

Fluidity of the Concept of Mothering (A Sociological Study on Mothering in the Lived Experience of the Working Mothers and Fathers in Tehran)

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Abstract: *The sociological studies on the concept of mothering have not been of much interest in Iran, so far. Thus, the current study has aimed at investigation of the lived experience of the mothers and the fathers working in Tehran. We, in the current study, have not investigated the motherhood, but we have addressed the mothering (the maternal role), through 31 field interviews with 15 couples and a single woman with intentional celibacy. The methodology of the study is based on the grounded theory. Therefore, the data were arranged based on the open, pivotal, and eventually, selective coding. The data were gathered revolving around four phenomena. The two phenomena of “the mothering dominant discourse of mothering” and “femininity of mothering”, considered mothering to be feminine and intrinsic, institutionalized in a woman. The other two phenomena, on the contrary to the former two, considered a beyond sex mothering and anti-essentialism role for the mothering. The two phenomena of “belief in beyond the gender mothering” and “the partition in dominant discourse of mothering” did not believe the mothering to be a feminine task, and implied a kind of balance based on the couple’s agreement. As a result, through adaptation of the data and the couple’s narratives, the phenomena of “plurality in the concept of mothering” was chosen as the central phenomenon. This phenomena implies a type of fluidity of the mothering concept, i.e. the mothering is no longer seen as one-way and merely feminine task, and the people, through putting the essentialism discourses and frameworks aside, follow a different function of mothering, which is based on degenderizing and pluralism. Thus, despite the fact that the traditions, the superior mothering structures, and most of the couples still consider the mothering to be feminine, in practice, and the lived experience, it has reached a mutual interaction and agreement between the couples, in its function.*

Keywords: *mothering, fluidity of mothering, the femininity of mothering, the dominant discourse of mothering, beyond sex mothering, plurality of the concept of mothering.*

Introduction

“Mothering” is a concept whose description can be traced back everywhere. From its explanation in the dictionaries to the myths, it has been demonstrated as a general term. From the words of the physicians, the medical books, and baby care guide brochures, to the convention, tradition, and religion, the woman is expected to be the mother. The question is that from the viewpoint of those who have experienced child-bearing, and lived with it, how this concept is formed, understood, and interpreted? And meanwhile, what consequences it has had for their daily life? How and based on what conditions is the conceptual closeness of the motherhood and womanhood in the daily life of the couples formed? And what consequences does it have? The analysis of experiences and an internal look to this subject can make the drafting of the laws related to child-bearing, work, education, family law and the like, more

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efficient. Also, expression of the needs and ideas of people about the relation between the woman and mother roles, and how this approach is formed, can be effective on modification of the traditional view to mothering phenomenon, and the hegemony stemmed from it, in the traditional, medical, and educational discourses, and eventually lead to creation of a sweeter and less-grueling atmosphere for the modern mothers. The point of resemblance between most of these descriptions of the concept of mother and mothering, is the femininity of this task. In this regard, the emphasis is sometimes put on the woman as the child bearer (natural mothering), and sometimes, on the woman as the child caregiver (social mothering). Nancy Chodorow (1978) negates the inherent and instinctive nature of mothering, and its being the result of social conditions. She argues that desire to mothering is a part of tendency towards femininity the girls reveal from the early ages. In fact, it happens at such low age, that it can't be a part of a conscious choice, but it should be considered as a more of an unintentional selection. In the recent decades, the feministic views on the mothering have become richer and more complicated. The concept of mothering has moved from an essentialist concept towards a post structuralism concept. Now, it is less talked of mothering, and it is the mothering which is the center of focus. The mothering is considered, not as a fixed and static entity, but a set of contextual characteristics. The concept of mothering is manifestation of the active and dynamic nature of mothering (Jeremia, 2006, 21).

In the current study, the focus has been on the concept of mothering, not on the physiological and biological aspects of it, but on its social aspect or the very duties and tasks related to caregiving and raising the child, which itself encompasses a diverse and broad spectrum. Diversity in the concept of mothering is indicative of the fact that entrusting the duty of child caregiving- regardless of the physiological and biological aspects- can be considered as one of the deconstructed characteristics of femininity.

