



EFFECTIVENESS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT IN PROMOTION OF GENERAL HEALTH IN WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS



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ABSTRACT

The current study aims at the survey of the psychological empowerment efficiency in enhancing the breadwinner moms' general health. The present study makes use of an experimental method and it is comprised of the control and experimental groups. The study population includes all of the family breadwinning moms who received protections from Imam Khomeini relief foundation based in Shiraz County. The study population was recalled through a public announcement. We also took advantage of a randomized sampling method and finally 60 individuals were chosen as the study sample volume. The study sample volume was divided into two experimental and control groups. These were asked to complete the general health questionnaire (GHQ), and then the experimental group received an 8-session psychological empowerment training course and, in the end, they were again requested to complete the general health questionnaire (retest). In comparing the pretest and posttest results it was made evident that holding cognitive empowerment training courses is an appropriate method for elevating the breadwinning moms' general health level. Knowing the high prevalence of divorce, and/or the husband's death and/or the husband's inability and the psychological consequences followed by such phenomena it is hereby suggested that the method proposed by the current study is qualified to be used for reducing the female heads of the household's negative psychological outcomes.

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Contribution/ Originality

This study was conducted to determine the efficacy of psychological empowerment in improving general health in women-headed households. The results indicated that informing and entrepreneurship activities are among the important and effective factors influencing the female heads of the households' empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term "breadwinning moms" is a phrase that has become prevalent during the recent decade, and it is used to refer to those kinship units which are occasionally comprised of an old father and mother and/or several children. The bread earning person in such family should have lost her husband, or she should have been divorced or the husband's whereabouts is not definitely currently known or the husband should be handicapped or unable to work. Such females who suffer from severe lack of knowledge and intense poverty, besides the incomes they earn from doing low-income

jobs, mostly seasonal, are aided by the government and the other institutions which seems to be a lot less than what is required in practice. As it is put by the United Nation's human development report, the widowed women enjoy a little share of the human development resources, though they constitute half of the world's population. In non-industrial countries and in developing countries due to the availability of the limited resources and also as a result of prevailing discriminatory mindsets; in cases that the women have to carry out their traditional tasks and duties which are also implying of gender inequalities besides playing roles as the family protectors and have to earn a living as well, such a discrepancy becomes more distinct. The existence of such inequalities in addition to imposing pressure and harsh conditions on the women leads to the reduction of their general health and the household under their guardianship, as well [1]. In this regard, whenever the subject of poverty is discussed there is a need for the policy-makers and the protesting organizations take steps. Therefore, paying attention to the gender concerns in development plans with the objective of enhancing the women competencies and presenting gender-related information and statistics according to the various groupings seem to be necessary [2]. The entire cases recounted above severely threatens the household, female heads general and psychological health; health is a state in which the individuals are apparently enjoying perfect physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being and the sole absence of a type of disease should not be taken to mean healthiness. Thus, the health enhancement regarding the people's empowerment concepts deals with the recognition of the factors influencing the individual and social health and correct decision-making in adopting healthy behaviors and the observation of the healthy lifestyles, subsequently [3].

Individuals' empowerment means encouraging them to participate more in decision-making processes which are effective in their activities; that is, there is a need for the healthy individuals to be provided with an environment in which they could be able to contribute good ideas and practice them. Empowerment is the vital element of the business in the modern world. Goals such as getting closer to the customers, improving after-sale services, constant innovative offerings, augmenting productivity and taking over in the competitive fields can be afforded to be obtained by those of the organizations which are continuously coming up with novel methods for their individuals and, generally, 37% of the families around the world are headed by the women and over 70% of the single-people families or, in other words, self-administrated families, in the world are managed by the women and 30% by the men [4].

According to the statistics obtained through the formal sources, the female heads of the households comprise about 9.42% of the all households worldwide. In Europe and the US, 15-20% of the families are administrated by the women, in Africa and southern Asia this number reaches to 30% and in Yemen, Lebanon and Sudan, respectively, about 22%, 12% and 66% of the families are headed by the women. The female heads of the households in Egypt make up for 49% of the whole population and 20% of the Egyptian households are headed by the female breadwinners.

