Explaining Men’s Discord Actions in Iranian Families

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Extended abstract

1. Introduction

In the current nuclear type of family, as the most common type in Iran, three social roles can be found: wife, husband, and child. Wives and husbands have also the roles of mothers and fathers, respectively. In recent years, many scholars have warned about the increasing rate of divorce in Iran. If one considers this increasing rate along with the relatively strong sense of hate about divorce, it seems that there should be much more discord actions inside families. Discord action is defined as the intentionally aggressive action against one of other members of the family. The main question is what structural characteristics of the family are responsible for this rate of discord actions. Although it is known that the conflicts between couples is mainly based on many personal and social characteristics (Mansourian & Fakhraee, 2007), this research is focused on the structural properties of the whole family.

2. Theoretical framework

Discord actions, when turn into a pathologic form, may affect the exclusive functions of the family including the emotional and social support, which makes the grounds for the inherent violence (Kaffashi 2009). The insecure family may bring much social disequilibrium (Golchin, 2002) and affect other parts of the society. A nonfunctional family may result in disorders in the members’ personality (Saadati & Dinaee, 2010). Therefore, studying discord actions in the Iranian families has a significant importance.

The social position of the husband who also takes the role of a father is crucial since in many cases he is the one who makes important decisions (Moosavi, 2002; , 2002; 1 Corresponding author, m-kermani@um.ac.ir
A family contains a set of social positions plus roles and statuses such as husband, wife, father, mother, child, sister, and brother. Of course, in non-nuclear families the number and definition of the social positions may change. For example, in an extended family there are some other positions like father-in-law, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law. However, in the nuclear family these positions do not exist within the core family.

The equilibrium in the familial system can be explained by the following factors:

- The definition of roles and the relationships among them
- The relationship between roles and statuses
- The calibration of roles and statuses with the personality of the actor
- The relationship between roles and the organisms of the actor

It is obvious that any perturbation in any of the above items can affect the other parts. The social system of the family is at middle level, thus, it is not just the study of interactions or its sub systems. The family system is under the influence of culture and sub cultures. It influences the personalities of its members and their actions.

A family at its first stages includes just the social roles of being wife and husband. Any social position possesses a set of responsibilities along with some advantages. Social status includes a set of norms that determine the level of scarce resources that are assigned to a social position (Boudon, 2006, p. 13). The present study addresses the disequilibrium in the social system of the family using the concepts of social roles in social organizations. In fact, the discord actions of men in the family is considered using disorders in the family as a system. To do so, first the main following concepts should be defined.

- Inconsistent interpretations of the roles: The social definitions of social roles are not that exact and clear as not to leave any space for different interpretations (Boudon, 2004, p. 79).
- Roles ambiguity: It happens in an organization when one’s responsibilities are not clearly defined and others’ expectations from her/him are not explicit.
- Role stress is the high pressure on a person because of others’ expectations.
- Value inconsistency among family members, which originates from cultural differences among one’s family and her/his peer group.
- Inconsistency between role and status: refers to the non-proportionate relationship between roles related to a social position and its statuses.
- Unfulfillment of the desires of other members of the family, which refers to the gap between wishes and the real attainments.
3. Methodology
The data are gathered through a social survey. The population of the study were families in eight large cities of Iran including Tehran, Mashhad, Kermanshah, Khoramabad, Yazd, Ghom, Karaj, and Rasht. In these families, there were a husband and a wife with at least one son and one daughter. The sample size was restricted to 944 families due to the financial support of the research. The selected families were chosen through random quota method in different areas of all cities. Each member of the family had a separate questionnaire. Four questionnaires were conducted to each family. In sum, the mean age of husbands, wives, sons, and daughters’ were 48.4, 42.0, 18.45, and 18.01, respectively. The mean of education level by years for these respondents were 10.9, 9.46, 11.00 and 11.14, respectively.

4. Results
To check the structural model explaining the discord actions of men in Iranian families, one third of the original sample was randomly selected. This is common in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis since the total chi-square of the model is highly dependent on the sample size.

The chi-square of the model and the degree of freedom are 328.47 and 110, respectively. Their ratio is 2.99, which is not in the desirable domain for this statistic. On the other hand, RMSEA is much less than 0.10 indicating that the model fits well. As Browne and Cudeck (1993) suggest the higher value of more than 0.10 for RMSEA shows the weak fit of the model.

There are two other statistics of model fit in SEM, which are AGFI and GFI. GFI is equivalent to R-square in multiple regression models (Tanaka & Huba, 1989). Then, the desirable values for them are the ones close to one. The lower boundary of these two for a good model is 0.9. In our model, GFI is 0.96 and AGFI is 0.95, which are both proper. All t statistics of paths in the model are more than 1.96, which means they are significant.

5. Conclusion
As we have expected, the most significant explaining factor of men’s discord actions in the family was the existence of conflicting definitions for the father and the husband role. In the current status of the Iranian society, which is in the middle intense cultural changes, all family members receive numerous messages by various media. Most media propagate western values of the family roles while weakening the Iranian and traditional family roles.

The father and the husband role have different definitions in the traditional Iranian culture and the western one, while the current Iranian status stands in the middle. Younger members of families mostly believe in western values and elder ones believe in traditional Iranian values. A similar conflict can be found between wife
and husband as well. These leads to the mutual dissatisfaction among family members, while no one intends to bother others. They try to do their best by failing to satisfy other family members. This situation result in a dead end in couples’ relationships as they themselves have expressed, “we have nothing in common” or “we do not understand each other”. Resolving this problem is dependent to cultural coordination among family members. The ban on media seems to be impossible, yet some preventive actions can reduce the inappropriate consequences. Considering the cultural identity of couples at the frist steps of marriage can be one of these actions. If husbands and wives have almost the same cultural values and definitions of their roles in the family, they can understand each other at higher level by bringing a few cultural changes to their lives.

**Key words:** Discord actions, Family, Norm, Social status, Social value

**References (in Persian)**


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