

Analogizing Gender Attitudes of Women Located in Economically Developed and Underdeveloped Cities: A Case Study of Khuzestan Province, Iran

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ABSTRACT

One of the remarkable results of the industrialization of Europe was women's participation in public spheres. In fact, it was after the industrialization process, that the significance and necessity of women's roles in public life took place. This in turn, caused a basic change in women's attitudes towards social participation. Iran instead of having an introverted process of economic development, suffered a non-homogeneous economic process. The non-homogenous economic process creates many conflicts and contradictions both in objective and subjective Iranian culture. The main idea in this study is that it seems the women living in economically developed regions have less conservative and more equality-oriented attitudes toward their gender as compared with women living in economically underdeveloped regions. For this purpose, a study comprising a sample of 62 women with a settlement record of over 15 years in urban regions of Khuzestan province was performed. The result of research shows that, women located in economically developed cities have more equality-oriented attitudes towards their social roles in comparison with women living in economically underdeveloped cities. As finding shows women residing in underdeveloped cities are less prone to social and economic participation.

Keywords: economic development, incongruous, gender attitudes of women, Khuzestan Province, urban regions

1. INTRODUCTION

Is there any significant difference between women's gender attitudes? And if any, what are the fundamental causes of differences in attitude? Many literatures focus on race, religion, gender personal background and other micro level variables as main determinants of women's attitudes toward gender attitudes.

In this study economic structure is consider as one of the important determinants of gender attitudes of women in Iran. Therefore the main aim in this study is making a comparison between gender attitudes of women residence in economically developed cities and economically developed cities. In order to gain a comprehensive recognition of gender attitudes, various aspects of gender attitudes are considered. Gender roles, gender norms, gender believes, gender, gender stereotypes, and gender ideology are these various dimensions. Therefore, this study put a specific emphasis on macro-economic development of society and its effect on women's attitudes. The economic development can cause not only human development in general, but also development in gender conditions in particular. Exploring the effect of economic development can reveal the importance of economic factors to decision makers .

The socio-economic development of Iran started at about early nineteen century. This process took form mainly under the influence of mechanisms outside the society and took place without an ideal structural ground and any changes in the structure and base of social relationships. So, such a socio-economic development made the social structure and the social system became more unbalanced and dependent on the global economic [1]. In such a condition, it is forecasted that the Iranian women to have different or conflicting attitudes towards their social roles under the impact of and unbalanced structure and function of socio-economic development of the society. In other words, it seems that the women who are living in developed regions have a more gender equality-oriented attitudes in comparison with the women who are living in underdeveloped regions. As the economic structures of each society have a basic effect on other aspect of social life, this study the main emphasis is economic development. Therefore, the main issue of this research is whether or not the women's attitudes towards gender attitudes in cities with developed economic structures are different from their attitudes in underdeveloped economic structures? Reviewing the examples of this issue in different urban regions of Iran, it will be possible to gather the practical and statistical documents necessary for the issue .

The unbalanced and incongruous economic structures of Iran have caused contradictions and conflicts, not only in behavior, but also in the expectations, desires, and attitudes of Iranian women. In other words, according to the women's various objective conditions, their attitudes toward gender stereotypes, gender norms, gender ideology, and gender roles are different. This means, women are facing many ambiguities and conflicts in defining their social expectations and desires. The main point in this study is that there is a meaningful

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difference between gender attitudes of women residing in economically developed cities, and those located in economically underdeveloped cities. In other words, it seems that the women who are living in more developed areas have more equality-seeking gender attitudes as compared with the women living in underdeveloped areas. Studying the examples of such an issue in urban society of Iran can help with the preparation of necessary practical and statistical documents for this issue .

The pivotal assumption of this study is that the gender attitudes of women are basically depended on the economic structure of their society. So that logically, it can be concluded that to the extent a society enjoys a higher level of development, to the same extent, it will have more equality-oriented attitudes towards gender attitudes and as the same time, it will have a more positive attitude towards social participation .

There is no doubt that the low rate of women's participations in social responsibility, and their disapproval toward social roles, in the macro level would cause less social-economic, and human development, and in micro level would decrease less access to better life conditions.

Study and identification the main factors and relationships, which are more effective in the creation of gender attitudes of women, can lead to the promotion of their participatory attitudes. Meanwhile, it will help with the possibility of the efficient use of existing human forces at the society .

There are too much research, which has conducted on gender attitudes, beliefs, norms and ideology. Schmitz and Diefenthaler [2] have tried to study the relationship between culture and gender attitudes in their research. The results of the above research show that the Mexican people are more faithful to traditional norms and expectation in comparison with the Americans. In addition, the Mexicans have gained more scores in the scale of measuring patriarchal attitudes in comparison with the Americans, so that they have more patriarchal (male-oriented) attitudes .