The health and demographic studies presented by the UN indicates that the Latin America and some of the countries positioned in the Sahara region or Africa are bearing witness to the lowest differences in terms of determining the family head gender based on the family size. (On average, the 5-peoples' families are administrated by the male heads and the 4-peoples' families by the female heads). Based on the researches, such gender differences are more tangible in some of the North African countries and west Asian countries. (On average, the 6-peoples' families are headed by the men and the 4-peoples' families are administered by the women). Also the studies undertaken in the three countries situated in the western Asia and northern Africa indicate that over 80% of the female heads of the households live apart from their husbands, are divorced or widowed. Based on the international studies, 60% of the women around the world are breadwinners for their families and the recent statistical researches worldwide are indicative of the rise in the number of the female heads of the households [5].

In Western Europe, as well, the women-headed families account for 31% of the entire population and it has also been shown that 18% to 25% of the poor families are administered by the women. This percentage reaches to 40% in Ireland and it is 50% for Canada. In developing countries about 20% to 50% of the total families are administrated by the women [1].

With the definition provided by the Iranian center for demography and statistics and based on the demographic investigation conducted in 2011, 9.24% of the households have been shown to be run by the women heads. From the population point of view, the female heads of the households account for 5.2% of the entire population and in terms of the age, the female heads of the households are on average 44.5 years old in the cities and 54.1 years old in the villages. Among the breadwinning moms about 35.6% are literate in the cities and this value gets down to 16.8% in the villages. In terms of the marital status, 18.9% of the female heads of the households have husbands in the cities and this value decreases to 26.2% of the women in the villages. The ratio of the women not having a husband due to reasons such as divorce or death among the female heads of the households in the cities is 5.1% and 71.4%, respectively. The same ratio for the women in the villages has been found to be 2.3% and 68.9%, respectively [2].

The employment rate in the active population from the economic perspectives for the female heads of the households in the cities and in the villages is 96.0% and 94.4%, respectively. Comparing the employment rate among the female heads of the households with the entire women in the country (8.1% urban females and 10.7% rural women) is suggestive of a higher employment rate among the female heads of the households with respect to the entire women which can be due to the reasons such as their life conditions and the necessity to respond to the household member's needs.

The highest valuable need in Maslow's hierarchy, self-development, depends on the idea that our talents and competencies should be actualized to the maximum extent possible. It has been shown that if an individual satisfies all his or her needs in the Maslow's hierarchy of the needs but he is found to be not self-developed then he would be feeling impatient, unaccomplished and discontented. Maslow writes "musicians should compose, painters should paint, and poets should recite poetry and so on in order to find internal peace". The self-development process can be fulfilled in many various ways. But, every individual, disregard of the job or the internal tendencies s/he has, can maximize his or her capabilities and acquire the most complete personality growth. What turns out to be more important is the actualization of the talents in the most supreme level possible [1].

The proponents of the idea that the poverty is becoming more a characteristic of the women, poverty feminization, and the female heads of the households vulnerability believe that the families administered by the female heads not only are spread to all of the countries all around the world but the number of the female heads of the households who are categorized among the low-income population is increasing on a daily basis. Such a problem has also been observed in the countries which have had even the most advanced rules and statutory regulations in favor and to the best benefits of the women. In such countries, despite the governmental aids made available to these women, the women's pauperization process is still at large. Comparing the above mentioned statistics and values indicate that though the women constitute half of the world's population and a large fraction of the working hours is accounted for by them, their income level and their properties are very low. In spite of the fact that the women outperform men in many respects such as vocational discipline, commitment and precision but it is the men who are appointed for taking higher level jobs [4].

About two third of the female heads of the households are the sole bread winners of the family without being aided by another one member of the family working and they are also shown to have lower income rates in contrast to the men due to the lack of and limited job opportunities appropriate for the women and they are forced to mostly get part-time jobs. Thus, they do not come out to have proper economical statuses. Of course, some of them like the self-sustained women who are spending their eldership and take advantage of their deceased husband's retirement pensions have incomes without needing to do any job. The studies conducted in this regard indicate that the female heads of the households in Iran find themselves highly exposed to the economic pressures pertaining to the supply of accommodation, daily requirements and their children's needs and their income rate is significantly less than what the control group earns [3].

The lower income obtained by the female-headed household causes these women to be relatively poorer in comparison with their male counterparts. And it is in such a manner that 29% of the households belonging to the first

economic decile is comprised of the headless households or the female headed households. Therefore, it can be stated that the female-headed families' absolute poverty rate is higher than the households administrated by the male heads. By absolute poverty rate we intend to include those of the individuals whose income is less than a minimum specified sustenance income (primary needs satisfaction). In fact, such individuals live below the poverty line. In the years 1991, 1997, 2001, the female-headed households costs were estimated to be respectively 45.4%, 52% and 17.5% and it was also shown that such costs and expenditures acted as barriers for such female heads to satisfy their minimum level needs; therefore, these social groups used to live in absolute poverty, whereas, this index for their male counterparts has been 25.4%, 16.1% and 14.8%, respectively.

