

Power, Motivation and Females Aggression, a Qualitative Study

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Abstract: This study examines qualitatively the motivation of women about power and effect on female's aggression. The research studied ten women, who were already registered in counselling clinics, whom suffered from aggression (physical and psychological). The results revealed that the females have pointed out they do not want to have dominance on their husbands but they were looking for equality in their relationship. Female aggression was a part of the partners attempt for power.

Key words: Power, wives aggression, female aggression, motivation, behaviour, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to highlight the relationship between power and wives aggressive. The qualitative data for this study was based on a study which was carried out among ten wives, who had referred to the clinic. In the study, power has been accounted for as an independent variable to sketch its most probable contribution to aggression. However, the findings of this study have pointed out factors, such as effort for equalize power, responsible for the female aggression. Female aggression can be environmentally affected by several factors in the family. A review of literature exhibits and demonstrates many researches on the effect of psychological characteristics on female aggression worldwide. The relationship between power with female aggression has not been extensively and deeply researched with respect to the Iranian context. Even though, numerous researchers have investigated on aggression of men (Anderson and Huesmann, 2003; Felson, 2006; Olweus, 1978; Shams Esfandabadi and Emamipour, 2003) and very less studies have explored on the female aggression in Iran. This study is concerned about the power and female aggression all in relevance to the ecological systems theory and social learning theory.

Theoretical framework: Bronfenbrenner (1979) is the primary contributor to the ecological systems theory. The general system consists of four levels: micro-system, meso-system, exo-system and macro-system levels. According to the framework, four systems which include roles, norms and rules that shape development can explain individual behaviour. According to this study, aggression occurs dynamically and in two levels of individual and familial, while both couples play roles in its formation. As aggression is considered mutual, in order to control it, it's

not enough to treat men only. Moreover, its success hugely depends on the other party to be willing to decrease and control the aggression. The variables used for the study are hereby explained as they relate to the theory. The domains of the ecological systems theory examined are: Micro and Macro systems.

Micro-systems: A setting in which the individual lives is referred to as the micro system (Kail and Cavanaugh, 2004). In this level aggression (physical and psychological) can happen and is comprised of patterns of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced in a given face-to-face setting. Inadequate or non cordial relationship between spouses at the micro level may result into aggression. As an example, some women cannot obtain equal power and right in the family (dominance) and as such they become dissatisfied because of their husbands ignoring attitude. Women are exposed to inequality with regard to the power equation in the family, these results into their exhibition of aggressive tendencies in the family. At this level, great emphasis is placed on how women perceive the characteristics of the environment as it relates to them.

Macro-system: The macrosystem stands for the several institutions of a society, which consists of political, religious, economic and educational system. These institutions have established traditions which subjugate woman. However, the rapidly advancing change in the world highlights the equality of men and woman in all strata of society. This advancing change in the world serves as an eye opener to woman and thus increases their tendency to be aggressive towards their male counterparts, husbands and the existing traditional values in the society. The second theory that can explain the female aggression is social learning theory. 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 that fact that people can learn behaviour without directly experiencing and in absence of any rewards (equal power in the family). However, rewards are very important in motivating people to later perform the behaviour, in case of the current research, the equality of situation in the family compare with their husband.

From another broad perspective, human being learn to behave in each culture through observing other men and women in that culture (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, they accept those aspects of culture which are more attractive to them. The same is true about women in Iran. Through observing equality of men and women in developing countries, they have learnt and internalized such values and react against traditional values that consider women lower than men. Because of awareness and feminist activities, women have reached sufficiency. So they think they are able to revolutionize.

According to this theory, women in the society learn new values and norms that consider them equal in all aspect of their lives (equal power in their relation). These new family values consider male and female as human and only have some differences biologically but their rights and values are equal. Also this theory can show that women internalized to have equal power in their relationship. When men do not want consider such rights and equally women will react aggressively with them. The social learning theory, believes that people have learnt much of their norms and values from their parents, friends, school as well as the area where they live (Bandura, 1977). With respect to the context of the present research, as new values are being exerted at the levels of Iranian families, school, religion and society, accordingly people are likely to learn these values and behaviours and make them internal.

Literature review: Theoreticians have different ideas about conceptualizing aspects of dominance in families, however, many scholars use the term decision making for dominance in families. When it is questioned, who holds authority, it specifically refers to decision making in families. There are many researches showed that dominance has been linked with female aggression. Researchers described a strong relationship between dominance and female aggression (Hamby, 1996). Hamby (1996) defines dominance as any attempts that a life partner makes to take control over the other partner.

He mentioned three different forms of dominance, i.e., authority, restrictiveness and disparagement. Sarookani (2005) has defined dominance in terms of the decision maker within family. The person who makes the final decision is the dominant person. When one of the couple wants to have more control and dominance, the aggression is more possible. In the other words, it is an inevitable part of human life discussed in different aspects of society including families.