Review of the Related Literature

In this chapter, the studies conducted on the mothering concept, both in Iran and the world, would be reviewed. The special approach and the elements of each study would be focused, and we would emphasize the strengths and shortcomings of them. Among the most important studies conducted on the subject of mothering, four fundamental and classical texts about the mothering can be mentioned, which have had a significant effect on the formation of feministic theories related to mothering, without reviewing of which, the other studies in this field cannot be evaluated. Rich (1976), in his book "Born from a woman: motherhood as an experience and institution", evaluates the motherhood as an experience and a social institution. She believes that the mothering ideology bound in the hands of a patriarchal system, changes a relation that actually can be creative and cheerful, to a painful and conflicting one, which eventually leads to the alienation of the mothering among the women. She argues that the mothering institution includes the laws and norms that have been imposed upon the women and limits them. Jeffner (1984), in a study titled "Motherhood: Annihilation of women", deals with the subject of mothering with a negative and radical approach, and states that the mothering is merely serving the men and the patriarchal system, and mother is the one whose body is exploited as a source for reproduction of the men and the patriarchal world. He considers the mothering as the cause of annihilation and removal of women from the society, and a means in the hands of the men, exploited by the men for increasing domination over the woman body and the society. He considers the ultimate solution to women emancipation to be liberating from the reproductive role, and believes that the women must stop the masculine reproduction patriarchal society and have a similar and equal role to men. Bellimer (2005) deals with the experiences of imprisoned women. The results of her study indicated that the prison is a significant and effective event in the mothering life of the women. The mothers studied in this research, had critical changes in their mothering lives, such as changes in the way of controlling and communicating with the children, the change in mothering role, and the change in the social brand experience. In addition to the change in the mothering role, most of the mothers still tried to maintain their internal mothering strategies. Some succeeded and some failed. The outcome of efforts to maintain the mothering standards was the depression of feeling guilty, in the mothers.

Kaufman Kitchen (2012) has dealt with the challenges the American working mothers face with. Since the working environments are designed based on the traditional needs of the men, the mothers are

usually facing with distinct challenges in terms of working duties and mothering responsibilities. For example, in the middle-class American families, more than 70% of the mothers work for long hours, while they are paid 30% lower than their male counterparts. Also, for two-thirds of the working women, there is no guarantee that they would return to their work after the maternity leave. Lyn Craig (2007) has addressed the mothering conditions and the problems of parenting and raising children in contemporary era. She does not consider the mothering as a merely feminine task, and instead of emphasis on mothering, focuses on parenting. She believes: what makes the parenting more difficult, besides the contemporary life complications, is that the child caregiving responsibility is a hidden duty and there is no social and economic frameworks for it. The main cost imposed upon the mothers is their time, for which there is no precise prediction to calculate in the society, and also, its extent is unknown. Lack of recognizing the time the parents, especially the mother, consume for raising and taking care of the children, leads to the mothers' lack of projection about this aspect, and gives the young mothers a sense of being guilty, confused, and betrayed, when facing this reality. Almond (2010) has investigated the experiences, and fears and frustrations of the women in the mothering conditions. He, in his book "The monster within: The hidden side of motherhood", deals with her personal experience as a mother, and as a physician and psychotherapist. Almond's focus is on the ill mothers who have recited their internal experiences, frustrations, and fears, to her. This book addresses subjects such as the dual sense of maternity, power of mother love, intangible conflict of being good mother, fears of women before mothering and reproduction, and how to understand these fears, inner dual emotions of mothers and feelings of guilt, and predicting the future of internal conflicts of mothering feelings. Thorn (2012) by the use of combined research method, dealt with the investigation of an aspect of mothering experience, which has been rarely taken into consideration. "Transitions to the Empty nest Phase". In this study, three databases and different analysis techniques were utilized in order to deeply understand how the daily life of women is affected by this transition. The first database based on the data obtained from a linear survey, shows two transition phases. First is entering the motherhood, and the second is the changes during the children growth. This section emphasize the working pressures, occupational responsibilities, and the activities in the leisure time, during the years of children growth. The third analysis source based on the obtained data, is the result of 12 in-depth interviews with the mothers whose children have recently left home. In Iran also, there have been studies conducted on mothering, most important of which will be briefly reviewed. Azkia and Abdollahi (2011) have dealt with the lifestyle of two groups of working women and housewives. In this study, the attributive research method was used to formulate the theoretical framework and hypotheses testing, for responding to the research problem at the theoretical level. The quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaires filled out by 382 working women and housewives aged from 25 to 45, residing in the District 3 of Tehran City.

