

Perception of Women towards Family Values and Their Marital Satisfaction

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Abstract: The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between perceptions of women toward Iranian traditional values and their marital satisfaction. The 337 of women were selected as the population of the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select samples. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) is used to measure marital satisfaction. It shows a positive relationship between perception of women toward traditional values (inequality in family affairs and inequality in regulation) and marital satisfaction. It has also shown that there is no relationship between perception of women toward traditional values of inequality in access job and inequality in political in relation to marital satisfaction. The multivariate regression analysis is utilized to answer the last objective. The analysis showed that among the two predictor variables, the variable of inequality in affairs was found to be significant in explaining the observed variation in marital satisfaction (DV). Generally, the final model has explained 4.6% of total observed variance in marital satisfaction. The findings show one reflection of the inequality and discrimination that there is in family affairs and inequality in regulation between men and women in the Iranian society. The findings highlight the need for screening and identification of other factors and unequal situations in the family and society in which women are growing. [Journal of American Science 2010;6(4):132-137]. (ISSN: 1545-1003).

Keywords: Family Values, Marital Satisfaction, Women perception.

1. Introduction

This article examines the relationship between perceptions of women toward Iranian traditional values and marital satisfaction. Accumulating evidence indicates that new women generation in Iran challenges traditional values. Research showed that the degree of modernity and liberalism are variables that have a significant effect on marital satisfaction. Research has consistently demonstrated that women are rejecting the old values in society, and consider the women status is lower than men. Since the 1960s, there has been a sudden and sharp decline in marriage rates, an increase in the age at marriage, and a significant increase in divorce rates in all over the world. The roots of these changes are in the demographic transition arising out of the social and economic developments of the last century. This is also true in Iran. In this country, the structure of family is changing and is under the processes of structuring and restructuring continuously. Therefore, any attitude towards family should benefit from the new generation's attitude toward the concept of family as well as the society values. This will ensure a permanent and sustainable development of value-system with respect to individuals' rights regardless of their gender. In the context of the current research, female understands and even experiences the gender differences may

separate her from the opposite gender within family, and even cause certain behaviors and reflections from other fellows toward her (Ehzazi, 2002). Therefore, female always select and develop family values and cultural models from among these male-oriented views. This perception is, however, observed to differ in degree and intensity across human society and must be separately investigated prior to any generalizations. Studies focusing on people's understanding and perception of social and psychological structures require drawing a comprehensive and illustrative sketch of the context of the study.

Marriage, as the first issue to discuss in the context of this study, has obtained the most controversial debates in Iran for many years. While monogamy was commonly practiced by the majority of people, polygamy has been in Iran from many years ago, and Islam has emphasized on this custom and state's civil law originated from Islamic jurisprudence permits it. Although, currently in Iran polygamy is committed rarely, yet it remains as an addressed issue of certain criticism for the Iranian society. The history of Iran is known as masculine dominant history, i.e. Iranian culture has been masculine-oriented (Sarookani, 2005). In other words, families have been under the influence of the fathers. For instance, children would have the father's

surname in as their surname and the father in the family would decide on future marriages of the family members. Undoubtedly, the Islamic values and the Islamic teachings, which have shaped the way of life in the Iranian society for many centuries, will continue to support the patriarchal family framework for family decision-making, individual behavior and action. Sexual behavior will continue to be controlled within this framework. Family and the state will discourage sexual activities out of marriage by various methods and heavy punishments. Hence, marriage will continue to be a marked transitional stage in life of an individual and family will have primacy in mate selection.

The unit of family is the second issue of concern in this discussion. When more social cooperation and organizations have more interrelations, the family duties decrease, i.e. when social organizations such as insurances, hospitals and education departments are more developed, the family duties become less significant, as some of these functions are performed by these social organizations. The changes in the functions of the families become so vast and important that it is not possible to consider family as a productive unit. Nowadays, family has delivered the production to industry and is considered as a consumer unit. In Iran, like other countries, the functions of the family have changed and will keep changing in line with economic advancements which are rapidly affecting the family forms regarding their values.

