

Coping Strategies for Women in Man Dominated Professions in Gaza

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Abstract: *Women in Palestine and mainly in Gaza, who struggle more than any other women in the world because of the ongoing persecutions and due to occupation, got a chance to be involved in several man dominated professions, amongst them is policing. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine coping strategies for police women in Gaza, Palestine. The study design is qualitative study. Amongst the 120 police women working in Gaza, five of them were chosen purposively to be part of a focus group interview to find out their coping strategies. The findings showed that despite of all current difficulties police women face in Gaza, Palestine; Gaza police women's coping strategies were connected to existing culture to include: "1) Self-awareness, 2) Islamic Belief, 3) Strong Faith, 4) Internal conviction and Normalization, 5) Ablution, Praying, and Dua'a, 6) Support Group, 7) Reading Qur'an, 8) Fasting, and 9) Crying and Moving outside". Finally, the study offers recommendations to all policy makers.*

Key Words: *Man Dominated Professions, Coping Strategies, Islamic Perspective, Gaza.*

I. Introduction

Palestinians have been taken place in many studies because of ongoing persecutions, in which until now they have not been given even simple human rights. Palestinian scholar Qouta stated that "Palestinians have been subjected to protracted and systematic suppression and brutality that traumatizes the entire community" (2000, p.1). Hence, the ongoing persecutions, occupation and systematic suppressions affected the routine life of Palestinian, who faced many problems including unemployment. So, what about Palestinian women, who are known as well educated, as the literacy rates for them is 95.2% percent, which is really high in all over the world. Also, 14.2% percent of these women have bachelor degrees and above. In the same time, women in Palestine faced the biggest employment gap. The amount of female employment force involvement was 19.3% as of 2016 only. Moreover, most of Palestinian women were working in facilities such as; 9% percent in agriculture and fishing, 11% percent in mining and manufacturing, 0.6% percent in construction 12% percent in commerce and 2% percent in transport storage, respectively (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

Moreover, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (2009), reported that women's current employment force involvement was lessened and oppressed because of ongoing gloomy financial conditions with huge unemployment amounts. In the meantime, women in Palestine commonly mentioned that their managers showed prejudice in the workplace and special treatment to their male coworkers, which was against to the Palestinian employment law of 2000.

Women in Palestine can work in any profession, as there are women who work in several man dominated professions. In 2016 only 3.9% percentage of Palestinian women worked as legislator, manager

positions, operators and assemblers, which shows these women till now labor mostly in classic professions. Also, in the public sector 11.3% percentage of women are working as the General Directors in Palestine. In Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), 12.1% of women work and approximately 6% of the ambassadors of Palestine are women, and women structure 17.3% of judges, and 32.3% of women are registered engineers in Palestinian Engineering Association, and only 3.8% of women are registered members of the Agricultural, Commerce and Industry Chamber in Palestine as of 2016 (PCBS, 2017).

According to reports of Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2017), Palestinian women face numbers of problems including mortality of infants and maternal because of insanitary conditions. The illegal occupation has worsened this issue by rejecting the requests of health clinic services of mother-infant in Palestine, and the infant mortality rate is 6.4 per 1,000 single live births (Adalah, 2018). Moreover, the illegal occupation undermines healthcare of Palestinian in Gaza and West Bank. This situation contributes to women in Palestine worse life expectancy and health outcome (Efrat, 2015).

The PCBS showed detailed evidence to realize how women in Palestine face challenges, because of their work environment and its culture. Also, when it was considered the current political and economic problems with illegal occupation, it was seen clearly, how big the problem is for women' perspective and for future of Palestine. Hence, while the systematic suppressions keep continuing because of gloomy political interests, researchers get great chances to effort on specific areas to contribute on society and stand against persecutions. Therefore, the present study designed to find out coping strategies of Palestinian police women.

Police women have to face with the misunderstanding by police men in which women do not have capability for masculine job (Vega & Silverman, 1982). Therefore, women who "commit to the institutional means see rule adherence as instrumental in gaining male officers' approval", which answers the reason why women tend to be more obedient to the rules of organization. The researchers think this is the finest method to show their abilities to the police men. Yet, the setting does not afford any chance to police women to show their capabilities. Moreover, "Male co-workers are known to assign the label 'estrogen mafia' to female officers who socialize with one another, thereby making it difficult for female officers to work collaboratively with one another". At the end, "social isolation is often the price women pay for joining the police service". So, because of these mental outlooks, police women have trouble to merge into man dominated professions (Parnaby& Leyden, 2011, p.257).

