




The Relationship Between Sexist Parenting Style and Cognitive Emotion Regulation Styles in Men With Perpetration of Domestic Violence Against Women

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the relationship between sexist parenting style, cognitive emotion regulation strategies, and the perpetration of domestic violence against women by married men.

Methods and Materials: A correlational design was used involving 300 married men selected through convenience sampling from medical centers in Qazvin. Participants completed the Mohseni Tabrizi Domestic Violence Questionnaire and the Garnefski Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and structural equation modeling using LISREL 8.80 were conducted to analyze the data. Model fit was assessed using indices including Chi-square, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI.

Findings: Results indicated that sexist parenting style was positively associated with domestic violence perpetration ($\beta = .51, p < .001$). Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies were also significantly associated with increased violent behavior ($\beta = -.39, p < .001$). Model fit indices demonstrated a good fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.41$, RMSEA = .037, CFI = .97, TLI = .96). Additionally, sexist parenting and emotion regulation interacted positively in predicting violence, suggesting that both factors jointly contribute to abusive behavior.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the critical role of sexist parenting and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies in perpetuating domestic violence against women. These results highlight the need for preventive interventions focusing on gender-sensitive parenting practices and training in adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies among men to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence, sexist parenting style, cognitive emotion regulation, structural equation modeling, men perpetrators.

1. Introduction

Domestic violence against women is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that continues to pose a severe threat to public health and social stability worldwide. Defined as any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse directed toward a woman by her intimate partner, domestic violence transcends social, cultural, and economic boundaries. The persistence of this form of violence not only reflects underlying power dynamics within intimate relationships but also underscores broader structural and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality (Benagiano et al., 2010; Oddone, 2020). At the center of this crisis lies the critical role of early childhood socialization, especially the internalization of sexist norms through parenting styles, which shapes both gender roles and emotion regulation patterns in adulthood.

The psychological consequences of domestic violence are well documented and extensive, ranging from post-traumatic stress disorder to depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Bermea et al., 2021; Liu, 2024). More importantly, emerging research indicates that cognitive emotion regulation strategies—the ways in which individuals process and respond to emotionally charged situations—serve as both risk and protective factors in the development and persistence of violent behaviors (Fakhraei & Azita, 2018; Mahmoudi, 2017). These strategies become especially critical when contextualized within a framework of sexist upbringing, where gendered expectations may inhibit the development of adaptive emotion regulation and reinforce violence as a permissible behavioral outlet.

In recent years, several studies have explored the interplay between cognitive emotion regulation, gendered socialization, and intimate partner violence. For example, Ghalandarzadeh et al. found that maladaptive regulation strategies such as suppression and rumination mediate the relationship between domestic violence and impaired cognitive functions in women victims (Ghalandarzadeh et al., 2020). Likewise, Hashemi et al. demonstrated that cognitive emotion regulation strategies significantly mediate the relationship between attachment styles and psychological well-being in women subjected to spousal abuse (Hashemi et al., 2022). Such findings suggest that targeting emotion regulation patterns may offer a valuable intervention pathway in mitigating domestic violence and its psychological aftermath.

The influence of sexist parenting style—characterized by rigid gender role expectations, differential treatment of sons

and daughters, and the endorsement of male authority—on later violent behaviors is increasingly being scrutinized. Yazdkhasti and Shiri emphasized that patriarchal value systems embedded in family structures serve as foundational mechanisms for legitimizing violence against women (Yazdkhasti & Shiri, 2008). Similarly, Musazadeh et al. found a significant relationship between religiosity content and spousal abuse, suggesting that culturally embedded beliefs and norms play a critical role in shaping male behavior in intimate relationships (Musazadeh et al., 2010). These findings align with the theoretical assumption that social learning within the family unit sets the stage for future relational behaviors.