The other issue of a prime concern is the observed changes of attitudes and values across generations in the Iranian society. Since two decades ago, women have some independence and are able to benefit from social and economic advantages. Apparently, because of the economic and social changes and the urbanization, the influence of Western attitudes through mass media and internet, the Iranian young generations seem to be changing with respect to religious affairs. Nowadays, the youths continue to study and think that it is necessary to be educated. This may reveal the reason why the marriage age has increased (Sadeghi & Kalhor, 2007). In the past, boys didn't have freedom to marry any girl they liked. Family-arranged marriages were so common that they had to marry the girl recommended by their parents. Contrary to this tradition, today the situation is different. Kinship network has been replaced with social system of values. Therefore, today marriage factors are mostly social ones and are directly related to the youths, and not their parents. All the things aforesaid are the factors justifying why marriage age is increasing, and people marry at older ages; that is why there are more unmarried people in the villages and cities, and the family is a device for the youths to

find their ways to socialize and enter into the bigger community. As women become more aware of their right and try to employ it, this would lead to higher number of divorces for women, where they are in abusive marriage relationships. Interestingly, it was found out that higher education and formal employment of women are both correlated with divorce rate (Riyahee, Aliverdynia, & Bahrami Kakavand, 2006).

The Iranian society is passing from a traditional society to a modern status; therefore, the Iranian families, especially the women in these families, have always been traditionally facing more problems compared to other family members. In other words, the modern society values on the one hand and the current views on the other hand, put the woman in appalling conditions. Yet, the adoption of Western ideas in all aspects of life by younger generations will be a continued source of stress on family. This will also reinforce the existing male and female conflict and dissatisfaction in their relationship, where young generation of women is exposed to the gender egalitarian values of western culture. They look for new values that consider them equal as men. This article studies the relationship between perception of women toward Iranian traditional family values and marital satisfaction. The general objective of this study is to determine the relationships between perception of women toward family values and marital satisfaction among married women. Specifically, the objectives were to describe the perception of women toward Iranian traditional family values and marital satisfaction; to examine the relationships between Iranian family values (inequality in getting job, regular, family affairs and politic) and female marital satisfaction; and to determine the factor which predicts marital satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Marital satisfaction is related to general happiness and pleasure with the relationships between couples. Marital satisfaction means a good feeling of marriage. Kaplan & Maddux (2002) stated that marital satisfaction is an individual experience in marriage which can only be evaluated by each person in response to the degree of marital pleasure. They believed that, it depends upon the individual's expectations, needs, and desires in their marriage. Marital satisfaction refers to the degree of satisfaction between couples. This would mean the degree of satisfaction they feel with their relationship. This satisfaction could be addressed both from the perspective of wife toward the husband, or the husband toward the wife. Nowadays, because of new values and changes in the societies, cultures, women

situations, and women educations, the women's expectation toward marital relationship has also been changed. As mentioned by Chafez, (1992):

“The average, once acceptable marriage increasingly becomes re-conceptualized by many women as short on intimacy and equality and therefore as unacceptable. The feminist message functions to raise the ideal standards or expectations against which marriages are increasingly measured, and therefore raises the frequency with which they will be found wanting” (p. 18)

Women's greater involvement in higher education has brought about a change in attitudes towards traditional marital roles, family values, and difficulties in reconciling changing roles within their marriage (Chafetz, 1992; Beck, 1995). According to Bureau of the Census (1992):

“Younger people in the U.S. who are marrying for the first time face roughly a 40-50% chance of divorcing in their lifetime under current trends” (p. 5).

With respect to the context of the current Iranian condition, Shadi Talab (2001) believes that at present times there is more agreement with women's employment outside the house, girls' marriage with non relatives, acquiring knowledge, equal cooperation of both partners in housework and opposition to polygamy. Among the educated women, it was found that the higher the educational level, the greater is the marital satisfaction. They have more hope and faith in life and there is more connection between their ideals and realities. Meanwhile, Shachar (1991) studied marital satisfaction with a sample of 206 couples who were married up to four years for the first time. The result revealed a degree of modernity and liberalism and the husband's desire to marry were variables that had a significant effect on marital satisfaction. On the other hand, Danesh & Heydarian (2006) investigated the relationship between mutual interest and respect among couples and their marital satisfaction. Result showed that couples, and also men and women, who were more respectful and loved their spouses, were more satisfied in their married life. There was a positive correlation between the amount of respect and love among couples. The couples who were respectful to their spouses were more satisfied of their married life. Also, couples who loved their spouses will be more satisfied of their married life as well.