Dimensions of lifestyle and indexation were determined by observing and interviewing the experts and informed individuals. Results of this study showed that the social relationships of the working women is different with the housewives relationships, and working women's social relationships are broader. The two group were the same in terms of body surveillance and management, and both have similar average. Also, there is a significant difference between the gender division of the housekeeping duties of the working women (including the task and responsibility of mothering) and the housewives, and the average cooperation of the working couples (both wife and husband working) was higher, as the housewives, compared to the working women, had more duties and responsibilities they had to do alone. Safiri and Eskandari (2014) expored the lived experience of the mothers of martyrs killed in the Iran-Iraq War. The narratives of these mothers were collected with an empirical approach through snowball sampling and in-depth interview. The interviews were conceptualized and categorized through the qualitative analysis method and open, pivotal, and selective coding. Self-construction, target-finding, religious and patriotic values, and experience of mourning and neutralization are the obtained categories. After reading and analyzing the narratives, it was revealed that institutionalization of the religion and meaning is the most pivotal selected content in the lived experience of the martyrs' mothers from the war period until now. The identity-making references of the community in the era of revolution and war are their national and religious goals. They, through convergence of the "wisdom and spirituality", have tied their lives to the whole society and even the whole world. Regarding the individual differences, the two character types as "passive mothers" including the semi- and full-passive, and the "active mothers",

were identified. Ezazi and Mirzanezhad (2009) investigated the mothering experience among the young women (a case study of Joibar town). They evaluated the howness of this experience, the perception of their pregnancy and their altered body, the experience of childcare responsibility, and their perception of this experience before and after the mothering. This study was conducted by the qualitative method. The samples were 30 married women aged 20 to 35, who have experienced pregnancy and childbearing, and generally, the mothering, at least once. The results of this study indicated that mothering experience is a varied experience, and based on the condition in which it is experienced, creates different feelings. The pregnancy is the initiation of acceptance of this role, which despite the limitations, concerns, and the fears, can be also joyful. In this sample, the mothers (especially in the first experience) felt that becoming a mother is somehow a respond to a demand made by the society, and based on the physical and mental conditions of the mother, can be joyful or agonizing, and help with acceptance of this role. Most of the samples believed that there was a big gap between their perception of mothering and what is experienced in the reality. The fathers did not associate much with childcare, and almost all the childcare duties were imposed on the mothers. They also considered the mothering to be a feminine power, which helps with generation of sense of security and their presence in the public fields.

Research Methodology

The qualitative method was used in the current study. The semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Thirty one interviews were done, separately. The snowball method was used for sampling, however, in the researcher's considerations, the diversities of the couples such as the couples without a child, the couples divorced, the couples who has adopted a child, and also the women who had chosen to be single, and were against the mothering and childbearing, were taken into consideration. Therefore, among the 30 persons interviewed, 11 couples had natural child or children, 2 couples had adopted children, and 2 couples did not have any children (intentional), besides a single woman. These samples were chosen by snowball method and pre-knowledge.

The research results were categorized and analyzed based on grounded theory. In this regard, the statistical population of the current study are couples among which, at least one of them is working in Tehran's Water and Sewage Company. The first inclusion criterion has been having a child or children below 8 or 9 years old. However, based on the data and the requirement, other indicators were also considered. In order to interview a broad range of people, the people diversity in terms of child status (natural or adopted), the religious beliefs extent, the modern or traditional lifestyle, economic status, educational status, and ... were considered. Also, for clarifying the subject dimensions, two couples without children (with personal content for not having children), and a single woman were also interviewed.

