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## ***The Journal of Woman and Family Studies***

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## **Editor's note**

Research in the humanities, particularly in the special, widely used, and necessary domains and topics in the present age, are one of the concerns of thinkers, especially in the disciplines and fields that address social pathologies. Undoubtedly, appropriate and scientific planning in this field needs to be supported by rigorous research with various basic, applied, and developmental approaches.

The issue of science production and new theorizations, especially in women and family, which is one of the new challenges of the present age, has various dimensions in the legal, social, economic, political, psychological, and cultural aspects. And the direct and indirect effects of these aspects on the family institution in particular and women in general double the necessity of localization and deepening of research.

The Quarterly "*Journal of Woman and Family Studies*" the scientific journal of the *Women Research Center* of Alzahra University, tries to prioritize the publication of original articles resulting from theory construction articles with new ideas in women and the family.

The present publication welcomes new research findings and scientific and applied articles that include the issues needed by the Iranian society among its strategic goals.

This journal accepts new research findings and scientific and applied research articles whose strategic goals have addressed topics needed by Iranian society



## Conceptual Coordinates of (Mother's Threat and Danger of Life) in Therapeutic Abortion Laws (Single Article Correspondence of Therapeutic Abortion 1384 and the Article Note 718)

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### ABSTRACT

Legislator with the legislation of the single article of therapeutic abortion 1384 and also the article note 718 to a large extent, can change the conflict of votes regarding the abortion license to the unity of the vote. However, the literature of these two articles and their correspondence with each other has led to an ambiguous reading for medical and judicial experts. To the point that the concept of the abrogation of the single article 84 is strengthened by Article 718. The first ambiguity is the mention of the words "threat" and "danger" in the legal materials. Article 84 states that if the mother is threatened with death, it is possible to abort the fetus by considering some conditions. The article note 718 issues the same license with the phrase "a danger to mother's life". Why does the legislator have two different interpretations? Do any of the words "threat" and "danger" indicate a particular issue that the legislature has deliberately mentioned? The second ambiguity is about the possibility of developing the concept of a condition of threat or danger to life; Is the legislator's purpose of the condition of "threat or danger to life" exclusive to death or does it include the failure and loss of organs? This paper adopts descriptive-analytical method based on medical and jurisprudential data and concludes that there is a substantial difference between the words "threat" and "danger" in the legislative language. This difference prevents the abrogation of article note 84. It can also be concluded that in the case of the possibility of developing the concept of danger to life to the deterioration of organs and benefits, there should be a difference between before and after the soul is blown.

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## Introduction

Is it allowed to have abortion basically and fundamentally? And is the license for abortion related to before or after blowing the soul? These are the issues that researchers in the field of jurisprudence and law have discussed in details. The problem of the present study is different from the above topics; this study determines the coordinates of a concept. Whenever information is obtained by the legislator and is included in the law book, all sections of society are required to observe it, whether they criticize or do not criticize it. Yes, it is the requirement of social order that people must be required to obey the law. However, the ambiguity or ambiguous reading of the law destroys this same social order. Moreover, the institution establishes the multiplicity of judicial votes. The phrases "mortal danger" and "threat to life" are visible in the note of Article 718 of the Islamic Penal Code of 1392 and the single article adopted in 1384 as a condition for the abortion license. Article 1384 states: "Therapeutic abortion with the definitive diagnosis of three specialist and forensic medicine approval of the fetus disease, which causes difficulties for mothers due to retardation or deformity, and also the mother's illness, which is associated with the threat to the mother's life, is permitted with the consent of the woman before the soul is blown (at the age of four months) and the punishment and responsibility will not be imposed on the managing physician...." Note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran: "Whenever a fetus with a life-threatening survival is aborted in order to protect the mother's life, wergild is not proved."

The laws state that if the mother's life is endangered during pregnancy and as a result of pregnancy or from a fetal illness, the mother is allowed to get rid of the fetus as a therapeutic abortion. The question is that why the legislator in Article 84 states the condition of the abortion license with the phrase "threat to life", while the same abortion license is expressed in the note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the phrase "danger to life"? It is also a question that the license for abortion in the assumption of the threat to the mother's life in article 84 is subjected before the soul is blown, while the abortion license is absolutely permitted in the assumption of the danger of the

mother's life in the note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Whether it is expressed before or after the soul is blown, whether the note of Article 718 is the abolishing of article 84 or the same verbal difference of "threat" and "danger" in the legal articles, it prevents the abolishing of the single article<sup>1384</sup> However, until the exact conceptualization of the words "threat" and "danger" is not carried out, the legal materials of therapeutic abortion face serious ambiguities such as abolishing or interpretation to the verdict. Another question that shakes the concept of therapeutic abortion license is the possibility of developing the concept of the word "life" in terms of threat and danger to life; Is it possible to develop the legislator's purpose of the word "life" in the sense of organ deterioration and benefits, and the deterioration of organs and benefits in the circle of therapeutic abortions, or is the legislator's purpose in the term "life" unique in the expressions of danger and threat to life in the occurrence of death?

### **The Importance of Discussion**

A group of legal and medical experts believe that the concept and meaning of "threat" and "danger" are the same. In this sense, like many legal vocabularies, such as trauma, injury, damage, which have similar meanings but a few words are used to refer to them, the legislator has also used such a method for the words threat and danger. Accordingly, the two words are not essentially different. The result of such a thinking is nothing but the implicit abolishing of Article 84, because if it is said that the words "threat" and "danger" have no difference in meaning then the use of article 718 of article 1392 governs the single article 1384 and makes it possible to license therapeutic abortion before and after the soul is blown. If an essential difference between the two words "threat" and "danger" can be imagined, the single article 84 is not abolished implicitly and therapeutic abortion will not be allowed in the fetus, both before and after blowing the soul. Another

importance of the discussion is the possibility of developing the concept of the word "life" in terms of threats and dangers of life. The possibility of developing the concept of the word "life" in the intended phrases can develop or weaken the circle of legal abortion. If the concept of danger and threat to life can be developed to organ deterioration and benefits, at least before the soul is blown, then the license for therapeutic abortion will be widely used.

## **Discussion Background**

The issue of abortion is generally visible in jurisprudential, legal, and medical works from the past to the present. By searching valid scientific papers, it is revealed that capable researchers have examined the issue of abortion because of its application and have written important articles in this field. In this regard, it is known that these works often struggle on the basis of abortion permits in the stages of fetus growth steps. In addition, finding the examples of difficulties and problems in therapeutic abortion, defects, and diseases of mother and fetus are among the issues that numerous respectful researchers have written about. In the present study, indeed g such issues, which are often specified by the legislator, are skipped. However, we seek to find the exact coordinates of the "danger and threat to life" condition which exist in the legal provisions and texts. This is a problem that even prolific authors have not yet found credible research works on it.

## **Historical Course of Discussion**

Human history admits that all human societies have been challenged by the issue of abortion in early stages of life for a fetus (Devereux,1954, 350). According to Goldman and Hatch (2000), it can be said that the first written laws of abortion are observed in the laws of Hamurabi (p. 160). Ancient Iran, ancient Egypt, and the Chinese Empire have a long history of scientific and practical aspects of abortion (Veatch ,2000, p.3). What is known is that abortion has been a cursed action since the primitive age (Mohagheghzadeh ,

Zargaran , 2011, pp.18-23). From the very early time, the act of abortion has been accompanied by punishment (Nie, 2012,pp. 4-42). As long as it is, mothers love their children at every stage of their s development and consider their children as a part of themselves. But there are some exceptional cases, however, when this feeling can be adversely affected. The fetus is derived from illegal sexual intercourse, physical defects of the fetus, poverty, and many other circumstances that are not mentioned in this article. Nevertheless, the health of the mother has always been a significant aspect of this argument Therefore, it is observed that today, apart from the four countries of The Vatican, Chile, El Salvador and Malta, all countries around the world have considered abortion legal in order to protect the mother's life (Wilcox, Horney, 1984, pp.120 (5), 727-733).

## **Subjectology**

In this section, it is necessary to define the general issue of the discussion, i.e. abortion to pave the way to discuss the minor issue of therapeutic abortion.

## **Fetus definition**

The word "fetus" literally means anything covered and veiled. The product of pregnancy, which is the origin of the establishment of sperm in the uterus and the end of the pre-birth moment, is called fetus because it is covered by the mother's womb (R,K: Atrak, 1387).

## **Abortion in Jurisprudence and Medicine**

Abortion in medical terms is a title for intentional or artificial expulsion or spontaneous withdrawal of the fetus before the birth time (Goodarzi, 1374, p.593). Dorland's Book of Medical Culture states that abortion is the withdrawal of pregnancy products from the uterus, before the fetus is able to live and it can refer to stopping a natural or pathological process before it can finish (Dorland, 1392, p.21). The word abortion in lexical sources means falling from top to bottom (Tarihi, 1416, p.256). Islamic jurists consider the



lexical meaning of the word abortion not to go away and consider the fall of the fetus as abortion (Najafi, 1983,pp.343-359/ ). The phrase "Ajhad al-Janin" used in the jurisprudential system means the phrase "Esqat al-Janin"(Sadr, 1420, 237/9).

## **Types of Abortion**

Abortion legally can be categorized into four types: criminal or illegal, traumatic, spontaneous, and therapeutic abortion.

## **Definition of Therapeutic Abortion**

Therapeutic abortion means termination of pregnancy before the ability of fetal life in order to protect mother's life. Abortion-therapeutic endemics include: a) termination of pregnancy to protect the mother's life b) termination of pregnancy to maintain the health of the mother c) termination of pregnancy in cases where pregnancy leads to birth of a deformed baby or abnormalities contrary to life d) elective abortion in multiple cases (Roche, 2004, pp.5- 6) (e) termination of pregnancy in cases where the baby is unable to live. As it is clear from these indexes, the end of pregnancy for maternal life is the end of pregnancy. This is the case that the present article seeks to determine based on its conceptual coordinates.

## **The Origin of Therapeutic Abortion in the Context of Laws**

Perhaps the oldest sentence that can be found in the form of the relevant laws regarding therapeutic abortion is the protection of the mother's life in Iran, related to the General Penal Code of 1304. In Article 183 of the law, the legislator stated: "A physician, a midwife, a surgeon, or a pharmacist and any persons who provide the means of abortion in case of a medication hospitalization, or surgery will be sentenced from three to ten years imprisonment unless it is proved that these persons do such a work to protect

the life of the mother.” After the 1304 legislative year, by reviewing medical laws and regulations, the most prominent ruling on therapeutic abortion can be found in the Medical Law Enforcement Regulations adopted in 1348. The legislator had decreed in Article 17 of that Regulation that: "In cases where abortion is necessary for saving the mother's life, the physician is obliged to take action in the hospital and after consultation and approval of two other physicians, within 24 hours, the report will be sent to the board of directors of the medical system by mentioning the reason and the name of the place and the names of the consultant physicians.” The Guardian Council did not endorse article 17 of the regulations. However, the reason for the council's rejection of that legal item was not related to abortion in order to protect the mother's life, but the Council of Guardians' objection was related to the legislator's lack of attention to the division of abortion before and after blowing the soul.

Finally, in 1363, the Council of Guardians declared: "The 17<sup>th</sup> article of The Islamic Consultative Assembly, which implies abortion for the health of the mother, is not religious, and since abortion regarding the case of the health of the mother can demonstrate itself in different reasons and dimensions, its cases (reasons and dimensions) should be determined. For example, in a case that the possibility of mother's waste of life and stoppage of her soul preservation over abortion is rationally determined or even the mentioned cases fears do exist indeed before the soul is blown into a fetus, the abortion is permissible and lawful. And in the case of after the soul being blown to the fetus, if it is a matter of maintaining one of them in such a way that if no action is taken, either the mother life or the fetus's are in threat, abortion is not allowed to save the mother's life, and other cases should be determined and the sentence should be determined according to the matter. The 1370 Penal Code indicates that despite serious treatment of abortion agents in Article 623, the legislature has excluded abortion in order to protect the mother's life from

punishment. The importance of abortion led the legislature to enact a single article in 1384 known as the Therapeutic Abortion Act.

In this single article, fetal diseases and maternal survival as causes of therapeutic abortion have been identified. The single article states: "Therapeutic abortion with the definitive diagnosis of three specialists and forensic approval of the fetus disease, which causes the difficulties for a mother due to retardation, deformation, or the mother's illness, associated with the threat of the mother's life, is permitted before the blowing soul (four months) with the consent of the woman, and the punishment and responsibility will not be imposed on the physician in charge. Violators will be sentenced to the penalties prescribed by the Islamic Penal Code from enforcing the provisions of this law. In addition, the legislator entered the Islamic penal code in 1392 under the article 718. The following note is: "Whenever a fetus with a life-threatening survival is aborted in order to protect the mother's life, blood money will not be proved." According to the above mentioned laws, it can be found that despite the differences between the above mentioned articles about abortion, before and after the soul is blown, or the differences in words and differences in punishments, protection of the mother's life as a license agent is common among all legal articles under the title of therapeutic abortion.

However, in this study, specifically, the single article of therapeutic abortion approved in 1384 and note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran approved in 1392 are discussed because judicial and expert decisions of forensic medicine are made based on these two mentioned laws.

## **Evaluation of Non-abrogation of the Article 84 on the Semantics of "Threat" and "Danger"**

On 10/03/1384, the legislator imposed a single article on therapeutic abortion. The single article stated: "Therapeutic abortion is permitted, before the soul is blown (age of four months) and after the consent of women

(mothers) are given, with the definite diagnosis of three specialists (medical practitioners) and forensic medicine authorities approval of the fetus disease, diagnosed with retardation or deformation that can bring about difficulties for the mother or diagnosis of species of diseases in the mother herself that can be counted as a threat to her own life. Under these circumstances, the consulted physician is not administered any punishment and is not penalized. As it is clear from the single article, the legislator considers abortion to be conditional based on the mother's illness, with her life's threat and before the soul is blown. Therapeutic abortion with... the mother's illness, which is accompanied by the threat to the mother's life before the soul is blown... is allowed. However, about eight years later, the legislator declares in article 718 of the Islamic Penal Code: "Whenever a fetus with a life-threatening survival is aborted in order to protect the mother's life, blood money is not proved." The legislator accepts the abortion permit in the assumption of the threat to the mother's life without any restrictions such as before or after the soul is blown, and does not even consider blood money for it. However, the article 84 considers abortion permitted in the condition that the mother's life is threatened only before blowing the soul. Is it possible to consider that Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been imposed in the period after article 84, and considers the single article as obsolete one and, as the article 718 has stated, to permit to abortion before and after the soul is blown? In order to answer this question, the subject and the verdict of both articles should be carefully analyzed. Article 84 considers the license of abortion permitted in the condition of the threat to the mother's life before the soul is blown, while the note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran considers the license of abortion permitted in the condition of the threat to mother's life before and after the soul is blown.

Yes, if it is said that the two phrases "threat to life" and "danger to life" both stated the same meaning and have no difference in meaning. As an

illustration, the legislator in the book of law has adopted numerous semantic commonalities in spite of the differences of words. It should be said that certainly the article 84 is obsolete, because the license for abortion in both articles is subjected to the life of the mother. If the threat and danger are of the same meaning, the note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran will certainly be the abrogation of the single article. However, if it is said that the two terms "threat to life" and "danger to life" both do not have the same meaning and each of them has a semantic space independent of the other. In this case not only is article 84 not obsolete, but each of the legal provisions has been precisely and practically enacted in its own place.

## **Semantics of the Words "Threat" and "Danger" in the Laws of Therapeutic Abortion**

In order to clarify the meanings of the words "threat" and "danger" in the laws of therapeutic abortion, it is necessary to analyze both words lexically and terminologically.

### **The Word "Threat" in Words and Terms**

As it is clear from the title of the single article, the law in question is "single article", and other articles are not available before and after this article in order to evaluate the legislative language for the word "threat". Threat literally means fear and intimidation (Mozafar, 1372, p. 163). Threat in law terminology means creating fear for another individual regarding his/her life, properties, or reputation (Langroodi, 1363, p. 183). The term "threat" has been used four times in the current penal code, which has been a meaning close to each other, governing the lexical meanings and terminology in the legislature's view. By considering the lexical meaning of the threat, one can see that the realization belongs to the threat in the future; Threat means scaring someone that one promises to do something against him or his belongings (Hashemi Shahroodi, 1426 ,pp. 671/2). The Persian equivalence of the word "threat" comes from

"wa'id" and the origin of "wa'id" comes from the root of "wa'ad" which means promising to do something in a certain time or place in the future. In his book titled " Al-Mufaradt fi Gharib al-Quran" , Ragheb Isfahani wrote: "Waqib is specific to evil and bad, so the meaning is threatened: evil that will be realized for the future at a certain time or place." According to the above mentioned arguments, it can be said that the important point in semantics of the word "threat" is the subjectiveness of the concept of threat. It is essential to note that threat is a subjective matter and its actuality is and can be determined in the future.

### **The Word "Danger" in Words and Terms**

The term "danger" and its derivatives have been used about 20 times in the Islamic Penal Code and in all cases, a single concept has been desired by the legislator. The word "danger" is visible in lexical sources as damaging and harmful, and it is also more precisely meant to be about to to be perished or to be wasted (Vaseti,1414,357/6). The Persian equivalence of the word "danger" almost means destruction (Amid, 1391,p.867). One of the notable points in the semantics of the word danger is the fact that danger is an external matter and it is necessary to reach its actuality in the outside world. Although according to the lexical data, it can be said that both the words "threat" and "danger" have close meanings to each other considering that threat is a subjective concept and danger is an external one, a serious and effective difference between the single article of therapeutic abortion and the note of Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran can be understood (Abdi,1398). Abortion permits are permitted in the condition of a mother's disease that can be a threat to her life based on the single article of therapeutic abortion if the fetus has not reached the stage of blowing the soul. Since the threat is a subjective one, it implies that the pregnant mother is allowed to have an abortion from the time of diagnosis until the disease causes the mother death.

However, the condition for the license of abortion in Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a threat to mother's life. The threat to life is external and when the conflict between the mother's life and her fetus's is made then the mother is allowed to have a therapeutic abortion. The most important difference between the concept of threat and danger in the two articles discussed is in the time range of abortion license. According to the single article of therapeutic abortion, the pregnant mother from the time of the diagnosis of her deadly disease and before the soul blowing can have an abortion. While according to Article 718, the pregnant mother has an abortion permit only in the occurrence of conflict between the mother's and the fetus's.

### **The Scope of Life's Concept in Therapeutic Abortion Laws**

Is the legislator's purpose of the use of the word "life" in the phrases "threat to life" and "danger to life" exclusive to death or can it also refer to the disability and loss of organs? If it is said that the word "life" is unique in the occurrence of death, then the pregnant mother only has an abortion permit when the disease specifically threatens her life; it is clear that in this condition, the pregnant mother faces serious restrictions on the abortion license. However, if it is said that the concept of "life" in the phrases "threat to life" and "danger to life" is not exclusive in the occurrence of death and it is possible to develop and generalize the concept of "life" to the decline of organs, then a wider scope can be imagined for the pregnant mother in the abortion license. Under these circumstances, the pregnant mother does not need to see herself at risk of death in order to be granted an abortion permit, but if her organs or benefits are threatened, the abortion license is available to her. Answering this question entails the determination of first entrance of the condition of "threat or danger to the mother's life" as an exception to the prohibition of abortion to the legislative sphere. Whether the legislator himself

has established the condition that the scope of the concept of the mother's life condition should be realized from the legislative language or whether the legislator has inserted this concept and condition from other fields of knowledge. In this case the relevant knowledge must be referred to in order to receive an answer. Accordingly, in order to answer the question in this section, it is important to consider the kind of knowledge that is the origin of the term "threat" or "danger to life used" in the law.

