

“I Need to Heal”: A Case Study Approach on Victimization due to Partner Abandonment

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Abstract

This study investigates the phenomenon of relationship abandonment, where one partner leaves the other without solid reasons. Employing a case study approach, this research examines five real-life cases to uncover the tactics used by the departing partners and explore the multifaceted victimization experienced by those abandoned. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, surveys, and document analysis, focusing on the emotional, physical, and financial impacts on the remaining partner. The findings reveal various strategies of abandonment, including gradual withdrawal, monetary manipulation, and psychological tactics such as gas lighting, blame-shifting, guilt-tripping and emotional detachment. Victims reported experiencing prolonged emotional distress, financial instability, and difficulties in rebuilding their social and personal lives. By presenting real-life cases and analysing their narratives, this study will be the first direct assessment of victimization due to partner abandonment and address the specific needs of individuals at risk of abandonment, thereby reducing the likelihood of subsequent victimization and criminal behaviour. Moreover, the study underscores the necessity of targeted interventions, including counselling services, financial support systems, and legal protections, to aid abandoned individuals in their recovery. The implications of these findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and further research into the long-term psychological effects and coping mechanisms for abandoned partners.

Keywords: Blame-Shifting, Case Study, Gas Lighting, Partner Abandonment, Relationship, Victimization.

Introduction

Relationships are a fundamental aspect of a person's life and the phenomenon of one partner leaving another without solid reasons is an underexplored area in relationship research (1). Being a victim to partner abandonment in relationship is indeed, a traumatizing experience which can make one emotionally, psychologically and socially weak. In light of this, increased psychological victimization was associated with lower levels of self-acceptance and personal autonomy (2). Women displayed significantly higher levels of anger, hostility, and ambivalent attachment than men in a romantic relationship (3). Gender differences are clear in post-breakup emotions, especially sadness, confusion and fear (4). Relationships which are based on trust, emotional bond and mutual responsibilities fall apart very soon when one partner don't come up missing or deserts the other. Bowlby's Attachment Theory in 1969 and 1988 explains that intimate relationships play a key role in helping individuals

cope with emotional distress (5). But the feeling of betrayal and abandonment for those left behind is typically intense and complex (whatever their emotional weakness may have been before abandonment). When divorce or separation occurred, there will be a negative impact on its members and quality of care and quality of life were adversely affected (6, 7). Hence, this study aims to investigate the tactics used by the departing partner and the subsequent victimization of the abandoned partner. Victimization within relationships, particularly due to partner abandonment, is a significant yet underexplored issue in the domain of victimological research. Despite growing awareness, there is a lack of in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by individuals abandoned by their partners. Studying different types of victimization together helps identify polyvictims and what causes it at a young age (8). The consequences can lead to

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significant effects, from feelings of sadness and anger to the development of psychological disorders like anxiety and depression (9,10). These are not considered as a matter in this relationship dynamic society, even though the prevalence of victimization experiences remaining significant. Moreover, Emotions are also a discussed part to support the reasons of such abandonment that proves, emotional infidelity will be more associated with mate abandonment behaviors in women (11). In this study, victimization is understood as a multifaceted experience that goes beyond emotional pain. It also includes financial strain, social isolation, and psychological distress caused by partner abandonment. This broader view helps capture the full impact on the individuals affected and these case studies aim to explore the lived experience of partner abandonment, examining the interplay between relational dynamics, attachment styles, and victimization. By sharing personal stories, this research helps break the stigma surrounding partner abandonment encouraging open discussions and empathy. The dissatisfaction in relationships may be due to various unexplained modern terms, such as “just-talking”, “zombieing”, “riz”, “guilt-tripping”, “love bombing”, “controlling”, “possessiveness” and “gaslighting” (12-14). In light of this, several terms have been identified and defined.

Relationship Terms

Bread Crumbing: Leading someone on with sporadic, non-committal communication (like sending occasional messages or showing some interest) to keep them interested without any intention of a serious relationship.

Benching: Keeping someone on the side-lines as a backup option while actively pursuing other romantic interests.

Ghosting: Suddenly ending all communication with someone without explanation.