To better and more help to the economic, social and cultural status of this vulnerable social class the officials and the policy-makers should adopt a higher look and devise better programs and plans and, on the other hand, the existence of such a social class along with the children they have to manage, jeopardizes their own health and the society's health. According to the fact that this type of the household heads involve an intermediate percentage of the society, the authorities in charge of the related and interest institutions can considerably help these families through arranging educational and training courses (cognitive empowerment and psychological and general health) [1].

2. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The current study takes a semi-experimental approach and it consists of two experimental and control groups. The study population includes all of the female heads of the households which received assistance from the Imam Khomeini relief Foundation in Shiraz County and all of them were called for through a public announcement. The total number of 60 individuals was selected based on randomized sampling methods and they were stochastically divided into two experimental and control groups.

Firstly, the general health questionnaire (GHQ) was completed by the two groups. Then, the experimental group received an 8-session training course on psychological empowerment and finally, after the training course was finished, the general health questionnaire was again administered to the experimental group (posttest). Then the results obtained from the questionnaires were compared by taking advantage of SPSS software.

The study instrument: Goldberg's general health questionnaire was compiled in order to be applied to the non-psychotic psychological disorders. The form used by the current study contained 28 questions. The form embraced 4 physical symptom scales, sleeping disorders and anxiety, social function disorders and severe depression and every scale was surveyed within 7 questions and this form was normalized to be used for the Iranian population by Ya'qubi, Sowlati and Mirkheshti which was scored 88%, 89% and 92% respectively.

2.1. Implementation Method

After the subjects were haphazardly assigned to the two experimental and control groups, firstly they were asked to complete Goldberg's general health questionnaire. Then, the experimental group received an 8-session course on psychological empowerment and general health and finally the pretest and posttest scores were analyzed by taking advantage of the SPSS software.

3. RESULTS

The pretest and posttest mean scores and standard deviations for the general health and its subscales have been given in Table 1, for the two experimental and control groups. To survey the mean differences significance we have made use of the covariance tests. During the analyses, the pretest control variable effect was deduced from the posttest scores and then the two groups were compared based on the residual scores.

Table-1. The pretest and posttest mean scores and standard deviations for the general health and its subscales

Scales	Group	Pretest		Posttest	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
General health	Tested	55.30	5.20	49.46	4.60
	Control	51.70	6.40	50.40	4.80
Physical symptoms	Tested	16.10	2.90	11.53	2.60
	Control	15.80	2.90	14.40	2.80
Anxiety and sleep disorders	Tested	13.70	3.20	10.33	3.20
	Control	13.70	2.80	14.00	2.40
Social dysfunction	Tested	8.80	3.30	13.00	2.80
	Control	9.10	2.90	8.50	1.90
Major depression	Tested	16.70	2.00	14.70	2.40
	Control	13.10	3.40	13.50	2.90

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to the fact that the high score rates for the three subtests of physical symptoms, anxiety and sleeping disorders and intense depression and the low score rates regarding the social function disorders in the general health questionnaire are reflective of the presence of a disease, the data given in the table are expressive of the idea that in the control group, the mean scores are reduced in some of the first subscales and they have been found to have increased in the social function disorder which can be indicative of the independent variable likely effectiveness on the experimental group individuals' general health. Whereas, in the control group the mean scores in the first three subtests are increased and as for the social function disorder subtest they have been found to be following a decreasing trend and through the results obtained so far the study main hypothesis stating that "there is a relationship between the cognitive empowerment efficiency on the psychological health of the two pretest and posttest groups" is, subsequently, confirmed.

Difference of grades method between pre-test and post-test in two groups were used considering that the assumptions of covariance analysis was established, and its results were as follows:

Table-2. Covariance analysis of psychological empowerment on public health

SOV	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig	R ²
Pre-test	2.748	1	2.748	7.238	0.012	0.211
The difference between groups	9.919	1	9.919	26.124	0.001	0.492
Error	10.252	27	0.380	-	-	-
Total	265.750	30	-	-	-	-

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to Table 2, F-value between experimental and control groups was 26.124, so psychological empowerment was effective on women public health and reduced it ($p < 0.01$).

3.1. In the Study Research Hypotheses by Using Inferential Statistics, the Following Results Were Obtained

The second hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between individual growth and development and promotion of public health in women headed households.