A research by Mensch et al. [3] has been conducted to measure the attitudes towards gender roles among the Egyptian adults. In this research, the attitudes of girls and boys towards obedience of women and their responsibility on household labors are assessed. The rate of academic progress and some of the socio-economic variables are studied as independent variables, which are effective on individuals' attitudes. The result of research indicates the lack of confirmation of the model of this research in elaborating the sociability differences of gender roles. In the views of the mentioned researchers, perhaps the attitudes towards gender roles are under the influence of unmeasured factors or those related to economic features or life experiences.

Zanjanizadeh [4] conducted a research entitled "The assessment of the rate of the independence of married women residing in Mashhad city and social factors affecting that". The results of the research indicated that variables of job, rate of women's education and that of her husband have a meaningful, positive or average relationship with the rate of self-autonomous condition.

In a research conducted by Abdolahi [5] entitled "factors, obstacles and strategies of Iranian women's civil participation" the women's participation has been considered as a dependent variable. The results of this study show that the civil participation of women living in provinces with central geographical-political position or semi-central is higher as compared with women who are residing in peripheral provinces. Also in provinces which are more developed from the viewpoint of economic, political, social and economic indicators and enjoy a dense population and higher percentage of urbanism, women have a higher social contribution.

In this research, the combined viewpoint of Seifollahi [1] has been considered as the macro variable elaborating the Iranian women's attitudes. Adopting a structural and dialectic approach, he notices to the objective structures of the society in social changes. Seifollahi believes that in general, the process of establishment of unjust social relationship is resulting from the performance of unbalanced social structure". The unbalanced social structure system is also resulting from the nature and performance of internal and external structure of the basic elements, which form a social system" [1]. Elaborating the unequal gender relationships in different societies, Seifollahi believes that social unjust relationships are causes for gender discrimination. In this issue, he adds: Another consequence of the unjust social relationships is the creation of gender inequalities. In a society whose bases are based on inequality, the discrimination, pre-judgment and gender exploitation is an undeniable fact [6].

Chafetz, one of the feminists' scholars studies the issue of gender inequality at micro and macro levels. He divides the mechanisms, which are influencing the continuation of gender inequality into two sections. These two sections include the mandatory forces and volunteer forces and individual actions. Chafetz distinguishes among three types of gender definition. 1) Gender ideology or belief in basic differences or typically biological differences between the nature of men and women 2) Gender norms or expectations on correct methods and behavior of women and men 3) Cliché beliefs or emphasis on difference among women and men that what kind of reaction do they usually show in different positions [7]. Concerning the cliché beliefs, in addition to Chafetz, some other scholars have conducted research as well. In his definition of cliché belief, Anselmi states that cliché beliefs include the prevailing beliefs among individuals based on their membership in one or some social groups [8]. In connection with the gender roles, he says that the gender roles are prescriptions and beliefs determined by a culture and society in connection with the method of women and men's behaviors and emotions [8]. The result of research by Mac Donald et al. has shown that the behavior of parent-child has impacts on the formation of gender cliché and they treat their sons and daughters differently. Furthermore, they play physical games with their sons more than their daughters [9]. The result of research has

shown that boys and men are forced to act in accordance with the manly standards. For example, boys and men who do not act in accordance with manly standards are faced with inferiority complex [10]. Researchers have indicated that parents have cliché beliefs on having special behaviors suitable for each gender and consider difference in natural capabilities of each gender [11]. Such a situation has a negative impact on individuals' performance, since they see themselves before judgment of cliché beliefs in advance. The result of a research by scientists has shown that when the participants of a math test were told that the test will probably show gender differences among the two genders, the women's scores went meaningfully lower than men. Oppositely, when the participants of a test did not imagine that the result of test will indicate their gender differences, both men's and women's scores were the same [12]. Concerning the gender and cliché beliefs and the necessity of paying attention to these two issues in connection with each other and in particular to the mutual relationship of couples, Landrine believes that when the gender cliché beliefs are studied, though it is possible that no race or social class to be put forth, but most of people make some pre-assumptions. So when a race or a social class is put forth, different gender cliché beliefs are put forth [13]. In the opinion of Walzer, the labor division of house duties is based on gender. Usually, women undertake home jobs and men deal with working outside home and undertake the duty of gaining family income [14]. Bem is one of the feminists who put forth gender schema or theory and thereby he emphasizes on the role of cognitive system in addition to sociability. In that theory, it is assumed that children learn how culture or society has defined their role as a woman or a man and then they internalize those definitions as a gender schema or undisputable image [15].