### **The Origin of the Term "Threat to Life" or "Danger to Life" Used in the Law**

According to the researches, it turns out that the term "threat to life" not observed in the words of jurists, but the phrase "danger to life" has been discussed in jurisprudential sources. The legislator is not the founder of the phrase "danger to life", but as mentioned above, the legislator has taken the phrase in question from the knowledge of jurisprudence like many other phrases. "It is possible for the mother to abort her fetus when she finds herself in danger", this proposition is visible in the jurisprudential system. It should be noted that in order to discover the scope of the concept of "danger to life" from the phrases of jurists, it is necessary to express the historical course and explain and expand the phrase.

### **Historical Course of the Phrase "Danger to Mother's Life" in Shi'a Jurisprudence**

Many of the words and concepts of legal materials, including criminal and non-criminal laws, have entered the legal literature from the knowledge of jurisprudence, narratives (Hadiths), and the Holy Quran. However, the discovery of the exact meanings and concepts of these words and phrases depends on the history of this knowledge. Jurisprudence scholars have written different periods for Shi'a jurisprudence, according to which the works of Shi'a



jurists can be evaluated in different stages. Among the periods defined for Shi'a jurisprudence are the nine stages. In this view, nine periods have been considered for Shi'a jurisprudence: the age of exegesis and explanation, the era of "mohadesan" (narrators), the era of the beginning of ijtiḥad, the era of the perfection of ijtiḥad, the age of imitation, the era of the re-movement of "mujtahidan", the age of the appearance of the religion of "Akhbarian", the new era of inference and the present age (Gorji,1394, p.51). In the present study, it was attempted to investigate the historiography of the phrase "a danger to mother's life" in Shi'a jurisprudence based on nine periods. Although Shi'a jurists from the early periods, especially in the era of the foundation of ijtiḥad thoughts, considered the rulings based on materials to be flexible, so that based on the notion of the mother's life protection, the ruling of therapeutic abortion can be inferred from the works of the same first-round jurists (Sharif Morteza, 1415, p.532). However, if the phrase "a danger to mother's life" is found with the same explicitness in jurisprudential works, it may be said that the phrase is the first in the *istifta'* (the formal and official answer of a mujtahid to a question) of Mohaqiq Khoei in Mr. Tabrizi's book "Sirat al-Njah" as follows (Khuei,1416, 33/1). "Is it possible to have an abortion when the mother suffers from severe heart disease and the continuation of this condition is a danger to the mother's life? "If the survival of the fetus is a danger to the mother's life, abortion is possible and blood money must be paid."

## **The Possibility of Developing the Concept of "Danger to Mother's Life"**

Now that it has been revealed that the legislator has extracted the term "danger to mother's life" from the knowledge of jurisprudence and introduced the term into the legal literature and it has been revealed that the phrase was

first used in the works of earlier jurists, it is possible to discuss the scope of the concept of danger of life in the words of jurists.

The term "danger to the life of the mother" which has been used from the time of Mohaqiq Khoei is current in the literature of jurists and grand marja's since then and is often accompanied by the phrase "Hayat al-Om", i.e., mother's life. As it is said, if mother's life is in danger (Fazel, 1425, p.446), if keeping a fetus causes the mother's death (Makarem,1422, p.292), fear of mother's death (Khameneei,1420, pp.30-32), because of the significance of saving Mother's life (Sabzevari, 1413, pp.317-329). Jurisprudents consider the word "danger" in these phrases to be dissuaded from "life" of the mother. The word "hayat" is the name of the infinitive from the root of "Hay" meaning "living" versus "dead"(Ebne Manzoor,1414, pp.211-214). The jurists' choice of the word "hayat" in these phrases is nothing more than the meaning of "being alive". This means that jurists have repeatedly adopted the word "life" in various aspects of jurisprudence, including in Abu Yisas and Diyat. The plurality of the use of the word "hayat" against "moat" is visible in Quranic literature (Anam,162; Morsalat,26). Moreover, another group of jurists have used the concept of "danger to the mother's life" with the word "nafs". This conception was elaborated in the words of other faqihs as follows, pregnancy can endanger mother's life (Fazel,1425, p.447), Abortion is a danger to the mother's life (Tabrizi,1427, p.259). The words "danger" and "endanger" in the mentioned phrases are indeed adopted in relation to the mother's "self". The word "nafs" in Arabic implies the act of breeze being blown (as if it exits somewhere). This word is visible in lexical sources referring to the object's essence and truth value (Ebne farc,1404, pp.460-465). However, the meaning of soul as self, is one of the most widely used meanings of the word "soul.". It is on this basis that whenever a person is not in the world of matter, it can be referred to this phrase "he kills himself"(Ebnr manzoor,1404, p.233). Shi'a

jurists have used the word *nafs* in different aspects of jurisprudence. The word "nafs" in case of issues of blood money and Islamic *lex talionis* is often used referring to the meaning of "life"(Heli,1408, pp.180-184). Accordingly, in phrases such as "Pregnancy causes the danger of death" and "Abortion is a danger to the mother's life", word danger means the danger to the life of the mother. The inclusion of the meaning of "life" in the meaning scope of the word "nafs" is visible in Quranic literature (Asra,32). In some of the contemporary *Istifta's*, the phrase "danger to mother's life" can be seen. In these *Istifta's*, the jurist has provided an answer similar to the answer that overlaps with the previous phrase (Makarem,1422, p.285), i.e., the license for therapeutic abortion. The phrase "danger to mother's life" does not require any specific analysis, because it is quite clear that the focus of the discussion is on the mother's "life." Accordingly, when the phrases such as "If mother's life is in danger", "If keeping a fetus causes the mother's death"," For the significance of saving Mother's life"," Abortion is a danger to the mother's life", in the field of therapeutic abortion, the truth value of the meaning of the danger, that is licensed for therapeutic abortion, is the sort of danger that provides the conditions for the death of the mother, not the danger of organ decline. One of the evidence which proves the exclusiveness of the reference of the concept of "danger to mother's life" to the concept of death is the use of the phrases of loss and decay along with and in parallel to the phrase of "danger to life: in the words of jurists. If the scope of the phrase "danger to the mother's life" was so widespread that the meanings of decline or organ deformation could be included in it, there would be no need for jurists to count the phrases of loss and decay along with the phrase "danger to mother's life" in the abortion license (Khomeini,1422, pp.291-293). There is a considerable number of research in Persian or Persian translation, in which using the danger

to the mother's life refers to the loss of the mother's life (Khomeini, 1422, pp. 283-284).

Although according to the above-mentioned issues, it can be said that the phrase "danger to life r" means mother's state of being dead versus her state of being alive, a group of scholars in the field of jurisprudence and law believe in separation and distinction in the possibility of developing the concept of the word "life" in the phrase "danger to life". The theory is that whenever the mother's life is subjected to death after the soul is blown, the scholars indeed refer to the meaning of life verses death. Additionally, it is only under these circumstances the permission for abortion is issued, because based on the Article 718 of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this permission is only assumed when the mother's life will be perished. However, it seems that as long as the soul has not been blown in the body of the fetus, it is possible to develop the concept of the phrase "mother's life" and consider the inclusion of the mother's organs and interests. It should be noted that if the mother's organs and interests were perished before the soul was blown and there was no choice but to abort, in this assumption, by developing the concept of the term "threat to life" in the single matter of therapeutic abortion, the mother could abort her fetus. The reason for this order is that according to the top of the single article of therapeutic abortion, if the fetus causes the mother's difficulty, the mother can abort her fetus before the soul is blown. Now, according to the above-mentioned legislative, it can be said that before the soul is blown if the mother is diagnosed with a disease that is not caused by the fetus but brings about her loss and difficulties regarding her organs and interests, she can abort the fetus, because in many cases, the difficulties that the fetus brings about for the mother's body is more severe than the decay of the mother's organs due to her own disease. It should also be noted that in many cases, the difficulty caused by a fetus that is licensed to be aborted is transient, while the decay of the mother's organs and interests due to her own disease can be permanent.

Accordingly, the word "life" can be developed in the single article of therapeutic abortion and the life can be considered referring to soul and organ decay. It is also necessary to point out that the legislator considers the concept of the word "life" in its legal language, including life and organs. In Article 204, the legislator states, "The threat of the transaction party in the soul or life or honor of his close relatives, such as the couple, the wife, and the children, is reluctant. In the case of this article, to distinguish the degree of proximity to the effectiveness of reluctance depending on the opinion of the common law." As it is clear from this article, the two words "soul" and "life" have been used in parallel with each other, each of which has its own semantic range. The word "life" is exclusively against death, but the word "soul" is used along with the concepts of "organs" and "benefits".

## **Conclusion**

The words "threat" and "danger", which are used in the single article adopted in 1384 and note 718 of the Islamic Penal Code of 1392, are essentially different; as the word "threat" implies a subjective concept, while the word "danger" refers to a foreign matter. According to the mentioned difference, whenever the word "threat" is used along with the word "life" regarding the issue of abortion, it means that the life of the pregnant mother is not in conflict with the fetus's life, but this conflict is probable in the future. However, whenever the word "danger" is used along with the word "life" regarding the issue of abortion, it means that the pregnant mother's life is already in conflict with the fetus's life. The diagnosis of either state has a direct effect on the time period of the abortion license. When the state is diagnosed as a threat to mother's life, the pregnant mother is allowed to have an abortion from the time of diagnosis until the disease leads the mother to death, of course before the soul is blown, nevertheless under the circumstances of the diagnosis of a danger to life, the pregnant mother is only licensed to have an abortion

when the conflict between the mother's life and the fetus has been realized. The results show that there is no conflict between article 1384 and article 718 of the Islamic Penal Code; hence both articles can be appropriate under their explicated circumstances. About the possibility of developing the conceptual scope of the word "life" in the phrase "danger and threat to life", it should be said that, as mentioned in the course of the discussions, the theory of separation and distinction is more compatible with justice as well as jurisprudential rules. Accordingly, before the soul is blown, the concept of the word "life" can be developed and abortion can be realized as lawful as a result of the decline of the organs and the interests of the mother, but this conceptual development is prohibited after the soul.

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## Study of Women's Coping Styles With the Marital Challenges Based on Their Identity Style

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to study the women's coping style with the marital challenges based on their identity style. The research method was qualitative and phenomenological. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The sample included 13 married women who had been married for at least five years. Sampling was performed purposefully and interviews continued until adequate data were collected. Before the interview, participants were given Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory (ISI-6G) and their scores were calculated for obtaining three identity styles. The method of data analysis was Colaizzi's seven-step method. Through asking questions about how participants coped with challenges, important themes were extracted and coded. The main themes of coping strategy for women with an informational identity style were: "dialogue", "problem-solving between the couple", "adapting to real conditions", "flexibility in solving problems", and "existential awareness". The main themes of coping strategy for women with a normative identity were: "relying on social capital", "following predetermined patterns", "gradual change" and "direct dialogue through messages". The main themes of coping strategy for women with Diffuse-avoidant identity style were: "passive solutions", "authoritative solution" and "feeling desperate in solving challenges". The results of this study enable counselors to offer pre-marriage advice to couples.

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## Introduction

Formation of identity and achieving a coherent definition of self is one of the major developmental challenges during adolescence and adulthood and serves as the most important aspect of psychological development. To effectively organize and manage their lives, individuals need a stable and meaningful identity structure, which offers them a sense of uniqueness (McAdams and Olson, 2010), provides a feeling of continuity over time and space, and defines a framework for decision-making, problem-solving, and interpretation of experiences for the individual (Berzonsky, Ciecuch, Duriez & Soenens, 2011). Identity is a combination of how one and others perceive the individual and a known social status that is perceived by the individual and other people who are in contact with him (Hussain and Yaseen, 2019).

There are different perspectives on how identity is formed. Theorists such as Cattell (1943), Erickson (1950), and Freud (1961) believe that individuals function as a completely independent entity and that their identities are naturally formed individually and independent of others, whereas theorists such as Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982) and Josselson (1987) believe that the identity of individuals, and especially women, is formed in relation to others (Laney, Hall, Anderson & Willingham, 2015). Hull and Zacher (2007) also believe that a person's identity is formed in the course of their life and in relation to the identity of other important people in their life. In other words, identity formation is a process that sometimes takes place in contradiction with the identity of one's relatives and sometimes in harmony with it, but it is undoubtedly defined in a close connection with the identity of others.

There are two main approaches to the study of identity: structural approaches of Marcia (1966) and process approach of Berzonsky (1989, cited in RahimiNezhad and Mortezaee, 2016). Marcia (1966) believes identity is a combination of different beliefs, values, patterns, behaviors, and cognitive, moral, and practical skills. Berzonsky (2003) also considers identity styles as the basis for achieving identity and a coherent understanding of oneself. Identity process styles refer to how individuals process their identity information and how they discuss and make decisions about their identity issues (Zareinejad, 2011; cited in Reyhani, Soleimani, and Zarifi, 2016).

The first style is the 'informational' identity style in which individuals intentionally seek out new information and examine the situations, and then make independent decisions. People with this identity style are open to new

experiences. Individuals with a 'normative' identity style define their identity without scrutinizing alternative choices and rely on pre-determined guidelines set by authorities, standards, and community conventions. They have very low ambiguity tolerance and are in dire need of specific structures. Finally, people with the 'diffused-avoidant' identity style postpone their decisions, avoid personal problems and challenges. They prefer to make their identity decisions based on situational demands and immediate short-term needs (Berzonsky, 1989; Berzonsky, 2008).

Women play an important role in the intellectual, religious, emotional, and social guidance of the family and the society (Akhavan Gholami, Hayati, Rajabi Sorkhani and Roozi, 2017). From the identity style point of view, psychological life challenges inflict more pressure on women compared to men. The sources of women's identity are in many cases derived from the societal class of their husbands and are related to sources that point to a male identity direction (Mohammadpour and Bahmani, 2010). Women are influenced by three factors in the process of finding an identity. These factors influence each other and include (1) Gender (biological differences); 2. Role in the family; and (3) Dominant structures in the society (Patriarchy, masculism, humanistic) (Khojasteh, 2007). Education and employment as the most important empirical contexts of the new identity provide a context for cultural and identity development, and women choose new identities to adapt and define their identity differentiation from others in order to adjust to their social environment. This is while the society's individual, family, and traditional expectations have defined them more in mother and wife roles and the new contexts have added different expectations to the new roles (Tayebinia, Rahmani, 2017).

In addition to playing a supportive role, the family institution also instills traditional gender stereotypes in girls. So, we can assume for today's Iranian society that the family institution plays an influential role in the formation of the identity of young women and girls. This role is performed both by providing support and by trying to reproduce traditional gender stereotypes in order to maintain the existing social order (Ebadollahi Chanzanegh, Madadi, & Moradi, 2014). Therefore, it seems that since men in Iran have not yet been accustomed to the changes in women's roles, even if girls are supported by their parental family in changing their traditional roles, they may face challenges after the marriage as the traditional expectations of women have not yet changed significantly. This problem is especially aggravated during the transition of women to the maternal stage.

In their research on the characteristics of identity and related issues in contemporary women, Asefi and Imani (2016) concluded that there is a source of identity both in the struggle between tradition and modernity and the conflicting values regarding the role of women in the family and society. One outcome of these issues is that even educated women face identity challenges and are forced to seek independent identity only in their social roles and especially in employment. The lack of social, legal, and financial support, as well as the prevalence of values such as individualism and materialism, often have negative consequences most of all for women, the family, and subsequently for society as a whole. Tayebinia and Rahmani (2017) also found that women are more inclined to flexible and controllable interactions during processes known as a second thought. Therefore, caring for others stemming from ethics is considered along with restorative interactions as pillars of a successful strategy in women's lives. Webber (2015) studied how academic education affects identity changes in married women and concluded that higher education leads to changes in women's identity and their perception of self. In other words, women define their identity based on being a wife and a mother before entering the educational environment; However, they develop a new definition of their identity during and after education. Based on this finding, people with an informational style are more likely to face such challenges.

Various studies have addressed the issue of identity changes and challenges in employed, educated, or women who have experienced motherhood. However, there were no studies that directly examine women's post-marital challenges and propose some solutions based on their identity style. Several studies have examined the relationship between different identity styles and variables such as marital commitment and marital instability. For example, Reyhani et al. (2016) showed that the informational and normative identity styles have a significant negative correlation with instability in marriage while the diffuse-avoidant identity style has a significant positive relationship with instability in marriage. Heidari, Karimian, and Salari (2015) also found that the informational identity style can predict a couple's marital commitment. Despite these findings, previous studies have often ignored the role of women's identity styles in their post-marital challenges and conflicts. Women may face different challenges and resolve them differently depending on the characteristics of each style. Therefore, the present study aims to study how women deal with post-marital challenges based on their identity style.

## Methods

This is a qualitative phenomenological study. An in-depth semi-structured interview was used as the data collection method. In these interviews, several open-ended questions were asked, and after receiving the answers, some other questions were asked to resolve any ambiguity. In the next step, the answers were transcribed and the target concepts were extracted from the answers and categorized. The study population was married women who had been married for at least five years. Purposive sampling was used in which the inclusion criteria were being a woman, volunteering for the interview, being married and living with a husband, and being married for at least five years. Before each interview, the Berzonsky Identity Style Questionnaire (ISI-6G) was given to the participants to determine the scores of their identity styles. Sampling was continued until adequate data were collected. The sample size in this study was 13.

The Berzonsky Identity Style Questionnaire (1992, 1998) is a 40-item scale designed to understand the cognitive processes involved in coping and problem-solving in different stages of the identity crisis. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions related to the informational scale, 9 questions related to the normative scale, and 10 questions related to the diffuse-avoidance scale. The remaining 10 questions are related to the commitment scale which is not part of identity style and is used for secondary analysis and was not used in this study. Answering the questionnaire is in the form of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Three scores are obtained for an individual's identity style based on which the participants are ranked in an identity category with the highest score. Individuals who are classified with an informational identity style demonstrate a high level of exploration. Individuals categorized in the normative identity style have a high tendency to align with the views and aspirations of important people and internalize the values and coping styles introduced by such people. Finally, individuals who have a diffuse / avoidant style identity tend to procrastinate and avoid facing their personal problems (Ghazanfari, 2004). In the present study, individuals were placed in one of the informational and normative styles based on the highest score, and individuals who had a diffuse / avoidant identity style were excluded from the research due to not providing answers to the interview questions. However, because each participant scores in three styles, some individuals who were placed in one category demonstrated ways of solving challenges pertaining to other styles,

albeit to a lower extent. Therefore, in addition to being affected by an individual's main personality style, methods of handling challenges may include elements used in other styles as well.

White et al. (1998) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient for informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant style identity subscales of .59, .64, and .78, respectively (cited in Ghazanfari, 2004). Farsinejad (2004) also reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the subscales of informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity subscale as .77, .60, and .66, respectively. In addition, White et al. (1998) examined the convergent validity of the agreement between the original ISI form and the current form (ISI-6G). They found the raw scores of both scales very similar and the correlation coefficients of these two forms were as .81 for the informational style, .85 for the normative style, and .85 for the diffuse-avoidant style (cited in Ghazanfari, 2004).