The grounded theory method is based on the simultaneous data collection and analysis. To this purpose, the author, after each interview and writing it down, noted down the initial schedule of the interview and its gist. Then, the three phases of open, pivotal, and selective coding of the data were executed. This process was executed for each interview, since the concepts obtained from one interview helps us search for the new concepts and propositions in the next interview. Also, the pivotal and selective coding can eventually lead to the extraction of the concepts from open coding. These three phases are not necessarily separated and in the research process, they complete one another. However, Azkia and Imani Jajarmi (2011) believe that from a general point of view, the analysis is initiated with an open coding and in an ideal state, lead to selective coding. Achieving the selective coding and finding a theory for all research conducted by this method, is not necessary or possible, and it can be fulfilled in the phase of presentation of concepts and analyzing them.

Findings

Based on the investigation, from the analysis of the interviews and other observations in the open coding phase, firstly, 138 concepts were extracted, and in a more detailed investigation, 68 categories were categorized. Investigation of the men and women's experiences of mothering and femininity concept, the categories and findings obtained, are indicative of two different and at times, conflicting approaches on femininity of mothering role, which can be considered as a spectrum. On the ending levels of this

spectrum, on one hand, we can see the full acceptance of mothering as a feminine role (feminine mothering), which is in lines with ideal traditional pattern, and on the other hand, we can observe the resistance against femininity of this role (beyond sex mothering). Indeed, we rarely faced a uniform and pure form of the two, and in fact, based on the investigation of different aspects of the mothering role, both approaches (femininity of the mothering or the opposite), were observed in most of the interviewees, with different intensity and weakness levels. Next stages of the study and the deeper investigation of the subjects and categories, indicated that the former phenomena are themselves a part of a more principal and larger phenomena, known as “the dominant discourse of mothering”, and also “divergence/partition in the dominant discourse of mothering”, and the femininity of the mothering or beyond sex mothering are a part of the very same broader phenomena. Also, in terms of causal, underlying, and intervening conditions, there are lots of proximities and similarities between the phenomenon of “dominant discourse of mothering” and the “femininity of mothering” on one hand, and between the “beyond sex mothering” and “divergence/partition in the dominant discourse of mothering”.



In the ultimate analysis, the central phenomenon of “plurality in concept of mothering” was considered. However, the “plurality in concept of mothering” has contained the micro-categories of the study, as much as possible, be it the categories extracted from the interviews in the affirmative explanation of the existing conditions, and be it the categories that consider the feminine role of mothering and dominant discourse of mothering, with a somehow negative approach. On the other hand, it was tried that in the categorization, the evident categories be also included. In this regard, the evident, despite their firm and accepted position in explanation, have different and at times, conflicting interpretations and meanings. For example, breastfeeding, although from one viewpoint, is described as the climax of maternal pleasure, stemmed from the mothering instinct in a woman, in another experience, is described as unpleasant and troublesome, and a feeling of “being a milking cow” and a sign of patriarchal society pressure. Or in another description of mothering experience for the women, we observed a broad and challenging spectrum from “a divine gift” to the “eternal curse”, which was addressed by us in the first paradigm pattern.

The Femininity of Mothering

The femininity of the mothering, is the first phenomenon of the four phenomena obtained in the current study, and we will explain how to achieve it. During the interviews and their categorization based on the grounded theory, we found out that this phenomenon has been obtained from a transcendental and institutionalized approach towards the woman’s sex. Among the causal conditions of this phenomenon, the “pregnancy and childbearing”, which is attributed to the woman and her nature, the belief in “originality of mothering instinct in the woman”, and the fact that from the birth, it has been placed in the women, and they saw their perfection in becoming a mother, and also “emphasis on the feminine characteristics”, can be mentioned. It should be noted that the religious prepositions and emphasis on the women’s perfection in mothering, and “giving a spiritual grace to mothering” have been also effective on this approach. In addition, “how the father faces the mothering role” and the “the feminine representations of mothering” in the media, arts, and etc. are among the other causal conditions of this