1.1. Research Problem

In Palestinian context, there are some discriminations, like similar to other places, in policing in addition to ongoing persecutions. About %3.7 percentage of the Palestinian Civil Police Force is women. At 2011, the gender unit started to work to raise awareness on gender issues in Jericho, Palestine. According to PCPF report, the first visible success was that, there are three women in headquarters (Alhussein, 2016).

Likewise, for the case of Gaza, based on the in-depth pre-interview with police women in Gaza, it was reported that among almost 9000 police officers only 130 of them are women. These women spread to five areas of Gaza territory in which Jabalia, Gaza, Middle of Gaza (Wusta), Khan Yunis, and Rafah. Women already have their own departments and their own responsible managers who are women as well. Like any department in the police departments of Gaza, police women depend on the main directorate which gives them freedom to work as any other police officers in Gaza. Even for the cases, they are mainly responsible for female citizens to make them feel more comfortable and secure in Gaza, despite of ongoing difficulties.

The present study searched answers for following question:

What are coping strategies of Palestinian women in policing in Gaza?

Signification of the study

The study is the one of the first studies in the Palestinian context in terms of its' scope to examine coping strategies for women in policing. Furthermore, this study investigated their coping strategies within the frame of cultural and Islamic perspectives (based on Qur'anic words and Prophet Muhammad's p.b.u.h. words and actions). Most commonly, previous literature in the topic was mostly conducted and studied in the light of Western perspectives.

II. Literature Review

Women in Man Dominated Professions

Struggles in work-life is inevitable as in any part of the life. Human beings learn the life through these struggles and at this point, learning does not mean always to solve the problems, but sometimes it is how to learn to live with them. When it was talked about struggles in work-life, it needs to be clarified based on genders especially for women in man dominated professions, which is defined as "men's numerical dominance of occupations or industries; men may also be 'dominant' in terms of gender power relations" (Wright, 2011, p.11). According to social role theory, people evolve detailed and authoritarian expectations of others' actions, regarding on their gender role, depend on an evolutionary gender-based division of work (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to Eagly and Wood (2012), this division of the work have culturally linked; women as lady of the house and men as wage earner positions.

Conforming to these social roles, females were labeled and expected to be more and more family oriented, communal and taking care of others. Men were labeled and assumed to be more free, assertive, forceful and agentic, which means the features for men that rely with cultural stereotypes of chief (Schein 1973, 2007). That is why debate on gender equality continues. Gender equality can be explained as issue of getting "equality as sameness" which means having equal opportunities or issue of confirming dissimilarity from the male norm or issue of transforming all well-known standards (Walby, 2005; Squires, 2005; Verloo, 2005a).

According to these researchers in the "sameness" the obstacle is that females have been expelled from the politic. So, they think the solutions is to involve women in any part of life as it is, without underlying male standards which challenge them. The key point is that, everybody regardless of their gender need to get the rights and chances appreciated by humans and need to be behaved according to the "same principles and norms". Differently, feminism path is disapproved for not questioning dominant masculine principles directly. "Vision of genders" seeks to a "gender-neutral world" which means females are behaved as males under equal conditions which is linked to the "liberal tradition of feminism" (Squires, 1999; Verloo, 2005a).

Men and Women in Islamic Culture

From the Islamic culture men and women have special unique statue, which supports justice not just equality. As biological and psychological needs of men and women differ, they need different rights for their well-being. This situation is not defined as the "sameness". In the Holy Qur'an it is mentioned that, by referring women as: "They are a vestment for you (man) and you are a vestment for them, (Qur'an, 2:187)." In which woman and man are not identical in terms of many aspects, but they complete each other. The life is not the same exactly for man and woman, as well their dispositions and creations are not expected to be the same. In due course, this situation asks for different responsibilities, punishments and even rights. To give them the same rights and responsibilities in an identical way will lead to unfairness.

Today in the modern world, some people try to create “uniformity and identicalness” in rights and regulations in law, for the woman and man. However, these people keep ignore the essential and natural dissimilarities between men and women. Thus, people who have Islamic cultural perspective support equality in rights not the “sameness” or “uniformity” (Mutahhari, 1980). Moreover, according to International Community of Submitters, in Islamic culture women and men are equal in the eyes of Allah (s.w.t.) who is the Ultimate Creator of the whole universe. In Holy Qur’an it is mentioned that: “As for those who lead a righteous life, male or female, while believing, they enter Paradise; without the slightest injustice (Qur’an, 4:124).”

