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The Relationship between women's Attributions and Perceived violence: The Moderating Role of Husbands' Perspective-taking

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Abstract

Abstract

Domestic violence against women is one of the most significant social and psychological harms, and identifying the cognitive and interpersonal factors associated with it can contribute to designing effective family and couple therapy interventions. The present study aimed to examine the moderating role of husbands' perspective-taking in the relationship between women's attributions and their perceived violence. The statistical population consisted of married women in Shiraz, from whom 130 participants were selected using a convenience sampling method. They responded to the Violence Toward Women Inventory (VTWI), the short form of the Relationship Attribution Measurement (RAM), and the Other Dyadic Perspective-Taking Scale (ODPT). The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between women's responsibility and causal attributions with perceived violence, whereas husbands' perspective-taking was negatively correlated with women's perceived violence. Moreover, moderation analysis showed that husbands' perspective-taking weakened the positive relationship between responsibility attributions and women's perceived violence, but its moderating effect on the relationship between causal attributions and perceived violence was not supported. These results suggest that enhancing husbands' perspective-taking may reduce the negative impact of women's responsibility attributions on domestic violence.

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Introduction

Women, as one of the fundamental pillars of the family and society, play an important role, and their healthy functioning and empowerment require a kind and supportive approach (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2021; Carneiro, 2023; Ahmadi Gohari et al., 2023). However, domestic violence against women, as a global problem, includes various dimensions, including physical, psychological, sexual, and financial violence, and has widespread consequences on their health and lives (Gholami et al., 2018; Masoudi, 2023; Hosseini et al., 2019). Statistics show that psychological and economic violence are the most prevalent ones (Kazemi & Ghassemi, 2023); several factors, such as addiction, psychological and physical disorders, low levels of education, and negative attitudes toward women, play a role in its occurrence (Gunarathne et al., 2023).

In this vein, examining cognitive factors such as relationship attributions and husbands' conceptual perspectives is of particular importance. Relationship attributions refer to the explanation of responsibility for wives' behaviors and their justifications in marital relationships; it can lead to an escalation of violence (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2012a; Pollak et al., 2022). The findings show that there is a positive and significant relationship between women's causal attributions and their responsibility attributions with violence against women; in other words, the more the destructive attributions of women, the more the violence against them (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2014a). The relationship between these attributions and violence is two-way and complex; Negative attributions may weaken relationship quality and increase violence, and in other situations, the experience of violence can reinforce and consolidate negative attributions in their minds (D'Costa & Saklofske, 2023). On the other hand, perspective-taking refers to the ability of spouses to understand each other, which plays a key role in improving the relationship and reducing violence (Gottman, 1993; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2013; Reid & Overall, 2023, as cited in Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2025). Husbands' perspective-taking can have a moderating role in the relationship between women's attributions and violence, such that greater perspective-taking by men reduces violent reactions (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2017). Despite extensive research on individual and social factors of violence, cognitive and interpersonal dimensions have received less attention. The present study examined the moderating role of husbands' perspective-taking in the relationship between women's causal attributions and responsibility and their violence. Considering the theoretical considerations and existing research findings, the hypotheses of this study were posed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between causal attributions and women's violence.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between responsibility attributions and women's violence.

Hypothesis 3: There is a negative relationship between husbands' perspective-taking and women's violence.

Hypothesis 4: Husbands' perspective-taking can moderate the relationship between women's responsibility attributions and their violence.

Hypothesis 5: Husbands' perspective-taking can moderate the relationship between women's causal attributions and their violence.

Methodology

The statistical population included married Iranian women living in Shiraz during the study. Sampling was conducted using convenience sampling method. One hundred thirty individuals were voluntarily selected. To ensure data quality and sample homogeneity, four main inclusion criteria were considered. They included having at least a high school diploma so that participants could properly understand and respond to the research instruments, not taking psychiatric medications, as these medications can have a significant impact on emotions, perception, and cognition and may affect the results related to attributions and violence, not using drugs, which is one of the main factors in conflict and violence in marital relationships, and not referring to the Conflict Resolution Council or Family Court due to severe marital conflicts or divorce petitions, as this would indicate a severe crisis in the relationship and could limit the generalizability of the findings. The instruments used to collect data included the Violence Toward Women Inventory (VTWI; Haj-Yahia, 2000), the short form of the Relationship Attribution Measurement (RAM; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) which was translated by Khojasteh Mehr et al. (2010) validated in an Iranian sample, and the Other Dyadic Perspective-Taking scale (ODPT) (Long, 1990), translated by Khojasteh Mehr

et al. (2016) and validated in an Iranian sample. At the beginning of the study, the general objectives of the study were explained to the participants and they were assured that participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from further cooperation at any stage without any consequences. This ethical process maintained the participants' psychological security and increased the validity of the study.

