**Women, Values** **and 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 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.

**Keywords:** Value,Family Values, Marital Satisfaction, Women, Women perception.

**1. Introduction**

This article examines the relationship between perceptions of women toward Iranian traditional values and marital satisfaction. Rapidly accumulating evidence indicates that new women generation in Iran challenges traditional values. Research showed that degree of modernity and liberalism was variables that had a significant effect on marital satisfaction. Research has consistently demonstrated that women are rejecting the old values that there is in the society and consider women lower that 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 around the world. The roots of these changes are in the demographic transition arising out of the social and economic developments of the last century (Cherlin, 1992). This is also correct about Iran. In Iran 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 understand and even experience across life that from birth the gender differences may separate her from the opposite gender within family and even cause certain behaviours 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. The following explanation is attempted to serve this purpose. The role of religion, the significance of family and the interactions between these elements are elaborated on in the following section. Iran is an Islamic country in the Middle East. Its population is approximately 70,495,782 people, which share Islam as formal religion with other countries in the region (Iran Statistical Centre, 2006). The majority of Iranians practice the Shiite sect of Islam.

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 this ancient country from many years ago and Islam has emphasized on this custom and state’s civil law originated from Islamic jurisprudence permits it. 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, that is, 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 of 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 behaviour and action. Sexual behaviour 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 fewer and fewer, 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 not their parents. All the things aforesaid are the factors justifying why marriage age is increasing and people marry in older ages in our community; that is why we see 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 thiers right and try to use it, this would lead to higher number of divorces for women who are in abusive marriage relationships. Interestingly it was found out that higher education and formal employment of women are both correlated with divorce (Riyahee, Aliverdynia, & Bahrami Kakavand, 2006).

Concluding this discussion it must be mentioned that, the movement and evolution of ideas and the expansion of values- in other words the process of globalization and industrialization- continue to increase in future. Moreover, the adoption of Western ideas in all aspects of life by the Iranian younger generations is a continued source of stress on family.

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 bad 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 unsatisfied in their relationship with their husband, as young generation of women will be 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 values and marital satisfaction.

**2. Literature**

Marital satisfaction means general happiness and pleasure with the relationships between couples. Marital satisfaction means good feeling of marriage. Kaplan & Maddux (2002) states 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 belive 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. In these years because of new values and changes in the societies, cultures, women situations, and women educations the women’s expectation toward marital relationship has been changed. As mentioned by Chafez, (1992, p. 18):

“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.”

Women’s greater involvement in higher education has brought about a change in attitudes towards traditional marital roles, 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.

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.

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 Method**

The population of the study includes all married women above 18 years of age. This study does not include single or divorced women since these people either had not started their married family or did not have a complete family. In this study, the target population was the women in Iran. But the accessible population was the women in south of Iran, Shiraz city. The southeast province in this study refers to Fars province. Since Iran is a very big country that includes 30 provinces, it is impossible for the researcher to reach a representative sample of women throughout the country. Shiraz city in the Fars, Iran is the research area of this study. The 337 of women were selected as the population of the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select samples.

The KMS is used to measure marital satisfaction (Schumm, Bugaighis, Paff-Bergen, Hatch, Obiorah, Meens, & Copeland, 1986). The satisfaction of the respondents with their marital relationship was evaluated through this scale. It includes three questions whose 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.

Iranian family Values scale is 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 comprising of 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 traditional values of Iran have been categorized under the five groups of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. To assess the perceptions of women toward Iranian family values, this scale was used.

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 minor 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 regression were employed in this research in order to test the hypotheses and answer of the research questions.

**4. Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to determine the relationships between perception of women toward Iranian traditional values and marital satisfaction among married women in Shiraz city, Iran. However, the clustered variables are subdivided into the following specific objectives:

* 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
* To determine the factor which predicts marital satisfaction

**5. Results**

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 Marital Satisfaction**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **n** | **%** | **Mean** | **SD.** |
| Inequality in Family Affairs |  |  | 50.23 | 7.03 |
| Agree With Tradition Values (<43) | 59 | 17.5 |  |  |
| Medium (43-59) | 253 | 75.1 |  |  |
| Not Agree with Tradition Values (>59) | 25 | 7.4 |  |  |
| Inequality in Regulations |  |  | 36.83 | 8.45 |
| Agree (<32) | 103 | 30.6 |  |  |
| Medium (32-46) | 198 | 58.8 |  |  |
| Not Agree (>46) | 36 | 10.7 |  |  |
| Inequality in Access to Job |  |  | 22.07 | 5.66 |
| Agree (<20) | 130 | 38.6 |  |  |
| Medium (20-31) | 191 | 56.7 |  |  |
| Not Agree (>31) | 16 | 4.7 |  |  |
| Inequality in Politics |  |  | 14.53 | 4.74 |
| Agree (<14) | 179 | 53.1 |  |  |
| Medium (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 (N=337). 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 of the four domains of perceptions of family values. However, when high level (agree) and the low level (not agree) of the perception towards family values are compared, more respondents were found to be in the high level from 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, according to female reports, the level of their marital satisfaction is high, where the calculated mean M=15.40 and the standard deviation was SD=5.82. From this total figure, 72 (21.4%) of respondents have low satisfaction, and 65 (19.3%) have medium satisfaction. However, 200 (59.3%) have a high level of marital satisfaction.

