

**CHRIST**(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
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Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Deepthi Jose Maliakkal, Registration Number: 1951080, PhD Scholar at the School of Psychological Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Tuesday, 07 April 2026 at 10.00 am in Room No. 628, 6th Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

- Title of the Thesis** : **Exploring Emotional Abuse and Help-Seeking Behaviors among the Divorced and Separated: A Qualitative Study**
- Discipline** : **Psychology**
- External Examiner - I** : **Dr S Suresh**
Associate Professor
Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD)
Pennalur, Sriperumbudur
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- External Examiner - II** : **Dr Pooja Garg**
Associate Professor
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- Supervisor** : **Dr Viju P D**
Professor
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- Co-Supervisor** : **Dr Tony Sam George**
Professor (Former)
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The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva-voce examination.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 25 March 2026


Registrar (Academics)

ABSTRACT

Given the steadily escalating rates of divorce and separation in India, it becomes crucial to understand the factors that hinder marital satisfaction. Emotional abuse emerges as a pivotal yet often neglected factor for marital dissolution. This form of abuse can have lasting effects on both the individual and society as a whole. A significant challenge lies in the widespread inability to identify emotional abuse and the lack of knowledge regarding effective avenues for assistance. While there are several studies of Indian literature on emotional abuse, they have primarily concentrated on physical and sexual abuse, especially among women and childhood emotional abuse. There exists a paucity of studies addressing the nuances of emotional abuse in the context of Indian marriages. Therefore, this study delves into understanding emotional abuse behaviors, barriers, or facilitators to help-seeking among the separated and divorced population. For the purpose of this study, participants were selected through purposive sampling with permission and following the Institutional Review Board (RCEC/00387/12/22). Organisations that support survivors of domestic violence and provide legal assistance were used to recruit participants. All potential participants were screened using the HITS (Hurt, Insult, Threat, Scream) screening tool by Sherin et al. (1998). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 divorced and separated participants (9 male and 6 female) aged between 28 and 52 years. The data collected was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an inductive approach that captures the nuances and depth of participants' experiences, with the help of the Atlas.ti 23 software. The findings reveal the manifestation of emotional abuse in marital relationships, its effects on self, obstacles and opportunities for seeking help, and the distress and gender biases in legal proceedings. The implications of this study include implementing policy and legislative changes, such as laws for emotional abuse and cruelty, inclusive of genders, and publicising legislative information to safeguard all individuals. Additionally, raising awareness of emotional abuse and educating young couples on early intervention.

Keywords: Emotional Abuse, Help-Seeking, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Atlas.ti

Publications:

1. **Maliakkal, D. J., & George, T. S. (2023).** Emotional Abuse and the Pandemic in India: Implications for Policy, Research, and Practice. *Partner Abuse, 15*(1), 95-115. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/PA-2023-0023>
2. **Maliakkal, D. J., & George, T. S. (2025).** Separated/Divorced Individuals' Experiences with the Legal System in India: A Qualitative Inquiry. *Family Transitions, 66*(6), 409-444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/28375300.2025.2524666>