From a cultural perspective, Gihwa and Yang's ethnographic study of Korean domestic violence shelters illustrated how traditional gender roles and expectations exacerbate women's vulnerability and normalize male aggression (Gihwa & Yang, 2016). In the Iranian context, Sarichilou et al. emphasized that the lack of preventive measures in local communities has enabled the widespread and systemic nature of domestic violence, particularly in socioeconomically marginalized neighborhoods (Sarichilou et al., 2010). These localized observations mirror global trends, reinforcing the argument that sexist socialization and emotion regulation deficits are universal contributors to domestic violence.

Emotion regulation itself has gained prominence as a central mechanism in understanding behavioral responses to interpersonal conflict. Cognitive emotion regulation involves processes such as reappraisal, suppression, acceptance, and rumination, which influence how individuals experience and express emotions (Moeini et al., 2022). Keivanlu and Mikaili reported that therapeutic interventions targeting cognitive emotion regulation and compassion—particularly among female survivors—significantly improve mental health and resilience outcomes (Keivanlu & Mikaili, 2023). Similarly, Moeini et al. showed that emotion-focused therapy enhanced feelings of acceptance and marital compatibility in abused women, further illustrating the significance of emotion regulation in relational dynamics (Moeini et al., 2022).

However, emotion regulation should not be considered in isolation. It often interacts with broader cultural constructs, such as religious beliefs, media representation, and social policies. Kobrlo examined how the Iraqi media oscillates between accepting and rejecting domestic violence, thereby influencing public discourse and potentially shaping men's justification of abuse (Kobrlo, 2024). On the psychological

front, Solati et al. established a link between religious orientation and mental health, indicating that internalized moral frameworks may either exacerbate or alleviate tendencies toward violent behavior (Solati et al., 2011). In a complementary vein, Saeedzadeh discussed the limitations of legal frameworks in the Islamic Punishment Bill, advocating for more comprehensive preventive strategies rooted in both law and ethics (Saeedzadeh, 2008).

While the majority of research focuses on women as victims, a growing body of literature is concerned with the experiences of men as perpetrators, which is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Oddone's ethnographic research highlighted how domestic violence serves as a "gendering practice" through which men assert masculine identity in contexts where other forms of power are inaccessible (Oddone, 2020). Similarly, Menaker and Franklin discussed how societal tendencies to blame victims and justify male aggression reinforce harmful stereotypes and hinder the development of effective support systems (Menaker & Franklin, 2015). This insight is crucial, as it shifts the discourse from individualized pathology to social conditioning.

The present study aims to bridge these two dimensions—individual psychological processes and sociocultural conditioning—by investigating the relationship between sexist parenting styles and men's cognitive emotion regulation strategies in predicting domestic violence against women.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study employed a correlational research design, in which the researcher aimed to identify relationships among variables without manipulating or controlling them. The data collection method was field-based, and the researcher investigated male-perpetrated domestic violence against women based on intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation and men's mental health, considering the mediating roles of sexist parenting style and cognitive emotion regulation styles. The target population consisted of married men referring to medical centers in the city of Qazvin, among whom 300 individuals were selected through convenience sampling. In this study, medical centers included welfare-affiliated facilities, psychiatric hospital counseling centers, urban health clinics, and psychological counseling clinics in Qazvin.

Initially, 100 questionnaires were distributed among male clients at the psychiatry department of Bu-Ali Sina Educational and Medical Center in Qazvin, of which 93 were completed in full. Another 50 questionnaires were completed by male clients at the psychiatric clinic of 22 Bahman Hospital in Qazvin. Subsequently, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical distribution of questionnaires was suspended, and the questionnaire was made available online. The online questionnaire received 480 views, and 157 complete responses were collected through the online platform. At the end of the sampling process, 300 completed responses were included in the final analysis.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Domestic Violence Against Women

Domestic Violence Against Women Questionnaire by Mohseni Tabrizi: This questionnaire consists of a demographic information form and several items assessing different types of spousal abuse, patriarchal beliefs, traditional norms, family upbringing, and learned violence. The scoring is based on a Likert scale, where higher scores indicate higher levels of violence and more sexist beliefs. The validity and reliability of this instrument have been confirmed by experts and scholars.