A study by Straus (2008) shows that almost 1/3 of females as well as male students have physically assaulted their dating partners in the 12 months of study period. The findings showed that the rates for any violence ranged from as low as 16 and 17% in Portugal and Sweden, respectively, to as high as 44 and 77% in Mexico and Iran, respectively. The results show that the rates of severe assault ranged from a low rate of 1.7 and 4% in Sweden and Malta respectively, to a high rate of 19.8 and 23.2% in Tanzania and Taiwan, respectively, followed by 16.5 and 16.3% in Mexico and Iran, respectively (Straus, 2008). Statistics has ranked Iran as the fourth most critical nation for domestic, family violence (Straus, 2008). Although, he has elaborated on the role of dominance for both males and females collectively, the two groups are studied separately as well. The percentage of severely violated relationship by both male and female for Iran has been observed to be around 66%. The relatively high percent of disturbed relationships is assumed to threaten the foundation of family and the society consequently.

There are three relationships after marriage based on Coleman and Strauss (1986) such as equality, men's dominance and women's dominance. In their study, they found that the presence of equality in a relationship had the least amount of fights but men's dominance and women's dominance relationship had the highest risk for violence.

Another finding shows that women aggression is due to an effort in equalizing the relationship that causes female aggression, as Adi (2007) argued that an effort to equalize power is one of the motivations for female aggression. The aim of her study was to recognize how women aggression impacts the couples in situational violent relationships and to realize the motivation for the women to use aggression against their husband. She found that the reasons for women aggression against their partner were due to certain conditions such as a desire to equalize the dominance in the relationship, to release built up tension, abandonment, wanting control and retribution.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Shiraz city in the Fars, Iran is the research area of this study. The study adopted the qualitative procedure to investigate wives' motivation for power and women's aggression. The researcher believes that qualitative research approach provides better and more exact results than the quantitative ones. Qualitative approach of research can explore and identify the problem in depth provided that trust exists between researcher and the participants and that there is a friendly and confidential environment provided for the participants. However, there was a limitation regarding the women, who were referred to the clinics. This issue was due to the existing traditional attitude. Not all women from different ethnic and social groups were referred to the clinics and thus the sample for this study may not be a true representative of the aggressive women population. Moreover, this study did not include divorced women.

Ten women were purposively selected and interviewed. These criteria for a safe and representative sample were thoughtfully determined in such a way to inclusively represent the spectrum of women participating in the research project. A letter was sent to the purposively selected women explaining the study and asking permission to contact them. The researcher contacted each woman who gave permission by telephone to explain the project in more detail. The screening interview enabled the researcher to do an in-depth interview. Suitable women were invited to participate in the study and again were given a verbal and written explanation of the project. Each participant was required to give written consent before participating in the study.

One-on-one interview method was used to gather the data. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. They were then translated into English. Based on the questions raised in the interview guide, the participants answers were classified and discussed. The interviewed women's answers to the questions were carefully analyzed and the concepts, which were frequently observed were categorized and summarized.

Based on the researcher's observations, in most of cases women emphasized that the discussed issues should be kept secret and the husbands do not hear from them. It was identified that it was better to hold the interview away from their husbands to allow the women to talk freely about the conditions and factors affecting aggressiveness. They were particularly sensitive about the fact that the data be kept confidential, especially when they talked about their in law's families. These issues may not be significant for researchers from other countries,

while they call for a special importance in Iran due to the traditional approach existing there. The participants need to be made sure of the fact that the results of the study are used simply to help promote the services provided to the people needing them and that they will be kept confidential.

RESULTS

Findings described in this study highlights the objectives of the research. Table 1 shows the background of the respondents (women).

Power and females aggression: For understanding the motivation of female aggression we asked the question: What's your motivation about power and dominance in the family, do you think it can lead to female aggression?

As shown in Table 2, out of the ten interviewed women, eight women were mentioned that they do not want to have dominance on their husbands; they were looking only for equality that they learned in their society and educations. For example Samaneh said:

I do not agree that women need dominance on their husband. Never! I just want be equal in my life. I tell my husband so many times that I looked only for equal life and that is enough for me.

Women are only searching for same power and equality in their relationship and do not wish to dominate their husbands. To elaborate further, Laila, one interviewee said:

To tell you, I do not want to have dominance on my husband. Never! I only need equal power with him. He must accept me as human, acknowledge my rights and we both make decisions equally. That is all.

