

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore women survivors' experiences of leaving an abusive relationship, to examine how they were able to overcome the obstacles of leaving, and how they utilized resources that enabled them to leave. This study also allowed women to express their own opinions about what helped them leave the abusive relationships. As the process of telling their experiences unfolded, it illuminated the reasons why the women left, providing an explanation of specific aspects of the process that made a difference for the women.

This research placed emphasis on the actions of abused women and what they did. Rather than examining why a woman stayed in an abusive relationship, the researcher looked at how she actively ended the relationship. The knowledge gained can then be utilized to aid women who are trying to end an abusive relationship. They can be given practical assistance and support using the data gleaned from those women who have already left as they moved through the process of ending the abuse in their lives.

This study used a phenomenological approach, and in-depth interviews to gather the stories that provided a rich narrative of each woman's experience in leaving an abusive relationship. A purposive sampling was used in this study. The total sample consist of seven formerly abused women of diverse races (2 Malays, 3 Chinese, 1 Indian and 1 Punjabi) all of whom are Malaysians and have been out of the relationship for at least a year.

This study explored the experience of leaving an abusive relationship. Themes from the analysis of the participant interviews highlight the individual experiences of leaving intimate partner violence as well as the sustaining factors that enabled them to leave permanently. A total of five themes emerged: (a) the experience of abuse; (b) the turning point; (c) factors affecting leaving; (d) the permanent exit; and (e) life after leaving.

This study has provided some insights into how the seven survivors who had been abused were able to leave and remain out of their abusive relationships. These survivors accomplished leaving and remaining out of relationship through their courage and awareness, their ability to draw upon the resources available, to rely on their beliefs and remained focus on life after the abuse. All of them found that life after ending the relationship was much happier and they now enjoy a great sense of freedom where the sky is their limit. Far from being passive victims, they are not only survivors but are great warriors in their own right.

# **PENGALAMAN MANGSA DERA WANITA MENINGGALKAN HUBUNGAN AKIBAT PENDERAAN**

## **ABSTRAK**

Kajian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengalaman wanita yang meninggalkan perhubungan akibat keganasan rumah tangga, bagaimana mereka melepasi rintangan, dan bagaimana menggunakan pelbagai sumber untuk tujuan meninggalkan hubungan tersebut. Kajian ini memberi peluang kepada wanita yang terlibat meluahkan pendapat mereka berkenaan sesuatu yang membantu mereka melepaskan diri daripada penderaan. Melalui proses penceritaan pengalaman, gambaran tepat diberi mengenai sebab-sebab wanita meninggalkan perhubungan akibat penderaan. Kajian ini menekankan perlakuan wanita yang didera dan tindakan mereka. Pengkaji tidak menyelidik mengapa wanita tetap berada dalam perhubungan keganasan rumah tangga; sebaliknya, pengkaji melihat bagaimana wanita secara aktif mengakhiri dan meninggalkan perhubungan itu. Pengetahuan yang diperolehi boleh digunakan untuk membantu wanita lain yang juga ingin menamatkan perhubungan dengan pasangan mereka. Maklumat mengenai bantuan praktikal dan sokongan berdasar data yang dikumpul daripada wanita yang sudah mengalami proses meninggalkan hubungan juga boleh dijadikan panduan kepada wanita lain yang menjadi mangsa keganasan.

Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah fenomenologi dan temu bual secara mendalam untuk mengumpulkan naratif pengalaman setiap peserta kajian yang telah meninggalkan perhubungan akibat keganasan rumah tangga. Persampelan bertujuan telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini merangkumi sampel sebanyak tujuh orang wanita yang pernah didera. Mereka terdiri daripada pelbagai kaum (2 Melayu, 3 Cina, 1 India dan 1 Punjabi). Kesemua mereka ini adalah warga negara Malaysia dan telah meninggalkan perhubungan perkahwinan sekurang-kurangnya selama setahun.

