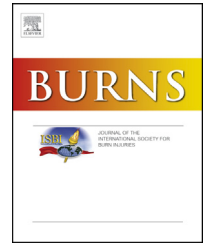


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# A study of Kurdish women's tragic self-immolation in Iran: A qualitative study

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## ABSTRACT

Self-immolation is one of the most painful methods of suicide which is widespread among women in Kurdish regions of Iran. The present study aimed to explore the causes and sociocultural groundwork of choosing self-immolation methods by women in Kurdish regions of Iran.

This present study was conducted using a qualitative approach and conventional content analysis. The research population included women who self-immolated and were rescued in Kurdish regions of Iran. The data collection method was a deep interview as well as observation. The sampling method was based on objective and snowball sampling. The data collection continued to theoretical saturation, the number of participants reached 25 in the end, and Lincoln and Guba criteria were used to strengthen the research. From the analysis of the data obtained in this study, the 8 sub-themes related to cause of suicide attempt from the participants' viewpoints including unbridled coherence, lack of supportive social and environmental structures, economic pressure, aggravation of violence, humiliated ego, dominance of modern values over the local and indigenous ones, incoherent family, and giving up on changing conditions as well as 6 sub themes based on the cause of choosing the method of self-immolation including protesting, frightening the family, catching more attention, championing and showing courage, inducing more guilty feelings in the family and society, fashion or imitation, and easy access were revealed. Self-immolation is one of the most important problems in the Kurdish regions of Iran, which is rooted in various economic, social, psychological and cultural causes. To reduce this social harm, there is a need for comprehensive programs that cover all dimensions.

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## 1. Introduction

Suicide is a deliberate action of self-destruction [1] and self-immolation is one of its methods that has been seen in many nations and times [2]. Self-immolation is a rare form of suicide

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that is tragic, dramatic, violent [3] and also difficult to understand [4,5].

Self-immolation is the saddest incident that a woman can experience and its resulting deaths in Western societies are rare [6-9] but in Eastern societies [10,11] and Iran [12] are high. Self-immolation is seen in 27% of suicide attempts in developing countries such as Iran, India and Sri Lanka [13]. Women self-immolation is more common in some parts of Iran. These areas include the western parts of the country, including provinces, Ilam, Lorestan, Kermanshah and Kurdistan [14]. Suicide is a catastrophic but preventable phenomenon [15] that is affected by cultural, religious, psychological and social differences [16]. Most people who commit self-immolation die [17,18], in other words, the rate of death is 70% [19]. Due to the many complications of burn, including deformity, the process of recovery is challenging and long-lasting [20]. Also, life with a burned appearance, especially in social-cultural conditions, which put a lot of importance on physical attractiveness, can be problematic [21].

Unfortunately, the burn centers of Iran have daily cases of self-immolated women who, in the face of difficulties and problems of life, have not found any solution but self-destruction by the most disastrous ways [22,23]. Many experts believe that self-immolation is a form of protest, and unlike other methods that are calm and quiet, self-immolation is a protest to the status quo [24,25], and the symbol of revolution [26].

In a qualitative study conducted by Mirlashari et al., it was concluded that the women surviving self-immolation were faced with feelings of disbelief, regret and grief and anger at their previous self-immolation attempts. Furthermore, these women were isolated and ignored by family members and society after committing self-immolation [27].

In another qualitative research performed by Amin et al. into Kurdish women's self-immolation, factors such as lack of control over personal life, marital conflicts, need for attention, creation of feelings of guilt among family members and anger at the governing patriarchal atmosphere in the region accounted for committing self-immolation [11].

In a study done by Safiri and Rezaei Nasab, traditional gender patterns, ethical stigmatization, deprivation and depression accounted for women's self-immolation [28]. In another study performed by Khankeh et al., it was shown that the main causes of women's self-immolation were family disputes, cultural background, and mental health problems [1]. The majority of studies on self-immolation of women have been conducted empirically and quantitatively and mainly addressing the associated demographic factors, and the results of few qualitative researches conducted in this respect cannot be generalized to other societies due to the different social and cultural context of the Kurdish regions in Iran. Moreover, the conducted studies have less addressed the reasons of choosing this kind of suicide. Therefore, the necessity of qualitative analysis of this phenomenon becomes obvious. Additionally, given the complex and multidimensional nature of self-immolation, which is influenced by certain cultural and social components, the experiences of women who commit self-immolation can give us deep and comprehensive information, thereby increasing our understanding of this phenomenon. Besides, because of the

weakness of theoretical foundations of self-immolation in women and given the fact that qualitative studies can help develop new ideas on the topic under study, the present study aimed to explore the causes and sociocultural groundwork of choosing self-immolation methods by women in Kurdish regions of Iran.