Gaslighting: Manipulating someone into questioning their own reality, memories, or perceptions.

Love Bombing: Overwhelming someone with excessive affection, attention and gifts to gain control or manipulate them.

Cushioning: Keeping several romantic interests as a safety net in case the primary relationship doesn't work out.

Zombieing: When someone who previously ghosted you comes back into your life out of the blue, usually with little to no explanation.

Stashing: Hiding a romantic partner from friends, family and social media, keeping the relationship secret.

Orbiting: When someone stops communicating directly but still engages with you on social media by liking posts or viewing stories.

Pocketing: Similar to stashing, it's when someone avoids introducing their partner to friends and family, essentially keeping them separate from other aspects of their life.

Submarining: When someone resurfaces after a long period of absence without any apology or explanation, acting as if nothing happened.

Mosting: A combination of ghosting and love-bombing, where someone goes overboard with affection and then disappears suddenly.

Haunting: When someone from your past continues to engage with your social media content without direct communication.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws from key psychological and sociological theories to understand the emotional and relational patterns observed in the cases. In 1969, Bowlby's attachment theory helps explain how early emotional bonds may influence one's response to abandonment and According to him, the way people are treated by important figures throughout their lives, particularly in stressful situations, influences their future views, attitudes, and expectations about relationships and partners (15). Seligman's Learned Helplessness Theory, 1975 provides insight into the feelings of powerlessness some participants expressed, particularly when faced with emotional manipulation. Additionally, Feminist Theory highlights how societal gender expectations and imbalances in power dynamics may contribute to the patterns of victimization observed in these cases.

Methodology

This research employs a case study method to explore the emotional and psychological impacts of relationship abandonment. The primary aim is to gain insights into individuals' experiences and the factors contributing to their emotional struggles after being deserted by a partner, focusing on respondents from the Tirunelveli

district. Case studies were recorded, finalized (five), transcribed verbatim, and pseudonymized. All the interviews were held in Tamil and all translations are ours.

Selection Criteria

Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study and individuals were identified through their WhatsApp statuses, where they expressed feelings related to relationship issues, hence, this method of recruitment utilized convenience sampling.

Scheduling

During the data collection, one participant was interviewed twice. In the first session, the participant experienced strong emotional responses, leading to distress. The researcher did not compel the respondent to continue, respecting their emotional state. However, later that same evening, the participant reached out to the researcher expressing a willingness to participate again. In the second round, the participant came prepared with documents related to their relationship, which enriched the data collected. Interview times with participants proved challenging due to their commitments, so the researcher offered flexible scheduling to accommodate participants' availability.

Procedure

Participants were provided with a consent form that outlined the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and their rights. Each participant was required to sign the consent form, indicating their agreement to participate in the study. The primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and each interview lasted between 20 to 25 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to share their experience and feelings. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable physical space to facilitate open communication. The researcher chose a park as the interview location, where the sunlight and serene environment contributed to a relaxed atmosphere. The park was typically free of people after 10:00 AM, ensuring privacy and minimizing distractions during the discussions. To explore participants' experiences in depth, open-ended questions were used during the interviews. Some sample questions included:

- Could you describe how your relationship began and how it evolved over time? Were

there any significant changes in the way you interacted or connected with each other?

- In what ways did your partner's behavior impact your emotional or mental well-being? How did it make you feel about yourself or the relationship?
- Did this experience have any financial or social consequences for you? For example, did it affect your job, income, friendships or social interactions?
- Were you able to seek or receive any form of support during this time? If so, who supported you - friends, family or someone else - and how did they help you cope?

Results

Case Description

Case 1

Background: Vijay and Sangeetha are both engineering graduates in their final year. They met at a mutual friend's wedding and exchanged contact information, including phone numbers and Instagram IDs. A month after their initial meeting, they fell in love, with Sangeetha proposing to Vijay, who happily accepted.