2.2.2. Cognitive Emotion Regulation

Short Form of the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ): The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire was developed by Garnefski and Kraaij (2006). This self-report tool originally contains 36 items, but the current study used its 18-item short form. Higher scores reflect greater use of the respective cognitive strategies. The reliability of the questionnaire in the Iranian cultural context was reported by Yousefi (2006) with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed by correlating the negative strategies with scores on the depression and anxiety subscales of the 28-item General Health Questionnaire, yielding correlation coefficients of 0.35 and 0.37, respectively—both significant at $p < .0001$.

2.3. Data Analysis

For descriptive analysis of the variables—dependent, independent, and mediating—central tendency indices such as mean and median, as well as dispersion indices such as standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis were used. Data

obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed in two sections: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. SPSS version 20 and LISREL version 8.80 software were used for statistical analysis. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the conceptual model and the study hypotheses.

3. Findings and Results

The sample consisted of 300 married men residing in Qazvin, ranging in age from 21 to over 50 years.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 300)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Sexist Parenting Style	3.67	0.52
Cognitive Emotion Regulation – Total	2.91	0.61
Domestic Violence	3.28	0.49

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for sexist parenting style was 3.67 (SD = 0.52), indicating a moderate to high level of sexist attitudes in parenting practices among participants. The mean score for cognitive emotion

Specifically, 55 participants (18.3%) were aged 30 years or younger, 120 participants (40.0%) were between 31 and 40 years old, 84 participants (28.0%) were aged 41 to 50, and 41 participants (13.7%) were older than 50. In terms of education level, 5 participants (1.7%) were only literate, 20 (6.7%) had completed primary school, 29 (9.7%) had secondary education, 46 (15.3%) held a high school diploma, 155 (51.7%) had an associate degree or higher, and 45 (15.0%) held medical or doctoral degrees.

regulation was 2.91 (SD = 0.61), reflecting moderate use of cognitive strategies. The mean domestic violence score was 3.28 (SD = 0.49), suggesting a notable prevalence of self-reported violent behaviors within the sample.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients and p-values Between Variables (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Sexist Parenting Style	–		
2. Cognitive Emotion Regulation	.44** (p < .001)	–	
3. Domestic Violence	.51** (p < .001)	.39** (p < .001)	–

Table 2 reveals significant positive correlations among all variables. Sexist parenting style was positively correlated with domestic violence ($r = .51$, $p < .001$) and cognitive emotion regulation ($r = .44$, $p < .001$). Additionally,

cognitive emotion regulation was positively correlated with domestic violence ($r = .39$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher use of certain cognitive emotion regulation strategies may be associated with increased violent behavior.

Table 3

Model Fit Indices for Structural Equation Model

Fit Index	Acceptable Range	Observed Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	–	226.37
df	–	160
χ^2/df	< 3	1.41
GFI	> .90	.94
AGFI	> .90	.91
CFI	> .90	.97
RMSEA	≤ .08	.037
TLI (NNFI)	> .90	.96

As indicated in Table 3, the structural equation model demonstrated a good fit with the data. The chi-square to

degrees of freedom ratio ($\chi^2/df = 1.41$) was within the acceptable range. Additionally, other fit indices such as GFI

(.94), AGFI (.91), CFI (.97), and TLI (.96) all exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.90. The RMSEA value was

.037, which is well below the acceptable limit of .08, confirming the adequacy of the model.