1.1. Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis of this paper was women's attitudes toward gender attitudes have a significant difference in economically developed cities and in economically underdeveloped cities.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Women's attitudes toward gender stereotypes have a significant difference in economically developed cities and economically underdeveloped cities.
2. Women's attitudes toward gender norms have a significant difference economically developed cities and in economically underdeveloped cities.
3. Women's attitudes toward gender ideology have a significant difference in economically developed cities and economically underdeveloped cities.
4. Women's attitudes toward gender roles have a significant difference economically developed cities and economically underdeveloped cities.
 - 4.1. Women's attitudes toward labor market have a significant difference economically developed cities and economically underdeveloped cities.
 - 4.2. Women's attitudes toward division of household labor have a significant difference economically developed cities and economically underdeveloped cities.
 - 4.3. Women's attitudes toward structure of power in family have a significant difference economically developed cities and economically underdeveloped cities.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to measuring women's attitudes, a scale was developed according to creditable scales made by the Iranian and western scholars. However, regarding to the economic difference between Iran and the western societies, the discordant components, which were in conflict with the Iranian culture, were either amended or deleted. The women's attitudes towards their social roles were assessed through three micro scales of women's attitudes towards participation in labor market, their attitudes towards home jobs (household labors) and their attitudes toward decision making in the family. The scale made by Slade and Jenner which have been prepared to assess women's attitudes towards social roles was one of the scales whose items were used while keeping an eye on the economic conditions of the Iranian society [16]. The Fortin's scale under the title of women's attitudes towards gender roles and participation in labor market was another scales being used to develop the questionnaire of the present research. The items of this scale were used in particular to assess the women's attitudes towards their participation in the labor market and the rate of importance of this social role in comparison with the mother and wife roles [17]. Spence et al. [18] scale entitled a version of a summary of attitudes to the women scale. The questionnaire of the present research was adjusted in accordance with the Likert spectrum. Based on coding of this research, the score of an individual with a fully equality-seeking attitude is (1) and the score of an individual with a fully non-equality seeking attitude (belief in full detachment of gender roles) is equal to (5).

In order to assess the macro variable of the research statement, i.e. the rate and nature of economic development of urban regions of Khuzestan province, it was necessary to rank different cities of this province by rate and nature of development. For this purpose, with a combination of the indicators extracted from the report of indicators of human development of UN, the indexes extracted from research of Abdolahi [5] and indexes determined by Management and Planning Organization, the multi-fold indexes were determined to make an operational study of the rate and nature of cities of Khuzestan province After determining the

economic development indexes (13 indexes), all cities of Khuzestan province (according to the classification of the year 2006 of Management and Planning Organization of Khuzestan province), with the help of Taxonomy technique (as one of the best ranking techniques), they were ranked in terms of the rate of their economic development. In the last step, these cities were divided into two general categories based on their ranking. The first group included economically developed cities and the second group was the economically underdeveloped cities. It is worth mentioning that due to the proximity of the scores of each of these cities and the similarities of scores with each other, in practice; it was not possible to divide the cities into three categories .

The statistical society in this research includes all women and girls over 15 years of age residing in urban regions of cities of Khuzestan province. Using the formula of conversion of Fischer, the statistical volume of 62 was determined and in harmony with the rate of population of each city, the sample volume of that city was specified. Therefore the sample volume for Andimeshk was 35, and for Izeh was 27. The sampling method was a random sampling. For this purpose, first, a simple random sampling was made and one city was selected out of the two groups of developed and underdeveloped cities. For this, Andimeshk was selected out of economically developed cities and Izeh from the group of economically underdeveloped cities. As, each of the mentioned cities consists of a number of cities, for facilitating the sampling and upgrading the rate of accuracy, the centers of each of these cities was selected as sample units. At the second stage of sampling, by using random systematic sampling, sample units were selected.

3. RESULTS

In connection with the women's attitude towards gender stereotypes, gender norms, gender ideology and gender roles Andimeshk has higher rate of equality-oriented than Izeh. The descriptive findings indicate that the in Andimeshk women's attitudes towards their social stereotypes have an average score of 3.1, toward gender norms the average score is 2.87, gender ideology is 2.92, and in connection with gender roles the average is 2.88. Meanwhile, these amounts for Izeh consecutively are: 3.82, 3.49, 3.78, and 3.6. Finding shows that in all aspects of gender attitudes women living in Andimeshk, have more equitable orientation than women residing in Izeh.

In order to make a comparison between high economic develop cities and low economic develop cities, with the help of Tukey test, a pair comparisons was made between the mean squares of the scores of the two cities. The results of the test of comparison of two cities (Table 1) of Andimeshk and Izeh indicated that with confidence over 0.95, there is a difference between the two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh from the perspective of women's attitudes towards gender stereotypes.

The second hypothesis test whether if there is a significant difference between the economic development of cities, and women's attitudes toward gender norms. The result of Tukey test (Table 2) resulting from comparing the women's attitudes toward gender norms in two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh indicate that with 0.95 confidence, the zero hypothesis of research is rejected and the hypothesis of research is confirmed.