Relationship Dynamics: Vijay and Sangeetha shared a profound connection, particularly through their mutual love for music. They often sang together, entertaining their friends with heartfelt performances. Among the many songs they sang, "Yedho Ondru Yedho Ondru" from the movie *Lesa Lesa*, composed by Harris Jayaraj, held a special emotional significance for them, becoming their favorite song. Their relationship was characterized by mutual caring, empathy, and understanding, as demonstrated when Vijay fell ill. Sangeetha traveled approximately 380 km from Bangalore to his college in Coimbatore to support him, showcasing her commitment.

Turning Point: Four months into their relationship, Sangeetha abruptly stopped communicating with Vijay, leaving him stunned and emotionally dependent. I thought she was avoiding me to keep me in check; she used to do that before, but the final time, it concluded. Despite his efforts to reach out through mutual friends, Sangeetha remained unresponsive. Determined to understand the situation, Vijay planned a visit to her college. When they finally spoke, Sangeetha apologized, claiming she had not been well. Unconvinced by her vague explanation, Vijay

opposed her. ("Please don't play with my feelings just because you're unsure of yours"). I deserve clarity," he insisted, seeking a more honest discussion. However, Sangeetha reacted angrily during his visit, "What are you doing here? I don't have time for your drama by now" and refused to answer the questions. My instinct tingled that she was hiding something and Vijay in the heat of the situation, replied "You made sure I was there for you whenever you needed me, but it seems like you're never available when I need you" that time Vijay was feeling increasingly betrayed as she left him stranded at her college bus stand until 8 PM.

Revelation: A stranger approached Vijay, introducing himself and offering assistance. Over dinner, he revealed that Sangeetha had been in a relationship with another boy for the past month. He showed Vijay photos of the couple, shattering his heart. "You've been manipulated by her into believing that she was in you" he realized. The stranger emphasized that Sangeetha had never made any promises to Vijay, a logic that only deepened his sense of abandonment.

Emotional Impact: Vijay's emotional chaos after this revelation was profound. He struggled to concentrate on his studies, lost interest in music, and found it increasingly difficult to sleep or maintain his social life. "I'm an emotional wreck right now. I shouldn't have to go through this alone," he admitted during a session with his psychiatrist, who noted his deep emotional scars. His relationships with friends and family, including his mother, deteriorated. The weight of abandonment settled heavily on his heart: "At my core, I believe that no one is truly reliable and that everyone will eventually leave me." This emotional and psychological distress prompted him to seek professional help, leading to a prescription for sleeping pills. Despite the medication, he continued to attend therapy sessions to address his ongoing emotional struggles. "Every meaningful person in my life seems to walk out, leaving me feeling worthless and unlovable," he expressed to his therapist, revealing the depth of his pain.

Conclusion: This case illustrates the severe emotional, physical, and social impacts of relationship abandonment, emphasizing the importance of emotional resilience and the need for support systems when navigating unexpected and painful life changes. As Vijay reflected on his

experience, he came to a profound realization: "It doesn't matter how perfect I try to be; one broken trust can shatter everything we've built together." This experience not only shaped his understanding of relationships but also highlighted the necessity of clear communication and commitment, ensuring that he would approach future relationships with greater awareness and caution.

Case 2

Background: Velu and Dhanalakshmi had been married for six months, but their relationship was strained from the beginning. On the first day of their marriage, Dhanalakshmi conversed with a man she claimed was a friend who wished them a happy married life. Velu, trusting her, did not question this interaction, even though the man frequently called her. While Dhanalakshmi occasionally showed emotional and physical care toward Velu, he began noticing toxic traits in her behavior. These included dishonesty, where she would often hide details about her interactions; financial control, as she managed their finances without his input; gaslighting, where she would twist conversations to make Velu doubt his perceptions; and constant criticism, which left Velu feeling inadequate.

Confrontations: When Velu attempted to address these behaviors, Dhanalakshmi would deflect, often playing the victim and blaming him for their issues. For instance, when Velu expressed concern about her phone being unavailable during his business trips, she would respond with excuses like, "I didn't receive your calls; I was talking to my parents," making him feel guilty for not trying harder. As time passed, Dhanalakshmi's behavior escalated into physical violence over trivial matters, such as an argument about not putting shoes in the right place. She would create dramatic scenes, manipulating Velu into feeling responsible for her reactions. Despite the emotional turmoil, Velu remained determined to salvage their marriage.