To analyze the collected data, the seven-step method proposed by Colaizzi (1978) was used. In this method, after interviewing the research participants, their statements were first transcribed verbatim on paper and reviewed multiple times to fully understand the participants' experiences and challenges. In the second stage, after studying all the descriptions of the participants, meaningful information and statements related to the study subject were identified. The third stage consisted of formulating meanings and extracting the concepts from the data, in which a concept was extracted from each phrase that expressed a meaning related to the individual's way of thinking through identifying important phrases of each interview. After obtaining the formulated concepts, the relevance of the formulated meaning with the main and initial sentences was examined to ensure the validity of the relationship between them. In the fourth stage, the developed concepts were carefully studied and categories were formed based on the similarity of the concepts. In the fifth stage of the Colaizzi method, which is the stage of formulating an analytical description of the participant's feelings and perspectives on the themes, the results were combined to produce a comprehensive description of the phenomenon studied and the general categories were formed. In the sixth stage, a comprehensive description of the studied phenomenon was presented in clear and unambiguous language. In the final stage, validation was done by referring to each sample and presenting a descriptive structure of the meanings of experiences (Colaizzi, 1978, cited in Shaterian, 2017). To do this, statements and codes assigned to each section were provided to the interviewees allowing them to change the codes or add items to their statements as needed.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Participant Number	Age	Age difference with husband (year/month)	Duration of marriage	Informational style score	Normative style score	Diffuse-avoidant style score	Number of children
1	31	0/3	6	3.63	3.44	2.2	1
2	23	3/0	5	3.27	3.88	2.8	-
3	27	10/0	10	3.5	3.7	2.3	1
4	32	5/7	6	3.6	3.5	2.3	-
5	23	7/0	5	3.5	3.9	4.3	1
6	33	1/0	8	4.09	4.22	2.2	1
7	29	4/0	6	2.63	2.55	2.4	2
8	29	0/0	7	3.64	3.56	2.4	1
9	35	6/0	6	4.54	4.44	1.2	2
10	29	0/5	6	4.27	3.44	4	-
11	27	5/0	5	4.09	3.77	2.8	-
12	34	6/0	8	4	3.22	1.6	-
13	30	2/6	5	3.5	4.1	2.9	-
Mean	29	3/9	6/5	3.71	3.67	2.56	

To find a response to the research question, women's coping strategies were classified based on the identity style. For the informational style, 5 main themes and 16 sub-themes were coded for managing challenge. These themes were: "Conversation" (with 3 sub-themes of listening and respecting other side's opinion, direct conversation on the subject of the dispute until reaching an agreement, and consultation and dialogue with each other), "Resolving problems within the boundaries of the marriage" (with 3 sub-themes of avoiding family interference in marital issues, prioritizing tasks, and consulting), "Adapting to the real situation" (with two sub-themes of facing the reality and accepting it, and adjusting one's expectations and accepting parallel roles), "Flexibility in problem solving" (with 5 sub-themes of obtaining valid information and expanding horizons of one's perspective, understanding, forgiveness and mutual acceptance, paying attention to positives and accepting the reality, and comparative analysis of one's behaviors with those of their parents and changing the adopted behavioral procedures), and "existential awareness" (with 3 sub-themes of increasing the quality of each other's

presence, accepting responsibility for one's behavior and thoughts, and understanding and accepting the phenomenology and logic of men in handling differences).

In handling challenges with a normative style, 4 main themes and 11 sub-themes were coded. These themes were: "relying on social capital" (with 3 sub-themes: consultation and reaching consensus with others, seeking social approval to restore self-esteem, and accepting the norms of the reference group (e.g. the religion) with minor changes), "following pre-existing patterns" (with 6 sub-themes: trying for peace and reconciliation, division of duties and accepting complementary roles, minor changes in management methods, forced obedience towards the spouse without solving the problem, alignment of self with the spouse's family and passive acceptance), "gradual changes" (with 2 sub-themes of allowing time to pass and gaining experience in life), and indirect conversation through sending a message.

In solving the challenge with a diffuse-avoidant style, 3 main themes and 6 sub-themes were coded. These themes were: "passive solutions" (with 2 sub-themes of creating physical distance and taking medicine), "authoritarian solution" (with 1 sub-theme of pointing out the right way to deal the issue), "feeling helpless in solving the challenge" (with 3 sub-themes of loss of control and feeling of guilt, cessation of daily functioning when faced with a problem, and preoccupation with and focusing on the spouse's wishes rather than solving the problem).

In the following table, demographic information and detailed research findings are reported including the main and secondary themes along with summaries of the participants' statements and the number of interviews from which the themes were extracted. The presence of an asterisk next to the number of some interviews means that the problem-solving strategy used by the participant does not match his or her original identity style.

**Table 2**

*Problem-solving methods by participants with the informational identity style*

Main theme	Sub-theme	Example Quote
Conversations (1-6-9-10-11-13-14)	Listening and respecting other side's opinion (10)	"We listen to and respect each other's opinions." (10, age 29)
	Direct conversation on the subject of dispute until coming to a conclusion (1)	"We put together everything that upset us to talk directly about them to reach a result." (1, age 31)
	Consulting and talking to each other (1, 7, 9, and 10)	"The conversation was to convince him that it is not his job to manage financial problems alone when I go to work, and that there is no need for personal savings." (1, age 31) / "We talked about it directly and came to the conclusion that I should wear more covered dresses there." (10, age 29)
Resolving problems within the marriage boundaries (1-3-6-7-9-11-13-14)	Preventing family interference in marital issues (1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14)	"We solve most of our problems and do not involve the families." (7, age 29) / "As we figured out that getting help from them would make the problem worse, we cut it off." (11, age 27) / "We agreed that our challenges do not go beyond the boundaries of our home." (13, age 30)
	Prioritizing tasks (1)	"At the beginning of my life it was very difficult to manage and schedule, but I was able to solve it by prioritizing the plans." (1, age 31)
	Referring to a counselor (3 and 11)	"I agree with getting help from a counselor very much." (11, age 27)
Adapting oneself to real situations (9&10)	Facing the reality and accepting it (9)	"I was beginning to realized that the reality of life is something else, for example, I was sensitive about shopping and getting out, which was not worth it at all." "I also lowered my expectations and managed the financial issues." (9, age 35) / "Because, for example, if the food was not ready, we would go to my mother's home and eat with them and not take it hard, or if the house was dirty, Milad would clean it." (10, age 29)
	Adjusting expectations and accepting parallel roles (9 and 10)	
Flexibility in problem-solving (1-2-3-4-6-7-9-14)	Obtaining valid information and expanding the horizon (3* and 9):	"When I went to the university, I became much more flexible, I gained a lot more information, and I tried to solve my problems, for example, by reading books, or for example, I discussed them with a counselor rather than with my friends." (3, age 27) "I started coming to terms with these differences and solved them ... I tried to use reliable sources and good experiences." (9, age 35)
	Understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance (1, 6, and 7)	"I realized that life commands its own politics, and you can solve your problems gradually by knowing each other's sensitivities and mutual understanding and patience," (1, age 31)
		"We do not compare our families." (6, age 33)



		"Forgiveness and understanding between my husband and I were very effective in improving our relationship." (7, age 29)
	Paying attention to the positive and accepting the reality ( 2*, 7, and 3)	"In marriage, there is a feeling of peace, growth, and perfection, that makes me see how different I am from my singlehood. I think better about my problems now and make more patient decisions." (2, age 23)
	Analyzing the behaviors of myself and my parents (4)	"So, I began to think a little bit about our problems and tried not to react like before. Not that I deny how I used to react in the past, but see myself as a person who has gained some experience and has become more aware of the problem and now positively, I want it not to be like in the past." (4, age 32)
	Changing the learned behavioral procedures ( 3* and 7)	"Girls and boys, when they leave the family, naturally 90% of their behaviors come from the family in which they were raised in. But in general, we try to improve ourselves compared to our family practices ... And for example, there are a series of behaviors that we practice which were not practiced by our family of origin." (3, age 27)
Existential awareness (9-13)	Improving the quality of presence (9)	"I try to be energetic during the time I am with them and spend time playing and going out and watching movies together so that my absence is less felt." (9, age 35)
	Accepting responsibility for our behavior and thoughts and self-analysis (13)	"First, in order to recognize the things between us that cause conflicts, we accepted the responsibility of our behavior and thoughts." (13, age 30)
	Understanding and accepting men's phenomenological world and logic in handling differences (13)	"I finally chose to be closer to what my husband prefers because although his reasons are not 100% acceptable to me, his logic was acceptable and I understood and knew that what he says is of value and priority to him and he didn't mean to limit me." (13, age 30)

**Table 3**

*– Problem-solving methods by participants with the normative identity styles*

Main theme	Sub-theme	Example Quote
Relying on social capital (2 and 3)	Consulting and thinking with others (2)	"I get help from my friends and family as much as possible to solve my problems as they possess distinguished thoughts and intelligence which can be a great help to me." (2, age 23)
	Seeking social approval to regain self-esteem (3)	During those 4 years that our differences became intense, I completely lost my self-confidence. Going to university helped me a lot to regain my self-confidence." (3, age 27)

	Acceptance of the norms of the reference group (religion) with minor changes (3)	"My dress was in harmony with my husband's preferences. My husband's family did not have a problem with this because they know their son and his thoughts, but I tried very hard to wear the hijab and at the same time as a newlywed of an open family, have all of the beauty any bride would have. To be satisfied with this feeling in me first, and in my husband so that he does not think if I go out with hijab, I may be inferior to others in appearance."(3, age 27)
	Trying for peace and compromise and reconciliation (3, 4*)	"I tried less than him, and he might have very much liked housekeeper housewife, but I may not have been as successful as he wished, but we did not have much of an issue because we tried to work it out with each other and to solve our problems by compromise."(3, age 27)  "Finally, some way of making compromises came about."(4, age 32)
	Division of duties and acceptance of supplementary roles (3)	"From the first day, my husband demanded that handling financial issues the economic helm of life and the economic management of the household to be with him. I do not interfere much in the financial field, but offer comments or consultation in issues such as buying or selling a house or furniture, but only my husband handles the details." (3, age 27)
Following the pre-existing patterns	Minor changes in management practices (3)	"We ran into problems which made us decide that there should be a change in our handling of payments." (3, age 27)
	Compulsory obedience to my husband without solving the problem (4* and 7)	"I could not cope, but I just lowered my expectations from my husband and thought I would not allow such arguments, albeit being of importance, create challenges in my life. For example, whenever he says let's go out, I agree, but whenever I suggest that we go out if he agrees so be it, but I do not expect him to agree with everything I suggest and have come over this although with dissatisfaction, but I am gradually accepting this" (4, age 32)
	Harmony with my husband's family (9* and 10*)	"I did not become religious, but I tried to appear more dressed in front of them." (10, age 29)
	Giving in without acceptance (13)	"I talked about it a lot with my husband, but this was not one of those things that could bother me or challenge me, and I finally accepted it for many reasons." (13, age 30)
Gradual change (3-4-11-13)	The passage of time (4*, 11 and, 13)	"They put a lot of energy into this issue, and I was hardly able to deal with it and it was very difficult for me to solve it. It took them a long time, maybe 3 to 4 years, to realize that this was just due to my personality and not because I hated them." (4, age 32).

	Gaining experience in life (3 and 4*)	"Now we have both moved away from them and also realized the problem, and so some changes have come along and finally some reconciliation has taken place." (4, age 32)
Indirect conversation by sending a message (6)	Indirect conversation by sending a message (6)	"Before talking to him directly, I would send him messages related to these issues." (6, age 33)

**Table 4**

*Problem-solving methods by participants with the diffuse / avoidant identity style*

Main theme	Sub-theme	Example Quotes
Passive solutions (4&8)	Creating a physical distance (4*)	"I was also incapable of solving it and I only counted the days to come to Tehran from Isfahan so that I didn't have to visit them as often." (4, age 32)
	Taking medicine (8*)	"Sometimes, when I have a problem with my husband or my son makes me frustrated, I use low-dose sedatives under my doctor's supervision." (8, age 29)
Authoritarian solution (8)	Pointing out the right way to deal with the issue (8*)	"Remind him how to behave properly." (8, age 29)
Feeling frustrated in handling the challenge (3-4-6)	Loss of control and feeling of guilt (3*)	"Sometimes I feel guilty about myself, but when I get angry, I lose control of the situation." (3, age 27)
	Impairing daily functions after facing the problem and mental predicament (4*)	"I often think a lot when a problem arises that I may not be able to do my main tasks well for three or four days, especially if it is a major issue." (4, age 32)
	Focus on the husband's wishes not on solving the problem (6*)	"To solve problems, early on in our married life I made a full biography of my husband listing the things he likes or dislikes, and I kept adding to it. During my marriage, I studied the subjects of personality and psychology to better know what would make my husband happy or sad."

## Discussion

In the present study, the women's ways of coping with challenges were classified based on their identity styles. Families have different developmental stages and face different challenges in each stage. Women, as one of the main pillars of family life, use different methods to handle these challenges, which may differ in terms of effectiveness. One of the characteristics that can affect a woman's choice of a strategy for solving challenges is their identity style because individuals develop different views about challenges and possible methods to solve them according to their identity styles. The purpose of this

research is to study how women cope with the challenges of marital life with a focus on the role of their identity style.

According to the findings, women with an informational identity style act in five ways to resolve the challenges of marital life. One of these methods is "dialogue" which has 3 sub-themes. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Rajabi et al. (2018). They found that the best marital relationship is the one in which everyone can express their feelings and ideas. Also, couples who discussed the problems reported fewer conflicts and were more satisfied with their life. Rajabi, Hamidi, Amanollahi Fard and Aslani (2018) concluded that successful couples stayed together peacefully through effective communication, dialogue, and expression of their wishes and opinions as well as respecting the other side. In accordance to this finding and to further explain it, we can say that people with an informational identity style actively use the available information in dealing with everyday issues and life challenges and then make informed decisions. Since people with an informational identity style are receptive to new information and open to it, they use methods such as conversation and respecting the other side's opinions.

"Problem-solving within the boundaries of couples" with 3 sub-themes is another challenge solving method employed by people with an informational identity style. Balvardi, Balvardi, and Aghajani (2016) showed that the more relationships a couple may have with different people and with influential people in their life, the more the stable and healthy trend of their lives will be affected by the crisis. Bryant, Congar, and Meehan (2001) stated that establishing the right relationship and setting up proper boundaries between the newly formed family and the extended family is one of the most important tasks of a couple in early marriage. Also, Hatami-Varzaneh, Ismaili, Farahbakhsh, and Borjali (2016) showed that the divorcing couples have had a serious shortcoming in defining a clear and distinct boundary with their parental families. In explaining this finding, it can be said that since people with an informational identity style make their decisions based on examining different aspects of issues and independent of the involvement and opinion of others, they prefer to manage their issues between themselves. In fact, people with an informational identity style are more likely to possess the ability to maintain the functionality and independence of their marital life and to create a clear boundary between themselves and their extended families, and if seeking advice from others becomes necessary, they prefer to consult with a person who is both expert and impartial.

"Adapting to the real situation" with two sub-themes is another method used by women having an informational identity style. Rowshani, Naeeni, and Bastani (2016) considered recognizing the reality of marital life and having a correct attitude towards it as comforting factors in marital life, which is in line with the sub-theme of "knowing the reality and accepting it". Fathi, Parvin, and Javadian (2016) found in their research that women do not complain about anything in life due to shame or excessive feeling of devotion towards their husbands, and sometimes even hide their personal opinions and show satisfaction with the existing conditions. Overlooking a wife's wishes by a husband makes her feel bad. These unpleasant feelings accumulate over time and may outbreak suddenly and cause discomfort for the other side (Sabbaghi, Salehi, & Moghaddamzadeh, 2017). To offer an explanation based on our findings, it can be said that due to the high openness of people with an informational identity style to new information and experiences, they are able to adapt to a different setting in their marital life and have a high level of ability to turn challenges into opportunities. Therefore, it seems that adapting to the real situation by women does not necessarily mean shyness or reducing intimacy, because in people with an informational style, this adaptation takes place along with engaging in conversations.

"Flexibility in problem-solving" also has 5 sub-themes. Rajabi et al. (2018) proposed that if in the family environment, instead of stubbornness and selfishness, understanding and attendance are practiced along with love in couples, the quality of the marital life undoubtedly will be enhanced, and moreover, the couple, and particularly, women mentioned a great increase in expressing emotions, empathy, and interest. Yousefi and Karimnejhad (2018) stated that forgiveness and letting go are effective in reducing marital conflicts. These findings are consistent with the sub-theme of "understanding, forgiveness and acceptance" in the present study. Also, Rajabi et al. (2018) emphasized the need for flexibility in couples, especially in dealing with cultural differences. Naji Esfahani, Jahangiri, and Lahsaeizadeh (2018) confirmed that one of the strategies couples use in resolving conflict is rethinking about themselves, meaning contemplating on their thoughts and behavior, and seeking to resolve the problem through self-evaluation. This is consistent with the sub-theme of "analysis of their own and their parents' behaviors". In explaining this finding, it can be said that women with an informational identity style approach issues rationally and logically, and are less likely to use emotion-based reactions such as stubbornness and Silent treatment. In other words, women with an

informational identity style have more mature interpersonal skills and when faced with problems, they try to analyze them and develop the most appropriate approach to the solution.

"Existential awareness" with 3 sub-themes was another method employed by women with informational identity. This finding is consistent with the research of Koraei, KhojastehMehr, Sudani, and Aslani (2017) who consider personality traits and responsibility as one of the determinants of the permanence of marriage. Nazari (2010) believes that in a successful marriage, couples take responsibility for their behavior and do not expect their partner to be responsible for keeping them happy. To explain this finding, it can be said that people with an informational identity style are actively looking for information and have a high level of openness and flexibility in dealing with new information about themselves and others, hence when facing challenging differences with others try to understand the other side's phenomenological context.

Women with a normative identity style rely on "social capital" for dealing with the challenges of married life which had three sub-themes in our study. Tayebinia and Rahmani (2017) have suggested that some women seek support from the family and trusted individuals to resolve their challenges. To explain this finding, it can be said that people with a normative identity style are highly dependent on the values and decisions of important people in their lives and have little tolerance in dealing with challenging and ambiguous situations. When dealing with challenges of marital life, they also seek approval and help from others because they are not fully able to solve their problems on their own. In addition, since they have acquired their values and behavior patterns based on complete obedience to others, they are not able to change these values, or content to minor and superficial changes when necessary.

"Following the pre-existing patterns" with 6 sub-themes was another way for women with a normative identity style in dealing with challenges. Tayebinia and Rahmani (2017) stated that women tend to adapt in order to change their living conditions. Also, Berzonsky (1990) concluded that the normative identity style has a significant negative relationship with openness to different values and behaviors. To explain this finding, it can be said that since people with a normative identity style exert little effort to search for information and resolve problems when faced with challenges and contradictions, they show little flexibility and try to resolve the problem through complete and unquestioned obedience of others.

"Gradual change" with 3 sub-themes was another method employed by women with a normative identity style in dealing with problems. The current study did not reach a conclusion similar to existing reports for this theme. This result can be explained by noting that people with a normative identity style do not show openness to new information and hence do not make fundamental changes. They may implement gradual change over time and only within the norms as they gain experience.

