



Woman in Development and Politics

The Dual Experience of Women's Bread-Making a Study on the Lives of Female Heads of Households in Behshahr City

Reza Azamzadeh¹ | Soheila Alirezanejad²

1. PhD Student, Department of Cultural Sociology, Faculty of Humanities, Science and Research Branch Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: azamzadehr7@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author, Full Professor of Sociology, Garmsar Branch Islamic Azad University, Garmsar, Iran. E-mail: soal802001@yahoo.com

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 25 August 2024 Received in revised form: 27 November 2024 Accepted: 29 December 2024 Published online: 31 December 2024</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Breadwinner,</i> <i>Head of the Household,</i> <i>Loneliness,</i> <i>Poverty.</i></p>	<p>Introduction The role of women breadwinners in managing families has increased, and the number of female-headed families has grown relatively substantially in recent decades. In this era, women comprise over one-third of household chiefs, as indicated by the United Nations report. These women are responsible for the family in the absence of an adult male presence or support. The number of families headed by women has also increased in our country. Iran is home to over 24.2 million households, with 12.7% of them being commanded by women, as per the 2015 census.</p> <p>Women who are the leaders of their households prioritize earning. They engage in a variety of activities to fulfill the responsibilities of the provider and provide for their family. In order to combat poverty and enhance the empowerment of these women, structural adjustments, such as increased self-reliance, are necessary. The relief committee provides coverage for the majority of the female guardians in this research; however, the relief committee's limited assistance fails to satisfy their material requirements, necessitating their employment.</p> <p>This research seeks to find out how these women earn money after taking charge of the household and in what ways they meet their material needs. The primary inquiry of the investigation is: What are the economic activities of women who are designated as guardians?</p> <p>Literature Review The article "Sociological explanation of the acquisition of professional skills and its impact on the employment of female supervisors" by Soraya Gudarzi demonstrates that a small percentage of female supervisors possess skills, with the majority of them (85.5%) having acquired them for a variety of reason. They have no desire to acquire skills and education and are employed in activities such as nursing (both for children and adults), cleaning, secretarial work and low-paid jobs. Fereydoun Ghorbani and his colleagues in the article "Metaanalysis of the needs and priorities of the lives of women-caregivers" assert that the primary issue facing women-caregivers is the insufficient employment and income. They are of the opinion that the empowerment of female guardians is influenced by the presence of social support. Tesfamariam demonstrates in the article "Lifestyle and Coping Strategies" that female chiefs are in a significantly more disadvantageous position than men when it comes to securing employment, and the economic status of women prior to becoming the head of the household was superior to their current circumstances. Ferdo et al. identify access to education and credits as the most critical factors in the empowerment of women-caregivers in the article "Gender, Social Capital and Empowerment."</p> <p>Methodology The grounded theory research method was employed to accomplish the research objectives. Strauss and Corbin define the grounded theory approach as a qualitative research method that employs a systematic set of procedures to develop a fundamental theory. This theory is derived from induction about a phenomenon. To accomplish this task, in this research, 33 female heads of households in Behshahr city, most of whom were covered by the relief committee, were interviewed. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, and the sampling process was terminated upon the attainment of theoretical saturation. The research instrument was a semi-structured interview. In order to preserve confidentiality, this investigation implemented pseudonyms. The minimum period of guardianship for these women was three years, while the utmost period was nineteen years. After the start of the first interview, coding and identification of concepts began to discover categories.</p> <p>Research Findings The research results indicate that female guardians varied in terms of age, the presence or absence</p>

of children, and the level of family support. However, the common denominator among all of them is their role as breadwinners, which involves earning money to support the lives of the individuals under their care. The primary categories of the research are as follows: 1. Household headship; 2. The poverty of female guardians; 3. The loneliness of women in administering the household; 4. Earning money and earning bread.

household headship

In this research, the head of the household is a woman who, in addition to her previous duties as a housewife and mother, temporarily assumes this role after her marriage due to a variety of circumstances, including death, separation, illness, drug addiction, desertion, and her husband's imprisonment. A man is accountable for the household and the material and non-material requirements of their family members, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

The following categories are among the numerous causes why women are placed in the role of guardians in this research:

1. Spouse of the deceased 2. Husband and wife have separated. 3. A female guardian is appointed as a result of the husband's illness and infirmity. 4. A female guardian is appointed as a result of the husband's addiction and negligence. 5. Female guardian and desertion → Joint life by the spouse 6. The prisoner's spouse and the female guardian

Poverty of Female Guardians

The majority of female guardians in this study are facing a challenging situation as a result of a lack of financial support, inadequate support from family and government institutions, and numerous challenges in meeting their children's basic requirements, including food and clothing.

Loneliness of women in managing the household

Despite the poor mental conditions and poverty, the family's determination to endure long hours of labor and sleeplessness without expecting others and to live their lives according to their abilities and minimal opportunities is evident.

The primary concern of female supervisors in this research is to earn a living. Accordingly, they are compelled to take on any position that will enable them to earn a livelihood.

In the selective coding stage of the core category, the "Women's understanding of femininity" was identified. The categories derived from the interviews were categorized, resulting in the development of two paradigm models for the economic activities of women-supervisors. Various factors contribute to the emergence of these phenomena, and each one is examined in terms of antecedent conditions, causal and intervening conditions, as well as strategies.

The first paradigm: Self as needing support

Women who conform to this pattern lack the requisite self-assurance and material resources to establish themselves as independent individuals. Causal factors, including illness, deprive women of the opportunity to work, and the father's family's opposition to employment outside the home, all contribute to women's dependence on their families and their need for support.

The perception of femininity as delicate is a substantial factor that deters women from pursuing a livelihood. The intervening factors of loneliness and homelessness put women in difficult mental conditions and due to the lack of job skills, they face many problems in earning money and earning bread. The participation of family members in one's personal life is an additional component of this model. The loneliness of women in managing the family makes them not have the necessary self-confidence to manage their lives, and taking risks and suppressing feminine desires are their strategies in this model. The results of women's searches for protection are the feeling of annihilation and lack of economic and social capital.

The second paradigm: Self as an agent of change

In this paradigmatic pattern, female guardians are able to alter their living conditions and pursue their objectives through diligent effort, thereby establishing a new existence. They have achieved self-confidence and stability in their new position. Lack of dependence on the paternal family, professional skills before marriage, ambition and the motivation to progress are among the causal factors of this paradigm.

The factors of the field that influence the development of a successful woman include economic capital, family support for women's presence in society, and the concept of femininity, which implies a competent individual. They are adamant about implementing substantial changes in their lifestyle, and they are confident in their own capabilities and the ability to transform their lives. Among the interfering factors of this paradigm are a strong wish to achieve independence, an emphasis on the role of guardian, and the responsibility of providing for the needs of children. Their strategies for success in the role of breadwinner include risk-taking, contentment, persistence, and resistance to family interference. The consequence and accomplishment of women who are chiefs of the household in this paradigm is the acquisition of economic and social

capital—independent living.

Conclusion

Individual, social, familial, and cultural factors all contribute to the comprehension of women's perceptions of themselves as women. Independence, self-reliance, and emotional support from the family, particularly the patriarch, are critical factors in the challenges that women encounter during guardianship. These women are categorized into two paradigms: “self as needing support” and “self as agent of change.” Women's understanding of femininity in the second paradigm leads to the ability to change their lives and succeed in their goals. Conversely, the initial paradigm is significantly influenced by the family's opposition to the presence of a female chief in society, a lack of self-confidence, and family dependence. Women who conform to this pattern are incapable of altering their lives without the assistance of others, are less active in groups, and prioritize the role of mother.

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