Turning Point: The turning point came when Velu directly questioned Dhanalakshmi about her intentions. This confrontation led to another escalation, where she resorted to gaslighting tactics, telling him, "You're the reason we have problems," while threatening to leave. After this confrontation, Dhanalakshmi left the house, declaring that Velu was responsible for everything that had happened. It took Velu two days to fully

grasp the situation's gravity. During this period, he experienced severe emotional and physical distress, marked by shaking and difficulty breathing. In a desperate attempt to reach her, Velu found her phone switched off. When he called her mother for clarity, he realized that Dhanalakshmi had left the country. I felt "It was like the unbearable weight pressing down on me." This revelation shattered Velu, leaving him feeling like a ghost of himself, unable to move or think clearly.

Stress and Trauma: The stress from this situation extended to Velu's family as well. His mother, already concerned about the unfolding drama, was hospitalized due to the overwhelming stress. Velu's experience illustrates the severe emotional, physical, and social impact of partner desertion. He struggled to concentrate on his studies, lost interest in hobbies he once loved, and found it increasingly difficult to sleep or maintain a social life. His relationships with friends and family began to deteriorate, compounded by his feelings of isolation and despair.

Conclusion: This case reveals the profound impact of emotional manipulation and partner desertion, affecting not just the individual but also their extended family. As Velu reflected on his experience, he recognized the painful truth: "Sometimes feelings are difficult to explain. I never wanted perfect; I always wanted real." His journey emphasizes the importance of trust and communication in relationships, as well as the long-lasting effects of emotional abuse and neglect. The need for supportive environments and open dialogues about emotional health cannot be overstated, as they play a crucial role in healing from such traumatic experiences.

Case 3

Background: Ananya, a 26-year-old woman, met Ajith, a 25-year-old man, on a matrimony site. They initially connected well, and as their conversations deepened, she believed they were building a solid foundation for marriage. However, unbeknownst to her, Ajith continued using various matrimony platforms to search for other potential matches while hiding this from her.

Relationship Dynamics: Throughout their year-long interaction, Ananya caught Ajith multiple times on other matrimony platforms. Each time she confronted him about this, he would turn the situation around, making her feel like she was the

problem for being suspicious. He often insisted that she had trust issues, leading her to question her judgment and feel guilty for doubting him. This constant manipulation caused her to apologize repeatedly, even though he was the one at fault, and she continued the relationship despite her concerns. As she reflected on her experiences, she voiced her profound disappointment, stating, "I believed in the future we were building together, but his betrayal has left me questioning everything I thought I knew about love and trust."

Monetary Support: During this time, Ananya provided Ajith with significant financial support, giving him over 5 lakhs from her savings. Despite the trust issues, they reached a point where he met her family, giving her hope for their future together. However, as she later realized, "It's not just the money or the time I lost; it's the dreams and hopes I had for us that are now shattered. I feel like I've lost a part of myself."

Turning Point: After a year, Ajith visited Ananya's home and proposed marriage, seemingly confirming their commitment. However, he started avoiding her just days later and eventually told her they shouldn't continue because of their differing economic statuses. He claimed she was too rich for him and that he couldn't match her standards. Shortly after she remembered his way of dodging tough situations in his office and he used to say "Honestly, acting clueless has saved me so many times" and she found out that he had been talking to another woman even before he visited her home and had planned to get engaged to this new person within a month. This revelation left her devastated. She thought, "He made me feel guilty for doubting him, turning my love into a weapon against me, How could he manipulate my feelings so cruelly?"

Emotional and Financial Impact: She realized that Ajith had been deceiving her all along. He had made her question her doubts and misled her emotionally while also taking financial advantage of her generosity. Despite having given him substantial financial support, he never spent money on her nor did he treat her to anything special during their time together. Now, even though she has cut ties with him, she remains uncertain about whether she should ask him to return the money she gave him. The emotional toll was immense; she felt emotionally exhausted, saying, "Every confrontation left me more drained and confused, as he twisted the truth and made me

question my sanity. I'm exhausted from the emotional rollercoaster he put me through."