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## 2. Material and methods

This present study was conducted using a qualitative approach and conventional content analysis. The content analysis is a method which is used for the subjective interpretation of the content of textual data, and its application is appropriate when there is insufficient research theory and literature in the context of the intended phenomenon [29]. Since this technique provided us with new knowledge and insights into realities, the conventional content analysis was employed to explore both the causes and groundwork of committing self-immolation in Kurdish women. To analyze the content of data, the Graneheim and Lundman's five-step method was employed. The steps are as follows: conducting the entire interview immediately after each interview, reading the entire text for comprehensive understanding of its content, defining the units of meaning and primary codes, classifying the similar primary codes under more comprehensive classes, and determine the main theme of the classes [30].

The research population consisted of women who lived in Kurdish regions of Iran, including Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam and parts of West Azerbaijan, who attempted self-immolation and were rescued over the past year. These women were injured by self-immolation, but were living at home and were discharged from the hospital at the time of conducting the present study. Moreover, the inclusion criteria were having a history of self-immolation in the past year, residing in Kurdish areas at the time of attempting self-immolation, ability to speak, and willingness to participate in the study.

Deep interviews and observation were used as the data collection methods, and the sampling method was based on objective sampling and part of the sampling was also conducted in the form of snowball sampling because some of the samples had seen some women who attempted self-immolate and met them in hospitals and health centers in the past, thereby providing us with the chance to find their place of residence to have access to the required information.

Considering the objective sampling, it was tried to include a wide range of women in terms of economic and social characteristics such as source of income, religion, geographic location, etc. in the research. The data collection continued to theoretical saturation, that in the end the number of participants reached 25. The duration of each interview lasted from 35 to 70 min and the time and place of the interviews were determined by the participants.

Due to the disagreement of four samples with recording interviews, note taking was used instead of recording for those four cases. Moreover, the data of observations and interviews were handwritten and then coded after each interview. The main method of data collection was conducting deep interviews, but for more accurate records, the information and

socioeconomic conditions of the samples and observations were also used. After writing the data of interviews and observations, the texts was repeatedly read by the researchers to create more compact semantic units. Then, the data were classified using induction.

To this end, the extracted codes were classified according to similarities and differences using the continuous comparison method. The classes were then organized in such a way that there was the most internal consistency and the least external incompatibility. Besides, the accuracy and precision of the initial coding was also carried out in a standard process under the supervision of qualified experts in the field.

Lincoln and Guba criteria were used to assess the strength of the present study [31]. To ensure the acceptability of data accuracy and authenticity, ongoing verifying and coding of data was carried out by help of participants. To determine the dependability, two members of the research team encoded the data separately and reached a high level of agreement. Also the data collection, implementation, and encoding of data were done very carefully and enough time was allocated. In the field of transferability, the gathered information by three experts outside the research team, who are expert on sociology, qualitative research, and self-immolation, was reviewed and approved. A comprehensive and complete description of the studied subject was also provided, and also direct quotations from participants were used.

During the research, affairs such as obtaining informed consent, preserving the anonymity of samples, confidentiality of information, the right to withdraw at a desired time were observed.

### 3. Results

A total of 25 women were interviewed. According to the demographic data of the samples listed in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the age of subjects were  $25.86 \pm 3.95$ , most of the samples were young, illiterate or low educated, unemployed, have traditional and imposed marriages, and also lacked independent housing. Religion of most samples is "Ahl-e-Hagh", and the source of their income is farming, and they mostly live in rural areas and their source of energy is oil, and most of them have experienced self-immolation in their relatives.

As shown in Table 2, two main themes were addressed in the present study: the causes of suicide and the groundwork for self-immolation (with eight and six sub-themes in each, respectively).