**Table 2: Correlation between Inequality in Affairs, Inequality in Regulation, Inequality in access Job, and Inequality in Political**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Correlation Coefficient ( r ) | |  |
| Marital Satisfaction |  |  |
| Inequality in affairs | .212\*\* |  |  |
| Inequality in regulation | .143\*\* |  |  |
| Inequality in access job  Inequality in political | -.035  -.003 |  |  |

\*\*P≤.01

\*p≤.05

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. There was a positive and significant relationship between perception of women toward inequality in family affairs and marital satisfaction where, r = .212 and p<0.01.

There was a positive and significant relationship between Inequality in Regulation and marital satisfaction where, r = .143 and p<0.01. As it can be seen, inequality in regulation was positively correlated with marital satisfaction.

There was no significant relationship between Inequality in Access Job and marital satisfaction where, r = -.035 and p<0.05. There was no significant relationship between Inequality in Political and marital satisfaction where, r = -.003 and p<0.05 (Table 2).

The Multivariate Regression Analysis was used to answer the last objective. The analysis showed that from the four predictor variables, only inequality in family 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 to marital satisfaction.

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Predictors of DV | | Unstandardized coefficients | | Std. Error | Beta  Unstandardized coefficients | t | p-value |
| constant | | 6.45 | | 2.25 |  | 2.86 | .004 |
| \*Sum famil | | .156 | | .052 | .1881 | 3.009 | .003 |
| \*\*Sum ineq | | .031 | | .043 | .044 | 710 | .487 |
|  |  | |
|  | |  | |  |  |  |  |

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.

**6. Discussion**

Women gradually understand regarding traditional values in the society as against women’s rights and why at this time they rejected all and do not want obey these discriminations. Women after marriage are more in contact with all sections of the society and turned out to be more familiar with the values and norms present in the society. Today women with higher education have more awareness about the rights and outlook for equality in their lives, thus, they reject all values and norms which may consider the women as second member of the family.

Findings shown that 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 also increased. Modern women can think better than traditional women because they have more relation and connection with other people. They can spend more times with their friends. In terms of hobby and entertainments, modern women looked more satisfied compare with 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 increase their knowledge in the society, in spite of the existence of so many difficulties in their relationship, new generation tried to discover and learn new values in the society and also in the world. Increasing their knowledge will make them more aware about their rights and lives in the society.

**7. Conclusion**

As we can see, finding showed that women are unsatisfied with the values in the society (inequality in family affairs and inequality in regulation) and especially the government rules. These inequalities belong to the past and old generation and must be changed in all section of the society especially in the government sections. Today, women learned new values in their educations or in the society through the mass mass media, as Bandura (1977) states that most learning takes place indirectly by modelling, which entails receiving information by observing others. It means that observer extracts underlying rules inside the behaviour. This theory clearly recognizes the fact that people can learn behaviour without directly experiencing and in absence of any rewards (new values and norms). The presence of modernization, new ideas and values in the world and in our society, there is women suffrage over these discriminations and want to effect change in all sections of the society especially in the families. They emphasized that these changes must be accepted by society and government. If the rules change then we can hope that other section can be changed easily.

As a conclusion, we can mention that our society is passing from a traditional to a modern society. In this situation, women compare with men are more to face difficulty and problem. With increased level of their knowledge, increases the percentage of their employment in all the sections of the society. They will become more participative in social activity, such that, it also increases the activities that boys and girls will have more contacts and relations with each other. They can be more familiar with new norms and values, therefore, they will know each other better than before and they can get married having to know each other better compared to the situation that they do not know each other at all. In addition, their knowledge for choosing their partner will increase, thus in future, they will live with their husbands having less conflict so the level of their marital satisfaction will be increased.

**8. Limitation of the study**

The study was not able to study the male partners, because they are not accessible and only women were studied. This study collects information only from women due to financial cost and time constraints (Armstrong et. al., 2002).

**9. Recommendations**

For having better society and more satisfied women the unequal rules especially those that cause female unsatisfied in their marital relation, those that consider women lower than men and the inequalities that there are in all sections of society must be changed. For this reason, government must change these rules causing this inequality between male and female.

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