A Phenomenological Study of Lived Experiences of Female Managers in Isfahan City

Ali Rabbani Khorasghani
Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences, University of Isfahan, Iran
Saide Elahidoost*
M.A. in Women's Studies, University of Isfahan, Iran
Fereshte Gheisarie Najafabadi
M.A. in Women's Studies, University of Isfahan, Iran
* Corresponding author, e-mail: saide.elahidoost@gmail.com

Introduction

Nowadays women are increasingly participating in economic activities in Iran. This has attracted a lot of attention, so some people consider its positive aspects and put emphasis on more engagement of women in different areas, while others consider its negative aspects and speak about the conflict between satisfactory performance at both job and family at the same time. Almost all of the surveys carried out about the counter relationship between job and family showed that the so called conflict can have negative influences on the quality of occupational and family lives, reducing therefore the individual satisfaction with life, increasing occupational and family problems, and resulting in depression and poor health. But in some of the studies, the focus has been on the importance of role reproduction and its positive influences on improving women's physical and mental conditions. Durkheim believes that "women's engagement in work increase their sense of independence, self-confidence and hopefulness, and help them to know themselves as useful and beneficial members of the society, strengthening therefore their solidarity with other members of the family". Given these different ideas, it seems that women's occupation is a controversial issue. Also, we should consider different individual, family and social dimensions of this problem, because occupation is a human phenomenon with various aspects. This study addresses the experiences of married female managers in Isfahan City to see what their experiences are with regard to occupation.

Materials & Methods

This study uses phenomenology approach that is a qualitative method. In this viewpoint, we try to find the relationship between individual knowledge and social life. On this basis, a phenomenologist seeks to understand how human knowledge is present in social interactions, social status and social world. The Phenomenological method aims at understanding meaningful and deep layers of lived experiences of research subjects about a concept or phenomenon. In this regard, we interviewed 10 female managers of Isfahan City to understand what problems and challenges they experience as a result of performing job and family roles at the same time.

Because the management is beyond a fulltime job and requires special skills in professional, individual and social contexts, and because the married women have obligations like being a wife or a mother, and in some of the cases there are interferes between their maternal and family functions, thus the sample consists of 10 female married managers with at least one child. In most phenomenological studies, the sample has been less than 10 subjects. The sampling method was purposeful and was carried out on a snowball basis. After 10 interviews we reached at data saturation. The data was analyzed using Collizzi's 7-step method.

Discussion of Results & Conclusions

Overall, 118 codes were extracted after clustering, assimilating repeatable codes and forming new categorization. This formulated meanings were categorized in the bunches of topics, which in this study are recognized as conceptions (descriptive codes) or codes that are closer to the terms used by research subjects. After this step, all of the resultant ideas were integrated in the frame of a detailed description from underlying phenomenon (appendix to title of interpretative codes). At this step, 28 interpretative codes were extracted that were compacted into 10 interpretative codes. Finally, interpretative codes were reduced to 3 explanative (making clear) codes. Obtained Results and codes, in three descriptive (primary coding), interpretative (intensive coding) and explanative levels rely on women's experiences regarding occupational management in three levels of individual, social and family. In other words, using explanative codes, we could categorize these experiences in three areas of individual life, individual experience from family life and individual experiences from social and occupational life.

Subject experiences from individual life is an explanative code, which, at interpretative level, is consisted of health status, subject personality, individual point of views and sports. The explanative code of subject experiences from family life is formed from interpretative codes of maternal role, housekeeping role, and partner role and power distribution in the family. Explanative code of subject experiences from social and occupational life explains their experiences during occupation and is constituted from interpretative codes of occupational motivation and job satisfaction.

This study provides profound information about the subjects' experiences with occupation. In comparison and summing up the experiences that are clustered in three mentioned areas with different levels, we encounter two different situations. In fact, one of them is subjects' experience with occupational effects that increase their satisfaction with life, and the other is occupational effects that create contrast between job and family roles. Following subjects' experiences in this context showed that having a job outside the home creates some problems such as anxiety about wellbeing of the children, mental and physical tiredness, lack of time for study at the university, facing massive home choirs with little rest, stress, feeling of being indebted to the family and so on. On the other hand, being employed as a manager has positive influences on different aspects of individual, social and family life. Some of the advantages, according to research subjects, are increasing self-confidence, diversification of life experiences and social relations, giving advice to husband, more interpersonal understanding, financial independence, satisfying personal needs, creating good spirit and mood, positive effects for society and so on.

Other findings of the study show that the contrast between job and family is more acute when the subject has no ability or control over her occupation out of the house. In another words, when she cannot create a kind of coordination between the two dimensions. The participants believe that a way for solving the conflict between job and family is to have a schedule for tasks and responsibilities. If the subjects have the ability to make equilibrium between responsibilities and tasks in family and occupational life, and avoid any conflict in this regard, then it has positive effects in their lives. Some of the effects of this successful balance are: decreasing occupational stress, improving occupational performance, increasing matrimonial satisfaction, increasing the quality and quantity of the relationship with spouse, increasing life satisfaction, spirit and meaning in life, better relationship with children and relatives, increasing the quality of performing duties of the house and decreasing physical illness. Participants' experiences show that women can perform several roles simultaneously if they develop their capacities and abilities, and when they are doing two or three roles altogether, they can increase their strength and capabilities.

Keywords: Employment of Women, Work - Family Conflict, Qualitative Methods, Life Satisfaction, Women's Leadership, Motherhood.

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