#### 3.1. The sub-themes related to cause of suicide attempt

**Unbridled coherence:** Because of the cultural and social context of the areas under study, which are more

**Table 1 – Demographic information of samples.**

Variable	Dimension	N(%)
Marriage	Single	8(32%)
	Married	7(28%)
	Divorced	10(40%)
Level of education	Uneducated	7(28%)
	Elementary	10(40%)
	Junior high school	3(12%)
	Senior high school	2(8%)
	High education (university)	3(12%)
Occupation	Unemployed	20(80%)
	Self-employed	5(20%)
Type of marriage	Traditional	10(40%)
	Imposed	5(20%)
Type of housing	Free to choose	28(8%)
	Independent	5(20%)
Religion	Dependent	12(48%)
	Ahl-e-hagh	10(40%)
	Sunni	8(32%)
Family source of income	Shia	7(28%)
	Agriculture	10(40%)
	Animal husbandry	5(20%)
Habitat	Porter (to carry cargo on his back)	6(24%)
	Others	4(16%)
	Nomadic	4(16%)
	Urban	6(24%)
	Rural	15(60%)
Source of energy	Wood	4(16%)
	Oil	16(64%)
	Natural gas	5(20%)
To have satellite?	Yes	20(80%)
	No	5(20%)
Self-immolation in relatives?	Yes	21(84%)
	No	4(16%)

**Table 2 – Themes, sub-themes and codes generated from the interviews.**

Themes	Sub themes	Codes
Cause of suicide attempt	Unbridled coherence	The strictness of parents and elder brother, interference of in-laws, worrying about people talking behind their back, the inappropriate view of relatives about them after divorce, the relatives reproach due to divorce, having no children, the in-laws' reproach.
	Lack of supportive social and environmental structures	Lack of proper social counseling and support after the previous suicide attempt, lack of recreational facilities, lack of counseling centers for divorce and other unpleasant events were examples of concepts that were included in this category.
	Economic pressure	Lack of income, feeling of being a burden, financial poverty, living with a husband's family because of lack of financial well-being, lack of financial independence, lack of job are examples of concepts that are in this category.
	Aggravation of violence	Hearing insults, beatings, harassment, sexual abuse, either inside the family or outside of it are some of the concepts that fit into this category.
	Humiliated ego	The family's neglect of the individual's interests, refusing to continue education, not allowing her to go out, not allowing her to marry a loved one, lacking sufficient literacy, lack of affection, unmet dreams and expectations, and humiliation.
	The dominance of modern values over the local and indigenous ones	Not being pretty, comparing her life with other girls on television and satellite channels, raising the age of marriage and lack of suit due to the lack of good looks regarding the new definition of beauty.
	Incoherent family	Living with mother-in-law, having an addict in the family, divorce and separation from the spouse, and arguments and conflicts in the family.
	Giving up on changing conditions	Repetitiousness of life, lack of hope for the future, fear of the future, lack of hope to change conditions, and feeling of emptiness.
The reasons of committing self-immolation	Protest	Showing the bad conditions of herself and other women to the community and authorities, protesting about the existing condition, improving the conditions for other women, becoming more visible to the community.
	Scaring the family and catching more attention.	Scaring parents and elder brother and attracting the spouse's attention.
	Being a champion and showing courage.	Showing more courage and praising friends more.
	Inducing more guilty feelings in the family and society.	Punishing the family, creating feelings of guilt among the people around you, and creating feelings of guilt among the local and national authorities
	Fashion or imitation	The history of self-immolation in the relatives, the frequency of self-immolation in the area, having self-immolation in mind as the first way of suicide, and that only self-immolation came to mind when committing suicide.
	Easy access	Convenience and easy access to oil and matches.

traditional and male-dominated, the community, and especially men, have more control over women, so women are constantly subject to judgment. Participant No. 3, aged 19, said, "As long as my father was at home, he controlled what to wear and what to do and who I got out with, when he was not there, my younger brother did the same. I was tired of all this supervision and control, whenever I wanted to make my situation better it got worse. They have not even let me go out recently."

Participant No. 5, aged 34, also said: "Since my in-laws and their relatives knew that I could not have children, they hurled the worst taunt and bitter reproach to me. All the time, they stimulated my husband to take another wife. I get annoyed very much."

**Generalized violence:** Women in the areas under study are subject to a lot of violence and because of lack of financial independence or enough self-confidence they cannot cope with this violence.

Participant No. 2, with 29 years of age, said: "My husband always humiliated me in front of others, he used very bad words to me; some time he beat me up in front of his family, that offended me so much."