phenomenon. We found the context of such approach, i.e. the underlying condition, in the type of discourses attached. Most of people who had a merely feminine view to the mothering, and considered it to be in the framework of women responsibilities and abilities, had a wide religious and traditional background, who not only did consider the mothering to be feminine, but also considered especial values for her, of which the men are deprived, and it is a divine gift, only granted to the women. This view, in a broader sense, has led to the discourse and the discourses pressure, which stabilizes this approach, as an intervening factor. "The medical and psychological discourse expectations from the mother, and the effect of the structured education, as well as the social rules and political-cultural approach, dominant in the society, can be categorized in the discourses pressure category. For example, women's housekeeping, although seemingly is a social act, created around the duties division, our findings indicate that this function has been the result of the macro- and micro-structures approach to women and fulfilling the mothering role. The dominant social and cultural rules in the society, demotes the main role of women to a limited environment such as the home, for parenting the children, by the type of functions. Most of the men and women interviewed in the current study, who were affected by such approach, respected the women's housekeeping and consider any replacement for their higher social movement in the society contrary to the main function of the role of women, which is housekeeping and mothering. Among the consequences of this approach, the limitation of the social and personal life of women and reproduction of the power of men in their personal and social lives, can be named, which leads to fixed definition of men and women role in the society. In a definition, the men, due to the external function, had higher movement and power, and women, despite having advantages at home, are limited in a space, and their movements are marked around their demands and requests in that space.

The Ideal Dominant Discourse of mothering Phenomenon

The second phenomenon of the ideal dominant discourse of mothering is in lines with the first phenomenon. By this phenomenon, we briefly mean a discourse related to the mothering, either tangible or intangible, or implicitly or explicitly, which exists in the society, and is educated traditionally or through modern channels, and is expected to be followed by the women. The dominant discourse of mothering has impacted all the aspects of women life, from the very beginning which marks the presence of the child as the sign of perfection and mothering as the main identity of woman, and expects the woman to bear children and do the mothering tasks, to the time after having a baby. Form the behavioral attributes of the woman towards the child, family, and personal life to the mothering characteristics and mothering. This phenomenon, as was elaborated previously in the introduction of this chapter, is a broader and more general sense than considering the mothering a feminine phenomenon, however, it constitutes a large part of it. Besides considering the mothering a feminine task, this discourse focuses on other attributes of motherhood and mothering, and other aspects of women's life, such as the baby care guidelines, how to train and interact with the child, psychological training and how to play with the child, emphasis on the importance and manifestation of the child's role in the family, and etc. This discourse even introduces and requires a guideline and pattern for any cases of baby treatment, from feeding to educational and behavioral issues. This phenomenon, especially includes the "women knowledge of the child", in a way that in its causal conditions, "the standards of an ideal mother" are considered. In other words, this phenomenon is separation of traditional mothering from the modern mothering. The women who had recently become a mother, talked about the mothering knowledge, which has changed it to a doubly difficult task, compared to the past. For example, if the mother's role is limited to the children care and feeding until the age of independence in the affairs, today, this role has got broader and beside it, the mother should be aware of different types of games and knowledge about them, how to deal with the child and psychology, parenting tips and hardships, the up-to-date being of information about the child and even the child's entertainment, such as is produced every day by the media. This discourse puts the men on the opposite point, as in the interviews, the men mentioned that: "the reason that we do not take such role is that the women consider the details and do the tasks such as planning, follow-up, and instructions in an innate subjective (innate) order, at their best, while we are not able to do so. Also, in the modern psychology and medicine, and also by the schools, kindergartens, and children education center, these tasks are expected from the mothers, and the women are the addressees of such knowledge, in order to set these functions in a subjective system, and do it

for a long time. In terms of this phenomenon, like the previous one, the type of the discursual attachment and the educational and cultural background of the family, is effective. In addition, “the mothering taboos and moral fears of mothering” are the basis of this phenomenon. These taboos includes: the prohibition of infant feeding with dried milk and extraordinary attachment to the infant and fear of separation from him, or any anxiety and restlessness that can be annoying and unprofitable for the mother and child., but respected and honored as the motherly concerns, and any mother, tries to, intentionally or unintentionally, depict more quantities and qualities of this concern about the mothering role. And taboos such as: The mother should not have self-centered and pleasure-seeking, all behaviors that focus on herself and enjoy something other than the child, or any non-sacrificing and non-endearing behavior can be among maternal taboos.