3. Research Methodology

A study was carried out in Shiraz City, Fars Province, Iran. Iran is an Islamic country, with its population of approximately 70,000,000 people (Iran Statistical Centre, 2006). The majority of Iranians practice the

Shiite sect of Islam. In the study, a number of 337 women were selected as the respondents. Stratified random sampling was used to select samples. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) is used to measure the marital satisfaction (Schumm, Bugaighis, Paff-Bergen, Hatch, Obiorah, Meens, & Copeland, 1986). The satisfaction of the respondents towards their marital relationship was evaluated through this scale. It includes three questions in which the responses range from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied). The sum of these three responses was the total score. This scale is reported to have high internal consistency with alphas ranging from 0.89 to 0.98 and high inter-correlations among items ranging from 0.93 to 0.95 (Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, & Grisby, 1983). In this study, the level of marital satisfaction reported by women was used. In this particular study, the alpha reliability of women marital satisfaction was observed as 0.95.

Meanwhile, to assess the perceptions of women toward family values, a family value scale was used. The scale was a combination of four sub-scales that contains of inequality in family affairs, inequality in employment, inequality in regulation implementation and inequality in political issues. This scale comprises 49 items. There are 25 items about negative aspects and 24 items about positive features of gender inequality and values exhibited in Iranian society. Women's opinions related to the family values have been categorized under the five groups of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. For example, inequality in family affairs relates to free selection of the husband (without the permission and satisfaction of father and elder brother as an example), similar rights of man and woman for getting divorce (divorce right, etc.), family directorship (man's right), marriage proposal (man's right), man's ability to prevent his wife from choosing a job that is against the benefits and interests of the family, the guardianship of children (to be undertaken by father and grandfather), men's polygamy, training and taking care of children, housework and duties and providing family expenses (to be undertaken by men). Women's opinions related to the traditional values of Iran have been categorized under the five groups of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and multiple regressions were employed in this research in order to achieve the stated objectives..

4. Results and Discussions

In this section, the descriptive data is presented in Table 1 which includes the perception of women toward Iranian family values and marital satisfaction.

Table 1: Perception of Women toward Iranian Traditional Family Values and Their Marital Satisfaction

Variables	n	%	Mean	SD.
Perception towards family values			50.23	7.03
<i>Inequality in Family Affairs</i>				
Agreed With Tradition Values (<43)	59	17.5		
Somewhat agreed (43-59)	253	75.1		
Not Agreed with Tradition Values (>59)	25	7.4		
<i>Inequality in Regulations</i>			36.83	8.45
Agreed (<32)	103	30.6		
Somewhat agreed (32-46)	198	58.8		
Not Agree (>46)	36	10.7		
<i>Inequality in Access to Job</i>			22.07	5.66
Agreed (<20)	130	38.6		
Somewhat agreed (20-31)	191	56.7		
Not Agreed (>31)	16	4.7		
<i>Inequality in Politics</i>			14.53	4.74
Agreed (<14)	179	53.1		
Somewhat agreed (14-22)	140	41.5		
Not Agree (>22)	18	5.3		
Marital Satisfaction (n=337)			15.40	5.82
Low (<9)	72	21.4		
Medium (9-15)	65	19.3		
High (>15)	200	59.3		

The participants for this study were 337 women (wives). For “the mean for family affairs” it was observed to be $M=50.23$, $SD=7.04$. Approximately, 59 (17.5%) of the respondents have agreed with traditional family values, while 253 (75.1%) were located as mediocre and 25 (7.4%) were found to disagree with the traditional values. It can be interpreted that majority of the respondents were either be unsupportive to the traditional values or were examining their position to adopt the new family values. For the values of inequality in politics, it was observed that $M=14.53$, $SD=4.74$; for values inequality in access to job $M=22.07$, $SD=5.67$; for inequality in family affairs $M=50.23$, $SD=7.03$, while for inequality in regulations $M=36.83$, $SD=8.45$. Generally, majority of the respondents were in the medium level (somewhat agreed) of the four domains of perceptions of family values. However, when high level (agreed) and the low level (not agreed) of the perception towards family values is compared, more respondents were found to be in the high level in all four domains of perceptions. It reflects that more respondents perceived the occurrence of inequalities in family affairs, regulations, access to job and politics compared to those who disagreed. In Iranian culture, there are new values emerged in relations to family values.

The other variable in this tabulated data represents the “level of marital satisfaction”. As shown in Table 1, the level of their marital satisfaction is high, where the calculated mean was $M=15.40$ and the standard deviation was $SD=5.82$. From this total figure, 72 (21.4%) of respondents had low satisfaction, and 65 (19.3%) had medium satisfaction, whereas, 200 (59.3%) had a high level of marital satisfaction.