For women with a diffuse-avoidant identity style, the theme of "passive solutions" with two sub-themes and the theme of "authoritarian solutions" with one sub-theme, and "feeling helpless in solving the challenge" with 3 sub-themes were the methods that these women use to face challenges. Tayebinia and Rahmani (2017) concluded in their study that some women use methods such as justification, indifference, retaliation, and silence to resolve their challenges. Hatami Varzaneh et al. (2016) also found that one of the problems of separating couples is the lack of consultation, neglecting the other side's recommendations, and dysfunctional communication, meaning that there is either no dialogue or it is in the form of insulting and criticizing each other. Naji Esfahani, Jahangiri, and Lhasaeizadeh (2018) proposed that one of the strategies of couples in the face of trouble is to remain silent. Berzonsky (1992) also found that people with a diffuse-avoidant style resorted to fantasizing, distancing from the situation, and tension-reduction tactics when faced with problems. To explain these findings, we can note that since people with a diffuse-avoidant identity styles avoid solving problems and challenges in the individual and interpersonal domains and are more likely to resort to external control sources when faced with problems they lose control and feel helpless.

In explaining other findings of our study, we can mention that in addition to the methods used based on their identity style, participants also use methods related to other styles. In other words, in some cases, participants with the informational identity style also used methods related to the normative identity style. In fact, it seems that when women face challenges that they do not have sufficient resources to resolve (such as social support, expertise, knowledge, time, etc.), they employ methods that mainly belong to other identity styles. In addition, given the rather small difference in the scores of most participants in different identity styles, applying methods associated with identity styles other than their own identity styles is in fact not an unlikely approach.

## Limitations of research

Due to the lack of cooperation by women with a diffuse-avoidant style, we had difficulty in finding the problem-solving styles of these participants, and hence the themes associated with this style were extracted from the interviews of participants whose second or third identity style was diffuse-avoidant.

## Suggestions for further research and application

Considering the need to use effective problem-solving methods by women for handling post-marital challenges, it is suggested that training courses be held for women and their husbands with an emphasis on problem-solving and decision-making skills, and especially informational problem-solving sessions be held for participants with a diffuse-avoidant identity style.

It is suggested that premarital and family counselors pay attention to the unique style of the referring couples and their characteristics related to these styles and, if necessary, inform the couple about these attributes.

It is suggested that a similar study be conducted on men to examine their phenomenological perception.

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## Predicting Mental Health and Illness Based on Religious Health Promoting Behaviors and Patience in Female Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to examine symptoms that predict mental health and illness based on religious health promoting behaviors and patience during COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 395 university students completed the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-28), the Religious Health Promoting Behaviors Inventory (RHPBI), and the Patience Scale (PS). The results suggested a significantly positive relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and patience with symptoms of mental health. They also suggested a significantly negative relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and patience with symptoms of mental illness. The results confirmed the predictive role of religious health promoting behaviors and patience for symptoms of mental health and illness. Religious health promoting behaviors and patience could hence be considered as effective variables in mental health and reinforcing them can be an effective preventive act in the area of promoting mental health.

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## **Introduction**

### **Mental health and illness**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased loneliness, social isolation, domestic violence, and feelings of fear, uncertainty, hopelessness, and anxiety (Sinha et al., 2020). Also, the levels of stress and depression in the population have seen an increase (Wang et al., 2020). An alarming number of young adults have showed clinically relevant post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive or anxiety symptoms in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. At the same time, numerous individuals have been able to effectively cope with the situation (Chi et al., 2020). Studies show that anxiety, depression, and/or suicidal thoughts have reached an alarming rate in university students in the US. University students are reported to be among the most sensitive groups in the area of mental health during the pandemic of COVID-19 (Wang et al., 2020). Besides the effects of the current pandemic, mental disorders have been reported to be rising in colleges. One-fifth of college students have experienced 12 months of DSM-IV/ICD-10 disorders (Auerbach et al., 2016). Results of an important study by the WHO indicated that 35% of students had experienced at least one psychiatric disorder throughout their lifetime, and 31% had experienced at least one DSM-IV disorder during one year prior to the study (Auerbach et al., 2016). Therefore, research on the mental health of students and the factors affecting it has become especially important. The present study has been conducted in the context of mental health of university students.

Generally speaking, one of the most momentous psychological variables is mental health. According to the definition by the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health refers to a situation of well-being. In this state, an individual realizes his/her own abilities, copes with stress, works fruitfully,

and is able to contribute to the community (WHO, 2020). Mental illness is known to create the highest level of burden among all disabilities to individuals suffering from it (Vigo, Thornicroft, & Atun, 2016). The findings of a large study showed that all types of mental disorders were related to higher risks of a broad range of physical conditions, and hence, the prevention of mental disorders from occurring and addressing them when they inflict an individual plays a very important role in the well-being of the community (Scott et al., 2016). The anxiety of two thirds, and the depression of one third of university students has increased across the COVID-19 pandemic (Passali et al., 2020). One of the risk factors were female sex (Passali et al., 2020). As a result, research on the mental health of female students during the pandemic of COVID-19 has a particular importance. The present study investigated the important issue. Also, religion and its components are known as one of the factors promoting mental health and therefore preventing mental illness.

### **Religious health promoting behaviors and patience**

A large number of studies suggest that the behaviors and beliefs that are based on religion or spirituality are correlated with mental health (Bosco-Ruggiero, 2018). There is an association reported between an individual's religious practices and lower mental distress (Drakeford, 2019). Religion can be regarded as a way to have a purpose and meaning in life. Also, it can serve as a way to have a sense of well-being. Mental health has often coexisted with religious experiences (Papaleontiou-Louca, 2021). A new study suggests that religious cognitive behavioral therapy could improve psychological and general health (Alagheband et al., 2019). The findings of another study suggest that there are two kinds of religiousness: 1. Restful religiousness (which consists of doing prayers, attending religious ceremonies, and becoming educated in religion), and is reported to be correlated with well-being, and 2. Crisis religiousness (which only consists of praying without

following any other religious practices), and is reported to be correlated with poor health (Ahrenfeldt et al., 2017).

Many recent studies have indicated that religiosity could supply various health benefits (Regnerus, 2003). A longitudinal study suggests that stronger religious beliefs and behaviors are correlated with more active spiritual health and control (Clark, Williams, Huang, Roth, & Holt, 2018). Another study suggests that religion can support psychological adjustment to an illness by offering a sense of having a goal and meaning in life (Toledo, Ochoa, & Farias, 2020). Mental health and health behaviors are related (Hautekiet et al., 2020), and a variety of health outcomes have been associated with religious involvement. One such association is the influence of being religious in health behaviors (Halt, Roth, Huang, Park, & Clark, 2017). Psychological function, social support, physical and cognitive function, and health behaviors have been reported higher among more religious individuals (Al Zaben et al., 2015).

The public health effects of COVID-19 on psychological disorders and symptoms, addiction, and health behaviors are reported to be important and lingering (Zvolensky et al., 2020). Physical activity and nutrition are two health behaviors that are influenced by sociocultural factors (Haddad & Sarti, 2020). As one of health behaviors, physical activity is related to mental health. A recent comprehensive review has suggested that physical activity can decrease depressive symptoms and enhance cardiorespiratory fitness, and increase the quality of life in major depressive disorder patients (Stubbs et al., 2018). Another study indicated that having poor quality of sleep has a strong correlation with mental health (Ofstedal et al., 2019).

Psychological well-being can have an important role in adherence to health behaviors. There is an association between health behaviors and positive constructs such as pride, hope, and determination (Celano et al., 2020), which are related to the mental health. Because of the importance of health



promoting behaviors, the present study investigates the role of religious health promoting behaviors in predicting mental health.

Another predictor of mental health is patience (Zarei, 2015). The holy Quran has commanded those who are with faith to be patient (The Holy Quran, (3) Al-Emran, verse 200). The word patience has been used frequently in the holy Quran as an indication of its importance (Shamshiri & ShirvaniShiri, 2012). Patience as one of the most important moral and religious teachings has been mentioned 103 times in 93 verses of the holy Quran. In terms of frequency, next to the words such as resurrection and the hereafter, patience is one of the most frequent words in the holy Quran (Zare & Farmani, 2017). Patience is closely related to concepts such as Islam, faith, piety, certainty, determination, perseverance, kindness, and gratitude (Daneshi & Yari Dehnavi, 2013). The word patience as used in the holy Quran refers to several related concepts such as perseverance in obedience and worship of God, patience in face of disasters, perseverance in resisting sins, forbearance in relationships, not engaging in hasty and rushed behavior, steadfastness in achieving knowledge and seeking the truth, and perseverance in the path of the truth (Shamshiri & ShirvaniShiri, 2012).

Patience has been introduced as one of the main elements of faith in Islam. It can be regarded as a comprehensive term that encompasses all religious and moral values and virtues. This special human virtue appears to best demonstrate its impact in difficult situations. Restraint against adversity or adverse situations is considered as the main core of patience. Patience is expressed in the Quran and the narrations (Hadith) as endurance, perseverance, and striving to achieve deliverance and dignity which are regarded as the goals of the human creation (YousofiAmoli, & Akbari, 2012). The Quran and Hadith have named such benefits for patience as mental and physical health, success in worldly matters, turning problems into

opportunities to earn divine grace, having prayers answered, and entering the Paradise (IzadiTame, Borjali, Delaver, & Eskandari, 2009). Also, patience is recognized as a way of self-regulation that leads to mental balance (Ghobarian, Khodayarifard, Sholouhiyekta, 2000). Three main aspects of patience are emphasized in Islamic studies: 1) Patience in obedience of God; 2) Patience in sufferings and tribulations; and 3) Patience in avoidance of sin. Patience is associated with gratitude, contentment, forgiveness, satisfaction, and surrender to Allah (Rusdi, 2016).

Patience as a Quranic concept is closely related to psychology (Shamshiri & ShirvaniShiri, 2012). One of the important goals of contemporary psychology is to increase the psychological well-being, the realization of which is influenced by various factors. Religious orientation and patience are among the predictors of psychological well-being (Mirzaee Fandokht, Sadpour, Talebi, Salmabadi, 2017). In the past years, psychologists have introduced a new definition for patience as the ability to delay some desires in order to achieve them in better forms in the future (Dia & Fishbach, 2013). Today, researchers regard patience as the component behind the power to procrastinate the fulfillment of desires (Comer & Sekerka, 2014). In contemporary psychology, patience is synonymous to resilience, self-control, restraint in face of adversity, and several other attributes (Rusdi, 2016). Patience has also been considered as a religious-moral concept in recent psychological research (Farmani & Pani, 2015; Khormaei, Farmani, & Kalantari, 2015; Shokoofeh fard & Khormaei, 2012). For example, variables such as lack of faith in God and attachment to materialistic belongings are reported as negative predictors of patience, and belief in God is reported as a positive predictor of patience (Mahdiyar, Taghavi, & Goodarzi, 2016). There are also reports on a correlation between patience, mental health, and resilience. Patience can also protect against the negative effects of stress (Zarei, 2015). Patience has an effect on procrastination. Patience training

programs can reduce procrastination (Khormaei & Azadidehbidi, 2017). Cognitive styles of thinking are related to components of patience (Mahmoodi & Khormaei, 2015). Patience has a mediating role in the relationship between religiousness and hope. Religiosity combined with patience can increase the level of hope (Marhamati & Khormaei, 2018). Patience can increase resilience through promoting resistance to pressure. It has been suggested that patience be prescribed by the medical staff to patients in therapeutic interventions (Sharifi Saki et al., 2018). In a study with a longitudinal design that included an intervention focused on patience, the intervention proved to offer some benefits: The participants made progress in the traits of self-control and forgiveness. In addition, patience could predict mental (anxiety, resilience, satisfaction with life, positive and negative affect, and depression), physical, relational (perceived social support and communicative competence), and spiritual (spiritual involvement and attitudes) health outcomes (Lavelock, 2015).

Other studies have shown that individuals with higher IQs (Intelligence Quotient) possess more patience power than those with lower IQs (Chapman, Snowberg, Wang, & Camerer, 2018; Falk et al., 2018; Potrafk, 2019). This was explained by (Jones and podemska, 2010, quoted from Potrafk, 2019) as that intelligent individuals tend to be more patient because they maintain a long-term horizon in facing situations. There is also an association between patience and effective coping strategies. Resilience is the lowest component of patience which facilitates tolerance in face of frustrations (Qodariah & Puspitasari, 2016). There is a close association between patience, stamina, and strength (Sandroni, & Urgan, 2018). Patience can protect individuals from psychological disorders. It also has close relationships with several positive attributes (Rusdi, 2016) such as optimism, happiness (El Hafiz, Rozi,

Mundzir, & Pratiwi, 2013; quoted from Rusdi, 2016), and self-regulation (Zurah, 2015; quoted from Rusdi, 2016).

A new study showed that a low socioeconomic status in childhood can lead to higher willingness to wait for a primary choice, and can also predict experiencing less negative emotions in response to a delay (Thompson, Hamilton, & Banerji, 2020). Patience can increase cooperative behaviors and decrease competitiveness. It has been shown that groups that consist of more patient members show better cooperative synergy in problem solving situations (Espin, Correa, & Ruiz-Villaverde, 2019). A correlation has been established between patience and delays in receiving of gratifications (Barragan-Jason, Atance, Kopp, & Hopfensitz, 2018). Therefore, as one of the most important variables in psychology, patience deserves to be further studied (Rusdi, 2016). The present study investigates the role of patience in predicting mental health.

Generally speaking, not enough psychological research has been conducted on faith-based behavior in Muslim-majority countries to date (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2014). Also, more research is needed to understand any causal relationship between mental health and health behaviors (Hoang et al., 2019), while the connecting link between religiousness and health benefits is also not well studied (George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002). On the other hand, with regard to the increasing rates of mental disorders in colleges around the world (Auerbach et al., 2018), the correlation between religious/spiritual belief and behaviors and mental health (Bosco-Ruggiero, 2018) needs to be examined for finding approaches that can help address the issue. Despite the important role that patience can potentially play in the ecosystem of faith, behavior, and mental health (Mahdiyar et al., 2016), little has been done in the form of a rigorous research study. The current study aims to address this need by examining the predicting symptoms of mental health and illness based on religious health promoting behaviors and patience. The study is conducted on

a population of female students. The research questions are as follows: (1) Can religious health promoting behaviors and patience predict mental health symptoms? (2) Can religious health promoting behaviors and patience predict mental illness symptoms?

## **Methods**

### **Participants and procedure**

A total of 395 female students of Alzahra University participated in this study. Their age ranged between 18 and 57 ( $M = 23$ ;  $SD = 6$ ). The educational background of participants was: 341 undergraduates (86.3%), 51 postgraduates (12.9%), and 3 doctoral students (.8%). Their marital status was so that 315 students were single (79.7%), and 80 were married (20.3%). The participants were asked to complete the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-28; Besharat, 2009), the Religious Health Promoting Behaviors Inventory (RHPBI; Besharat, & Hosseini, 2015), and the Patience Scale (PS; Khormaei, Farmani, & Soltani, 2014).

In order for the study to comply with the ethical principles of research, the participants were first given an explanation about the study and were instructed on how to complete the questionnaires. Before taking part in the study, the participants signed a consent form. They were also given assurances that their personal information would remain confidential. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from cooperation at any time during the study. The criteria of inclusion in the study included being a student, and willingness to participate in the research.

## **Measures**

### **Mental Health Inventory**

Mental health of the participants was measured using the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-28; Besharat, 2009). It is a short form of the 34-item Mental

Health Scale (Veit & Ware, 1983) with 28-items that assess 22 psychological well-being and psychological distress states in a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .94 and .91, respectively. The correlation coefficients between the scores were calculated with a 2-week interval for test-retest reliability. These coefficients for psychological well-being and psychological distress were  $r = .90$ ,  $r = .89$ , respectively. The concurrent validity of the MHI-28 was measured by the simultaneous implementation of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972, 1988). Correlation coefficients showed that a significantly negative correlation between the subjects' general score in the general health questionnaire and the sub-scale of psychological well-being ( $r = -.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and a significantly positive correlation with the sub scale of psychological distress ( $r = .89$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Besharat, 2009). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the psychological well-being sub-scale for the present study was .89, and .90 for psychological distress.

## **Religious Health Promoting Behaviors Inventory**

The Religious Health Promoting Behaviors Inventory (RHPBI; Besharat, & Hosseini, 2015) is a 16-item measure that assesses the personal behaviors and habits based on religious beliefs of the individuals in everyday life on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = completely disagree to 6 = completely agree). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questions was calculated for a sample of 93 individuals (.88). The convergent and differential validity of the RHPBI was calculated through the simultaneous implementation of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Palutzin & Ellison, 1982) and the Mental Health Inventory (MHI; Besharat, 2009) in the sample. A significantly positive correlation between the scores of subjects in the RHPBI and SWBS and psychological well-being from .37 to .49 ( $p < .001$ ) and a negative correlation with psychological distress ( $-.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was revealed through the analysis.

These results confirm the convergent and differential validity of the RHPBI (Besharat & Hosseini, 2015). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the RHPBI for the present study was .72.

## **Patience Scale**

The patience of the participants was measured using the Patience Scale (PS; Khormaei, Farmani, & Soltani, 2014). The scale has been defined using the components of the concept of patience derived from the Quran and Hadith. It consists of 25 items with ratings based on 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely true to 5 = completely false) (Khormaei et al., 2014). In Khormaei et al.'s (2014) study, using the principal component method with varimax rotation, factor analysis of the data revealed the existence of 5 components including eminence, sufferance, satisfaction, perseverance, and halt. These 5 components accounted for 52% of the total variance of the sample. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged between 0.60 and 0.84 for subscales and 0.86 for the whole scale (Khormaei et al., 2014). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the PS for the present study was .82.

## **Results**

In the present study, the predictive role of religious health promoting behaviors, and patience for the symptoms of mental health and illness was investigated using the standard multiple regression method. Outlier data were checked by examining marginal scores and screening of primary data. Data analysis showed that the default of outlier data control existed. In order to evaluate the normality of the variables, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. According to the value of the  $z$  statistics (ranged from .520 to 1.225), the normality assumption was observed ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 1**  
*Means, Standard Deviation, Observed Range, and Correlation matrix of research variables*

		Patience						RHPBI	Psyc. Dis	Psyc. Well
		Total	Halt	Perseverance	Satisfaction	Sufferance	Eminence			
Mental health	Psyc. Well	.47**	.20**	.37**	.31**	.34**	.43**	.24**	-	-
	Psyc. Dis	-.43**	-.19**	-.31**	-.44**	-.38**	-.22**	-.23**	-	
RHPBI		.50**	.32**	.30**	.27**	.32**	.49**	-		
Patience	Eminence	.68**	.40**	.44**	.27**	.38**	-			
	Sufferance	.65**	.29**	.29**	.39**	-				
	Satisfaction	.62**	.22**	.34**	-					
	Perseverance	.61**	.19**	-						
	Halt	.55**	-							
	Total	-								
Mean			10.40	10.40	12.66	20.68	28.39	65.53	35.58	50.67
SD			2.25	2.90	3.05	4.23	5.06	11.80	11.03	9.99
Observed Range			4-15	3-15	5-28	9-35	16-40	21-98	7-62	19-79

\*\*  $p < .001$

Psyc. Well: Psychological Well-being

Psyc. Dis: Psychological Distress

RHPBI: Religious Health Promoting Behaviors Inventory

The results related to the common scatter between the observed variable are reported in Table 1. As is shown, linearity and multi-alignments hypotheses were observed. The correlation matrix indicates that there is a significantly positive relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and patience (including eminence, sufferance, satisfaction, perseverance, and halt) with mental health symptoms. Also, there is a significantly negative relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and patience with mental illness symptoms. As a result, a significant relationship exists between the criterion variables and the predictors, and the



relationship is not to the extent that multiple lines occur. Considering that all the assumptions have been observed, multiple simultaneous regression was used.