On the other hand, we extracted two phenomena from the analyses and interviews, which are more corresponding to the other end of the spectrum, and emphasize on the mutuality of man and woman in terms of mothering. These two phenomena, by departing from a static and innate approach to mothering, emphasize its beyond sex and dynamic attributes.

Beyond sex Mothering Phenomenon

This phenomenon puts us on the opposite point of femininity of the mother. The mentioned phenomenon generally releases the mothering out of a definition and function centered on a gender (female), and considers the mothering to be a beyond sex act. For example, the interviewees emphasized that mothering is not a task specific to man or woman, and it can be created in a correlation. The women agreeing with this approach mentioned that considering the mothering to be a feminine act, has imposed harms and suffering on them. In the words of this group, the innateness of the mothering instinct was doubted and the focus was more on the functionality of it, and that this feeling and attachment is formed not based on the eternal and innate form, but based on the continuous and close relationship between the mother and the child, as it was formed in the similar emotional examples among the fathers who had closer relationships with their children. Criticism of the common stereotypes about the femininity of mothering role and the critique of the traditions emphasizing it, the critique of the gender division of roles and duties, and the critique of the intrinsic nature of the behaviors and attributes of women "can be known as the basis of creation of “life” and “evolution” in lifestyle and their expectations, and higher presence and dynamism of women in the society for following the personal interests, have affected this approach. This phenomenon has more implied the mutual responsibility of the couples facing all the issues related to the children. Using the modern facilities and replacement, is among the strategies the women use to care the mothering responsibility. Entrusting the childcare duty to the kindergartens or close relatives, using equipment such as baby phones, Moving Cradle, Lullabies & Storytelling Software, etc. are among the facilities that provides the mothers, especially the working mothers, with more time and space, to follow their personal interests. The emergence of such approach (the beyond sex mothering), and higher cooperation of fathers with the mothering tasks, lead to the rethink in the definition of mothering role and consequently, and the review in cultural discourse common in the mothering.

The Partition in the Dominant Discourse of mothering

The partition in dominant discourse of mothering is on the opposite point of the intrinsic and feminine approaches of mothering role, and the beyond sex mothering is also a big part of it. How is this phenomenon explained? The data revealed that although anti-intrinsic and institutionalized approaches on feminine mothering are being formed, it is only to the extent which can create a partition in the dominant discourse of mothering. In other words, the dominant discourse of mothering is the superior discourse which broadly plays its role in the society. On the contrary, the approaches were found among the participants that could lead to the partition in the dominant discourse of mothering, i.e. the dominant discourse of mothering, tied with the knowledge, religion, and power, has such a strength that the anti-intrinsic approaches, despite getting extended, can only create a partition in it. Investigating the causal conditions led to the phenomenon of “partition in dominant discourse”, the cases which were mentioned about the causal conditions of “belief in beyond sex mothering” can be also true due to the overlap