According to the third hypothesis, attitudes towards gender ideology have significant difference between these two types of cities. The result of Tukey test (Table 3) resulting from comparing the women's attitudes toward gender ideology in two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh indicates that with 0.99 confidence the zero hypothesis of research is rejected and the hypothesis of research is confirmed. Therefore it can be said that the result of Tukey test indicated that from the perspective of gender ideology significant difference between attitudes of women of cities with developed and underdeveloped economy.

Table 1. Tukey test results of comparing women's attitudes toward gender stereotypes in Andimeshk and Izeh

Attitudes toward Stereotypes	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.71852*	0.23473	0.013	-1.3262	-0.1108

Table 2. Tukey test results of comparing women's attitudes toward gender norms in Andimeshk and Izeh

Women's Attitudes Toward Gender Norms	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.62416*	0.20933	0.017	-1.1661	-0.0822

Table 3. Tukey test results of comparing women's attitudes toward gender ideology in Andimeshk and Izeh

Attitudes toward Gender Ideology	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.85593*	0.25769	0.006	-1.5231	-0.1888

Table 4 shows the results of the Tukey test resulting from the comparison of women's attitudes toward gender roles of Andimeshk and Izeh. The result of Tukey test indicates that with 0.99 confidence, the two cities

of Andimeshk and Izeh are different from the perspective of the average score of attitudes towards gender roles. So, the zero hypothesis of the research is rejected and the research hypothesis indicating difference among women’s attitudes toward gender roles of cities with developed and underdeveloped economy is confirmed.

Table 4. Tukey test results from comparing women’s attitudes toward gender roles in Andimeshk and Izeh

Women Attitudes toward Gender Roles	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.72245*	0.19445	0.001	-1.2259	-0.2190

As it was mentioned before, the women’s attitudes towards their social roles were assessed through three subscales of women’s attitudes towards: participation in labor market, their attitudes towards home jobs and their attitudes toward decision making in the family. Each of these various aspects of gender roles is tested separately. Table 5 shows the result of Tukey test resulting from comparing the women’s attitudes in two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh from the perspective of participation in labor market. The result of the test indicates that with 0.99% confidence, the research hypothesis of study, i.e. the existence of a relationship between economic developments of the city and the women’s attitudes towards participation in labor market is confirmed.

Table 5. Tukey test results from comparing women’s attitudes toward participation in labor in market, in Andimeshk and Izeh

Attitudes Toward participation in labor market	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.73360*	0.23802	0.012	-1.3499	-0.1173

Also, the findings (Table 6) indicated that with confidence over 0.95, there is a difference between the two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh from the perspective of women’s attitudes towards household labors. With regard to the fact that these two cities are different from each other from the viewpoint of economic development, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the women’s attitudes towards household labor with regard to the rate of economic development of city.

Table 6. Tukey test resulting from comparing women’s attitudes toward household labors in Andimeshk and Izeh

Attitude toward division of household labor	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.69254*	0.23281	0.017	-1.2953	-0.0898

In connection with the last subscale, the structure of power in family (decision making), the results of the test of comparison of two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh indicated that, with confidence over 0.99, there is a difference between the two cities of Andimeshk and Izeh from the perspective of women’s attitudes toward structure of power in family (table 7).

Table 7. Tukey test resulting from comparing women’s attitudes toward structure of power in family, in Andimeshk and Izeh

Attitude Toward structure of power in family	City 1	City 2	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Andimeshk	Izeh	-0.74120*	0.21869	0.005	-1.3074	-0.1750

4. DISCUSSION

The pivotal purpose of this research is to understand the gender attitudes of women in Iran. The theoretical framework of this study is based on combinational theory of socio-economic (Seifollahi) and of Chafetz and Bem’s feminist theories. Based on these theories, a field study was conducted to determine whether there is any significant difference between gender attitudes of women residing in economically developed and economically underdeveloped regions. For this purpose, the women’s attitudes of over 15 years of age were measured. The result of research shows that with a confidence on the theoretical clarifications of the research and based on the findings of the field study, it can be said that women located in economically developed cities have more equality-oriented attitudes towards their social roles in comparison with women living in economically underdeveloped cities. Thus, as was expected, the findings show that the incongruous conditions of economic structures of Iran have had a deep impact on women’s intellectual dimension and attitudes toward

their society. It can be said that the underdeveloped economic structures cause more conservative and less equality-oriented attitudes in women. As shown, women residing in underdeveloped cities are less prone toward social and economic participation. Moreover, the incongruous status in economic structures has created grounds for the creation of role conflicts, role pressure and dissatisfaction with roles and ambiguity in role definitions for women. Thus, changes in economic structures and enhanced economic development, will upgrade the objective and subjective situations of women's lives, and this, in turn, will cause more participation in social and economic life.

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