Table-3. Covariance analysis of life satisfaction and public health

SOV	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig	R ²
Pre-test	5.173	1	5.173	10.352	0.003	0.277
The difference between groups	33.900	2	16.950	33.918	0.001	0.715
Error	13.943	27	0.500	-	-	-
Total	319.000	30	-	-	-	-

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to Table 3, F-value between experimental and control groups was 33.918, therefore life satisfaction was effective on public health and increased it ($p < 0.01$).

The third hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between compatibility and mastery of the environment and promotion public health in women headed households.

Table-4. Covariance analysis of purpose in life and public health

SOV	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig	R ²
Pre-test	17.350	1	17.350	35.534	0.001	0.568
The difference between groups	35.853	2	17.927	36.715	0.001	0.731
Error	13.183	27	0.488	-	-	-
Total	326.000	30	-	-	-	-

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to Table 4, F-value between experimental and control groups was 36.715, so purpose in life was effective on women public health and increased it ($p < 0.01$).

The fourth hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between optimism and promoting public health in women headed households.

Table-5. Levine test for the equality of variance to optimism component

Component test	Levine's test (equal variances)	
Assuming equal variances	F	Sig
Assuming inequality of variances	2.569	0.120

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to Table 5, F-value was 2.569, therefore variances in both experimental and control groups were homogeneous, and the difference was not significant.

Table-6. To investigate the homogeneity of regression slopes

Index	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Pre-test group	0.298	1	0.298	0.520	0.483

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to Table 6, F-value the interaction between the independent variable and the covariance was 0.520, and obtained significant level was 0.483, so there was no statistically significant interaction between group and pretest, also the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes were confirmed for the use covariance analysis test.

Table-7. Covariance analysis for optimism and public health

SOV	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig	R ²
Pre-test	12.333	1	12.333	25.353	0.001	0.484
The difference between groups	30.745	2	15.373	31.602	0.001	0.701
Error	13.134	27	0.486	-	-	-
Total	341.000	30	-	-	-	-

Source: Author computation from field survey data

According to Table 7, F-value between experimental and control groups was 31.602, so the optimism was effective on public health and increased it ($p < 0.01$).

4. CONCLUSION

The results pertaining to the general health questionnaire total score indicates that the subjects' total score in the experimental group posttest scores is significantly higher than their pretest scores and the first study hypothesis is confirmed. The results obtained by the current study regarding the study main hypothesis correspond to the results obtained by many of the other researches. Also, Kwang [6] showed in a study that cognitive empowerment is a group psychotherapy method which has been found out to be very appropriate in enhancing the psychological health [6].

To better and more contribute to the economic, social and cultural status of this vulnerable social class, the authorities and the politicians should devise far better plans and they need to pay a highly precise attention and, on the other hand, the existence of such a social class and the children they have to tend to, collectively, endangers their own health and the social health. Because such household heads account for an intermediate percentage of the society, the interest institute officials can be of a great help through organizing proper training and educational courses on cognitive empowerment and psychological and general health enhancement.

Holding psychological training courses causes the individuals to get calm and they also bring about a reduction in the individuals' sorrow and grief and psychological complexes and make them psychologically feel tranquilized. Organizing such classes in a cohort-like manner and watching the others experiencing the same situation, sitting to hear each other's talks, speaking about one's own problems and/or accomplishments and successes pave the way for appropriate psychological and mental conditions.

Because the psychological effects were evaluated regarding the female heads of the households it was indicated that the authorities and the government officials should actively participate in this field.

Therefore, the results obtained from the current study indicated that informing and entrepreneurship activities are among the important and effective factors influencing the female heads of the households' empowerment. Thus, one of the most significant solutions and practical strategies is guiding the women towards the labor market and this, in return, causes an increase in the women's participation rate in economic, social and cultural activities of the country. Besides performing the scientific researches and arranging useful and effective educational and training programs for the female heads of the households, adopting proper policies by the government for the purpose of creating job opportunities for the women, providing the women with facilities to have access to the information, running financial plans or, in other words, allocating and supplying financial resources for the purpose of encouraging and stimulating the entrepreneur women to establish entrepreneur institutions, collecting valid statistical information regarding the active women populations and also employment creating activities by them, developing the entrepreneurship trainings and getting the women to have access to such trainings and education courses, women's access to the information technology, general training courses and allocating business funds and protecting services are among the most critical cases that can be effective on women's empowerment and getting them prepared as independent and capable groups to enter the labor market and increase their self-confidence.

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