Kajian ini meneroka pengalaman wanita yang meninggalkan perhubungan keganasan rumah tangga. Tema dari analisis temu bual dengan peserta kajian menunjukkan pengalaman individu meninggalkan hubungan akibat penderaan pasangan intim dan juga faktor yang menyebabkan mereka meninggalkan perhubungan itu buat selama-lamanya. Terdapat lima tema yang dikenalpasti iaitu: pengalaman penderaan, titik perubahan, faktor yang mempengaruhi keputusan untuk pergi, menamatkan hubungan dan kehidupan selepas keluar. Kajian ini memberi pengertian tentang bagaimana tujuh orang wanita bekas mangsa dera berjaya meninggalkan dan keluar dari perhubungan akibat keganasan rumah tangga. Mereka yang terselamat berjaya meninggalkan dan melarikan diri daripada perhubungan keganasan rumah tangga kerana keberanian dan kepekaan mereka, kesanggupan mereka menggunakan kemudahan sedia ada, dan berdasarkan kepercayaan mereka serta kesanggupan mereka untuk memberi lebih banyak perhatian kepada kehidupan selepas penderaan itu. Mereka mendapati bahawa kehidupan mereka lebih bahagia dan menikmati rasa kebebasan yang tidak terhingga selepas meninggalkan perhubungan itu. Mereka bukan mangsa pasif tetapi orang yang terselamat dan juga wirawati sejati.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgment	
Abstract (English)	i
Abstract (Bahasa Malaysia)	iii
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	8
Theoretical Framework	9
Research Questions	12
Operational Definitions	12
Significance of the Study	13
Limitations of the Study	15
Delimitations	16
Summary	16
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review	
Definition of Violence Against Women	17
Schools of Thought in Domestic Violence	21
Psychological Theory	22
Social Learning Theory	23
Theory of Learned Helplessness	24
Feminist Theory on Domestic Violence	25
Theory of Cycle of Violence	27
Exchange Theory	29
Resource Theory	29
Leaving an Abusive Relationship	30
Factors Related to Decisions to Leave an Abusive Relationship	36
Summary	41

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology	
The Phenomenological Research Design	43
Researcher as Instrument	45
Biases in the Researcher	48
Data collection	49
Sample	49
Participants' Rights	52
Data collection procedure	53
The In-depth Interviews	53
Data analysis	59
Ensuring rigor in the study	62
Credibility	63
Transferability	66
Dependability	68
Ethical considerations	68
Informed consent	68
Confidentiality	70
Protection from harm	70
Conflict of researcher/counselor role	71
Summary	72
CHAPTER 4: Findings	
The Participants' Background	73
Participants' Stories	78
Lily	78
Orchid	97
Rose	114
Jasmine	133
Hibiscus	149
Carnation	160
Daisy	174
Overview of Research Questions	184

Findings	185
Experiences of Abuse	185
Types of Abuses	187
Physical Abuse	187
Emotional and Psychological Abuse	189
Sexual Abuse	192
Control	193
Social Control	194
Verbal Abuse	196
Fear	198
Turning Point	201
Losing Hope of the Relationship	207
Gaining Insight	210
Permanent Exit	215
Factors Affecting Leaving	217
Resources	217
Financial	218
Spiritual	219
Support	222
Family	223
Friends	226
Planning	228
Children	235
Obstacles in Leaving	236
Family Members' Response	237
Religious Leaders' Response	238
Life After Leaving	240
Improved Self-Esteem	241
Mentally Healthier	244
Summary	246

CHAPTER 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations	
Discussion of the Research Findings	250
The Experience of Abuse	250
The Turning Point	254
A Permanent Exit	256
The Factors Affecting Leaving	259
Life After Leaving	265
Contributions of the Study	266
Implications for Counseling Practice	273
Recommendations for Communities with Abused Women	279
Recommendations for Further Study	282
Summary	284
Closing Remarks	285
References	287
Appendix A: Information Sheet for Participants	299
Appendix B: Email Blast	300
Appendix C: Letter from University	301
Appendix D: Inform Consent	302
Appendix E: Contact Number for Support and Counseling	304
Appendix F: Demographic Information Form	305
Appendix G: Interview Protocol	306
Appendix H: Example of Early Code	308



## List of Tables

Table		Page
3.1	Audit trail	69
4.1	Summarized demographics of the participants	74

## List of Figures

Figure		Page
1.1	The Duluth Model	10
3.1	The interview questions	56
4.1	Concept map of overall findings	186