Participant No. 25, aged 31, said: "My husband was very violent in sex, he often annoyed me and I could not do anything."

**Economic pressure:** Kurdish women are mostly unemployed, and this makes them more at risk.

Participant No. 24, aged 26, said, "I always liked to have my hand in my pocket to buy everything that I wanted, but it was never so, I had to beg a lot for the purchase of the smallest things. I started to knit shoes some times, but its income was so low, thus I quitted it."

**The lack of social and environmental structures:** The Kurdish regions in Iran are among the most deprived areas and face severe poverty and problems. Recreational and welfare facilities as well as supporting organizations in these areas are

rare especially for women, thus most women have psychological problems such as depression.

Participant No. 20, aged 19, said: "There is no place in our city to go when someone feels gloomy, there's not a park, no good library, no mall . . ."

**Humiliated ego:** Given the traditional, social and cultural context along with the patriarchal domination in Kurdish regions of Iran, the individuality of women is ignored and most of their decisions are taken by their family members and elders.

Participant No. 11, aged 20, said: "From childhood, it was the same, others always chose for me what to wear, what to eat, who to talk with or who not to talk with; I would love to study, but they did not let me. For marriage they did not let me choose, when I opened my eyes I got married to my cousin."

**The dominance of modern values over the local and indigenous ones:** In the past, in the Kurdish regions, there was another definition of a beautiful woman, but with the introduction of communication technologies and the spread of communications, this definition was changed. Participant No. 21, aged 34, said: "I'm 34 years old and I do not give any suit just because I'm plump, while if it were ten years ago, I would have ten suits a day. Now, all men are looking for skinny women."

Participant No. 15, aged 30, also said: "When I compare my life with the lives of actresses' on TV and satellite, I feel sick of myself and my circumstances and I hate. They have everything, but I do not have anything, nothing."

**Family rupture:** Some of the cases experienced family disputes and suffered a lot of pressure and stress in the family, which led them to suicide.

Participant No. 8, aged 17, said, "When my mother self-immolated and died I became very lonely. The scene she burned herself comes in front of my eyes. After my mother, my father got married. My mother-in-law is not good to me, she only looks for the excuse to makes my dad tells off me, she always makes my dad beat me."

**Giving up on changing conditions:** Participant No. 140, aged 27, said: "I was tired of all this repetitiousness and monotony. Since I opened my eyes, I was in the same village. I never went traveling, they did not let me to study in order to go to university and to be away from this condition at least."

### 3.2. *The sub-themes relating to the reasons of committing self-immolation*

**Protest:** Due to objections to the political and social structures governing Kurdish regions, many women residing in these areas choose self-immolation, and in practice, they intend to object to the civil society and the political and patriarchal structures governing the community and communicate their terrible conditions to the world.

Participant No. 14, aged 27, said: "When I decided to kill myself, I thought about how to suicide in order to tell everyone that we Kurd women have what difficult conditions, so I went to the worst way. When I burned myself, I was so angry that I did not know at all that my brother was behind me." Participant No. 23, aged 26, said: "I worked at a pharmacy. I could easily suicide with drug, but I chose self-immolation because I wanted to show everyone that we women have what difficult conditions."

**Scaring the family and catching more attention:** Sometimes, people do not want to commit suicide, they only want to catch more attention by pretending to do so. Participant No. 18, aged 15, said: "I did not really want to kill myself, I just wanted to scare my family to pay more attention to me, but I do not know how I burned myself."

**Being a champion and showing courage:** Since self-immolation is a painful method, it is considered actually a sort of courage. Participant No. 16, aged 23, said: "It's always been important for me what others tell about me after my death. So when I wanted to kill myself, I told myself that I burn myself because at least, after my death others tell how brave she was."

**Inducing more guilty feelings in the family and society:** Since self-immolation is a violent and harmful way, it hurts the soul of the community more. Therefore, some women in this region commit suicide in this way. Participant No. 6, aged 25, said: "I wanted to say to my family and community that how they oppressed me as a woman, I wanted to make them feel guilty, and at least for some moments they feel a twinge of guilt, so I chose self-immolation."

**Being a champion and showing courage:** Since self-immolation is a painful method, it is considered actually a sort of courage. Participant No. 16, aged 23, said: "It's always been important for me what others tell about me after my death. So when I wanted to kill myself, I told myself that I burn myself because at least, after my death others tell how brave she was."

