

Violence in Iranian Families

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Abstract: *The Objective of This Research was to investigate The Phenomenon of Violence in Iranian families. We wanted to show the expansion of This Phenomenon, its frequency, and its intensity in contemporary Iranian society. The Research was conducted in Tehran; Because, This big agglomeration is a melting pot; we can find in it Individuals from all regions. The method of research was survey; and the universe was composed of families, living in Tehran, with Husband and wife and at least one child between 7 to 20 years old. The sample Size was 1521 families. The results suggest that approximately one family out of five experience domestic violence; from The Perspective of severity, we find that only 12 percent of the beaten women declare a mild violence at home. From The Perspective of factors Influencing violence against women at home, we found that education of husband has a significant impact on the phenomenon.*

Keywords: *family, violence,*

Introduction

Importance of the problem

In a traditional society, the family is considered as a sacrosanct phenomenon. It transmits the cultural heritage of the society to the new generation. It produces man power, necessary to the survival of the society. In a capital intensive society, the quantity of the population is less important; on the contrary, in a society, where, technology is not highly developed, man power and its quantity, creates power, wealth and social security, that is because, this society is labor intensive. In other words, the quality and quantity of the population depend on the family. If it is not a safe place; if the strangers are better than the parents, and, if the home is the most violent place, the whole society is in danger, indeed, the marital violence creates an unbearable situation in the home; from the time we were children, we were taught that family is the source of safety and tranquility. In the violent families, our own family members are the people usually most dangerous to us.

The family and its qualitative survival can be used as a significant index of sustained development. Therefore, the number of battered women illustrates the quality of life in that society. Wife beating is a shocking reminder that, despite the function of family to institutionalize love and emotion, for many individuals, the family becomes a real hell. This paper examines the occurrence and intensity of all sort of violence against women in Iranian society.

Theoretical Framework

Almost 50 years after its creation, the U. N recognized violence against women as a human rights abuse in 1993. Two years prior to that, the United Nations principles for older people were published (United Nations, 1991). So, it is absolutely necessary to prevent and handle the violence against women at home. To do that, we have to explain it as a socio – cultural phenomenon. Therefore, we need social theories that can explain it. Early studies of the family concentrated on the relationship of the family to the economy and the (Re) production of workers and responsible citizens – (system theories of Parsons, 1949). Critical studies of the family followed but few addressed violence until late 1960, (Bernardes, 1987). Sociologists, such as Durkheim, in general, were concerned with legitimate forms of social control, consensus and cohesion. Others, such as Marx, insisted on conflict and exploitation (Bond, & Philips, 2001, p.12). Therefore, theorization of violence at home against women is a recent preoccupation of sociologists and especially social psychologists. Violence at home can be considered as a legacy of patriarchy produced by socio-cultural elements: when a man thinks that he is born

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superior, and the domination is his natural right, he tries to assert it by any means included violence. Therefore, it is quite plausible to stress that "the root of wife abuse is in our culture. This approach has led to an examination of how marital violence acts as a form of social domination through which women can be subordinated and controlled for the benefit of men.

Other aspect of this theory is related to the status inconsistency. That is, a gap between the role the man thinks he ought to play in relation to others and the actual position in which he finds himself. "A man who has a college degree, but drives a taxicab for a living, experiences status inconsistency. He uses violence as an ultimate means to combat this inconsistency. So, as with subservience based on social class, ethnic group in third world country, that of sex, too, rests ultimately on force". (Hammer & Maynard, 1987, p. 12). When a man carries patriarchal legacy and bears in mind the position of his father at home, he thinks about domination, and he acts so. It means that feminists have had some success in raising questions about male authority in marriage, by demonstrating its links with husbands to wife violence (Cheeles, & Harrop, 1989, p. 449). It is obvious that, when male violence at home finds its legitimacy by socio – cultural elements, it can be reinforced by psychological and sociological environment. The tradition of male superiority prescribes that the husband should always be in charge, and "even" western cultures have traditionally approved the use of violence by husband to keep wife in line. So, it is ultimately necessary to resort to the force and social sexual inequality to explain the marital violence; "Force is the ultimate power resource, there is on appeal form force in a given situation except the exercise of superior force" (Lenski, 1986, p.74).