Conclusion: This case demonstrates the emotional manipulation and financial exploitation that can occur in relationships formed on matrimony platforms. By making Ananya question her trustworthiness and causing her to feel responsible for their problems, Ajith was able to maintain control while benefiting financially. His abrupt abandonment, after a year of false promises, left her emotionally drained and financially burdened. She felt a deep sense of loss, realizing, "I supported him financially because I believed in our partnership. Now, I feel exploited and foolish for trusting him with my hard-earned savings." Ultimately, I was left with feelings of betrayal and exploitation, saying, "I opened my heart and my life to him, only to be deceived and discarded. The pain of his betrayal runs deeper than any wound".

As she sought closure, she remarked, "Even though I've cut ties with him, the injustice of what he did still haunts me. I deserve to reclaim not just my money but also my peace of mind and self-respect." The emotional aftermath left her questioning her self-worth: "his constant manipulation made me doubt my worth and my ability to trust my instincts. Now, I'm left wondering if I'll ever be able to trust again". Lastly, in her pursuit of healing, she expressed, "I need to heal from this trauma, but the scars he has left are deep. I hope that one day I can look back and see this as a lesson rather than just a painful memory".

Case 4

Background: This case centers on Rose a 27-year-old female who experienced her first romantic relationship with a colleague from work. They developed a close friendship over two years, during which she remained unaware of her growing feelings for him. When a new girl attempted to get close to him, she felt insecure but was reassured by her friend that he was not interested in anyone else. This reassurance led her to overlook her feelings for him.

Relationship Dynamics: Their friendship blossomed during a group trip, where mutual feelings surfaced, prompting him to ask her out. He proposed starting with a causal relationship, suggesting they could decide the future later. As someone who had never engaged in a romantic relationship or communicated with men before,

she felt uncertain but trusted his judgment. Initially hesitant about physical intimacy, she expressed her desire to wait until marriage. He questioned her resolve, asking, "Am I not the one?" This statement caused her to doubt herself, leading her to succumb to his pressure after three months of manipulation.

Turning Point: The relationship took a dark turn shortly after they became physical. The following day, he abruptly broke up with her, claiming he was depressed and unable to maintain a relationship. Her world shattered when she discovered he was dating the same girl he had previously dismissed. As she reflected on this betrayal, she thought, "How could he do this to me? I trusted him with my heart, my soul. He promised me that I was the only one, and I believed him...it's a lie; everything is a lie." His complete lack of remorse and tendency to blame her for their breakup deepened her sense of betrayal.

Emotional Impact: The emotional toll was profound; the experience marked her first relationship, leaving her heartbroken and vulnerable. "He shattered my heart into pieces, and I don't know if I can ever put them back together," she lamented. She felt manipulated and discarded, leading to an intense period of self-reflection and personal growth. "He made me doubt myself, question my values, and compromise my beliefs. He asked me if I was 'the one,' and I let myself believe I was. But now, I see that he was only manipulating me; He used my love and innocence against me," she expressed. As she grappled with her heartache, she found herself questioning everything about their relationship. She directed her pain into self-improvement, getting in shape, and pursuing a new career. The decision to cut ties completely, deleting mutual friends and his contact information, was a pivotal moment in reclaiming her sense of self. "Every promise he made feels like a cruel joke now," she expressed, feeling lost without the person she thought he was.

Conclusion: This case proves the complexities of first relationships, particularly when manipulation is involved. The emotional scars left by betrayal can be painful, yet they also provide an opportunity for personal growth and resilience. "I gave him everything I had-my first love, my trust, myself," she reflected. Moreover, it illustrates that physical intimacy does not equate to emotional commitment, reinforcing the moral that true love

