

PERCEPTION OF GENDER ROLES AND LANGUAGE USE AMONG YEMENI HUSBANDS

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of gender role among Yemeni husbands. It mainly attempts to examine the relationship between perception of gender roles and the language used by husbands when they speak to their wives. It identifies language habits used by husbands and wives as well. SPSS was utilized to analyze the data. The findings revealed that there is strong relationship between perception of gender roles and the language used by husbands when they speak to their wives.*

KEYWORDS: *gender role, language habits, Yemeni, husbands*

Introduction

The indignity of women has started early in Ancient Greece. The family was a very important element in society. Therefore, it was monitored by leaders and philosophers who outlined the family relationship at that time. One of these philosophers is Aristotle who supported males to rule and dominate the family with all authority. Aristotle claims that “males are by nature fitter to command than females” (Bristow, 1991, p 6). According to (Bristow, 1991) women were mostly used for pleasure and as servant to take care of the home, husbands and children. The traditional role of women has been imposed and exercised for a long time to the extent that women themselves accepted it as their major role in life. Bristow, 1991 states that the conviction that women were inferior to men was strongly rooted in the minds of men as well as women of the Greek community. The ideal woman in antique Greek culture was a woman who “stayed at home, taking care of it and obedient to her husband” (Keener, 1992: 164-166). The situation is nearly the same in the Roman culture where women were seen as housekeepers and children bearers. Women in Rome never enjoyed political rights but they have better opportunities in education compared to women in Greece (Bell, 1998). The economic situation of men assisted them to impose their power over women since they have been granted the privilege of breadwinning and because they earn money. Having the ability to earn money means that men have the privilege to control the family as they dole out money to wives and other member of the family. The power gained by men has different forms in the family life and may enable men to dominate all households’ decisions. (Techenor 2005 cited Ferree 1990,

Bernard 1981). Besides, there is a perception that women are less competent than men in many areas. Carli L. L (2001) states that people have a perception that men have higher level of competence compared to what women have, unless there is a very clear evidence of women superiority.

In the 19th century during the Victorian era women faced many difficulties as well. They were oppressed and abused and have no rights as a result of discriminatory laws which were existing at that time. Women were not able to vote or to hold professional jobs such as engineers, employees or any administrative position. Their job opportunities were limited to occupations like teachers, factory workers or agricultural labors (Mitchell, 2009). Women were subjects of a patriarchal system (Gaskell, 2005). Women were living in misogynist world and under male dominance (Muda, 2011). In fact, women were deprived of many rights granted to men and had consequently a very low status in society.

According to (CARE,2015; Gressmann, 2016; Heinze, 2016) In Yemen, women historically are seen as ‘weak’ and have generally had less power in society compared to men. Women have been the primary care givers at the household level. Gender relations in Yemen are shaped by diverse religious, cultural, social and political traditions across the regions, between rural and urban areas, and between different tribes and generations (Gressmann, 2016; CARE 2015).

The attitude towards women’s role has changed in many societies particularly in developed societies. However, in some other developing communities essentially in the middle east, the attitude towards the role of women is still traditional. Yemen society is one of these societies that still undermine the role of women and confine it to some traditional roles. There is still a traditional perception of gender roles among high educated husbands which doesn’t only affect the situation of women social life, but also the situation of economy in general. There is a view that supports the idea that appeals women to stay at home as a homemaker. This perception of gender role led to a complete marginalization of women’s rights in different aspects of life such as education, work, home, and making decision. It is still remarkable that women’s role and contribution in the Yemeni economy is very weak if we did not say totally absent, which is a natural result of economic, social and cultural factors. Factors such as income, responsibility, culture and level of education enabled men to exercise power and language dominance over women and caused gender differences.

This paper attempts to investigate Yemeni husbands’ perception of gender roles and identifies the language habits used by the husband and his wife when they interact with each other. It also finds out the relationship between husbands’ perception of gender roles and the language used by the husband and his wife when they interact with each other?

Objectives

This study intends to investigate the perception of gender roles among Yemeni husbands. It attempts to identify the language habits used by the husband and his wife when they interact with each other. It also tries to find out if there is a relationship between perception of gender roles and the language used by husbands when they interact with their wives. Specifically, this paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of Yemeni husbands of gender roles?
2. What language habits are expected to be used when husbands and wives interact with each other?
3. What is the relationship between gender roles perception and the language used by husbands when they speak to their wives?

METHODS

The researcher at first intended to conduct the study on husbands' dominance over their wives and planned to interview fifteen Yemeni families to record all the interviews in order to collect the data, but unfortunately due to some cultural hindrances, families opposed the idea of recording themselves in a tape, considering it a private matter and against their culture. Therefore, instead, a questionnaire was distributed to forty-six husbands as a sampling including university instructors, employees and school teachers. The questionnaire consists of three parts. Part 1 and 2 concentrate on perception of husbands for gender roles and the roles which are expected to be done by the wife. Part three focuses on the language habits expected to be used by husbands and wives. The statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to do the descriptive analysis and to find out the correlation between gender role and the language habits utilized by. Frequency and percentage were tabulated and utilized to describe the analysis.