Main hypotheses

Many factors contribute to the genesis and spread of violent behavior in the contemporary Iranian family. Mass media, in general, encourage the violence, the transition of families from a primary group to secondary group, provokes violence. The relations based on contract, necessity and obligation prepare the necessary framework for violence. On the contrary, the relations based upon respect, love and emotions create the necessary context for tolerance. The recent changes occurred in the legislation are also preparing a new context favorable to the violence; in contemporary Iran, the divorce is no longer unilateral and male dominated. It is contingent upon court decision and the procedure is long and very difficult.

- a. On the other hand, the husband has the obligation to pay the whole sum of dower (Mahr)¹, included its added value
- b. Level of violence against women can be explained by age of women at marriage.
- c. Level of violence against women is related to the age of men at marriage.
- d. Level of violence against women depends on the education of women.
- e. Husband's education is related to the level of violence against women.

Methodology

We used, in this study, the data obtained by many researchers, but, it was mainly based upon the finding of a study conducted in Tehran, in the summer of 1999. The technique employed was that of personal interview, using a standardized questionnaire. The universe was composed of families, living in Tehran, with husband and wife and at least one child between 7 to 20 years old. The sample size was 1521 families. Interviews were carried out with wife and husband randomly and the child. The study was intended to answer many questions: what is the degree of emotionality in the family? Is there any sort of Violence (verbal, physical, manifest, latent ...) in these families? If yes, how many families, in Tehran, experience violence? How severe is the violence in family?

Results

a. The image of the reality

The findings of the research demonstrate that 251 out of 1521 families, experience violence. The distribution of the violence according to severity, presents this picture:

¹. The great majority of **Iranian marriages are contingent upon a certain commitment** by the groom to his future wife, which can be claimed by her at any time, it is called Mahe see Saroukhani, B; Dower Mahr, in the mate selection in Iran; "in International journal of sociology of the family," vol 9, Jan 1979, pp: 17-25.

Mild	12.8%
Moderate	43.4%
Severe	43.9%

According to these data in every six women, one is beaten or at least faced with violent behavior at home in Tehran. In approximately 90 percent of the cases, the women declare that they have been submitted to a moderate or severe violence at home.

b. Factors and variables

Age gap and violence in the family: Age gap is an important phenomenon in every traditional society. In some cases, it reaches more than 20 years. (Saroukhani, B: 1981: 87) In a male dominated society, men have the privilege to marry young women. We try to point out the impact of this phenomenon, (age gap), on the severity of violence at home (table 1).

Table (1): Age difference between husband and wife and severity of marital violence

A.D \ M. V.	Wife older	Same Age	Husband			Total
			2-5 Years	6-10Years	More	
Mild	-	0.8%	5.2%	6%	0.8%	12.7%
Moderate	0.4%	2.4%	15.2%	15.9%	8.8%	43.4%
Severe	0.45	3.2%	13.9%	19.5%	6.8%	43.*%
Total	0.85%	6.4%	35.1%	41.4%	16.3%	100

X²= 5.366 d.f.=8 sig=0.718

It seems that age difference between wife and husband does not play a significant role on marital violence. We think that older husbands are able to support the family. They can play well their role as an instrumental partner (T. Parsons thought that men must assume instrumental role and their wife expressive roles at home).

Age at marriage and severity of violence at home: To explain the intensity of marital violence at home, we tried to find other variables, such as age of women at marriage (Table 2):

Table (2): age of women at marriage and severity of marital violence

A. of. W \ M. V.	Less than 19 years	20-29	30-39	Total
Mild	7.7%	5.3%	-	13%
Moderate	27.5%	15.4%	0.4%	43/3%
Severe	34.8%	8.5%	0.4%	43/7%
Total	70%	29.1%	0/8%	100

There is no significant correlation between the two variables. In other words, the data gathered in this research demonstrate that age of women at marriage has no impact on the marital violence and its intensity.

The age of men at marriage: Other aspect of age factor in marriage is the age of husband. When we distribute the data according to the age of men at marriage, we find that, the impact of variable is not highly significant (Table 3). It seems that in this culture, the age at marriage (men and women) and the difference of age between husband and wife, doesn't play a significant role in the severity and intensity of violence at home.