is characterized by respect and consistency. "This experience has taught me that true love is not about physical intimacy or empty promises. It's about respect, consistency, and genuine care. If someone truly loves you, they will stay, no matter what. I deserve that kind of love, and I will not settle for anything less," she declared. As she moved on, she firmly stated, "But I needed to reclaim my life. I will heal." Yet, the pain of his betrayal was a wound that refused to heal, compounded by her inner conscience always asking her questions. "How do I move on when every memory of him feels like a dagger in my heart?" she pondered. Ultimately, she realized, "He took my first love and turned it into my worst nightmare. I feel so lost without the person I thought he was. He made me believe in love, only to destroy that belief completely. I gave him my all, and he left me with nothing but tears," she wept. In her search for closure, she questioned, "How could he pretend to care when all he did was manipulate and hurt me?" Navigating through her journey of healing and self-discovery, she emerged stronger, determined to embrace a future where she would not settle for anything less than genuine love.

Case 5

Background: John, a 25-year-old professional, had been in a committed relationship for nearly a decade. He and his partner began dating when they were just 15 years old, having been high school friends. Over the years, their bond deepened, and John envisioned a future with her. However, his world was turned upside down when his partner abruptly ended the relationship, leaving him without closure or explanation.

Relationship Dynamics: John and his partner shared a deep emotional connection, having grown together through various life stages. Their relationship, spanning nearly ten years, was built on trust, companionship, and shared aspirations. John was devoted to his partner and imagined spending his life with her. "She was my first love," he reflected, and "I wanted to marry her."

Turning Point: John's partner ended their relationship without warning. There was no conversation, no closure, just a sudden cessation of communication. "I thought she was avoiding me to keep me in check like she used to, but this time, it was final," John explained. The betrayal was compounded by the discovery that she had been unfaithful during the relationship and was now

dating the person she cheated with. John, grappling with confusion and heartbreak, likened the experience to mourning a loss. "It's like a death to me," he admitted. "It feels as though someone close to me has died."

Emotional Impact: The revelation had a profound effect on John's mental health. He described himself as emotionally devastated, unable to focus on work or personal goals. "I've been grieving a lot," he shared during therapy sessions. "The other person moves on, but the one who's left behind grieves endlessly." His feelings of abandonment led to insomnia, social withdrawal, and a deep-seated mistrust of others. John also acknowledged the impact the betrayal might have on future relationships. "I never had trust issues before," he noted. "But now, I'll carry this baggage into any new relationship."

Attempts to Cope: Despite the emotional toll, John attempted to focus on self-improvement. He turned to his friends for support and considered preparing for the CAT exam as a means of distraction. However, he admitted to struggling with the sympathy he received and found it difficult to fully engage with his coping mechanisms. Therapy sessions became a critical outlet for him to process his emotions. His psychiatrist noted signs of emotional distress and prescribed medication to help him sleep. Through these sessions, John began to confront the reality of his situation and work toward rebuilding his life.

Revelation and Reflection: John's story resonated with others who shared similar experiences. One peer advised him to view this heartbreak as a learning opportunity. "Our experiences mold us into the person we're meant to be," they reminded him. This perspective gave John hope, encouraging him to reflect on his journey and consider how the pain could lead to personal growth. John also found solace in the meaning of his name, which signifies "ever-flowing." This served as a metaphor for resilience and moving forward, even amidst the challenges of life.

Conclusion: John's case underscores the emotional, psychological, and social impact of unexpected relationship betrayal and abandonment. His story highlights the importance of emotional resilience, professional support, and self-reflection in navigating painful experiences. Through therapy and introspection, John began to

understand the importance of clarity and commitment in relationships. As he reflected, "It doesn't matter how perfect I try to be; one broken trust can shatter everything we've built together." This realization not only shaped his approach to future relationships but also served as a reminder of the strength required to rebuild after profound heartbreak.

Discussion

During the data collection phase, the researcher encountered several challenges. Some individuals were hesitant to share personal experiences due to the sensitive nature of the topic. The researcher addressed these concerns by emphasizing confidentiality and the importance of their stories for the research. Some participants experienced strong emotions when recounting their experiences, leading to moments of distress. The researcher maintained a supportive demeanour, allowing participants to take breaks if needed. In the meantime, they have shown various emotional signs reflected in their words. The intensity of their victimization can be inferred from these expressions, as detailed below.