Also, both male and female are guaranteed for happiness now and forever in which it is mentioned in the Glorious Qur’an that: “Anyone who works righteousness, male or female, while believing, we will surely grant them a happy life in this world, and we will surely pay them their full recompense (on the Day of Judgment) for their righteous works (Qur’an,16:97).” The only criteria in Islam that distinguish between people is piousness. Allah (s.w.t.) mentioned in Glorious Qur’an that:“O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of GOD is the most righteous. GOD is Omniscient, Cognizant (Qur’an, 49:13).”

Furthermore, the importance of gender issue was underlined, because of unpredictable statue of Muslim women in the international diplomatic and within their own Muslim societies. It was highlighted that, how Islam “through the Qur’an and the Hadith (deeds and actions of Prophet Muhammad)”, value women and support their rights and gender equality by stating that; rules of Islam always are in line with the nature of woman and man. Islamic rules pay regard to inborn dissimilarities of men and women (Ibnouf, 2015).

Besides, the Qur’anic verses approve gender equality in any part of the life like at home, work place and politics. General rules were pointed out clearly, by the Qur’anic verses and Hadith that, all are the same for both women and men, like the same performance of worship, rewards and punishments. These Islamic rules were established to save the rights of man and woman according to their capabilities and stamina. There are some special cases that rules differ for both genders, because of inborn differences which is not gender-bias. Like men are obligated by Islam to care for and protect women to maintain the best welfares of women (Ibnouf, 2015).

In Islam, self is known by different concepts like spirit, psyche and heart, which is different than self-perception theory. Heart is the most meaningful concept; it refers to the deepest unique spiritual wisdom. Also, through the heart human being have connection with Allah (s.w.t.) and achieve Divine unity (Inayat, 2005).

In addition to that, Smither and Khorsandi, (2009) stated that “The heart provides a Muslim with a more profound level of understanding of the world than rational intelligence”, which supports the idea of free will in understanding our actions and others’ rather than determinism like in self-perception theory. Moreover, Mohamed (1998), claimed that “fitrah, together with divine revelation, allows humans to attain all levels of perception, even the knowledge of Allah in a direct and immediate way” (p.97). In here fitrah means “innate and natural disposition of man to believe and worship God” (Haque & Mohamed, 2009).

Coping Strategies for Women in Man Dominated Professions

Coping defined by Walton (2002) as a steadying factor which supports people in psychosocial adjustment, during stressful life events. Also, for health of human being (Kraag et al., 2006), their personal welfare (Viñas et al., 2015) and mental well-being (Bryden et al., 2015; Mayordomo et al., 2015) coping strategies play as important factors in the life. And, man dominated professions described as mainly liable to masculine stereotypes that, make it even harder for women to get good positions (Warren, 2009). Also, Coping explained as perceptual, cognitive and behavioral reactions in order to manage, control and avert stressful conditions, which people face. Thus, skills which used to control the surroundings are named as coping

strategies (Sundaram & Kumaran, 2012). These strategies can be classified into two categories, which are emotion and problem focused coping strategies. While controlling emotion during difficult situations called as emotion focused coping (like talking with friends), finding a solution for the source of the problem during difficult situation called as problem focused coping (like painting and journaling) (Lewis, Heitkemper, & Dirksen, 2011).

Moreover, Achour, Bensaid, Roslan and Nor (2015), stated four kinds of coping strategies which are respectively; “Personal coping strategies, Professional coping strategies, Social coping strategies and Institutional coping strategies”. By personal coping strategies they mean that; behavioral, emotional, cognitive, rational and physical strategies like; positive thinking, ignoring negative comments, having realistic expectations and so on. Professional coping strategies need more attention, for professional details, in which usually people get some special method to evade complications. Differently, social coping strategies are simply having conversations with family, friends during problematic situations. Institutional coping strategies are governmental and/or university levels of coping strategies, in which through aiding, programs, advice, financial support, motivations, facilities and instructions.

According to Chandler Macleod news (March 8, 2017) how many options do women have in man dominated professions to cope during challenges; should they be like man or should they use their femininity to provide different new perceptions to the industries? Four significant coping strategies were underlined, which are thankfulness for having feminine benefits, manning-up (to adopt traits of man), mentorship and being aware of motivational aspects of the professions, respectively. In addition to that having optimistic view for future life, to engage with nature of the work and focusing with challenges, gratitude and achievement are so important for perseverance of women in man dominated professions.