As we have observed that sometimes rights of women were ignored by their husbands, in such situations, women will react against this ignorance and inequality. Most of women mentioned that their dominance over their husbands so as to attain equal situation in the family, as Samaneh mentioned:

Though my husband is young, he is still following his ancients' ideas. He follows his father's idea and decides individually, he thinks only men have good ideas; he said women cannot decide perfectly. He wants dominance and decides in the family alone. It is unacceptable for me. I looked for equal life and that is enough.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewed women

Name	Characteristics and features
Afifeh	An active, tall and overweight woman. She was unemployed and she was 40 years old. She got married 21 years ago, had two children. Her education level was primary school level. Her husband was an addicted and she had to remarry. She looked serious. She liked to answer the questions carefully and sensitively
Golshifteh	A 31 years old household wife and unemployed with a diploma degree. She had been married for 6 years
Laila	A 25 years old woman, who had a university degree and worked in a university. She married 5 years ago. Her husband's education level is lower than hers
Shakila	A young, thin and 24 years old woman. She worked and had a university degree. She had been married for 3 years and had one son
Nazanin	A 24 years old woman without children. She had a university degree and had worked in a private company for 4 years
Afsaneh	A 27 years old woman. She had a diploma and was employed. She got married 7 years ago
Zahra	A 32 years old woman with one child. She married 7 years ago. She has a diploma and is unemployed
Nasrin	A 36 years old unemployed women with two children. She looked old and angry. She had problems with her husband and her husband was remarried. She was not satisfied with her marriage
Samaneh	A 29 years old, overweight and religious woman. She was working in the hospital and had been married since she was 13 years old
Sapeedeh	A 30 years old woman with a secondary school education. She married 12 years ago and was unemployed

Table 2: Perspectives of the interviewed women about the power, dominance and female aggression

Themes	Frequency
Effort for having equal power	8
Dominance their husband	2

Only two women mentioned that they want to have dominance on their husband and look for controlling the family's decision making. For example Shakila said:

I think everybody has special ability. I have always been a leader during school days. I am very strong in decision making. You can ask my husband, of course not in his family's presence! I dominate him. I am an educated person, you know.

It seems that society and government set of rules hinder their primary rights of women. For having better families with less conflict and aggression among couples, a change in some rules and inequality is needed in the society.

Most of the interviewees mentioned that they are unsatisfied with the power in their family. They mentioned that 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.

Male dominance is still a big problem in the Iranian family and society. Men grow up according to their father's opinion about the power of men and women in the family and they insist in this inequality. But according to social learning theory, women learned new values and norms that are equal for men and women and consider men and women to be equal. They want that their husbands will consider their right in the family as equal. But in most cases, this request was not accepted by their husband and aggression will happen because of such reaction to this discrimination. They react to this inequality and discriminations in the family and society.

Social learning theory clearly recognizes this fact that people can learn behaviour without directly experiencing and in absence of any rewards (new values and norms). However, rewards are very important in motivating people to later perform the behaviour, in case of the current research, the equality of situation in the family compare with their husbands.

DISCUSSION

The result showed that power and effort for equality in their relationship have relationship with female aggression. Nowadays, some economic, political and social changes experienced by the Iranian society that have lead various impact on the society in general and particularly on women. Development of new rules and self-concept among women are achieved from school, peer group and work place as changes commenced from infancy to adulthood. These values are recognized to provide women to be treated equal and same right as human being. Nowadays, new generation of women viewed and perceived values and dominance to be different from the previous generation, such that through the new changes that caused women to develop their positions in the society.

These results exhibit aggression of women towards their husband and it takes place in the micro level based on the theory of ecology system. In the micro level,

dominance and aggression have taken place in such a way that couples made in contact with each other inside the family. In the macro level (learn new values that there is in the society), women nowadays have lots of participation in the society and becoming more involved with other areas in the society as well, thus being knowledgeable and acquired increase in the level of educational status as compared to the previous generation will lead them for better familiarization of their rights in the society and learning of values and norms that influenced them to consider the essentiality of equality. In accordance to the social learning theory, women have acquired new set of values and norms that regarded the equality of women as well as the equality of men and women in all life's aspects.

CONCLUSION

At present, women are rejecting male dominance and inequality and demand for equal power in the family. When women become more educated, they will develop this kind of perception. The experience they learned from school, university, mass media and their interactions with society influenced them to believe that women have equal right as man and are not lower than men which are in line with concepts of social learning theory. After getting into marriage, when women understand that their husbands will not accept this equality, women in return will not endure this discrimination and will react against them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has focused on clinical samples, so the future researchers can replicated this present study by using larger samples of the women all over the country. It may assist researchers to further investigate and understand women aggression and attain generalized findings of more women population. In a comparative study on female aggression within different ethnic and religious group in Iran, it will be beneficial in understanding the prevalence of female aggression on these ethnic groups that constitute an Iranian society.

The findings and information acquired from this kind of research may shed enlightenment as to the effects of factors influencing female aggression therefore, intervention programs will provide and supply knowledge in the same way.

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