Findings

In the present study, 130 Iranian married women living in Shiraz (with a mean age of 39.82 and standard deviation of 8.31, and a mean marital history of 16.92 and standard deviation of 2.95) years participated. Statistical procedures, including mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, and moderator regression analysis, were used to analyze the research data. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation in terms of women's violence, husbands' perspective-taking, responsibility attributions, and causal attributions. In addition, since the values of kurtosis and skewness for these variables did not exceed the absolute value of 3, it could be concluded that the data had a normal distribution.

Table 1 . *Descriptive statistics of violence against women, husbands' perspective-taking, responsibility attributions, and causal attributions*

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Violance against women	43.09	10.65	.81	1.24
Husband' perspective-taking	45.14	16.40	-.47	-.47
Responsibility attributions	7.39	3.86	.02	-.90
Causal attributions	10.03	3.57	-.87	.15

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between the predictor and criterion variables in women. Accordingly, there was a significant positive relationship between causal attributions and violence against women, and between responsibility attributions and violence against women (supporting the first and second hypotheses). Furthermore, based on the data in this table, there was a significant negative correlation between husbands' perspective-taking and violence against women (supporting the third hypothesis).

Table 2 .*Pearson correlation coefficients and significance levels of research variables*

	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Violence against women	1.00			
2	Husband' perspective-taking	-.66	1.00		
3	Responsibility attributions	.55	-.68	1.00	
4	Causal attributions	.37	-.38	.39	1.00

To examine the moderating role of husbands' perspective-taking in the relationship between causal attributions and responsibility attributions with violence against women, a moderator regression analysis was used. As can be seen in Table 3, the interaction of women's responsibility attributions and husbands' perspective-taking increased the explained variance of violence against women from 0.31 to 0.49. The regression coefficients for the interaction of women's responsibility attributions and husbands' perspective-taking (β = 0.38-0.01, P < 0.01) indicated that this increase was statistically significant (supporting the fourth hypothesis). The results showed that the positive relationship between women's responsibility attributions and violence was lower in individuals with a high perspective-taking than in individuals with a lower perspective-taking.

Table 3. *The moderating role of husbands' perspective-taking in the relationship between women's responsibility attributions and violence against women*

Predictor variable	*R*	R^2	*F*	*P*	*B*	*β*	*t*	*P*
Responsibility attributions	.56	.31	56.94	.001	1.53	.56	7.55	.001
Husband' perspective-taking	.68	.46	53.08	.001	.55 -.34	.20 -.53	2.22 -5.86	.02 .001
Causal attributions × Husband' perspective – taking	.70	.49	39.60	.001	1.82 -.09 -.03	.66 -.15 -.38	3.44 -.88 -2.70	.001 .38 .008

Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between causal attributions, responsibility attributions, and husbands' perspective-taking with violence against women and the moderating role of perspective-taking. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between causal attributions and violence against women, which is in line with literature (Fincham et al, 2002; Fincham & Bradbury,1992; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2012a; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2014b; Yaqoubi, 2014) In this case, it can be said that the more negative attributions women make, the more likely they are to increase conflict and violence (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2014b); a positive relationship between responsibility attributions and violence against women was also supported (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Fincham et al., 2002; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2012b). Women who attributed marital problems to their husbands, by blaming their husbands, provided the basis for increased hostile behaviors (Wallach & Sela, 2008, as cited in Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2012b).

Another finding was that husbands' perspective-taking was negatively related to violence. It was associated with empathy, forgiveness, and problem-solving ability (Cooke et al., 2018; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2013; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2016). Perspective-taking increased marital satisfaction, and prevented violence (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998; Layman, 2009). Moreover, a moderator regression analysis showed that husbands' perspective-taking reduced the positive effect of responsibility attribution on violence; this finding is consistent with those of previous studies (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2013; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2014b; Fincham et al, 2002; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Yaqoubi, 2014). In fact, men who had greater perspective-taking perceived responsibility attribution as an opportunity for change (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2014b). The perspective-taking did not play a moderating role in the relationship between causal attributions and women's perceived violence. In explaining this finding, it can be stated that in causal attributions, women attributed the cause of the problem or event to their husbands without expecting their husbands to take action to solve this problem; that is, husbands were introduced as the cause of the problem, and in such a situation, whether men had a low or high cognitive perspective, they could not overcome their strong emotions such as anger and felt threatened.

Theoretically, the findings emphasize the importance of husbands' perspective-taking as a shield against violence. At a practical level, the results showed that couples therapy interventions should focus on teaching empathy to men and improving the way women express responsibility. One of the limitations of the study was that the sample was limited to married women in Shiraz, which made it difficult to generalize the results. It is recommended that future studies conduct the study with more participants. In addition, more extensive and longitudinal or qualitative methods should be carried out.

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Conflict of Interest

This paper is taken from a master's thesis in Family Counseling at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, and there was no conflict of interest in conducting it.

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