Moreover, as it was mentioned, according to a study in the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (2011), women who are more assertive and aggressive and have high self-confident tend to have greater chance for achievements. As a conclusion, it was found out that while some women in man dominated professions use healthy coping strategies (Davis, 2012; Martin, 2013; Dolan, 2017;), others use unhealthy coping strategies (Chandler Macleod, 2017; Fortune, 2014) during stressful problems. Also, they use social, professional, and some personal coping strategies such as social support, manning up, mentorship, emotional suppression, appreciation with femininity and so on which are mostly unique to the working women.

Coping Strategies in Islamic Culture

Allah (s.w.t.) has mentioned in Glorious Qur’an that every kinds of knowledge could be made use of by human beings, like it is stated as below: “We have explained in detail in this Qur’an for the benefit of mankind every kind of similitude: but man is in most things contentious. (Qur’an, 18;54)”. So, it would be so meaningful to search coping strategies of Muslims in the light of Qur’an and Hadith as participants of the present study belong and respect to Islam. Allah (s.w.t.) advised to human beings that: “Nay seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer: it is indeed hard except to those who bring a lowly spirit. (Qur’an, 2;45)”

Being patient and prayer is one of the most important coping strategies, which people cope during complicated conditions. Also, in Glorious Qur’an it is mentioned how to pray to Allah (s.w.t.), how to ask help from Him (s.w.t.) and among these verses; “And there are men who say: "Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and defend us from the torment on the fire! (Qur’an, 2;201)”. Moreover, reading Holy Qur’an itself was found as one of most beneficial coping strategies. Taghiabad, AhrariandGarai (2015), in their study with 80 participants of memorizers of Glorious Qur’an found out that; one of the best coping strategies is directing spiritual beliefs as well as reading the Holy Qur’an.

Furthermore, Achour, Bensaid, Roslan and Nor, (2015) found out that Muslims generally cope through trust in Allah (s.w.t.), spirituality, supplication, reading Qur'an, tolerance, prayers, patience and gratitude which help people to cope successfully during stressful life events. According to these researchers "religious coping strategies" involve emotion, problem focused and social support coping strategies.

Coping Strategies for Women in Policing

Female police personnel cope through; using different communication skills, gaining experiences, educating themselves, proving themselves, handling themselves, quitting overwork, taking self-defense combat class, following their training regularly, accepting policy of department, keeping them busy, compartmentalizing, not taking their work to home, working hard, taking responsibilities, being confident in their abilities, asking questions, using weapons, aid and gear, learning academy and having situational awareness. Overall, they believe that through obtaining knowledge on policing, police officers can get advanced skills to cope with stressful situations in their professions (Todak, 2012).

Gomes and Afonso (2016) investigated the coping strategies that were used by police personal which were mainly; focusing on problem solving like "active confrontation" and regulation of emotions like "situation acceptance". For each problem there were specific coping strategies. when military police officers came across with dangerous situation, they use seven situations of active confrontation. Police officers focused on the effectiveness of each coping strategies for the given situation, in other words, each specific context triggers the strategies of the coping for military police officers.

Furthermore, Mattocks et al., (2012), found out that behavioral avoidance, cognitive avoidance and behavioral approach are the major strategies of coping for women in military, during difficult situation and sexual harassments. Moreover, Haarr, and Morash (2013), in their study on coping with discrimination and harassment and the effect of rank for police women found out that high rank police women use specific coping strategies, which protect them from attacks on their personalities and from undesirable treatment that caused by their colleagues. On the other hand, according to Pattanaik and Worley (2011), female police officers in both Orissa and Delhi use both healthy and unhealthy coping strategies to reduce their work-related symptoms; such as stress, anxiety, tension and so on.

Misis (2012), found out that women law enforcement officers use more social coping strategies than man, which is considered as positive coping strategies like; communication, debating and so on. Also, women depend on prayers and religion, speaking to partners, and coming up with a schedule to challenge difficult situations and they stick to the schedule more than men.

III. Methodology

Research Design

The present study used qualitative design and the qualitative data was analyzed via Thematic Analysis after coding process.

Participants

The total number of women working in police department in Gaza is 130. Between 120 women police officers 5 participants were selected purposively. The age for the study sample ranged from 33 to 40 with a mean of (35.6). The participants were chosen regardless of their position in the department in order to administer focus group interview. To guarantee confidentiality the names removed from the interview during entering the data. And with interview protocol, it was obtained informed consent from women police officers.

Instruments

To measure coping strategies of women police women in Gaza, Palestine, focus group interview was done with 5 participants. The operational definition for coping strategies is “unique, steady factors that help police women to mentally and physically adjust during stressful life events.”