**Table 2**

*One-way analysis of variance for assessing the predicting role of religious health promoting behaviors and patience for mental health symptoms*

Model	SS	df	MS	f	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
regression	8794.15	2	4510.86			.47	.22	.21
residual	30599.05	392	99.32	56.33	.001			
Total	39393.2	394						

**Table 3**

*Differential correlation coefficient for assessing the predicting role of religious health promoting behaviors and patience for mental health symptoms*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	p	Correlations		
		B	SE	Coefficients $\beta$			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	Constant	17.93	3.28		5.45	.001			
	Patience e score	.39	.04	.47	9.13	.001	.47	.41	.40
	RHPBI score	.11	.04	.20	4.10	.019	.24	.21	.17

The first question of the study was whether the individual’s religious health promoting behaviors and patience predict their mental health? As Tables 2 and 3 show, the results suggest that according to the values of  $R = .47$  and  $R^2 = .22$ , and significance levels ( $p < .001$ ), the model was able to explain 22 % of mental health and illness. Also, the evaluation of the model with respect to the values ( $F = 56.33; p < .05$ ) confirmed the model’s predicting role for religious health promoting behaviors and patience among the participants. The strongest contribution to explaining the symptoms of mental health can be

provided by the value of patience ( $B = .39$ ). Also, investigating the contribution of each of the predictor variables in the total  $R^2$  value and the total variance of the criterion variable using the discriminant correlation coefficient shows that patience with a quadratic correlation of .40 and religious health promoting behaviors with a quadratic correlation of .21, respectively, have unique contributions of 16.5% and 4.4% in explaining the variance of mental health symptoms.

**Table 4.**

*One-way analysis of variance for assessing the predicting role of religious health promoting behaviors and patience for mental illness symptoms*

Model	SS	df	MS	f	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
regression	9021.72	2	4510.86			.43	.18	.18
residual	38934.35	392	99.32	45.41	.001			
Total	47956.07	394						

**Table 5.**

*Differential correlation coefficient for assessing the predicting role of religious health promoting behaviors and patience for mental illness symptoms*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	p	Correlations		
		Coefficients		Coefficients			Zero-order	Partial	Part
		B	SE	$\beta$					
1	Constant	69.08	3.70		18.62	.001			
	Patience e score	-.39	.04	-.42	-8.05	.001	-.43	-.37	-.36
	RHPBI score	-.01	.04	-.22	-.39	.697	-.23	-.18	-.17

The second question of the study was whether health promoting behaviors and patience can predict mental illness symptoms? As Tables 4 and 5 show,

the results suggest that according to the values of  $R = .43$  and  $R^2 = .18$ , the model was able to explain 18 % of the criterion variable, which is a significant percentage. Also, the evaluation of the model with respect to the values ( $F = 45.41$ ;  $p < .05$ ) confirmed the predictive role of religious health promoting behaviors and patience. The strongest contribution to explaining the symptoms of mental illness can be provided by the value of patience ( $B = .42$ ). Also, investigating the contribution of each of the predictor variables in the total  $R^2$  and the total variance of the criterion variable using the discriminant correlation coefficient shows that patience with a quadratic correlation of  $-.366$  and religious health promoting behaviors with a quadratic correlation coefficient of  $-.174$ , have unique contributions of 13.3% and 3% in explaining the variance of mental illness symptoms.

### **Discussion**

The findings suggest that there is an important positive relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and patience with mental health symptoms. In addition, there is an important negative relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and patience with mental illness symptoms. The questions of the study were whether religious health promoting behaviors and patience predict mental health/illness symptoms? The results revealed that the answer was positive.

The relationship between religious health promoting behaviors and mental health has been studied in only one study to the best of our knowledge (Besharat, Hosseini, Jahed, BahramiEhsan, & Dortaj, 2020), whereas the relationship between religious behaviors and mental health has been confirmed in several other studies (Alagheband et al., 2019; Bosco-Ruggiero, 2018; Papaleontiou-Louca, 2021). Also, the relationship between health promoting behaviors and mental health observed in the current study is consistent with the results of previous studies (Celano et al., 2020; Hautekiet

et al., 2020). Moreover, the relationship between patience and mental health demonstrated in our study is consistent with the results reported in earlier studies (Mirzaee Fandokht et al., 2017; Lavelock, 2015; Zarei, 2015).

Some explanations for the results are as follows: The predictive role of religious health promoting behaviors for mental health and illness can be explained through considering a collection of reported conjectures by other studies such as those that suggest religion could serve as a source of purpose, meaning, and a sense of well-being (Papaleontiou-Louca, 2021). Therefore, an individual who is more religious and shows more religious health promoting behaviors, has a purposive, and meaningful life, which can lead to an increase in their mental health.

Also, some studies establish a relationship between religious involvement and a variety of health outcomes. Being religious can affect health by impact on religious coping.

Religious beliefs have a protecting role against decrease in positive religious coping (Holt et al., 2017). As a result, one can expect that a more religious and healthier person, to have more mental health. Furthermore, as Besharat et al. (2020) found a relationship between religious lifestyle and mental and physical health, an individual who has more religious health promoting behaviors can also have more mental health (Besharat et al., 2020). In explaining the findings one can say that following religious instructions in the field of health, helps a person to have better physical health. In addition, having a healthy body promotes mental health.

Better psychological function, social support, physical and cognitive function, and health behaviors have been reported in more religious individuals (Al Zaben et al., 2015). As a result, a person who is more religious and has more religious health promoting behaviors has more mental health. Islamic lifestyle can promote health indicators through physical and psychological ways (Besharat et al., 2020). Some mediators of the relationship

between mental health and spirituality are physiological mechanisms, social network, social support, locus of control, and coping styles (Cornah, 2006).

The predictive role of patience in mental health and illness can also be explained as follows: Patience can facilitate self-regulation (Ghobarian et al., 2000); it is related to resilience so it can protect individuals against stress (Zarei, 2015); its combination with religiousness can increase the level of hope (Marhamati & Khormaei, 2018); it can improve self-control and forgiveness (Lavelock, 2015); it is correlated with effective coping strategies (Qodariah & Puspitasari, 2016); it is correlated with strength (Sandroni, & Urgun, 2018); and it is related to several positive variables (Rusdi, 2016) such as optimism, happiness (El Hafiz, Rozi, Mundzir, & Pratiwi, 2013), and self-regulation (Zurah, 2015). Therefore, a person who scores higher in the favorable variables mentioned above, can have more mental health.

## **Conclusion**

In general, it can be concluded that religious health promoting behaviors and patience are two very important variables in the field of mental health and their promotion can play a very effective role in increasing people's mental health. The present study faced some limitations. The participants were female university students. Therefore, generalizations of the findings should be done with caution. Future studies can investigate the variables in other samples and situations. Also, future studies could investigate the role of other important variables such as resilience, coping strategies, and social support that influence the individual's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Religious health promoting behaviors and patience are novel variables in psychology and deserve further attention.

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## Healthy Family Indicators from the Perspective of Iranian Working People: A Grounded Theory Study

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was aimed at identifying healthy family indicators from the perspective of working people. Therefore, it seemed necessary to consider cultural standards and personal and family experiences in determining healthy family indicators. A qualitative method based on the grounded theory was used, and the data were gathered using in-depth semi-structured interviews. The sample included 18 married and educated, working people (4 men and 14 women) who were selected using a purposeful sampling method. Major healthy family indicators were classified into three categories. The first category, called "Feeling of integration and companionship," included the following subcategories: Empathy, Space for communication, Recognition and respect for mutual rights and obligations, and Mutual respect and love. The second category, called "Healthy psychological environment," included the following subcategories: Sense of peace, Happiness and staying away from negative factors, and Healthy thoughts and beliefs. The third category, called "Presence of some virtues in the family members," included the following subcategories: Honesty, Forgiveness, and Overlooking financial aspects. Nine of the indicators found in this study were similar to those found in the previous studies, including Empathy, Space for communication, Recognition and respect for mutual rights and obligations, Mutual respect and love, Sense of peace, Happiness and staying away from negative factors, Healthy thoughts and beliefs, Honesty, and Forgiveness. Overlooking financial issues was a new indicator only identified in the present study.

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## Introduction

The present study aims to identify a set of healthy family indicators from the perspective of working People. Today, families are faced with unprecedented challenges, and most families are worried about how to build or maintain steady family relationships based on love. Given the increasing complexity of family life in our ever-changing world, models of healthy family performance should be defined according to cultural, personal, and family standards.

The concept of family health is often used to refer to such concepts as family performance, healthy family, flexible family, and balanced family (Walsh, 2011; Black and Lobo, 2008; Alderfer, 2011). Researchers focused on the family domain, define healthy family as a resilient family that can maintain a balance between integrity and adaptation that is facilitated through quality relationships (Smith, Freeman & Zabriskie, 2009). Resilience can be reinforced through a flexible structure, joint leadership, mutual support, and teamwork in the face of life challenges. Similarly, adaptation, development, and personal and family growth are gained through joint efforts of family members (Walsh, 2002). Some other characteristics of healthy family include: family unity, commitment, spending time together, flexibility, positive relationships, spiritual wellbeing, role clarity, and appreciation and care (Kim-Godwin and Bomar, 2014; Olson and Defrain, 2003; Wallis, Miskovic-Wheatley, Madden et al., 2018). Six dimensions identified in a previous study can be regarded as indicators of family integration: participation integration (frequency of interactions), emotional integration (emotional intimacy); agreement integration (agreement on values); functional integration (support and care); normative integration (care for the family); and goal integration. Balance between integration and flexibility seems to be a characteristic of healthy families (Olson and Gorall, 2006). Family unity and dependence are other characteristic of healthy families (Katz, 2010; Ajeli Lahiji, & Besharat, 2018). Family unity and dependence contribute to family health, especially due to the fact that family commitment improves family unity. Family unity is another feature of the definition of healthy family, and refers to the quality and quantity of the time the family members spend on providing care and love for each other (Kim-Godwin and Bomar, 2014). However, it should be noted

that excessive integration is not necessarily helpful, because it can lead to dependence, in which case less integration can improve the sense of love that can in turn contribute to a long-term relationship (Bengtson, 1991), and influence self-esteem (Roberts, 1999) and personal wellbeing (Roberts, 1999). Generally, close and flexible relationships between family members are believed to be effective in diminishing tension inside the family (Hodge, Zabriskie, Townsend et al., 2016).

In a study in Malaysia, 10 key indicators predicting family health were identified, such as safety, saving, healthy lifestyle, spending time with family, maintaining a balance between work and family, and religiosity (Noor et al., 2014). Families with a better performance have members who use positive relational skills, and feel satisfied with their relationships (Kim, Prouty, Smith & et al., 2015). The results of the study Arianfar and Rasouli (2019), also showed that when free participation in interaction, discussion and dialogue is encouraged in the family, in addition to the children feel accepted by the family and marital satisfaction also increases. Leisure time also has a direct association with family performance and life satisfaction (Poff, Zabriskie & Townsend, 2010).

In a qualitative study, Sadeghi et al. (2014) examined healthy family indicators from the perspective of family and marriage experts, and extracted 21 indicators, including dedication, clarity, awareness and proper role performance, interaction and direct relationships, honesty, respect, mutual understanding and paying attention to each other's rights and expectations, beliefs, religious beliefs and values, intimacy, proper expression of feelings and emotions. In another qualitative study, Khodadadi, Nazari, and Ahmadi (2015) examined the perspective of 13 parents, and found the following factors as influencing family health: responsibility, leisure time, not following fashion trends, intimacy, efforts to please each other, cooperation, mutual support, sexual satisfaction, being family-oriented, supervision, flexibility, forgiveness, maturity, appreciation, and religious beliefs and behaviors.

In summary, the most significant health family indicators found in non-Iranian studies include: integration, supportive behaviors, commitment, psychological and spiritual wellbeing, unity, open relationships, honesty, emotional bond, resiliency, flexibility, dedicating time for each other, and

negotiation; and the most significant health family indicators found in Iranian studies, in addition to the aforementioned factors, include: supervision, forgiveness, paying attention to each other's rights and exceptions, and religious beliefs. Although variations in family types have been prevalent throughout history and across cultures (Coontz, 2008), in today's societies in which values are rapidly changing, families are faced with unprecedented challenges, and many are concerned about how to build and keep steady family relationships. In addition, based on the complexity of today's societies, the existing models of healthy family performance could not be viewed as appropriate for all families with different cultural, personal, or family values. Therefore, in each culture, the model of healthy family should be examined based on the values and preferences specific to that culture (Walsh, 2003). Research has shown that different career levels and symbolic and cultural structures can lead to different work and home narratives (Ba', 2014). As was pointed out, the two previous studies on this topic in Iran, i.e. the studies by Sadegi et al. (2014) and Khodadadi et al. (2015), examined healthy family indicators from the perspective of experts and parents (according to parenting roles), respectively. But, in the Iranian society that is in a transition period and many of its traditional family values are changing and losing their previous functions (Azad Armaki & Maleki, 2007), it seems necessary to examine healthy family indicators from the perspective of working people with high education levels that are less likely to have traditional attitudes. Identification of healthy family indicators from the perspective of Iranian working families can show the similarities and differences between healthy family indicators from the perspective of Iranian working women and men with those obtained in other societies, and also help in developing proper instruments to assess healthy family based on the Iran's specific culture. The studies conducted on this topic in Iran were mainly quantitative studies based on the criteria provided by other studies conducted in other societies, and no Iranian study has ever focused on healthy family indicators from the perspective of married, working women and men. Therefore, using the grounded theory and a purposeful sampling method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), the present study is aimed at providing a deeper understanding of healthy family indicators from the perspective of Iranian working people with postgraduate education, and finally, help policymakers, experts, and organizations in the health domain by providing a pattern or theory of healthy family.

## Methods

The present study was conducted based on the grounded theory and using semi-structured interviews in a purposeful sample of 18 married individuals employed in industrial centers in Iran (4 men and 14 women), with postgraduate education (2 men with a master's degree and 2 men with a PhD; 6 women with a bachelor's degree, 6 women with a master's degree, and 4 women with a PhD), and aims to extract healthy family indicators.

In order to develop a better understanding of healthy family indicators in Iran, we used the grounded theory along with a purposeful sampling method, because this method helps in achieving a pattern or theory on the topic of interest (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). In addition, these indicators may be found helpful by policymakers, experts, and organizations in the health domain.

The sole inclusion criterion was married, working men and women. The participants were aged between 25-40 years. According to the methodology of grounded theory, 18 participants was considered the point of theoretical saturation. Table 1 shows the demographic description of the participants.

A total of 18 in-depth semi-structured interviews, each lasting 60-90 minutes, were conducted all in a single day. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed (Table 1). In order to gain a deeper understanding, the answer on each question was followed up (Table 2). The goal of each study was to obtain a complete description of the participants' experiences.

### *Data analysis*

The authors used a combination of analytic approaches to analyze the data. Data organization was started by naive reading and reviewing all the transcribed verbatim interviews. The data was reduced by listing all the important data and removing all the ambiguous, repeated, or overlapped statements. This process allows the researcher to obtain semantic units that are subsequently divided into themes (Moustakas, 1994). The data included 18 interviews. First, 10 interviews were coded and analyzed on one occasion. The primary themes were confirmed by examining them in the next 8 interviews, and the authors made sure that they were compatible and clearly expressed.



Trustworthiness of the themes was examined by the second author (Padgett, 1998; Rolfe, 2006). Classification of these semantic units led to three main categories that are shown in Table 1. These categories were identified as cores or “essences.” Finally, integration of the textual and structural contexts of the expressed meanings and themes led to the construction of the nature of the phenomena.

## Results

### 1) What are the most important healthy family indicators?

In order to answer the above question, three main categories were identified.

Table 1 shows the categories extracted from the participants’ responses, and table 2 shows the results of the analysis of follow-up questions based on two dimensions: emotional expression and conflict resolution.

**Table 1**

*Summary of categories extracted from the participants’ responses*

<b>Main categories</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
<i>Sense of integration and companionship</i>	Empathy Space for communication Recognition and respect for mutual rights and responsibilities Mutual respect and love Sense of peace
<i>Healthy psychological environment</i>	Happiness and staying away from negative factors Healthy thoughts and beliefs
<i>Presence of some virtues in the family members</i>	Honesty Forgiveness Overlooking financial issues

**Table 2.**

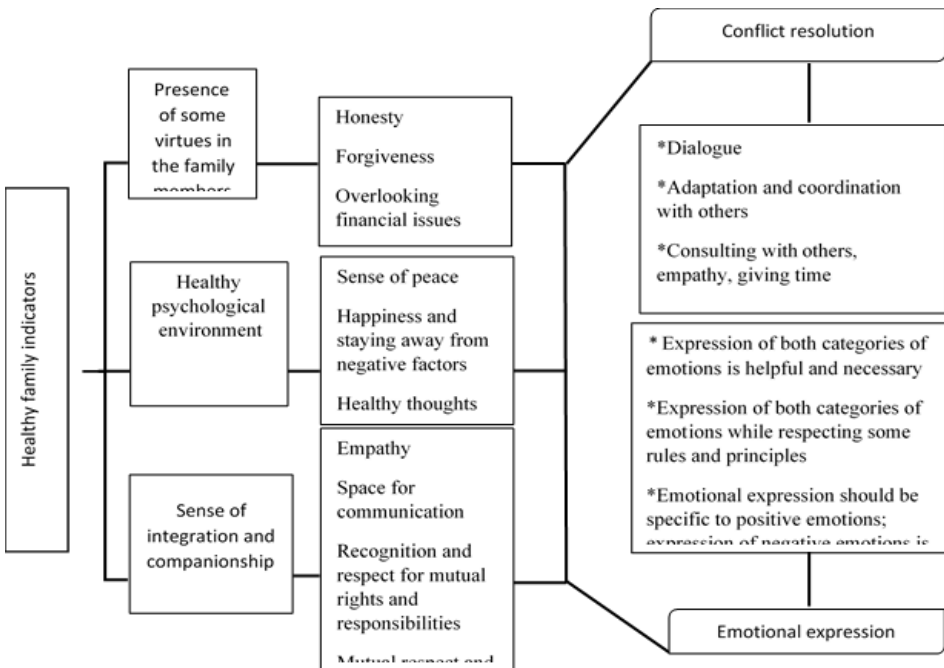
*Follow-up questions examined in two dimensions: emotional expression and conflict resolution*

<b>Emotional expression</b>	<b>Conflict resolution</b>
<i>Expression of both categories of emotions is helpful and necessary</i>	Dialogue
<i>Expression of both categories of emotions while respecting some rules and principles</i>	Adaptation and coordination with others
<i>Emotional expression should be specific to positive emotions; expression of negative emotions is harmful</i>	Consulting with others, empathy, giving time

The first category, i.e. Sense of integration and companionship, refers to a factor that was mentioned by the participants much more than the other two factors, and includes the following subcategories: Empathy, Space for communication, Recognition and respect for mutual rights and responsibilities, and Mutual respect and love.