Table 4

Results of Hypotheses Testing via Structural Equation Modeling

Path	b	S.E.	β	p-value
Sexist Parenting → Domestic Violence	0.49	0.07	.51	< .001
Emotion Regulation → Domestic Violence	-0.32	0.06	-.39	< .001

Table 4 presents the path analysis results. The path from sexist parenting style to domestic violence was significant ($b = 0.49$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = .51$, $p < .001$), supporting the hypothesis that sexist upbringing contributes to increased domestic violence. The path from cognitive emotion regulation to domestic violence was also significant but negative ($b = -0.32$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = -.39$, $p < .001$), suggesting that more adaptive emotion regulation strategies may serve as a protective factor against violent behavior.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to examine the relationship between sexist parenting styles, cognitive emotion regulation strategies, and the perpetration of domestic violence against women by married men. The findings indicate that both sexist parenting style and cognitive emotion regulation are significantly associated with the perpetration of domestic violence. Specifically, the results showed that higher endorsement of sexist parenting attitudes predicts greater likelihood of violent behavior toward women, while maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies are also positively related to violent acts. These results provide empirical support for the notion that deeply embedded gendered socialization processes and individual-level emotional processes jointly contribute to the persistence of domestic violence within intimate relationships.

The significant positive relationship found between sexist parenting style and domestic violence confirms earlier studies suggesting that family-based gendered socialization plays a foundational role in perpetuating cycles of violence against women (Benagiano et al., 2010; Yazdkhasti & Shiri, 2008). Yazdkhasti and Shiri highlighted how patriarchal family structures normalize male dominance and aggression, which become internalized through childhood and later manifest as violence in intimate relationships (Yazdkhasti & Shiri, 2008). This finding also resonates with Musazadeh et al., who found a strong correlation between men's religiosity

content—often reflecting patriarchal teachings—and spousal abuse behaviors (Musazadeh et al., 2010). Furthermore, Oddone's ethnographic research underscored how domestic violence serves as a tool for men to assert masculine identity, particularly when other avenues for asserting power are limited (Oddone, 2020). Thus, the current findings reinforce the argument that gendered parenting styles function as a mechanism through which violence is legitimized and transferred intergenerationally.

In terms of cognitive emotion regulation, the study found a strong positive relationship between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies and domestic violence perpetration. This aligns with the findings of Ghalandarzadeh et al., who demonstrated that emotion regulation suppression and rumination mediate the relationship between domestic violence and impaired cognitive functioning in women victims (Ghalandarzadeh et al., 2020). While that study examined victims, it indirectly points to the destructive cycle wherein maladaptive regulation contributes to both victimization and perpetration. Similarly, Hashemi et al. reported that cognitive emotion regulation strategies mediated the relationship between attachment styles and psychological well-being in abused women (Hashemi et al., 2022), suggesting that ineffective emotion regulation is a risk factor within violent relational contexts. The present study extends these findings by focusing on men as perpetrators, showing that the inability to effectively manage and process emotions is significantly associated with their engagement in violence.

Moreover, this research contributes to existing literature highlighting the interaction between sexist parenting and emotion regulation as co-occurring predictors of domestic violence. Keivanlu and Mikaili reported that combining emotion regulation therapy with compassion-focused therapy significantly improved mental well-being in women survivors (Keivanlu & Mikaili, 2023). While their study was treatment-focused, it underscores the centrality of emotion regulation in relational health. Similarly, Moeini et al. found that emotion-focused therapy improved feelings of

acceptance and marital compatibility in women victims (Moeini et al., 2022), indirectly supporting the argument that men's inability to engage in constructive emotion regulation likely contributes to partner conflict and abuse. The current study corroborates these findings by identifying emotion regulation patterns in men as critical to understanding and addressing abusive behavior.

In addition to psychological dimensions, the study findings are consistent with broader sociocultural analyses. Bermea et al. underscored how marginalized populations, including LGBTQ+ communities, face unique risks for domestic violence partly due to systemic discrimination and minority stress (Bermea et al., 2021). Similarly, Gihwa and Yang's ethnographic study in Korean shelters showed how societal norms around masculinity and gender expectations exacerbate violence and normalize male control (Gihwa & Yang, 2016). In the Iranian context, Sarichilou et al. highlighted the absence of preventive interventions and community education as contributing factors to the endemic nature of domestic violence (Sarichilou et al., 2010). These studies reinforce the current finding that sexist socialization remains a deeply embedded cultural and structural issue, requiring multi-level intervention strategies.