between the two phenomena. Cases such as “denial of the originality of mothering instinct in woman” and “the change in women’s attitude towards themselves”. In addition, “the maternal dissatisfaction and critique of dominant discourse of mothering” can be named. Some women feel a deep sense of dissatisfaction if they devote themselves totally to their children and follow the traditional and cultural expectations, and generally responding to the requirements of dominant discourse of mothering, or in other words, they feel ignored and rejected. Also, the problems and consequences of motherly body, such as the deformity and overweight, and abdomen obesity, and the formation of skin cracks and other apparent effects, as well as the complications and pain associated with breastfeeding in women, are among the examples of this maternal dissatisfaction. The reason behind this approach can be sought in lack of attachment of people to the traditional and institutionalized discourses in the society, i.e. the women spontaneously have reached such attitude through contemplating the social and cultural conditions of the society. Also, the personal reflections and the increase in celibacy among the women, or the increase in unwillingness to childbearing have been effective on this approach. For example, the women in the favor of this approach, mentioned that among their friends, there are people who have not got married and have no interest in becoming a mother, to the extent that they consider the mothering to be only a created instinct, and women induce themselves that such sense is institutionalized in them. Therefore, the consequence of such approach shows us that a rethink has been done in the concept of mothering. This rethink, in the two macro and micro levels, can create a balance between the mothering and the role of mothering; a balance in which the women are neither limited and under discoursed pressures, nor are they generally ignorant of their children due to broad movements in the society. The rethink in the mothering role is the result of the approach that has created a partition and crack in the dominant discourse of mothering, which led to the new attributes in mothering. The mothering has changed from an external attribute, which necessarily adhere to standards and do’s and don’ts arising from the discourse of tradition, philosophy, religion and science, into an internal and self-sufficient role, whose limits and requirements are determined by the mothers, based on their interests and demands, and lifestyle. Among the other attributes of this group of mothers, “the shared, beyond sex, multi-dimensional, and mutual mothering” can be named, i.e. the men also play a more effective role in childcare, and the consequence of such role is the emotional balance between the father and mother. Also, the mothers do not merely take the priority and satisfaction of the child into consideration, and take a mutual and multidimensional approach in the decisions and choices (both me and my child), more than the mothers with dominant discourse of mothering.

Central Phenomenon (Selective Coding)

The central phenomenon of the current study is the plurality in concept of mothering, which has been extracted from four phenomena investigated, and with a look to resistive ideas, as the mothering/motherhood has led to the women to be released from dominant discourse of mothering pressure and the idea of femininity of mothering, to some extent and consider the mothering a beyond sex phenomenon. The mothering can be found in different themes and styles. The plurality in mothering concept enables the mothering to be released from its traditional and transcendental role, and achieve new possibilities for reaching the degenderizing of mothering, and also suffice the way of mothering, and deal with the dimensions that have more proximity with women’s lifestyle. The new styles of beyond sex mothering, which are not merely child-focused, and the mother also have the possibility of promotion personally and socially, besides childcare. It seems that mothering is the most complicated and at the same time, the broadest concept affecting the women’s life. Therefore, the tendency to creation of plurality in concept of mothering, and the diversity in mothering methods, besides the different discourses for partition in the dominant and patriarchal discourses, can lead to the higher dynamism of the women in the society.