The Pearson’s product-moment correlation test was utilized to determine the relationship between perception of women toward four types of Iranian traditional values (inequality in affairs, inequality in regulation, inequality in access job and inequality in political) and marital satisfaction. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient (r) between Inequality in Affairs, Inequality in Regulation, Inequality in access Job, and Inequality in Political

Variables	Marital Satisfaction
Inequality in affairs	.212**
Inequality in regulation	.143**
Inequality in access job	-.035
Inequality in political	-.003

**P \leq .01; *p \leq .05

The results show that there are positive and significant relationships between marital satisfaction and perception of women toward inequality in family affairs, $r = .212$ and $p < 0.01$; and towards inequality in regulation, $r = .143$ and $p < 0.01$. However, there are no significant relationships between marital satisfaction and perception towards inequality in access job, $r = -.035$ and $p < 0.05$; and towards inequality in politics, $r = -.003$ and $p < 0.05$.

The Multivariate Regression Analysis was used to answer the last objective. The analysis shows that from the four predictor variables, only inequality in family affairs was found to be significant in explaining the observed variation in marital satisfaction (the dependent variable). Generally, the final model has explained only 4.6% of total observed variance of marital satisfaction.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis of the Main Variables Contributing to Marital Satisfaction

Predictors of marital satisfaction	Unstandardized coefficients	Std. Error	Beta Unstandardized coefficients	t
constant	6.450	2.250		2.866
*Sum famil	.156	.052	.188	3.005
**Sum ineq	.031	.043	.044	0.710

R² = 4.6

*Sum famil = Sum family affairs

** Sum ineq = Sum inequality in family regulation

The regression model shows that inequality in family affairs is one of the most important factors that play a great role in women marital satisfaction in Iranian society. Marital satisfaction means good feeling of marriage.

The findings of this study imply that women gradually understand the traditional family values in their society as against their rights, and thus some of them reject these values. After their marriage, women are more in contact with all sections of the society and turn out to be more familiar with the values and norms found in their society. Today, women with higher education have more awareness about the rights and outlook for equality in their lives; thus, they reject traditional values and norms which may consider them as second class members of their families. The findings of the study show that there

was an increase in the number of modern women turned out to be more satisfied with their lives. As the women become more knowledgeable, the level of marital satisfaction might also increase. It is believed, modern women can think well than traditional women because they have more relation and connection with other people, where they can spend more times with their friends. In terms of hobby and entertainments, modern women looked more satisfied compare to the traditional women. Modern women understand that if there is any inequality in the society, it belongs to the structure of their society that must be change. In the society of Iran nowadays, women are more educated compared from the past. They are more knowledgeable in spite of the existence of so many difficulties in their relationship, and new generation struggle to discover, learn and adopt new values. Being more knowledgeable of the new values make them more aware about their rights and lives in the society.

5. Conclusion

As we can see, finding showed that women had low level of perception towards family values (inequality in family affairs and inequality in regulation), and also towards government rules. However, these inequalities belong to the past and old generation, and must be changed in all section of the society, especially in the governmental sections. Today, women learned new values through their formal educations, and through the mass media in their society. Moreover, Bandura (1977) stated that most learning takes place indirectly by modeling, which entails receiving information by observing others. It means that observer extracts underlying rules inside the behavior. This theory clearly recognizes the fact that people can learn behavior without directly experiencing and in absence of any rewards (new values and norms). The presence of modernization, new ideas and values in our society, influence the women to go against women discriminations and want to effect change in all sections of the society, especially in the families. They emphasize that these changes must be accepted by society and government.

As a conclusion, our society is passing from a traditional to a modern society. In this situation, compared to men women are more facing difficulty and problem. However, with the increased level of their education, the percentage of their employment in all the sections of the society is also increased. They will become more participative in social activity, such that, it also increases the activities where boys and girls will have more contacts and relations with each other. Through these contacts

they can be more familiar with new norms and values, and therefore, they will know each other better than before. Such contacts will allow them to choose their suitable partners, and this could lead them living happily and feeling satisfy after marriage. In order to have a better society and more satisfied women, the unequal rules (norms), especially those that cause female unsatisfied in their marital relation, the inequalities between male and female that are found in all sections of society must be changed..

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