The path analysis in this study revealed that sexist parenting style is a robust positive predictor of domestic violence perpetration. This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework advanced by Menaker and Franklin, who argue that societal tendencies to blame victims and justify male aggression reinforce cycles of violence and further entrench gender hierarchies (Menaker & Franklin, 2015). Similarly, Naji Sabri called for gendered analyses of domestic violence to deconstruct deeply held patriarchal assumptions and highlight the role of male socialization in perpetuating abuse (Naji Sabri, 2022). The findings also reflect Sadat Asadi's argument that effective violence prevention must incorporate ethical and moral reform within families, alongside legal mechanisms (Sadat Asadi, 2009).

Additionally, the study revealed that maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, such as suppression and rumination, are positively associated with domestic violence perpetration. This is consistent with the findings of Fakhraei and Azita, who showed that negative emotion regulation strategies predict emotional disorders among nursing students (Fakhraei & Azita, 2018), suggesting the broad impact of emotion regulation on psychological functioning. Furthermore, Mahmoudi found a significant relationship between spiritual attitudes and cognitive emotion regulation strategies in predicting emotional

outcomes among students (Mahmoudi, 2017). Although in non-clinical populations, these studies collectively suggest that cognitive emotion regulation is a cross-contextual predictor of maladaptive outcomes, including violence.

Importantly, the current research situates domestic violence within a biopsychosocial framework, echoing arguments made by researchers such as Taheri Fard and Mikaeili, who showed that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy improves resilience, social anxiety, and emotion regulation in abused women (Taheri Fard & Mikaeili, 2019). By focusing on men, the present study highlights how emotion regulation interventions, combined with cultural and familial re-education around gender norms, could be vital in reducing violence. Similarly, Razzaqi et al. documented how women often avoid seeking help due to fear of stigma and lack of societal support, underscoring the need for broader cultural change (Razzaqi et al., 2008).

Collectively, these findings point to the necessity of interventions at multiple levels: individual (emotion regulation training), familial (parenting education), and societal (cultural and policy shifts). K. and Tripathi's findings on the role of family type and marital duration further suggest that structural factors must be integrated into intervention planning (K. & Tripathi, 2024). Additionally, the present study complements emerging global literature on domestic violence, such as Thamizhmathi et al.'s work on perceived stress and abuse in Indian urban populations (Thamizhmathi et al., 2024) and Mordas's exploration of domestic violence and maternal perversion (Mordas, 2024), highlighting the multifaceted nature of this issue across cultural contexts.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences regarding the relationship between sexist parenting style, cognitive emotion regulation, and domestic violence perpetration. Self-report measures of violence and emotion regulation may also be subject to social desirability and recall biases. Additionally, the sample consisted solely of married men from urban medical centers in Qazvin, potentially limiting generalizability to other contexts, including rural populations and unmarried men. Finally, the study did not include measures of potential moderating variables such as substance use, mental health diagnoses, or socioeconomic status, which may further influence the dynamics of violence.

Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs to establish causality and explore the developmental trajectory of sexist parenting styles and emotion regulation in relation to violence perpetration. Including qualitative interviews with both men and their partners could offer richer insights into relational dynamics. Moreover, expanding the sample to include diverse demographic groups—particularly rural and lower-income populations—would enhance the generalizability of findings. Researchers should also examine the potential moderating roles of variables such as attachment security, impulsivity, and cultural values in shaping the relationships observed in this study.

Practitioners should develop culturally adapted intervention programs that integrate cognitive emotion regulation training with gender-sensitive education aimed at transforming sexist attitudes. Community-based workshops targeting fathers and young men could help disrupt intergenerational cycles of gendered socialization that normalize aggression. Additionally, policy-makers and healthcare providers should collaborate to create multi-disciplinary response systems that combine psychological services, legal support, and community education to address domestic violence holistically.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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