Table (3): Age of men at marriage and severity of marital violence

A. of. W M. V.	Less than 19 Years	20-29	30-39	More Than 40	Total
Mild	1.2%	10.1%	1.6%	-	13%
Moderate	3.2%	31.2%	7.7%	0.8%	42.9%
Severe	7.7%	29.1%	6.5%	0.8%	44.1%
Total	12.1%	70.4%	15.8%	1.6%	100

Education: The hypothesis is that the level of education (men or women) must play a great role in the occurrence and intensity of violence at home. The higher the education of women, the higher their awareness of human dignity; the higher the level of education among women, the higher their access to the market and their independence, vis-à-vis their husband. On the other hand, it is assumed that; higher the education of men, higher their empathy, that is, their ability to understand others, especially their wife.

Education of women: We tried to distribute the data according to the level of education of women (Table 4). It is clear that, despite initial hypothesis, there is no solid basis to confirm the relation between education of women and severity of violence at home.

Table (4): education of women and level of violence at home

W. E L. V.	Little-Rate	Primary	Guidance	Secondary	Higher	Total
Mild	-	4.8%	2.4%	3.6%	1.6%	12.5%
Moderate	5.2%	12.9%	10.5%	11.3%	11.3%	43.5%
Sever	6.9%	16.9%	8.5%	9.7%	9.7%	44%
Total	12.1%	34.7%	21.4%	24.6%	7.3%	100

X²= 10.139

d.f.= 8

sig=0.255

Education of husband: Nevertheless, we tried to investigate other aspect of the phenomenon, that is the level of education among men and level of violence at home (Table 5). The data confirm the significance of the correlation. Educated husbands are less inclined to practice severe violence at home. In other words, violent behavior at home is less tolerated by educated husbands.

Table (5): Husband's and level of marital violence

W. E L. V.	Little-Rate	Primary	Guidance	Secondary	Higher	Total
Mild	-	4%	4%	1.6%	3.2%	12.9%
Moderate	4%	10.9%	11.7%	10.9%	5.6%	43.1%
Severe	4.4%	18.1%	8.1%	10.5%	2.8%	44%
Total	8.8%	33.1%	23%	23%	11.7%	100

It is quite significant that level of education among men has a clear impact on the level of violence at home. Education brings consciousness and empathy among men as perpetrators of aggression. On the contrary, the level of education among victims (women), doesn't play a great role in the level of violence at home. It seems that, in this culture, the level of education of men produces a healthier atmosphere at home. They can experience a sort of "fusion of horizon" and understand better the feeling of their partner;

Conclusion

The main problem in researches of this kind is the phenomenon of "denial", it is rather universal. Violence at home against women seems a taboo; family members have a great capacity to ignore what happens in front of their eyes, whether abuse, incest, violence, alcoholism, craziness or plain happiness. This may be partially explained by images of family life that determine which aspects can be shared or must remain private, even denied. In this society, (Iran), this problem is even more acute; Family has been sacred. Micro and macro denial exist in this social environment: To investigate this problem, qualitative methods were used (In-depth interview, confidence building, conversation analysis). But, we are sure that the data produced are not totally adequate. An estimated error of 10 percent is to be considered. It is not possible to mention the impact of other variables, such as occupation (Saroukhani, B, 1973, Saroukhani,., 1991), number of children ... on the level of violence at home in this paper, so, the main results, and suggestions are presented:

Main characteristics of the phenomenon

An old phenomenon: Violence in the society and at home is not a new problem; the history has witnessed tyrant like Changiz Khan, Attila... in the family, too. Infanticide, homicide, parricide ... are historical problems.

A multi-faced phenomenon: Violence in the family has sociological, psychological even anthropological dimensions. Therefore, it requires an interdisciplinary research.

An unbearable phenomenon: It is unbearable for the society, because, it changes the reality and image of family. You are more likely to be physically assaulted, beaten, and killed in your own home at the hands of a loved one than any place else, or by anyone else. It is also unbearable for the women, victims of the violence. In the age of super highways of information, it is not easily possible to accept the violent behavior of a loved one, or so. In the media, every body speaks about freedom, love and equality between men and women; while at her own home, a woman is subjected to a brutal – and violent behavior.