The second category, i.e. Healthy psychological environment, includes the following subcategories: Sense of peace, Happiness and staying away from negative factors, and Healthy thoughts and beliefs.

The third category, i.e. Presence of some virtues in the family members includes the following subcategories: Honesty, Forgiveness, and Overlooking financial issues.



**Diagram 1.**

*Categories extracted from the participants’ responses and the related semantic units*

The following are some of participants’ statements about healthy family indicators in which the extracted subcategories could be observed:

Participant number 2: “Despite all financial problems in your family, if you are strong spiritually, financial issue cannot create any major problem. Financial issues shouldn’t overcome the other aspects of life; they shouldn’t disturb your family life; simplicity in the family should be maintained. Having low expectations and being frugal can strengthen family life. Trying to keep up with the Joneses leads to the collapse of family life.”

Participant number 1: “From my perspective, a healthy family is, most importantly, the one in which the wife and husband are in agreement and honest with each other. It should also be purposeful, i.e. a man and woman should begin their married life with a purpose...”

Participant number 3: “I believe that the first and foremost condition is honesty that is you can easily communicate; but honesty is not present in our family, because my partner is very reticent, I usually talk...”

Participant number 4: “A healthy family is the one that there is honesty and faithfulness among its members, and that provides opportunities for cooperation, teamwork, or just dialogue. My daughter always told me ‘Let’s have a roundtable discussion; I have tried to improve our interactions, but my work is very stressful, and I often come home from work exhausted.’”

Participant number 10: “It is related to the distribution of roles, and no one should feel pressured; the members should talk to each other, and try to agree on the distribution of roles. Then, they should have honesty, forgiveness, empathy, and even understanding teach other in terms of their roles. Each person should appreciate the value of the other person... we should be matched with each other, and sometimes do each other’s works...”

Participant number 7: “In a healthy family, the members are satisfied with each other, are happy, and are content with the current situation. Both children and parents are satisfied and progressing. I believe when there is satisfaction with everything, the family is healthy...”

## **Discussion**

Examination of family health can improve the efficacy of working people and help them manage their mental capacities in both family and work domains. Given the shortage of previous findings on this topic, the healthy family indicators extracted in the present study can help researchers in conducting family-based studies and overcoming the limitations in this domain. The most limitation of the present study was that it was only focused on the perspective of working people in Iran, therefore, future studies should be conducted in other cultures and among different ethnicities to enable us to develop a comprehensive theory on healthy family. In addition, the indicators were identified based on the subjective perceptions of family members, while there is not always a direct relationship between subjective perceptions and objective conditions. Subjective perceptions are however important, because they are based on personal experiences.

Family integration (Nye, 1969; Bengtson, 1982; Silverstein, 1991; Smith et al., 2009; Katz, 2010) and role clarity in the family (Wallis, Miskovic-Wheatley, Madden et al., 2018) are among important factors mentioned in different family studies. The stronger emphasis of the study participants on

this issue also indicates the importance of this factor in family health. Another reason for this emphasis could be a need to clarify responsibilities, roles, and participation of all family members in the household tasks, because women are still bearing the main burden of household duties, therefore, recognizing family roles or even redefining them can improve family integration. This need is partly due to the fact the nuclear family is the most common type of family in Iran, and some believe that this type of family increases gender inequality and lead to the exploitation of women (Balswick & Balswick, 1995). Supportive behaviors, parental commitments (Bengtson, 1982; Roberts, 1991), Functional integration (Rushing, 1969), and geographical distance and social contact (Bengtson, 1982; Roberts, 1991) are among integration factors with a prominent role in Iranian families and in general in families in collectivistic cultures, because family members in these cultures usually have close relationships with each other. For example, children in collectivist cultures tend to live with their parents until marriage. However, these traditions are not as strong as before, and the number of single people who live alone is increasing. This is partly due to increased individualism. It can also be attributed to financial problems that limit the ability of families to support their adult children financially. However, it should be noted that integration that is not possible without dependence, has a major role in personal development of the family members, and reduces conflicts and improves respect and intimacy among them.

Contrary to the findings of Emranian (2012), the study results indicates that today, the important role of legal knowledge in the family and its significance as an indicator of family health has been recognized, and paying attention to this necessity can help families achieve legal knowledge, and subsequently improve family health.

Self-respect and mutual respect is another indicator of healthy family emphasized in scientific research (Westley and Epstein's, 1969) and also in the Islamic law and the Iranian culture, especially toward parents and people older people than you. This emphasis indicates that having a lifestyle compatible with traditional values and at the same time moving toward modernity and changes in women's roles, are still considered by women as factors important in family health.

Mental, physical, and spiritual health are among factors influencing both work and family life and also influenced by them. Impairment in each of these aspects, especially in the mental health, directly leads to impairments in different areas of one's life, including family, social, career, and academic domains. In contrast, proper mental health leads to effective relationships that underlie the formation of a healthy family. As shown by previous studies, this impact is mutual (Brill Hart, 2012; Vahedi, Krug & Westrupp, 2019; Lorenzo-Blanco, Meca, Unger et al., 2016; Sotoodeh, Shakerinia, Ghasemi Jobaneh et al., 2016), and generally, there are many similarities between healthy individual indicators and healthy family indicators. Also on the impact of physical health on family health, studies have shown that families with children with disabilities use less of a mutual Constructive Communication Pattern compared to families with normal children when faced with problems, and this leads to a decrease in the mental health of family members (Mohammad amin zade, Kazemian, Esmacili, 2017).

Spiritual health is a source of peace and hope in the face of life tensions and pressures. In addition, similar religious beliefs and activities allow family members to communicate and express their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs more effectively, and lead to increased mutual support between them. Through sharing their values and beliefs, people reinforce their similarities. Although there is a clear distinction between religion and spirituality, religiosity could be regarded as a factor facilitating spirituality. On the other hand, having access to a shared belief system is important because it helps family members to cope with a situation more easily when trying to make meaning of that (Hammer, Cullen, Marchand et al., 2006). It can also improve flexibility, resiliency, and health of families, considering the financial and social problems in the current societies. As found by previous studies, financial status has a significant role in the family life (Noor, Gandhi & Ishak et al., 2014), and can provide family members with a wide range of experiences stimulating moral and spiritual growth (Kempson, Bryson & Rowlingson, 1994; Kumar, 1993). In addition, the ability to overlook financial strain and seeing it as an opportunity for development can reduce tension in the family or make it more tolerable. Overall, families with a high capacity to cope with new challenges, show more flexibility in providing mutual support. Because we cannot control all fanatical problems in the society, perhaps the

only possible way to reduce the impact of these problems on our family life and the mental health of family members is through acceptance of the aspects that are out of our control or coping with them. These results are consistent with Khatibi's study (2015) which showed that the economic variable has the least correlation with Family's Strength compared to cultural, social, belief, emotional and political factors.

Religious beliefs also give the family a special perspective, for example, the holy Quran emphasizes respecting parents (29: 8), marriage (30: 21), avoiding sexual activity before marriage (25: 67-68), and chastity (23: 5-7), and considers children as gifts from God (16: 72); these commitments usually have an important role in maintaining respect, faithfulness (sometimes at the cost of losing personal freedom), financial help, and emotional support in the family, and lack of these commitments, in addition to creating the feeling of guilt, can endanger the overall health of the family. As shown by the previous studies, family values are different in different cultures and traditions. For example, the Asian list of family values emphasizes such values as duty, compliance, and respect toward those older than you (Halstead, 1997). Therefore, although acting based on these values is often viewed as ethical behavior, these terms can have different meanings in different societies based on different cultural and social backgrounds. A healthy family could represent a wide range of human and ethical values, including honesty, trust, faithfulness, courage, generosity, care, kindness, and love. In addition, the quantity and quality of family relationships, especially when accompanied by clarity, honesty, and open expression of emotions (e.g. mutual empathy, tolerance, and humor), and cooperative problem-solving is important in the formation of a healthy family. An ideal and healthy family is a place for love, acceptance, and harmony, and for the realization of harmony, such factors as spending time together, role clarity, respecting each other's individuality, unconditional love, support, open relationships, and honesty are necessary.

Although the number of men in the study was lower than the number of women, all of the identified categories were observed in both gender interviews. However, previous studies have shown that there is a gender difference in perceptions of family stressors (Harmelink, 1985), family relationships (Michael, 2018), and family functioning (Sunday et al., 2008).

As a result, study in a larger sample could provide a broader view of gender differences in perceptions of family health indicators.

The common indicators found in the present study as well as the previous studies include Empathy, Space for communication, Recognition and respect for mutual rights and responsibilities, Mutual respect and love, Sense of peace, Happiness and staying away from negative factors, Healthy thoughts and beliefs, Honesty, and Forgiveness. Overlooking financial aspect is a new indicator only found in the present study that can be regarded as a healthy family indicator in the Iranian families. In the present study, the extracted indicators were only reflected in a model of healthy family, but they will be more useful if included in a measure of family health by which families with lower health levels could be identified and supported.

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## Legal Protection of Child's Privacy in CyberSpace with an Overview of Iranian Laws and International Conventions

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### ABSTRACT

Children's rights, as one of the most fundamental human rights, play a paramount role in securing the prosperity of the society and maintaining and strengthening the sanctity of the family entity when given proper priority in the policymaking practices of a country. This is the reason why many related laws have been introduced in different countries in recent decades to protect children's rights in the cyberspace. Protection of children's rights in the cyberspace demands legislative measures to be established in order to criminalize offensive conducts against children via the new information technology tools and to enforce compensatory retributions to violators of these rights for any physical or mental harm inflicted on children as well as negative moral impacts on their personality.

This paper investigates the existing rules and regulations of the country of Iran, particularly those related to the legal protection of children and teenagers which have been recently legislated by the Iranian Islamic Parliament. It also provides an overview of the conventions, treaties, international resolutions and protocols that deal with the legal protection of children's privacy in the cyberspace, and investigates legal measures introduced by Iranian legislators to confront violations of children's rights and argues on the terms and conditions under which such measures could be adopted for effective enforcement.

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Some users in the cyberspace exploit children to increase traffic to their personal pages and gain popularity. Photos taken at a special occasion that a child attends or pictures in which a child appears in pretty, special, or even strange poses are displayed by these users to attract readers to their virtual spaces on the internet. Some even share photos of children dressed in unusual or peculiar fashion with their page followers. Although such practices are often conducted by people not related to a child, sometimes even parents fall into similar conduct by sharing photos of their child posed or dressed in the same way.

Subjects related to these practices of violating the privacy of children or exploiting them in the cyberspace which can be examined in research studies require a prompt and deep analysis of different legal perspectives as well as judicial viewpoints which are based on national laws and regulations and international conventions. They also demand an examination of judiciary ruling practices in order to either adopt effective regulations which can be enforced, or to develop legal mandates in case existing regulations are found ineffective or not enforceable. This is to establish sound legal frameworks which can effectively prevent any violation of children's rights in the cyberspace by others. In particular, when violations are conducted by a child's parents, the defined legal parental relationships and obligations as well as particular familial relationships that may exist in different settings call for a comprehensive understanding of these relationships in order to predict the efficacy and enforceability of any laws or regulations.

In this article, we aim to examine these issues along two main points of discourse. First, we describe the concept of child privacy in the cyberspace and develop a case for the need to safeguard this right. The notions of children's rights and in particular, a child's right to privacy is expanded in order to place them in the framework of legal support. Second, we set to define conditions for the enforceability of the related laws and regulations by considering the proportionality of these rules with the violations which may be committed by others and especially by parents, and in the latter case also examine if such rules could adequately represent the level of misuse of parental rights.

While this issue is understandably in its early developmental stages in the Iranian legal system as it is a novelty due to its emergence in recent years, a number of existing resources can be consulted as reference to gain an understanding of the concepts and basic foundations for approaching the issue. We will refer to these resources which have examined the problem in different societies as we develop our approach and study the relevance of these concepts.

It is noteworthy to mention that related research articles have in general approached the issue of child privacy from two different perspectives. One group of papers has approached the issue of child privacy violation without particularly focusing on conducting research on the cyberspace and its specific attributes. The other group has focused on the criminality of the acts that violate children's rights and discuss the issue of child privacy from a personal accountability standpoint. Our approach to the issue hence differentiates itself from the existing approaches in that we set to examine whether a violator of child privacy can be held accountable even if their action may not fall into the definition of a criminal act, and whether parents as the violators of their own child's right to privacy could face any legal retributions.

## **The concept of privacy as a child's right in the cybersapce**

As one of the most fundamental cases of human rights, children's rights serves as a driving force behind major societal policymaking efforts aiming to safeguard this right and its various aspects. Violating a child's rights can destabilize their personality and lead to unrepairable physical and mental damage. It can weaken the child's character and stamina, and may also impose excessive costs to different social services organizations throughtout the lifetime of the affected child. Presernce of these children in a society can also lead to the weakening of fundamental social norms and values, and replacing these norms with aberrations and anomalies in social behavior. Regulators need to address all these consequences in developing rules and regulations relating to children's rights, and also consider the relationship of a child's various particular life settings with each of the different rights that may be affected, as well as the potential impact of each regulation on the child's personality. Such consideration of children's special settings can hence lead to developing more effective laws.

A child's legal rights are formally recognized at birth or in some legal systems even before birth. These rights apply to a certain period of time and can be hence considered temporary as they only pertain to the infancy years and are scoped to consider a child's physical and mental limitations. However, they impose obligations and duties to the parents to safeguard these rights using all possible means as a condition for upbringing and nurturing the child (Raeiszadeh et al., 2010, 74).

The special attention paid by legislators to children's rights and the particular aspects of these rights in the cyberspace is further motivated by the special position that the cyberspace has attained in shaping social relationships. This attention thus calls for exploiting all possible means to protect these rights in their various aspects. It is however understandable that due to the complexities of the cyberspace and the extraordinarily rapid pace of new developments in that space, any legal regulations or rulings can hardly keep up with these changes in a timely manner (Ansari, Attar, 2012, 136).

Among the most important rights of children in the cyberspace is the protection of their privacy. The modern and legal definition of privacy is the extent of an individual's affairs, defined according to prevailing religious or social norms or as the individual wishes or intends or declares, which others should not be able to access or to violate (Begdeli, Aliakbari Baboukani, 2017, 15). Privacy offers an environment to the individual which allows for their personality's growth and maturity. According to the European Commission of human Rights, privacy leads to the appreciation of the entirety of a human being's physical and spiritual dimensions and enables humans to create a safe and serene personal space for themselves free of outside pressure, limitations, or unwanted interactions. In such an environment, they can pursue their most personal and sincere goals and dreams while defining various forms and levels of relationships with others according to their own wish. They can hence also express themselves as they like in the domain of emotions and personal feelings towards others. Furthermore, in such an environment, humans can find solace as a natural or conventional choice to personally evaluate and assess the purity, sincerity, and truthfulness of their thoughts or deeds without being overseen by others and free from any impurity or show-off pressure (Vaezi, Alipour, 2010, 136). According to these definitions, it can also be



stated that privacy as a right for a child is a relative right and its observance is indeed subject to some limitations (asadi, 2018, 12).

The concept of privacy in the cyberspace can be indeed scoped as protecting data. In this context, data mainly refers to features and attributes that pertain to the privacy of an individual such as their personal information and special attributes which differentiate the individual from others in the same group (Sabernezhad, Hosseinpour, 2017, 116). As such, the notion of privacy in the cyberspace has been replaced in some recent investigations with the concept of protecting personal data (Aslani, 2005, 51). Based on this argument, children's rights and their privacy in the cyberspace are two interconnected concepts.

## **Violation of child's privacy in the cyberspace**

The expression "virtual" relates to any link that is established through the computer language. As such, virtual social networks can be defined as web-based services which enable individuals to create public or semi-public profiles within a defined system, list other users they are connected to, and review the list of others in the system (Ansari, Attar, 2002, 115). The most important forms of violating privacy in the cyberspace occur as violating the basic norms of data protection which consist of two major aspects of "the principles of data usage" and "the right to the information within the data" (Mohseni, 2006, 35). The principles pertaining to these norms indeed correspond to a structured definition of the citizen's intrinsic rights to their personal data (Aghababaei, Ahmadi Natour, 2016, 10).

Illegal production or publication of harmful content and presentation and sale of children's personal photos and videos for commercial and financial gain and misuse of photos as well as publication of personal information and private photos of children by their parents in the cyberspace, which in some occasions are indeed a form of criminal act, can lead to destructive effects on the child's current and future life. Uploading, publication, and distribution of private films and pictures of a child in the cyberspace allow others to misuse this data to exploit or abuse the child. It appears that it is based on these notions that the Iranian legislation has criminalized the violation of a set of principles it has established for publicizing and transfer of data and has defined retributions for the distribution of private or family pictures and films or

private secrets of others through computer or communication systems without the owner's consent, conditioned that such acts cause harm to the owner or lead to the owner's social defamation<sup>1</sup>. The definition of a crime in this context is of course conditioned by the occurrence of harm or defamation (Mohseni, -, 578). As such, one can argue that this article is in fact not aiming to safeguard privacy per se, and only applies to protecting an individual when the violation of their privacy causes a loss or defamation to them (Aghababaei, Ahmadi Natour, 2016, 15).

## **Necessity of confronting violations of child privacy in the cybersapce**

“The prevalent use of virtual social networks has turned the issue of privacy into one of the main concerns in this area. Privacy is the territory of a person who naturally expects it not to be accessed, viewed, or otherwise exposed to others without the individual's consent or prior notice. Social networks have violated the privacy of their users in various ways. They sometimes misuse the private information of their users, and sometimes provide means for others to exploit and misuse this information.” (Ansari, Attar, 2012, 136). The basis for protecting a child is to preserve their human dignity. This notion defines a platform for establishing a legal system in which legislators find an obligation to set rules and introduce additional regulations for monitoring their enforcement. In setting up a legal system for defining children rights, possible particular situations of the child related to each right need to be considered. Due to the importance of the family entity and the preservation of its identity, most efforts to protect children rights have been defined in the framework of the family, and as a result, there are numerous commonalities between the set of rights attributed to children and those defined in parent-child relationships (Raeeszadeh et al., 2010, 75).

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<sup>1</sup> Article 17 of the Cybercrimes Act of 2009 reads: "Anyone who publishes or distributes to others private or familial voice or photo or film of others or their secrets without their consent, such that this causes them a loss or leads to their social defamation, will be convicted to imprisonment from ninety one days to two years or a fine from five million rials to fourty million rials or to both of these punishments."

In order to safeguard and protect children's privacy in the cyberspace, comprehensive approaches are required in the legislative system of a country such that the observation of children's privacy and protecting it in the cyberspace is established as a legal duty for the public and first and foremost for the parents and guardians of children. In lieu of such an approach and the absence of a legal framework on this issue, children's rights will be the subject of violation albeit unintentionally. More accurately, justification for setting up related laws is to promote justice and establish the rights of the community members as the owners of their rights. Legislation of effective laws not only serves to define suitable enforcement means to prevent violations of child privacy rights by others and especially by parents, but it also allows for creating a serene environment for the growth of children which is protected and monitored by law. These considerations are a requirement for creating a fundamental change in the society towards its ideals through the definition of guiding visionary plans for the development of the country when such plans incorporate rules and regulations that offer comprehensive protection for children. This need is even more visible in societies where the interference of other people besides formal law enforcement agencies is not possible or allowed.