4. Analysis and finding

No	Activities should be done by wife	frequency	Percentage
1	Cooking	46	100%
2	Vacuuming	36	78.3%
3	Washing clothes	44	95%
4	Buying clothes for the children	32	69%
5	Washing the dishes	43	93.5%
6	Combing the kids' hair	38	82.5%

Table (1) shows the activities selected by respondents to be done by the wife

Table (1) shows six top activities selected by the respondents to be done by wives. Husbands believe that cooking, vacuuming, washing clothes, buying clothes for children, washing the dishes and combing kids' hair are activities should be fulfilled by wives. In the table above the activity "cooking" has the unanimity of the total respondents. 100% of respondents agreed that "cooking" should be done by the wife. This indicates that husbands confine the role of cooking to wives only. "Washing the clothes" and washing the dishes are two other roles expected to be conducted by the wife. Almost 95% of participants supported that "washing clothes and dishes" should be done by the wife. The findings shown in the table above assert that husbands limit the role of wives to some traditional activities.

No	Activities should be done by wife	frequency	Percentage
1	Signing contracts with owners	13	28%
2	Shopping	18	39.1%
3	Purchasing valuable equipment	7	15.2%
4	Buying a car for the family	4	5.7%

Table 2. Shows the poor percentage of activities to be done by the wife

Table (2) above shows that very few respondents agreed that women can do the abovementioned activities which are usually done by males. This reflects that there is still an impression among respondents that women are still not eligible or not capable to do activities usually done by men. This view undermines the role of women and manifests that there is a belief among husbands and males in general that women are not efficient enough to play such roles. This attitude supports the idea that men exceed women in different abilities such as the ability to argue, negotiate and take proper decisions.

N o	Item	freque ncy	Percen tage
1	Women place is the home	34	73.9%
2	Wife's service in the house contributes to the husband's success	44	95%
3	Family life suffers when the wife has a full-time job	43	93.5%
4	Husband's job is to is to earn money, wife's job is to look after house work and family	37	80.4%
5	Husband should monitor the family because of his capabilities and character	42	91.3%

6	Wife should monitor the family because of her capabilities and personality	13	29%
7	Wife should ask for permission when she goes out.	43	93.5%
8	When the husband and wife make decisions about buying major equipment, the final decision is for the husband	29	63%
9	The wife should get up earlier than husband in the morning	39	84.8%

Table 3. illustrates attitudes of husbands (respondents) on wife's role

Table (3) demonstrates that the majority of respondents' support limiting wife's role to house work. Husbands view wives' role as homemakers as this role contributes to husband and family success. 95.3% support the idea that "family life suffers when the wife has a full-time job". 91.3% believe that husbands should monitor the family due to their abilities and character whereas only 29% of respondents agree that a wife should monitor and head the family. This asserts that there is a perception among Yemeni husbands that women are inferior to men in terms of capabilities and character. Husbands also emphasized that wives should ask for permission when they go outside and wives have to obey their husbands if they rejected giving them permission. This attitude might be a result of culture influence which grant men the power of dominance. Generally, there is still a traditional perception among Yemeni husbands to the role of wives in society. From the perspective of husbands, wife's participation in life is limited to housework.

No	Language habits	frequency	Percentage
1	Wife should always speak softly to her husband.	43	93.5%
3	Wife should not give orders to her husband	26	56.5%
5	Wife should compliment her husband	35	76.1%
8	Wife cannot raise her voice when she speaks to her husband	37	80.4%
9	Wife cannot scold her husband	36	78.2%
10	Husband can give orders to his wife	42	91.3%

Table 4. shows language habits expected to be used by the wife

Statistics in table (4) above reflect respondents' attitude towards the language habits used by wives when they speak to their husbands. The finding revealed that wives are expected to utilize soft and polite language when they speak to their husbands. This clearly asserts that there are some social and cultural constraints that are imposed over women. Women

are not expected to raise their voices when they speak to their husbands. They are not allowed to scold their husbands, but they are expected to compliment them. The heavy care burden women had responsibility for, limited their ability to engage in paid work. In addition to the cultural and traditional barriers women are unable to earn any material returns. They lack economic power that enable them to protect themselves from males' dominance. Therefore, they are expected to be obedient and very polite, soft when they speak to their husbands.

Correlation between perception of gender role and language used by wives and husbands

Objective 3 in this study aims to investigate the relationship between the perception of gender role and the language used by husband when they interact with their wives. Based on SPSS analysis of the data, results are shown in table (5) below.

		Gender role	Language used
Gender role Correlation (tailed)	Pearson	1	.434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.003
	N	46	46
Language used Correlation (tailed)	Pearson	.434**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.003
	N	46	46

Table (5) shows the correlation between gender role and language used

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Pearson correlation illustrated that there is a strong relationship between perception of gender role and the language used by husband and wife. As it is shown in table (5) above that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. Referring to the analysis of gender role and the language used by husbands, it was found that the more traditional the perception of gender role, the more dominant the language used by husbands. It was also inferred that the more traditional the attitude of the husband to the wife's role, the more polite, soft and nice the wife is expected to be when she speaks to her husband.

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