Main types of the phenomenon

As we saw in the paper, violence at home against women is a complex and multi dimensional phenomenon. So we can distinguish many types:

- ✓ Typology based on finality (against human, against objects [vandalistic])
- ✓ Typology based on modality (verbal, physical, psychological); (Hard, Mild, ...)

Causes

We differentiate three types of causes:

Macro: Causes related to the whole society, such as social values, traditional legacy, gender inequality. The problem of violence at home is not an independent and abstract phenomenon. Therefore, to prevent and handle the problem, we have to think about the function and structure of the society as a whole.

Meso: These problems are related to the human environment, social capital, and family of origin.

Micro: Other factors, such as individual characteristics, differential associations, can aggravate the problem. In considering the causes of the occurrence of violence at home, four theories are elaborated:

Main approaches

As mentioned, the phenomenon is multi-faced and complex. Therefore, its approaches are various:

Physical strength: According to Mc Kie's view, "A number of feminist and pro-feminist perspectives argue that mainstream theories and many family violence researchers, have disregarded the intervening and influence of gender and power" (Mc kie, 2005, p. 145).

Therefore, some argue that "violence is used by the most powerful family member as a means of legitimizing his or her dominant position" (Ray, 2000, p. 147). This idea implies that either a man or a woman can hold power equally and practice violence. However, in general, it is used by the man.

Social: Explaining that violence does not arise in a vacuum and violence in families is often patterned, a number of studies point to entrenched social relation. These studies often interlink and offer explanations of violence in terms of social divisions of class, sexualities, race, religion and age (Strauss, 1990, p. 193).

Historical: In these studies, sociologists consider the impact of traditions, stereotypes, and family of origin. In this perspective, social factors are considered with a historical background; this includes for example family of orientation as a micro environment; for these sociologists, the role of violence in the childhood and upbringing men has been a particular concern.

Structural: In this view, violence at home against women is a multidimensional phenomenon, "structural analyses have highlighted varied and dynamic impact of masculinities and offer a complex and differentiated notion of patriarchies" (Hearn, 1998).

Super structural: In this analysis, it is assumed that the phenomenon is multi-factorial and is influenced by social, economic, and cultural factors; however, at least in this society (Iran), it is a super structural phenomenon. In this perspective, it is also accepted that, the violence at home be analyzed and explained with a relativistic view. "Men's violence at home against women, within patriarchies, although persistent, is also variable and specific, rather than monolithic" (Hear, 1998, p. 32). With the middle range theory of R. Merton in mind, we consider that violence at home against women in this society and in this "moment" of history, is rather cultural and bears the impact of values. The data of this study suggest that violence at home against women in this social environment is rather a phenomenon of mentalities and values. We saw that, age at marriage or age gap

between men and women do not explain it, on the contrary the impact of education of men is highly significant. Therefore, we have to change the values and redefine masculinity. We have to change stereotypes against femininity; women are not second class citizens. We have to emphasize on human aspect of men and women.

Conclusions

To prevent, handle and combat the problem, some suggestions can be made: At the level of the society, we must think about the revitalization of human values; bring about a new humanism based on real equality. We have to struggle against consumerism, fetishism, and cult of instrumentalism. Enhancement of human dignity necessitates appropriation versus alienation; we have to raise the sensibility of children toward the suffering of human being; we must protect the society from technocracy in a new world. We have to work on the embitterment of the families (housing, occupation); we have to guarantee vital minimum for every human person and to stress on the social integration versus isolation. It is necessary to set up marriage counseling, to encourage the establishment of N. G. O's and people's participation. We have to set up, national and international network of action; it is necessary to encourage researches in this field, especially in developing countries. It is absolutely necessary to implement the scientific findings; the problem is related to the police, but, we think that, it must be solved mainly by social workers; it is a delicate problem. Being an international problem, it needs international attention and awareness. It must attract international collaboration. The experts in this field must be in touch, on a permanent basis, to exchange their views, to enhance the implementability of data, applicability of the tools and technique of the researches; to share experiences.

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