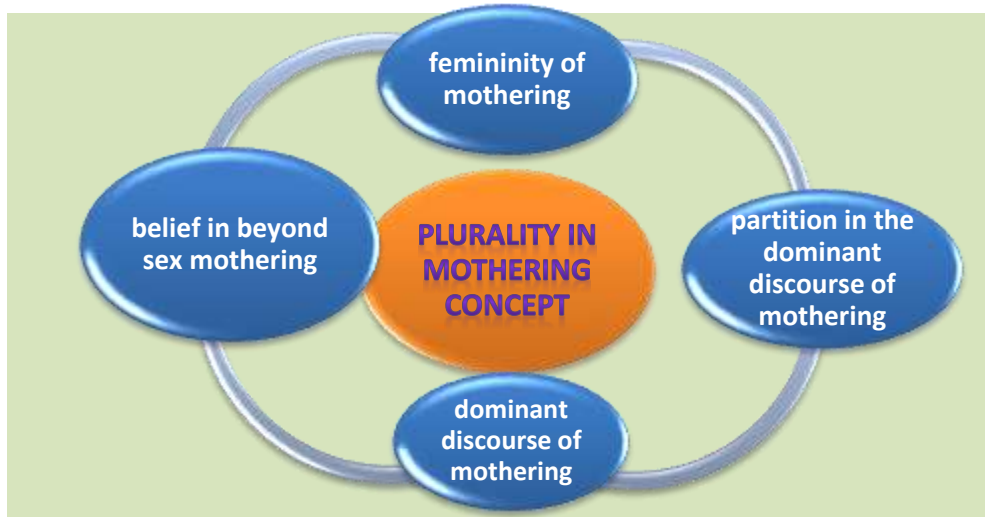


Figure (1): the central phenomenon extracted from four discussed phenomena

Conclusion

The plurality in concept of mothering is like a central phenomenon as a result of data analysis, directs us towards the theory of emergence of mothering practices. This theory is a transition from “being a mother/maternity” to “mothering/motherhood”. A move from the approaches that consider the mothering to be feminine, having an intrinsic originality, and the discourses confirming it during the centuries, to the mothering practices that decentralize the femininity of mothering and any discourse which seeks to limit the woman, and considers the mothering to be a dynamic, fluid, and plural task, which can have different forms and practices through intentional selection of the theme, and is not necessarily feminine. What is important of note is that emergence of the subject of mothering (fluid, dynamic, and plural, on the contrary of the dominant discourse of mothering) cannot be extended to the general public, however, our observations in the current study leads us to this theory. Indeed, this point should not be forgotten that the current study has been conducted among a specific group of women (educated, employee, and enjoying middle-to-upper class life condition). The mothering practices do not apply to a predetermined gender. Also, there is no condition seeking to categorize the mothering in the transcendental frameworks and discourses. However, it should be noted that mothering practices is a kind of interactional relationship between the couples, but it is not based on an especial background, rather, it is based on the current conditions and situation of the couples. Therefore, the mothering practices would update itself instantly, along with the momentary situations. This practice neither uses the mothering as a feminine task, nor does it totally disclaim them from their role. The mothering practices is free of any kinds of mothering role denial. Any kinds of dogmatic practice, any kinds of discourses full of tendency toward separation, and any rationality for reaching the goal. Also, the mothering practices provides the couples with different possibilities in protection, conservation, and stability of the child evolution, which is not only beyond sex mothering, but also is beyond the domestic structures and discourses. This theory is a mid-spectrum path. The moderation, which is the equality of the rights and enjoying the personal life share for each of the parties, can be explored. In the following figure, the circles of micro-categories and phenomena, which have led to the central phenomenon, are demonstrated, however, in order to prevent the redundancy, we refuse to present them again. Transition from the phenomenon of interest to the theory should manifest itself in a wide range, especially regarding the fact that theory achieves a large load of its description from the abstraction, however, in the current study, the theory, if not said to be the act itself, but it possess a large burden of the social act and interaction. Thus, it is not realized merely by the mind and abstraction, and it has been obtained in the course of study, and by refinement of the categories and observations.

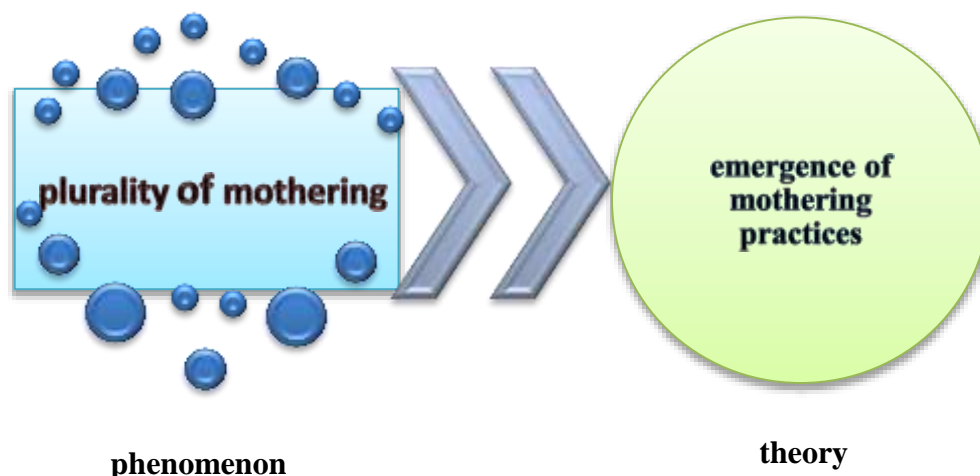


Figure (2): transition from the central phenomenon to the theory

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