



Gender Analysis of Persian Staying-at-Home Messages during Covid-19 Pandemic

Somayeh Sadat Shafiei¹

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ABSTRACT

In the Iranian family sociology, the dominant approach is based on this general idea that the family is the center of patriarchy. Based on this view, women at home are in subjugation and under male dominance. To support this idea, a lot of researches have been conducted in recent years. However, the present study does not seek to identify the patterns of female subjugation; rather it is in the process to identify the patterns of their resistance to male dominance within the home. As such, the study seeks to answer the question as how women use "culture" as a tool of resistance as well as to change the balance of power in the family. In this regard, 36 married women were interviewed. Findings showed that women use the strategies such as "struggle for meaning", "reverse decoding", "resistance to gender stereotypes", "resistance through tradition" and "appearance of obedience but hidden resistance within family" to resist the male dominance. Through these, they try to control male power in the home and balance it accordingly. Various resistance strategies indicate that women's "resistance sources" in the family are numerous, which take place in different domains and in different ways.

Keywords: gender study, gender stereotypes, women, Coronavirus, home

1. Department of Social Studies, Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran, Iran
✉ ss.shafiei@ihcs.ac.ir



INTRODUCTION

The house doesn't function only as providing shelter to someone, but these are human relations that actually testify belonging and intimacy to a particular surrounding or premise, we call home. In other words, the type and nature of relationships in a house that lead to production and reproduction of all kinds of capital and belongingness of its inhabitants or whether they are active or inactive. From individuals' perspective, these qualities that could turn a space into a home are the result of a complex network of personal semantics such as happiness, belonging, responsibility, self-expression, survival, privacy, time-perspective, knowledge, being a destination for return, kinship, hospitality, emotional environment, physical structure, services, architectural style, and work environment and so on.

The novel Coronavirus crisis, its vast and dangerous dimensions, plunged Iranian society, like others, into deadly challenges over the past couple of years. The less known and experienced aspects of such an event has been the appeal of social science studies. Fear of untimely death or illness beyond the threshold of tolerance accompanied human moments and shook their mental space towards new questions as who she/he is and what her/his relationship is with the outside world? The former order not only disrupted relationship among human beings, but also challenged their relationship with environment and work, consequently leading to a new social structure in less developed societies without maximum welfare coverage. Even developed countries were tested for priority, and in some cases found turning a blind eye to the right to life of the elderly in favor of a young workforce.

In the midst of these bottlenecks, staying-at-home was considered the only way to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, and health professionals as well as socio-cultural policymakers around the world came up and implemented guidelines to maximize social distancing as part of encouraging quarantine. Under the same milieu, messages through indigenous elements were created and advertised for housekeeping.

The media content of these messages was something more than text and images. In fact, what could be displayed go back to the complex and key nature of the media. In the contemporary world, since the media play a prominent role in shaping our perception of danger, interpersonal relationships, the virus and the home, like any other social phenomenon, photographs and videos are not unpretentious recordings of events, but a myriad of representations. It is a cultural-critical studies approach focusing on the implicit nature of propaganda, speaks about their role in reproducing social relations, promoting dominant values, and sharing cultural ideological meanings. Therefore, these messages, as a communication tool, contain a combination of socio-cultural elements and are designed with the aim of enriching and encouraging the audience to stay at home

and minimize their presence in the public, and like any other cultural product includes value, ideology and contain power relations. These have interesting ideas for experts and researchers of women and gender studies.

The current paper also aims to focus on home and relationships within in order to study gender aspects of staying-at-home messages and get an understanding of gender relations displayed in them as well as power relations and the patriarchal ideology. The main question here is what relation do the elements promote in these messages that are gender stereotypes?

PURPOSE

The article intends to identify gender and power relations presented in the messages posted during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to encourage people to stay-at-home. Also, it seeks to identify the characteristics of the family displayed in those messages. At the same time, finding the meaning of the house and components that shape these messages is yet another sub-goal of the research.

METHODOLOGY

An analytical approach was applied as the main methodology in this research to assess the content of 120 messages with the stay-at-home subject. In other words, analyzing the content of messages is an important method of social study that is even used to assess all kinds of issues and topics discussed in the press, radio and television programs and movies. However, we could examine the research subject both in terms of quantity (frequency and multiplicity) and quality (importance and value). The qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely calculating words or extracting objective content rather examines the meanings, forms, and patterns that may be evident or hidden in the text.

The statistical population is all images that were accessed by the Google search engine by entering the word "stay-at-home" in Persian. Images with a necessary degree of clarity and quality were selected to be examined and in order to have native visual elements, the inclusion of the source of production or meanings arising from the written expressions were considered valid. In total, all images sent online since the beginning of the campaign to fight the coronavirus in the late 2019 to August 2020 were collected. Relevant images were constantly monitored in order to not to include the new ones during the course of the research.

FINDINGS

Findings show that families mentioned in messages are the nuclear ones with two children, a daughter and a son. The number of families with one or two sons is next in the category. In 48% of the cases, men are drawn taller than their womenfolk, and in 11.66% of the cases, they are the sole human character in the message. Men alone represent historical subjects such as Uncle Nowruz, Haji Firooz, and medical staff,



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or seem to be powerful and successful while listening to and playing music, reading books, watching TV, doing exercises, or fighting the virus. A woman is seen in just one image that means it is the men who, quantitatively and qualitatively, engrave their superior presence in terms of social role in the mind of the audience.

CONCLUSION

Going through the content of messages and related aspects it can be said that the relationships portrayed are along with gender stereotypes and promote a traditional gender order. In other words, they neglect social and other important roles women play both in public and private arenas, especially during fight against the Coronavirus pandemic, here taking into account of Persian online messages, may be from Iran or elsewhere. These stereotypes, along with the neglect of women's agency in everyday reality of our pandemic society, in the medium term as deterrent cycles, are increasingly pushing women into the abyss of limitations, prejudices, and double deprivations.

NOVELTY

The novelty of the research is its contribution to illustrating the notion of gap between reality and formalism of gender relations and family shape. In other words, it is a wide gender gap men and women experience in everyday life and how they are reconstructed and represented by various media contents. It necessitates a reasonable strategy of cultural politics to engage the attention of both sexes in any demanding situation, including the current one of combating the Covid-19 pandemic.



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