"Among the many songs we sang, 'Yedho Ondru Yedho Ondru' from the movie 'Lesa Lesa', composed by Harris Jayaraj, held a special emotional connection for us and became our favorite." - Vijay.

"It's like a death to me, It feels as though someone close to me has died." - John.

Victims often experience a complex emotional journey marked by several distinct stages. Initially, there is a strong emotional connection where the victim is deeply invested in the relationship. This is followed by a phase of avoidance, where the abandoning partner begins to distance themselves emotionally or physically, leaving the victim in a state of confusion. As the relationship deteriorates, the abandoning partner may engage in manipulative behaviors, playing with the victim's emotions and fostering false hope.

"I'm exhausted from the emotional rollercoaster he put me through. The pain of betrayal cuts deeper than any wound. Even though I've cut ties, the injustice still haunts me." - Ananya.

"I thought she was avoiding me to keep me in check, she used to do that before. Please

don't play with my feelings just because you're unsure of yours" - Vijay.

Gaslighting, a common tactic, misleads the victim's perception of reality, making them question their judgment and experiences. Blame-shifting and guilt-tripping are also prevalent, where the victim is partially held responsible for the relationship's breakdown, further increasing their emotional turmoil. These toxic behaviors not only deepen the trauma of abandonment but also make recovery more challenging, as victims are left struggling with confusion, self-doubt, and a distorted sense of responsibility.

"He made me feel guilty for doubting him, turning my love into a weapon against me.

How could he manipulate my feelings so cruelly"? - Ananya.

"Every promise he made feels like a cruel joke now, how could he pretend to care when all he did was manipulate and hurt me? He took my first love and turned it into my worst nightmare." - Rose.

Victims often suffer a series of emotionally damaging stages that exacerbate their sense of betrayal and loss. Emotional abuse frequently surfaces, where the victim is manipulated and devalued, leading to a significant erosion of self-worth. Eventually, the victim reaches a stage of late realization, where the full impact of the abandonment becomes clear, often leading to feelings of betrayal, sadness and deep emotional distress.

"I'm an emotional wreck right now, I shouldn't have been alone at this time. At my core, I believe that nobody is reliable and everybody is going to eventually leave me." - Vijay.

"Feelings are difficult to explain. I never wanted perfect; I always wanted real." - Velu.

"This experience taught me that true love is about respect, consistency, and genuine care, not physical intimacy or empty promises. If someone truly loves you, they will stay. I deserve that love and won't settle for less." -

Rose.

These personal experiences also reflect deeper social issues. In many cases, societal attitudes toward gender roles, emotional expression and relationship responsibility contribute to how abandonment is handled or ignored. Moreover, there are no strong legal protections for emotional

neglect, leaving many victims without formal recognition or support. The lack of structured support systems, such as counselling or legal aid, forces abandoned individuals to cope alone. To address this issue, legal changes are needed to recognize abandonment as more than just a financial dispute. Society must also shift towards providing better emotional and economic support to those who have been left behind.

Role of Social Support and Emotional Impact

The stories shared by the participants show that having support from family or friends made a big difference in how they dealt with the pain of being abandoned. Those who had someone to talk to or who felt understood were able to manage their emotions better. But those who were alone or didn't have support felt sadder, confused and emotionally broken. Some participants, like Vijay and Rose, did not have much support and this made their healing process harder. Others, like Ananya, had a close friend who helped her feel stronger. Their feelings and reactions can be understood using psychological ideas like emotional trauma or grief. These kinds of emotional struggles show how important it is to have people around who care. Support from others can really help reduce the pain and speed up healing. Partner abandonment and its impact can differ across cultures and legal systems. While this study is rooted in the Indian socio-cultural setting, other countries may offer more structured legal protections or well-established support services such as counseling, shelters or financial aid. Future studies can look into how different societies handle these issues to understand what kind of support works best.

Key Insights

The relationship study provides key insights into victimization due to partner abandonment, emphasizing the importance of understanding its true implications. The cases presented offer empirical findings through some specific terms and victimization in relationships can be inferred from these toxic traits observed in real cases. These insights are valuable for developing innovations to identify such traits and offer appropriate coping mechanisms.