**Fashion or imitation:** Most research samples experienced self-immolation history among their first and second degree relatives, which is one of the most common suicide ways among women in the Kurdish regions of Iran. Thus when many of them think of suicide, the first thing that comes to their mind is self-immolation. Participant No. 1, aged 35, said: "When I decided to kill myself without thinking about the method, self-immolation came to my mind, as if I could only self-immolate myself. Other methods did not come to my mind at all."

**Easy access:** Self-immolation, unlike the pain, seems easier and more accessible than other methods of suicide, which is why some people turn to this method. Participant No. 2, aged 29, said, "It was too long I thought about suicide but I did not know to kill myself with what until I thought of self-immolation because it was easier than the other ways. I could not go to a pharmacy to get pills, or go out alone to buy the rope to hang myself. Therefore self-immolation for me was easier than all of them."

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## 4. Discussion

One of the sub themes for cause of suicidal attempts in women is unbridled coherence, or social rules and customs for women which are many and cumbersome. The cultural and social context of the Kurdish regions of Iran is mostly traditional and male-dominated and it seeks to keep women as far away as possible from the community in order to preserve their sanctity and to be safe from chastity slander which is one of the great problems of women and their reasons for self-immolation [32]. Therefore, women are more likely to be subjected to control and

their behavior is more scrutinized by the family or even by far or near relatives, which imposes a lot of pressure upon them.

The other cause of Kurdish women's suicide commitment in this study is the experience of violence, which is consistent with previous studies in this field [22,33,34]. Kurdish women are constantly exposed to various forms of violence by various people in the family and even the community, and because they have no power to confront them, they cannot find any way but suicide. Research results show that the sense of self-consciousness and humiliation caused by violence in women leads to severe depression, fear and concern, and eventually suicide [35]. Also, according to Golding's findings, women exposed to violence have a higher degree of suicide [36].

Another cause of suicide by Kurd women is economic pressure. Kurdish regions in Iran are among the most deprived areas that face a lot of economic problems. Among them, women in these areas are the most deprived ones because due to the social and cultural context that prohibits women from pursuing their studies they cannot hold a position in work market. So they have a lot of financial dependence on the family and cannot live independently, which results in more isolation of these women. Financial problems and lack of sufficient literacy are mentioned in many previous studies in this area as a factor in women self-immolation [37-42].

Another cause of suicide by Kurd women is the lack of supportive social and environmental structures. As mentioned, the Kurdish regions of Iran have few health and recreational facilities, as well as supportive organizations, so women are not adequately protected in the face of the problems. Also, these women have very limited access to services in the event of psychological problems, and because they cannot solve the problems by themselves, this will push them more toward self-immolation [1].

Another sub theme of the causes of committing suicide among Kurd women is the humiliation. In the Kurdish regions, due to widespread social relationships and cultural and social issues, women's individuality is overlooked, and most of the decisions and choices that exist in these women's lives, such as clothing, type of relationships with people, continuing education, etc. are made by the elderly. Even divorced women are no exception to this rule and may endure more pressure. This leads to a sense of humiliation and self-consciousness in these women, which is one of the effective factors in suicide [11,43].

Another sub theme of the causes of committing suicide among Kurd women is the dominance of modern values over the local and indigenous ones. As in other parts of Iran, the Kurdish communities have been exposed to changes in recent decades due to increased communications and social networks and their values and beliefs on many issues have changed. One of the issues that has been undergone many changes is the definition of the beauty of women. Previously, in these societies, a beautiful woman was one who had a lot of weight, so, women who were plump got married more comfortable, but today, given the new definitions of beauty, a woman who is slender is considered to be beautiful. The women under study often compare their lives with the lives of characters depicted in films, and because these films depict the lives of women who have a

high socioeconomic status, they cause disillusionment and self-consciousness in these women.

Another sub theme for the causes of committing suicide among Kurd women is the giving up on changing conditions. Disability to change circumstances and lack of hope for change make women more likely to depict a future that is more ambiguous and even worse than their present situation, so they seek suicide to escape the vague future. In Mirlashari et al., disappointment has also been mentioned as one of the causes of self-immolation in women in Iraq Kurdistan [27].