The cyberspace is an open field for individuals who use every opportunity to earn popularity or financial gain, or to have influence on the politics and direct public opinion towards their own benefit. Evidently, even the innocence of children is open game for such opportunists. It is in such a setting that exploiting children in the cyberspace and distributing their personal pictures becomes a practice that offers some of the named benefits to the violators of child privacy, including the children's parents who fall into this practice.

### **General enforcement requirements for violators of child privacy in the cyberspace**

One needs to investigate enforcement methods for child privacy violations in the cyberspace in such a way that these methods provide proper outcomes for both the child and the violators, and in particular, if the violators are the parents of the child, such enforcement methods do not cause more damage to or further hurt the child. It should be noted that a general and common enforcement method may not be effective in all cases and the particularity of

the situation has to be considered in defining legislative details. On the other hand, the interconnection of parental efforts for proper upbringing of their children, which are indeed regarded as a right for parents, with their duty to safeguard the children's privacy rights, makes the task of defining legislation in this domain an even more challenging task. As such, in certain situations, the existing legal regulations only define a protective role for the government.

We can infer the scope of protecting children's privacy rights in the cyberspace by studying the general framework set up by the laws and regulations. These regulations should generally be proportionate with the violation and the level of accountability of the violator has to be clearly defined in them.

### **Proportionality of the penalty with the violated duty**

Legal regulations are only meaningful when they can be enforced. Enforcement needs to be both reasonable and normative and it should be proportional to the importance of the violated duty and the damage resulting from the violation (Karami, Ghamami, Mohseni, Alsan, 2019, 30). In fact, the enforcement policy should represent the level of duty violation. The principle of proportionality of the verdict with the violated duty refers to the notion that there should be a balanced and coherent relationship between the crime and its punishment, such that the more damaging a crime is or the more it goes against the established societal values, the more severely it should be responded to by the defined retribution. And on the contrary, the less it causes damage or violates social values, the lighter its corresponding punishment should be (Mohamadi, Javanbakht, 2016, 155). Obviously, the accountability of those causing losses or damages to others should follow the same rule. In other words, the level of accountability and the penalty that a violator is held responsible for should reflect the size of the damage caused by their action. These principles need to be followed to determine punishments for those who violate children's privacy rights by distributing their private or family audio, pictures, or videos in the cyberspace, and by doing so, cause physical and mental harm or harassment to the children.

Irrespective of the mentioned principle regarding the enforcement policy, Islamic law defines the protection of children's rights as a paramount duty of the legislator to ensure that children are not exploited as commercial goods by

their parents or other people. In this regard, defining proportionality in the enforcement policy and especially ensuring the policy's enforceability within the scope of the family is a very challenging task which might even go against the essence and spirit of the law to the extent that setting regulations and defining retributions may even challenge or negate the intention of the legislator.

The enforcement policy defined for parents in regards to the violation of their child's rights should not violate the child's other rights or deprive the child from higher-level rights. For example, if the parents of a child repeatedly distribute private photos of the child in the cyberspace to gain popularity or other benefits and hence end up committing harassment of their own child in this way, punishing the parents by imprisonment is not only not helpful to the child in compensating the damage they suffered from, but it also results in a more severe harm to the child by depriving the child from the presence of parents in their life. Despite all the efforts the legislator body assesses to create a balanced solution in this challenging situation, they are still in need to receive comprehensive and multi-faceted consultations from experts in the different related areas such as child education and child psychology. As such, and according to the discussion that follows, setting up rules and regulations by a legislative system without paying attention to such considerations cannot lead to appropriate results.

## **Determining of the level of accountability of the violator**

Earlier we argued that the concept of privacy in the cyberspace is in fact equivalent to the notion of protecting personal data which may include the information or special features or attributes that differentiate a person from others. In the Iranian law, articles 71 to 73 and 78 of the Electronic Commerce Act define specific punishments for ensuring proper enforcement of the regulations pertaining data protection in this law. However, the ruling made by article 78 is scoped to only include civil accountability for harm and its text names only a specific set of means of causing damage. This kind of ambiguity in regulations eludes to the fact that one cannot refer to the general civil accountability laws when working on the violations of data protection laws, and the existing rulings are only applicable when the specific violations named

therein such as physical harm has occurred (Aghababaei, Ahmadi Natour, 2016, 12).

Although under this theory the general civil accountability rules do not directly apply to violations of data protection regulations, there are some articles in the civil accountability regulations which determine the level of responsibility in situations that are also usable in our context. For example, these regulations stipulate that when several individuals collectively cause a damage, they are all responsible for its compensation, and that the level of responsibility for each of them is determined by the court based on the type of their participation in the violation. According to this, the determination of the amount of the inflicted damage and the distribution of the compensatory load among the violators are linked in the Iranian legal system to the level of impact resulting from each violator's action or lack of action (Karami, Ghamami, Mohseni, Alsan, 2019, 34). Based on this general rule, the responsibility of the violators of child privacy who cause physical and mental harm to children by distributing their personal data is determined by the court according to the type of each violator's participation and the impact of their deeds on the child. It appears that in the domain of children's rights, punishing an individual who has caused mental and physical harm to a child is conditioned on their confirmed exploitation of the child. In response to this argument one can note that even if no bad intention is proven in the exploitation of a child, meaning for example that no publicity gain is achieved, the mere acts of defining a virtual identity for the child by parents and publishing unusual pictures of them can hold the parents legally responsible if such acts are deemed against the interests of the child. As the social theories rooted in individualism are fading and being replaced by theories adopted in legal systems based on an increased attention to the interests of the family and children in order to protect the family as a focal point for emotional and educational growth from harms caused by selfishness, accepting certain limitations in personal freedom will be understandable. It is in this context that the misuse of an authority bestowed to a person in the family can lead to their deprivation of that legal privilege as well as civil responsibility towards those harmed (Hekmatnia et al., V.1, 29).

## **Legal protection of child privacy in the cyberspace**

The legal protection of children's privacy in the cyberspace possesses a very high importance. According to investigations, there are no specific laws, rules, or regulations in the current legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran with explicit relevance to the protection and safeguarding of this right in the cyberspace. This calls for serious attention by the legislator body to this issue. It should be however added that one can deduct a general support for this right from the existing laws and regulations in the country. In addition, Iran has joined the children's rights convention in 1993, and since according to article 9 of the Iranian civil regulations law, any agreement established based on the constitution between the Iranian government and other governments is recognized as law, one can argue that the Iranian legal system is implicitly and under this convention committed to protecting children's rights<sup>1</sup> (Asadi, 2018, 10).

Based on this introduction, we will discuss in the following sections the issue of legal protection of children's privacy in the Iranian law and the conventions that Iran has joined.

### **Under Iranian Laws**

In the Iranian law, the violation of children's privacy in general and by parents in particular has not been explicitly referred to and there are currently no rules or regulations which explicitly or particularly protect this right in the cyberspace. However, it is possible to deduce a general rule for this issue from other legal regulations.

The Islamic Parliament of Iran approved the "Act of Protecting Children and the Youth" in December of 2002 with an objective to provide a legal support framework for children and the youth. This law covered all individuals under the age of 18. In addition, for the first time mental torture is recognized in this law as a crime, and more importantly, child harassment is counted as a general crime. According to this law, any acts of harming or hurting children

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<sup>1</sup> Article 16 of the children's rights convention declares: "No arbitrary or illegal interference is permitted in the private or familial affairs or correspondences of a child, or to defame the child, and the child is protected by law against such interferences or defamation."

and the youth, physical and mental torture, intentional ignorance of their physical and mental health, and their exploitation is considered a crime and subject to punishment. For example, in article 2 of this law, any kind of harassment to children and the youth which would cause physical, mental, or moral damage to them and endangers their physical or mental health is prohibited. In article 4 of the same law, any physical or mental harm or damage or harassment or torture of children and intentional ignorance of their mental and physical health and preventing them from education is prohibited and the violators are condemned to fines and imprisonment. As such, in addition to a child's parents, all other individuals including mothers, nurses and medical aids, are allowed to introduce child harassers to legal authorities. This law and other legal articles related to children rights were subsequently annulled during the approval of the new "Act of Protecting Children and the Youth" of June 2020 by the Islamic Parliament by article 51 of the new law. Paragraph A of article 1 of the new law defines "child" and paragraph T of the same article defines "misbehavior"<sup>1</sup>.

Exploiting a child to produce obscene or vulgar auditory or visual material is defined as a crime in paragraph 7 of article 10 of the mentioned law, and establishing any relationship with a child in the cyberspace for the purpose of sexual harassment or affairs is criminalized in paragraph 9 of the same article. Also, paragraph B of article 14 states that when the violator's actions lead to physical or mental harm to the child, they will be subject to the defined punishments. The ruling of paragraph 7 of article 10 of the law conditions the exploitation of a child for producing auditory and visual material on the obscenity or vulgarity of the created material. As such, if the exploitation is not conducted with an objective to create obscene or vulgar material, it will not be subjected to this rule. In other words, when a child is exploited to produce non-obscene and non-vulgar auditory or visual material, no crime has been committed in the context of this law for its committer to be punished for it. However, if such an exploitation violates the child's privacy and leads to

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph A of article 1 includes: "Child: Any individual who has not reached the religious puberty age." Also paragraph T of article 1 includes: "Misbehavior: Any deed or intentional lack of action which endangers the bodily, mental, moral, or social health of a child or a youth, including ... or placing the child or the youth in difficult or challenging situations ...".



the publication of the child's personal information in the cyberspace, in such a way that physical or mental damage is inflicted on the child, according to paragraph B of article 14 the committer of this act in general, be it the child's parents or other individuals, will be convicted to retribution according to the law.

Now let's consider the case in which the actions of the publisher of information related to child privacy do not cause physical or mental harm to the child, but for example leads to current or future financial damage to the child. What would be the punishment of the violator in this case? To answer this question, one can note that article 17 of the "Cybercrimes Act" approved in March of 2009 has criminalized the violation of the principles of publicizing and transfer of private data<sup>1</sup>. The text of this article states that any individual who distributes such data must obtain the consent of the owner of the data before publishing their private or familial audio, photo, or film, and that this consent must be available at the time of distributing or publicizing the data. Moreover, the article declares that the duty to obtain the owner's consent is with the distributor of the mentioned information and it should not be assumed that it is the duty of the owner of the data to announce their lack of consent to such distribution to the individual publishing their private secrets. This crime is also a conditioned one, meaning that a loss or social defamation must incur for it to take effect (Mohseni, - , 578). Similar to the laws on protecting children and the youth, this article is also in fact not protecting privacy per se, but offers protection when the named actions lead to damage or social defamation of an individual (Aghababaei, Ahmadi Natour, 2016, 15). Moreover, according to paragraph D of article 28 of the same law<sup>2</sup>, and in order to safeguard the rights of children in the cyberspace, Iranian courts have

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<sup>1</sup> Article 17 of the Cybercrimes Act approved in March of 2009 prescribes that: "Anyone who uses computer or communication systems to distribute private or familial audio or photo or film of others or secrets of others without their consent except when permitted by law or to make such information available to others such that this causes damage or social defamation to them, will be convicted to imprisonment from ninety one days to two years or a fine of five million (5000000) rials to forty million (40000000) rials or to both punishments."

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph D of article 28 of the Cybercrimes Act approved in March of 2009 declares: "... Iranian courts have the competence to investigate the following cases: ... D) Computer crimes consisting of abusing individuals aged less than 18 years, inclusive of whether the committer or the victim are Iranian or non-Iranian."

the authority to investigate computer crimes related to the exploitation of individuals aged less than 18, regardless of the nationalities of the violator or the victim. Even though according to these rules, any person causing financial or spiritual damage to others and anyone who harasses a child, is identified as a criminal and is condemned to punishments defined in these rules, it appears that anyone who engages in the physical or mental harassment of a child through publishing their private or familial voice, photos, or films or makes them available to others in the cyberspace, will be punished conditioned on that they do not obtain the child's consent and that their actions lead to harming the child.

As discussed above, anyone who violates the privacy of a child, if this causes physical or mental damage to the child (according to the Act of Protecting Children and the Youth of 2020), or if the violation causes a loss to the child and the violator is unable to obtain the child's consent (according to the Cybercrimes Act of 2009), will be convicted to the punishment defined in each of the mentioned laws.

## **Under international agreements and conventions**

Children's rights are regarded as one of the important cases of human rights and many international document pertaining to the human rights such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1968 European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1990 Islamic Declaration of Human Rights have all explicitly condemned its violation (Ansari, Attar, 2012, 120). On the other hand, Iran has joined the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993 and since according to article 9 of the Iranian civil regulations law, the agreements established based on the constitution between the Iranian government and other governments are regarded as law, it can be stated that the Iranian legal system is also implicitly committed to protecting children's rights under the framework of the convention. In addition, several other international conventions have been established to generally protect children's rights in the cyberspace, some of which are introduced below.

## **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was approved on Nov. 20, 1989 and its execution was mandated from Sept. 2, 1990, and aims to guarantee a comprehensive set of human rights protections such as civil rights, as well as cultural, economic, political, and social rights for children. The convention declares that private and familial affairs of a child or their correspondences with others cannot be arbitrarily or illegally interfered with or be insulted by anyone and that the law protects this regulation<sup>1</sup>. Besides, the main responsibility for the growth and development of children rests with their parents or guardians, for whom the most essential task in this regard would be to provide and safeguard the highest interests for the child<sup>2</sup>. The right of a child to be protected against harmful mental, spiritual, and moral acts has been explicitly affirmed in paragraph 1 of article 32<sup>3</sup>. Based on these, observation of a child's privacy right is conditioned on the lack of a conflict between that right and the right of the child to receive proper training which is the duty of the parents. In any conflict between these two rights, preserving the highest interests of the child points to giving higher priority to the child's right to receive proper training. Accordingly, it can be deduced that children's privacy in the domain of information has been paid particular attention to in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (asadi, 2018, 10).

## **Optional Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The optional Convention on the Rights of the Child was approved on May 25, 2000 by the general assembly of the United Nations with a focus on the

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<sup>1</sup> Article 16 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child declares: "No one can arbitrarily or illegally interfere in private, familial, or the correspondence affairs of a child or insult the child on these affairs, and the child is protected by law against such interferences or insults."

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 1 of Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child declares: "The convention's signatory countries allocate their utmost effort towards guaranteeing the recognition of the principle that the child's father and mother bear joint responsibilities regarding the upbringing and development of the child. ... that their most essential objective in this regard is to safeguard the interests of the child."

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 1 of Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child declares: "The convention's signatory countries recognize the need to protect children against financial exploitation and any harming actions and ... or be damaging to the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development of the child."

sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, and defines provisions to the member countries to include crimes and offenses related to the violation of children rights such as distributing perverse and obscene pictures of children by their parents or others into their domestic legal systems according to the defined international standards. The government of Iran joined this convention in May 2007. According to this convention, the adopting countries should set domestic laws and regulations pertaining these crimes in order to protect privacy rights of children. Any action to produce, distribute, assemble, import, export, market, or sell child pornography content or possessing obscene pictures of children with the purpose of production, distribution, publication, import, export, presentation, or accepting such material is defined as criminal act<sup>1</sup>. Along with defining legal responsibilities, criminal punishments, and administrative duties, the adopting countries should establish legal enforcement means in order to introduce the violators of children's privacy as criminals or felons<sup>2</sup>. The convention even allows the adopting countries to resort to defining extraterritorial jurisdiction for their laws with regards to the punishment of the violators of children's rights and those who engage in the named criminal acts. In other words, these countries are allowed to use extraterritorial means to pursue and punish those engaged in the violation of children privacy<sup>3</sup>.

## **Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) approved a convention in 1999 called "The Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour"<sup>4</sup>, which was subsequently renamed to "The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention". According to this convention, the member countries should adopt effective and immediate actions in the form of setting laws and regulations which prevent the exploitation of children by their parents or others as labour force or forcing children to work as labour for

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<sup>1</sup> Item C of paragraph 1 of article 3 of the optional Convention on the Right of the Child.

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 4 of article 3 of the optional Convention on the Right of the Child.

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 2 of article 4 of the Optional Convention on the Right of the Child.

<sup>4</sup> ILO, Convention No. 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).

other people. By the expression “the worst form of child labour” this convention refers to forcing children to engage in the production or sales of obscene and vulgar pictures.

## **The Convention on Cybercrime**

The Convention on Cybercrime, also known as the Budapest Convention, is among the first international agreements related to the crimes of the cyberspace which are based on employing the internet to violate copyrights, conduct embezzlement acts, violate network security protocols, or engage in child pornography. This convention was introduced by the European Commission in 2001 and became effective on July 1, 2004. Article 9 of this convention defines regulations related to criminalizing child pornography in the cyberspace conducted using computers. In this article, the member countries are asked to work on establishing related legislation and establish other means to criminalize the production, publication and distribution, or possessing pornographic and nude pictures of children under the age of 18. Although this convention was approved by the European countries, its article 37 allows for non-European countries to also join and become a member of it.

## **Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation**

The Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (also called the “Lanzarote Convention”) was adopted by the European Conventions Council on Oct. 25, 2007 in Lanzarote, Spain. It established regulations on the protection of children’s privacy. In article 20 of this convention, which relates to child pornography offenses, the member countries are asked to criminalize the production of pornographic photos of children for the purpose of lewd and sexual pleasure, and set up penalties and retributions for these crimes. In addition to the production of such content, this article also calls for criminalizing the preparation and offering, distribution and publication, possession, and access to these materials through the cyberspace and related communication technologies. Article 23 requires the member countries to take legal and judicial action with regards to online grooming offenses to criminalize all acts to mediate or intercede for sexual exploitation of children using information and communication technologies.

## **Prevention, protection, and international cooperation against use of new information technologies to abuse and/or exploit children**

The United Nation's Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution in 2011 in regards to the prevention, protection, and international cooperation against the use of new information technologies to abuse and/or exploit children. This resolution states that new information and communication technologies have been unfortunately misused to exploit children by their parents or other individuals in such a way that children become victims of sexual abuse or exploitation by others. It continues by emphasizing the fact that new technological tools and computer software are being used in the cyberspace to produce, distribute, and reproduce obscene and repulsive videos, films, and pictures of children, the content of which would be severely damaging for the physical and mental health of children.

## **The World Congress III against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents**

After the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action of 1996 and the Yokohama Global Commitment of 2001, the World Congress III against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents was organized in 2008 in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. The issues of sexual exploitation and its various forms and new scenarios, as well as the required legal structures to confront them, the need for a unified and integrated inter-departmental policy, the steps that corporations can take to fulfill their social responsibility, and strategies for international cooperation were discussed in this congress.

The final document published by the congress explicitly asked countries to: First, adopt and execute all international documents related to the human rights and children rights. Second, define, prohibit, and criminalize all forms of sexual exploitation of children within their legal, judicial, and executive competence, and create a platform for an effective extraterritorial enforcement in the international arena. Third, allocate effort to prevent sexual exploitation of children and adolescents through expanding their integrated nationwide protection systems and protect children against any form of violence or sexual exploitation. Fourth, define and execute multi-faceted mechanisms for the

protection of children and provision of services to the children who are victims of sexual crimes. And fifth, prevent the formation of systematic social behaviors such as sexual discrimination and stereotypical segregation which lead to harming the physical and mental health of children. Even though this document is not an internationally enforceable document, the actions it proposes the countries to take can lead to the prevention, halting, and criminalizing all forms of sexual exploitation of children by parents or other persons using internet-based tools or related technologies.