Manipulation: Controlling or influencing someone's behavior or emotions for one's benefit,

often without regard for their feelings or well-being.

Gas Lighting: Causing someone to doubt their own reality, memories, or perceptions, often by lying or denying the truth.

Controlling Behaviour: Excessive monitoring or dictating a partner's actions, decisions, and interactions with others.

Jealousy: Persistent and irrational suspicion or mistrust of a partner's interactions with others, often leading to possessiveness.

Lack of Communication: Refusal to openly discuss issues, feelings, or thoughts, leading to misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts.

Disrespect: Regularly belittling, mocking, or disregarding a partner's opinions, feelings, or needs.

Dishonesty: Frequent lying or withholding important information, breaking trust within the relationship.

Blame-Shifting: Refusing to take responsibility for one's actions and instead placing blame on the partner for any issues or problems.

Isolation: Preventing or discouraging a partner from maintaining relationships with friends, family, or social networks.

Neglect: Failing to give a partner the attention, affection, or support they need, making them feel undervalued or ignored.

Excessive Criticism: Constantly finding fault or criticizing a partner's actions, appearance or character, damaging their self-esteem.

Emotional Abuse: Behaviors such as verbal insults, threats, intimidation, or humiliation intended to control or harm a partner emotionally.

Financial Control: Controlling or limiting a partner's access to financial resources, making them financially dependent.

Love-Bombing: Overwhelming a partner with excessive affection and attention to manipulate or control them, often followed by withdrawal or manipulation.

Stonewalling: Refusing to engage in communication or discuss issues, effectively shutting down any attempts to resolve conflicts.

Inconsistency: Unpredictable behavior or mood swings that create an unstable and unreliable environment for the partner.

Guilt-Tripping: Making a partner feel guilty or responsible for one's own negative emotions or actions.

Implications for Mental Health Practice

The findings from this study can help mental health professionals understand the emotional and psychological struggles of individuals who face partner abandonment. Counselors and therapists can use these insights to design better support plans focused on trust-building, emotional regulation, and recovery from manipulation and gaslighting. These findings can also help professionals identify early signs of toxic relationships and offer timely interventions.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is limited by its small sample size, as only five cases were explored, which may not fully represent the wide range of experiences faced by individuals who experience partner abandonment. The use of convenience sampling through WhatsApp statuses may also limit the diversity of participants and may not include individuals who do not publicly express their emotional struggles. Additionally, the study is region-specific, focusing only on participants from the Tirunelveli district, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or geographical contexts. As interviews were conducted in Tamil and translated by the researchers, some emotional expressions may have lost their original depth. Despite these challenges, this research is valuable for mental health professionals, support groups and policymakers, offering insights that can guide better support systems. Future research can build on these findings by studying a wider group of people and following their emotional recovery over time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the case studies presented in this research provide a deep exploration of the multifaceted difficulties and challenges faced by individuals who experience victimization due to partner abandonment. There have been few studies conducted to assess this kind of victimization in the psychological era. Each case shows different patterns of relationship problems, abandonment tactics, and the resulting emotional, psychological, and financial victimization and also how abandonment, regardless of the relationship context, leads to severe distress, often compounded by manipulative behaviors like gaslighting, benching, and blame-shifting. These behaviors can be addressed through the

implementation of tailored interventions by mental health professionals and the establishment of legal safeguards, ensuring no harm is caused to any partner involved. Future research should continue to build on these profound insights to better understand the long-lasting effects of abandonment and develop effective coping strategies and techniques for those affected.

Abbreviations

None.

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Author Contributions

Arun Kumar G: Conceptualization, Resources, Methodology, Writing Original Draft, R Renjini: Resources, Interpretation of results, Review, Editing, MC Janaki: Editing, Supervision, R Sivakumar: Supervision, Final Proofing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Ethics Approval

Data for this study were collected with the informed consent of all respondents, ensuring their voluntary participation and understanding of the research purpose. Ethical guidelines were followed to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants throughout the study.

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