Incoherent family is another sub theme of the causes of Kurdish women suicide attempts. Because of the widespread poverty and deprivation in the Kurdish regions, most families face problems such as unemployment, addiction which puts families at risk of falling into trouble and causes to family rupture, and women in the ruptured family are more susceptible to suicide. In many previous researches, family disputes have been one of the factors influencing the self-immolation of Iranian women [44-46].

The sub themes about the cause of choosing a self-immolation method came from examples that include protest, scaring the family, and catching more attention, championing and showing courage, inducing more feeling of guilt to the family and society, fashion or imitation, and easy access.

Since ancient times, self-immolation has been recognized as a protesting way in many societies, as in the past few years in the Middle East, protests and revolutions began with a self-immolation [47]. Kurdish women use this method to show their protest to the condition of the society, as many of them do not feel regretful after this act on the contrary to other suicide attempts [11]. The use of self-immolation to protest was also reported in Czechoslovakia, India, South Korea and Turkey [48].

In a male-dominated society characterized by climate and mountainous hardships, as well as widespread political and social issues, showing emotions and expressions of affection and affectionate words toward women is less seen, and this leads to the fact that women feel the lack of love more and look at self-immolation as a solution to attract more attention and affection.

One of the other reasons to choose self-immolation is to become a hero and show her courage. Because self-immolation is the most painful way, people who do this think that they will be considered brave after this act and are more likely to catch attention than other suicide methods and people would talk about them in the community for a long time.

Since the method of self-immolation is very painful and affects the family and the community more, some women take this action to create and induce more feeling of guilt in the family and the community, in other words, they actually punish the family and the community and take revenge for their behavior and treatment [48]. One of the other themes that was shown in the results was fashion or imitation, the rate of self-immolation in the Kurdish regions of Iran is very high and all people have somehow faced this phenomenon and due to the high frequency of this method, women are more likely to think about this way when committing suicide, and in fact it comes to their mind sooner than other methods [2,49].

Despite the fact that self-immolation is the most painful method of suicide, at a glance, it is also an easy method, because it does not require a complicated process to perform, it only needs a kindling material (mostly oil) and matches. Given that our sample cases have a lot of limitations to go out, many of them cannot suicide in other ways, such as taking pills or guns, so they choose the most painful method, but the easiest one i.e. self-immolation. The research samples were mostly rural and they did not have the blessing of natural gas, so they had easier access to oil for self-immolation, and this could also have an impact [1,19].

## 5. Conclusion

Self-immolation is one of the important problems of women in Kurdish regions of Iran, which is rooted in various economic, social, psychological and cultural causes, and to reduce this social harm, there is a need for comprehensive programs that cover all aspects. By increasing the awareness of women about their rights and duties as well as the consequences of self-immolation, the degradation of self-dominated culture in society, increasing the ability to solve problem in facing with future problems, raising the level of literacy and creating employment for women, changing society's attitudes toward women, creating plans for preventing self-immolation in the Kurdish regions, reducing the level of economic and social inequalities, creating recreational welfare facilities such as library, park and stadium, as well as providing natural gas for the areas under study, free counseling services for previous self-immolation, showing the story of self-immolation victims in local channels and using local media to strengthen the position of women in the society they can take important steps to reduce this social harm.

## Authors' contributions

All authors have made contributions to the paper and authorized submission.

Javad Yoosefi lebni, Arash Ziapour, Gülcan Demir Özdenk: Conception of study design, data analysis support, interpretation, drafting of article and approved final manuscript as submitted.

Javad Yoosefi lebni, Arash Ziapour, Bahar Khosravi: Data analysis, interpretation, drafting of article, revisions and approved final manuscript as submitted.

Mohammad Hossain Taghdisi, Morteza Mansourian: Interpretation, critical review and revisions, approved final manuscript as submitted.

## Conflicts of interest

All authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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## Limitations

For one thing, the present study was faced with the identification of samples as well as the lack of cooperation of health centers in the introduction of samples. Therefore, as the last resort, the samples were identified with the help of locals in the city and villages. Another limitation was related to the participants' unwillingness to cooperate in the study. Therefore, the issue was resolved by establishing friendly and trusted relationships with them and telling them about the significance of the problem under study. In addition, given the cultural sensitivities in the area under study, some samples asked for female interviewers. Thus, some of them were interviewed by trained female assistants.

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