Moreover, the questions of the focus group interview were formulated by the researcher with the help of Supervisor based on past studies and demographic information of Palestinian female police officers. The first question was on background information of police women like; their age, education, marital status, rank, experiences in work. The second question was on their motivation to decide for working as a police woman. The third question was on perception of police women on being a woman in policing, and the fourth question was completing the third one in which how their experience effect on their sense of self. The last two questions were the main questions for the scope of the present study in which about major challenges of police women and about their coping strategies during stressful events in Gaza, Palestine.

Procedure

Data Collection: First of all, the researcher got a letter of facilitation from IUG to assist in the permission to implement the study in the police department of Gaza. After this step, another related permission was gotten from Gaza Police Department. Afterwards, the researcher visited the Department of Gaza Police Women, after rapport building with police women in Gaza police department, focus group interview was done. The venue was the office of the department in Gaza which was really comfortable. The first thing that was done was to distribute the interview protocol after their volunteer agreement was gotten.

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis was used for the Qualitative study in order to describe the results of focus group interview and come up with themes. It was reached really rich data via focus group interview which was aimed to find out the coping strategies of women in policing. Thenceforth, transcribing of the interview was done by the researcher with the help of experts. After transcribe of the interview, coding was done, the same or similar words and phrases were highlighted carefully. The next stage was coming up with themes which was done with deep concentration.

IV. Results and Discussion

Coping Strategies of Police Women in Gaza

The research question was “What are coping strategies of Palestinian women in policing in Gaza?”. Coping strategies of police women in Gaza were identified as; self-awareness, Islamic belief, strong faith, internal conviction and normalization, ablution, praying and dua’a, support group, reading Qur’an, fasting, and crying and moving outside.

Table 1: Coping strategies of police women

<i>Subtheme</i>	<i>References</i>
<i>Self-awareness</i>	3
<i>Islamic belief</i>	5
<i>Strong faith</i>	5
<i>Internal conviction and normalization</i>	3
<i>Ablution, praying and dua’a</i>	5
<i>Support group</i>	3
<i>Reading Qur’an</i>	3
<i>Fasting</i>	2
<i>Crying and moving outside</i>	2

Moreover, the findings of the reviewed studies were different than findings of the present study. It was claimed that, behavioral and cognitive avoidance, suppression of emotions and altering the femininity perception and manning up were used as coping strategies by women in man dominated professions (Davis, 2012; Mattocks et al., 2012 & Fortune August 14, 2014). Also, police women need to prove themselves that they are good enough, strong and really capable for policing. With this approval in police subculture, police women can go on throughout other processes as others (Belknap & Shelley, 2011; Davis, 2012 & Snow, 2010).

On the other hand, results of the present study are supported by the reviewed past studies which suggested optimistic reinterpreting, development, normalization, emotional and social support, internal conviction, using different communication skills, doing the best, taking responsibilities, being confident in the abilities, and self-awareness were used as coping strategies by women in man dominated professions (Della-Rossa, 2014; Gomes & Afonso, 2016; Misis, 2012 & Todak, 2012). Religious coping strategies were used also by women in man dominated professions (Achour, Bensaid, Roslan and Nor; 2015, Misis, 2012).

V. Conclusions

Although the society labels women as more family oriented, communal, taking care of others and men as freer, assertive, and forceful than men (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Schein, 1973, 2007), the present study showed that women can be good as men, in even man dominated professions. However, that view does not mean like “liberal tradition of feminism” which supports women should behave as men under equal conditions (Squires, 1999; Verloo, 2005a).

People who respect and belong to Islamic culture support equality in rights not the “sameness” or “uniformity” (Mutahhari, 1980) like in liberal tradition of feminism. By meaning that, women and men are not identical in terms of many features but they complete each other’s. The life itself is not the same exactly for men and women, as well as their dispositions and creations were not expected to be the same. At the end, this situation asks for different accountability, rights and penalties.

As a conclusion, police women in Gaza have effective coping strategies. As it was seen that, despite of illegal occupation, siege and psychological problems, police women in Gaza challenge these difficulties with effective ways to raise their moral to keep alive high hopes. As a limitation of the study; results in this study are accurate to the degree that they understand the instructions clearly and were willing to express them honestly.

VI. Recommendations

The present study recommended that present coping strategies can be implemented for employees in a shape of counselling package. This package should provide combination of different kinds of coping strategies like using religious, instrumental and active coping strategies together, like police women in Gaza use.

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