds with the deceased were maintained in their families. The bonds were continued by having dreams of the deceased and sharing those dreams with each other in the family, talking about the moments spent with deceased in the family, remembering on anniversaries, giving charity and visiting the graves. The importance of continued bonds in working through grief has been observed (Klass et al., 2014). Most of these practices draw from religious and cultural beliefs and traditions of the society. The findings are consistent with the previous studies which show that religious and cultural beliefs play a role in coping with loss through meaning reconstruction (Bloom, 2007; Doka & Morgan, 2016; Neimeyer, 2016; Osterweis et al., 1984; Park, 2007); prayers helping in pacifying the emotional crisis (Salsman et al., 2005) and religion providing the ground for maintaining continued bonds with the deceased (Kjærsgaard & Venbrux, 2016).

Majority of the participants described the instrumental, moral and emotional support they receive from their friends, neighbors and close relatives. The participants also described the need for keeping good social connections. It indicates that women after losing the primary support in their lives seek connections with others so as to replenish the

loss in their lives. Seeking social support has been found in the previous studies as a positive coping strategy in dealing with bereavement (Lowe & McClement, 2011; Wortmann & Park, 2008). In a collective society, the group goals are valued more than the individual goals. Social support in times of crisis and difficult times is mostly available in the Kashmiri society and has been observed in the previous studies (Bhat & Rangaiah, 2015; Hamid & Khan, 2021).

Majority of participants described that making adjustments in life helped them learn a lot of daily life skills. Some participants described that it changed their perspective towards the life and increased their patience. It is in line with the previous findings which show that growth and resilience follows in the face of bereavement (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Mohammed, 2018). It also extends the literature on grief presenting widows as mere victims in the face of loss.

Survival in the face of loss needs a hope or a meaning in life. Majority of the participants described that their concern and commitment towards their children increased since the loss in their lives. Some of the participants described that they have good hopes in the future of their children. The findings are consistent with the previous study observing that majority of Kashmiri widows do not re-marry (Dabla, 2010) and spent most of their lives in working for the better future of their children.

6. Conclusions

The findings reveal that spousal bereavement has significant consequences for young women in their personal, familial and social lives. The qualitative approach adopted for the present study provides a deep insight into the negative and positive aspects of spousal bereavement. The findings on the psychological and physical impact of loss in their lives have implications for grief counselors and therapists. The deprivation and uncertainties such women feel in the lives of their children need to be taken into account while providing support services to such bereaved women. There is a need to understand the impact on their social lives and provide necessary education about the rights and inequalities faced by such women. The positive aspects of bereavement are mostly neglected in the previous studies, the findings of the present study address such a gap in bereavement literature and contribute to the field of bereavement counseling.

The findings of the present study are based on the limited number of women who agreed to participate in the study. Varied challenges could be experienced by women belonging to different socio-economic sections of society. To have a broader understanding of the experiences of these participants in terms of the challenges and struggles in their lives, and ways of coping and adapting to these challenges; a study on the large scale, taking into consideration the larger sample of such a population, must be conducted in future.

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- c) Did it have any influence on your relations in the society? Did you encounter any problems? What where they?
- d) How did it change your personality and your daily life in the society?
2. What are the problems that are encountered in carrying out the daily family processes?
 - a) How did it influence the financial condition of the family?
 - b) How did it influence the parenting of your children?
 - c) What are the other problems that you face in carrying out the daily family processes?
 3. Does having ties with relatives and people outside the family help in managing those problems?
 - a) Did you receive any help in managing the financial condition of your family?
 - b) Do people around us help in managing the upbringing of children in some way? If yes, then how does it ease for you?
 - c) Do keeping social ties help in managing the daily life problems? If yes, then how?
 4. What are the strengths that you gained and the new lessons learnt after dealing with adversities in your life?
 - a) Did it change your perspective towards life? Then how?
 - b) Did you learn any new skills? What were they?
 - c) How do you deal with your difficulties now? Is there any change?
 5. Despite all the difficulties and challenges one has to face in life, what is it that keeps the hopes alive and help you along in your life?

Appendix

Interview Guide

1. What are the influences of experiencing the death of a spouse early in our lives?
 - a) How did it influence your health?
 - b) How does one feel for one's children in the family?