## Conclusion

Children's rights in general, and child privacy in particular, have been explicitly placed under protection by the Iranian legislation. However, protection of children's privacy in the cyberspace, which can be deduced from various laws including the Act of Protecting Children and the Youth of 2020 and the Cybercrimes Act of 2009, is conditioned and limited to the occurrence of physical or mental damage or harm or social defamation of the child. In addition, by joining or accepting the membership of international conventions, protocols, resolutions, or agreement, Iran as a member country is obligated to define and establish legal responsibilities, criminal punishments, administrative duties, and enforcement policies to protect children's privacy rights and declare as criminal act any actions to produce, distribute, publish, import, export, present, and accept violating content. Moreover, the distribution, publication, and possession of such pictures and accessing them through the cyberspace and communication technologies which could be identified as violation of child privacy in the cyberspace is identified as punishable criminal acts.

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## Effectiveness of parental Religiosity On Their Attitude Towards Childbearing

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### ABSTRACT

Target The present study has been conducted to understand the effects of parental religiosity on their attitude towards childbearing. The research method is based on a survey with a Likert scale questionnaire. The statistical community consists of 383 married couples living in Sari, Iran, selected by Morgan's table, with an increase in the number of samples to 460 couples. Sampling method is based on simple randomization.

Findings confirm a relationship between parental religiosity and their attitude towards childbearing as follows. A relationship exists between parental religiosity factors of commitment and fulfillment of religious duties and attitude towards childbearing, whereas a relationship between parental religiosity factor of religious emotions and attitude towards childbearing was not established. In addition, a relationship was observed between parental religiosity and the number of children.

Conclusion Thus, the issue of religiosity is one of the factors that is able to have positive role in parental attitude towards childbearing. Therefore, it is necessary to address the issue.

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## Introduction

The size of a country's population is one of the important and effective components in its military, economic, and cultural power. Over the past few decades, we have witnessed a significant reduction in the population in our country, Iran, and if this trend continues, we will have a country in the future with a population structure that is shaped by middle-aged and elderly people, which would face numerous challenges in economic, military, security, cultural, and educational fronts.

Marriage and having a family provides the context for childbearing and when practiced on the community level can lead to an increase in the size of the population and the country's manpower. Children are an inseparable part of the family and give meaning to it, but along with the changes in the lifestyles of people in the society, the nature of the family has changed over the past decades and the importance of having children and the birth rate have been affected due to lowered marriage rate.

One of the effective means in the birth rate is the issue of people's attitude toward childbearing. Attitude is "a relatively fixed way of thinking, feeling and behaving towards individuals, groups and social issues. The components of attitude are known as thoughts, beliefs, feelings or emotions, and behavioral tendencies that have cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions. Emotional components refer to negative or positive emotions and behavioral components specifically refer to individual actions and cognitive components to specific thoughts and interpretations" (Salarifar et al., 2017: 110).

When the attitude of families towards childbearing is negative, it is very clear to see a decrease in childbearing in the society. Therefore, whenever an individual or members of a society are to be persuaded towards a subject, it is essential to influence their attitude towards that subject. For such persuasion effort to be effective, issues that relate to both the cognitive aspects and the emotional dimension of the target group need to be addressed in order to influence their decisions and behavior. If men and women in a society are influenced by the prevailing culture - whether it is religion, creed, or anything else – to regard having a child as a means to increase wealth, or as a blessing, or contributing to the strength of their country, or any other motive, they may be persuaded towards having children.

In the past, children were considered as a blessing of life, and a main concern of women was having children. However, children may be considered by some people as a source of trouble today, a nuisance, or an obstacle to their progress in the society, and a negative attitude towards having children and the desire to have more children has become widespread among both men and women (See: Mousavi and Ghafeleh Bashi, 2013: 125).

Excessive and extreme participation of women in the society and the business market has reduced the birth rate and consequently, further advancing the existing negative attitude towards childbearing. According to the results reported recently, the attitude towards childbearing has a significant effect on women's agency in that many women consider childbearing as an obstacle to their agency (See: Safarian and Moradi, 2019: 182).

It seems that religion is one of the factors that can affect the attitude of people towards childbearing, because religion shapes human beliefs, actions and feelings. Religion literally means ruling, dignity, worship, habit, reckoning, obedience, and so on (See: Farahidi, 1409 AD, vol. 8:73; Johari, 1376 AD, vol. 5: 2118; Ragheb Isfahani, 1412 AD: 323) and in terminology refers to a set of beliefs, ethics, laws and regulations that are provided for management of the individual's lifestyle and thereby cultivating the progress of the human society through revelation and intellect (Javadi Amoli, 2009: 19).

Religion can influence people's attitudes and tendencies and move their feelings and actions in a certain direction according to its teachings. When sayings of the Holy Quran or narrations from Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) or the Imams refer to a divine order about a subject, they will be effective for those who believe in the faith of Islam.

Max Weber defines religion as a belief system that shapes forces. He believes that religion is an independent variable affecting social affairs of the individual (Kalantari et al., 2010: 86).

Golds Chider considers the correlation between religious affiliation and childbearing important and by using the term special theology, argues that the different birth rates of different religious groups implies that their religious teachings are different (Piltan and Rahmanian, 2015: 126).

Certainly, the type of insight, orientation, religion, as well as the level of person's beliefs affect all his/her behavior, including childbearing.

Hart emphasizes the role of religion in the worldview of individuals. According to him, there is no future for someone without religious beliefs, and therefore there is no good reason for that person to bear a child. Hope for the future gives meaning to our lives, and when there is no hope, many concepts of the family are weakened, individualism and egoism are highlighted and in these circumstances, the birth rate decreases (Modiri and Razeghi Nasrabad, 2015: 135).

According to existing research, women who describe religion as "very important" tend to have more children than those who find religion "somewhat important" or "not important" (Hayford and Philip Morgan, 2008: 1177).

There is a high correlation between religious beliefs and tendency to bear children, and religious beliefs are among the most important factors in women's childbearing decision (See: Rad and savabi, 2015: 144).

In Islam, there is an emphasis on childbearing and reproduction. If a person wants to have children within the legal limits, he/she needs to get married, because marriage is the prelude to having children.

Humans respond to their emotional, sexual, and reproductive needs through marriage. According to the Holy Quran, God Almighty created pairs of everything (Quran: Zariyat/49) and formed the nature of human existence in such a way that it reaches perfection and peace through marriage (Quran: Rome/21). In other parts of the Holy Quran, God Almighty decrees if you are poor and needy, I, shall make you needless by My grace. (Quran: Noor/32). The Messenger of God, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) suggested in a narration (hadith) to people to seek alimant in marriage (Tabarsi, 1412 AD, p. 196). In Islamic traditions, it is commanded to marry women with ability to give birth to a child. The importance of childbearing has been mentioned in various contexts, such as a narration attributed to the Holy Prophet suggesting to marry a virgin and prolific woman and do not marry a woman who is beautiful but barren (Koleini, 1407 AD, J 5: 333; Ibn Baboyah, 1413 AD, J 3: 392).

There are many hadiths that consider childbearing and reproduction of the Muslim generation as a source of pride and honor for the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

The importance of childbearing and reproduction is easily understood from these hadiths (See: Koleini, 1407 AD, vol. 6: 2; Ibn Hayyun, 1385 AD, vol. 2: 574).

According to Islamic teachings, the aliment of children is in the hands of God, and killing a fetus for fear of poverty is a great sin. God Almighty has given priority to the children over the parents (Quran: Isra/31). This means that the existence of a child itself is a blessing and mercy of life and provides aliment to the parents.

According to other research results, there is a positive relationship between religiosity and marital child bearing among Muslims (See: Schellekens and Atrash, 2018: 911).

Various European survey data also show that a larger percentage of Muslim women are married and more committed to traditional family values than other women. Muslim women are generally more religious than non-Muslim women, and religiosity is directly related to childbearing. Among Muslim women, religiosity and commitment to family values are equally important for childbearing, while for non-Muslim women, religion is a less important factor in the decision to bear a child (See: Westoff and Frejka, 2007: 785).

Given all the mentioned relevant results and observations, it should be noted that if in a society religion is placed out of the realm of everyday life and confined to a purely secular stance, the accumulation of wealth and constantly worrying about one' financials in the future may take the center stage, leading to a diminished role for religion to positively influence people's mind about childbearing. Therefore, in order to strengthen the role that a religious culture can play in the issue of childbearing, it is necessary to first place religion in the context of people's lives and lessen the influences of secularization, and additionally, save the lifestyle of people from extravagance and waste, facilitate the employment process and income of the people. It is then that the religious culture can naturally place its motivation towards bearing children in the context of people's lives. In this way, when families in a Muslim society become aware that Islam encourages childbearing, they will have a positive attitude toward childbearing.

The present study aims to examine the relationship between parents' religiosity and their attitudes toward childbearing and in particular, aims to answer the following questions:

1. What effect does the level of religiosity of parents have on their attitude towards childbearing?
2. What effect does the level of parental religiosity have on the number of parents' children?

Searching the available scientific sources, including databases and reputable publications in the country of Iran, no particular studies were found on the subject of the current study based on the approach of using the Quran and Hadith to underpin the importance of religion's stance on the topic. Hence, we refer to some studies that have been conducted on the various related aspects of this subject.

Saei Gharenaz et al. (2017), in their study concluded that religious orientation is an influential factor on the desired and feasible number of children by employed women.

Soroush and Bahrani (2013) suggested that there is a significant consensus among married women about the ideal number of children and this had nothing to do with their level of religiosity, as religiosity played a minor role in determining the number of children. This was while the attitude towards the role of maps genders has a significant relationship with the ideal number of children, which remains significant even when contextual variables are changed.

Foroutan and Rezaei Pasha (2018), in a study on the effects of religious identity on childbearing tendencies in rural and urban areas of Iran concluded that childbearing tendencies are significantly affected by the level of religiosity.

Modiri and Razeghi Nasrabad (2015) concluded in their study that childbearing is influenced by religiosity and this effect is still present in the presence of economic and social variables.

Abbaszadeh et al. (2019) compared the role of being religious and family-oriented with the influences of new media and modern thinking in the attitude

towards childbearing, and suggested that all these are effective factors in the attitude towards childbearing.

Modiri (2017) concluded that the desired number of children in both men and women is influenced by religiosity and gender-based attitudes, and found that religiosity affects the intended number of children more than gender-based attitudes.

The current study aims to address the need to clarify what kind of an effect the level of parental religiosity may have on their attitude towards childbearing. We hypothesize that the more religious an individual is, the more positive his/her attitude towards childbearing and having more children will be.

## **Methods**

In this research, a survey method with a Likert scale questionnaire was used. An “Attitude Toward Childbearing” questionnaire was developed and its face validity was determined by experts and university professors. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach's alpha test and a value of 64% was obtained. For religiosity, the questionnaire of “Religious Attitude and Religiosity” by Khodayari Fard et al. (2009) was used. The statistical population of this study was married people in the city of Sari, Iran. According to the latest population and housing census of the Statistics Center of Iran, the number of households in Sari is 140,492, and the Morgan table was used to determine the required number of samples, which was 383 participants based on an error level of 5%.

As having to answer questions about family issues may avert some participants, the sample size was increased to 460 as a remedy for exiting participants. For sampling in this research, a simple random sampling method was used. Selection of the participants was based on sampling from the three parts of the town which represent different economic levels. The respondents were asked to state the locality of their home in one of the three region of uptown, midtown and downtown. The SPSS software version 24 was used to describe the data and the Spearman correlation was used to analyze the data.



## Results

According to Table 1, the respondents' attitude toward childbearing are 26% negative or very negative, 43% moderate, and 31% positive or very positive.

According to Table 2, the respondents' religiosity is 23% low or very low, 31% moderate, and 46% high or very high.

According to Table 3, the respondents' religiosity (religious belief) is 14% low or very low, 19% moderate, and 66% high or very high.

According to Table 4, the respondents' religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) is 22% low, 29% moderate, and 49% high or very high.

According to Table 5, the respondents' religiosity (religious emotions) is 20% low or very low, 24% moderate, and 56% high or very high.

According to Table 6, the number of respondents' children are: 6% have no children, 29% have one child, 52% have two children, 11% have three children, 2% have four children, and 0.2% have five or six children.

**Table 1- Respondents' attitude**

*Attitude toward childbearing*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	Percentage	Number		
6.6	6.6	5.1	23	Very negative	Value
26.2	19.6	15.0	68	Negative	
69.2	42.9	32.8	149	Moderate	
94.5	25.4	19.4	88	Positive	
100.0	5.5	4.2	19	Very positive	
	100.0	76.4	347	Total	
		23.6	107	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

**Table 2- Respondents' religiosity**

*Religiosity*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
9.7	9.7	8.8	40	Very low	Value
23.4	13.8	12.6	57	Low	
54.3	30.9	28.2	128	Moderate	
85.0	30.7	28.0	127	High	
100.0	15.0	13.7	62	Very high	
	100.0	91.2	414	Total	
		8.8	40	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

**Table 3- Respondents' religiosity (religious belief)**

*Religiosity (religious belief)*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
6.6	6.6	6.4	29	Very low	Value
14.4	7.7	7.5	34	Low	
33.7	19.4	18.7	85	Moderate	
53.8	20.0	19.4	88	High	
100.0	46.2	44.7	203	Very high	
	100.0	96.7	439	Total	
		3.3	15	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

**Table 4- Respondents' religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)**

*Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
21.5	21.5	20.3	92	Low	Value
50.8	29.3	27.5	125	Moderate	
84.3	33.5	31.5	143	High	
100.0	15.7	14.8	67	Very high	
	100.0	94.1	427	Total	
		5.9	27	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

**Table 5- Respondents' religiosity (religious emotions)***Religiosity (religious emotions)*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
8.6	8.6	8.4	38	Very low	Value
19.7	11.1	10.8	49	Low	
43.8	24.0	23.3	106	Moderate	
72.3	28.6	27.8	126	High	
100.0	27.7	26.9	122	Very high	
	100.0	97.1	441	Total	
		2.9	13	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

**Table 6 - The number of respondents' children***Number of child*

Valid cumulative percentage	Valid percentage	percentage	Number		
5.9	5.9	5.5	25	0	Value
35.3	29.4	27.5	125	1	
87.1	51.8	48.5	220	2	
97.6	10.6	9.9	45	3	
99.5	1.9	1.8	8	4	
99.8	.2	.2	1	5	
100.0	.2	.2	1	6	
	100.0	93.6	425	Total	
		6.4	29	Unanswered	Unanswered
		100.0	454	Total	

Table 7 shows that the higher the level of a respondent's religiosity is, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing will be, and that people with lower levels of religiosity have a more negative attitude towards childbearing.

The results obtained based on the Spearman correlation test in Table 8 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to  $p = 0.240$ , which is a low positive value, and the validity level is equal to  $p = 0.000$ . As the value of the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between parents' religiosity and their attitude toward childbearing.

**Table 7: The relationship between parents' religiosity and attitude toward childbearing**

*Religiosity \* attitudes toward childbearing*

*Attitude toward childbearing*

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
Religiosity	Very low	15.2%	18.2%	45.5%	21.2%		100.0%
	Low	5.9%	25.5%	56.9%	9.8%	2.0%	100.0%
	Moderate	6.4%	22.3%	44.7%	24.5%	2.1%	100.0%
	High	5.5%	14.3%	37.4%	33.0%	9.9%	100.0%
	Very high	6.4%	14.9%	31.9%	31.9%	14.9%	100.0%
Total		7.0%	19.0%	42.7%	25.3%	6.0%	100.0%

**Table 8: Spearman correlation test of parental religiosity with attitude toward childbearing**

*Inferential table*

Religiosity	Attitude toward childbearing			
.240**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitude toward childbearing	Spearman test
.000	.	Significance level		
318	349	Number		
1.000	.240***	Correlation intensity	Religiosity	
.	.000	Significance level		
414	318	Number		

According to Table 9, the higher the level of religiosity (religious belief) of a respondent is, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing will be, and people with lower levels of religiosity (religious belief) have a more negative attitude towards childbearing. The results obtained from the Spearman correlation test in Table 10 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to  $p = 0.245$ , which is a low positive value, and the validity level is equal to  $p = 0.000$ . As the value of the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In

other words, there is a relationship between the degree of religiosity (religious belief) of parents and their attitude towards childbearing.

**Table 9: The relationship between religiosity (religious belief) and attitude toward childbearing**

*Religiosity (religious belief) \* attitude toward childbearing*  
*Attitude toward childbearing*

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
Religiosity (religious belief)	Very low	26.1%	13.0%	39.1%	21.7%		100.0%
	Low	6.9%	37.9%	41.4%	13.8%		100.0%
	Moderate	3.1%	24.6%	53.8%	15.4%	3.1%	100.0%
	High	4.5%	17.9%	49.3%	25.4%	3.0%	100.0%
	Very high	5.9%	14.5%	36.8%	32.9%	9.9%	100.0%
Total		6.5%	19.0%	43.2%	25.6%	5.7%	100.0%

**Table 10: Spearman correlation test of religiosity (religious belief) with attitude toward childbearing**

*Inferential table*

Religiosity (religious belief)	Attitude toward childbearing			
.245**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitudes toward childbearing	Spearman test
.000	.	Significance level		
338	349	Number		
1.000	.245***	Correlation intensity	Religiosity (religious belief)	
.	.000	Significance level		
439	338	Number		

Table 11 shows that the higher the level of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) of a respondent is, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing will be, and that people with lower levels of religiosity

(commitment and performing religious duties) have a more negative attitude towards childbearing. The results obtained from the Spearman correlation test in Table 12 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to  $p = 0.249$ , which is a low positive value, and the validity level is equal to  $p = 0.000$ . As the value of the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between the degree of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) of parents and their attitude towards childbearing.

**Table 11: The relationship between religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) with attitude toward childbearing**

*Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)\* attitude toward childbearing*

*Attitude toward childbearing*

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
(commitment and performing religious duties)	Low	9.0%	21.8%	44.9%	23.1%	1.3%	100.0%
	Moderate	7.9%	27.7%	50.5%	10.9%	3.0%	100.0%
	High	4.0%	15.8%	37.6%	34.7%	7.9%	100.0%
	Very high	8.9%	11.1%	31.1%	37.8%	11.1%	100.0%
	Total	7.1%	20.3%	42.5%	24.9%	5.2%	100.0%

**Table 12: Spearman correlation test of religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) with attitude toward childbearing***Inferential table*

Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)	Attitude toward childbearing			
.249**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitudes toward childbearing	Spearman test
.000	.	Significance level		
335	349	Number		
1.000	.249***	Correlation intensity	Religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties)	
.	.000	Significance level		
435	335	Number		

According to Table 13, there is no relationship between the level of parents' religiosity (religious emotions) and their attitude toward childbearing. This is based on the results obtained from the Spearman correlation test presented in Table 14, which show that the correlation coefficient between the two mentioned variables is equal to  $p = 0.067$ , a low positive value with the validity level of  $p = 0.222$ . As the value of the validity level is greater than 0.05, then it can be concluded that the main hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

**Table 13: The relationship between religiosity (religious emotions) and attitude toward childbearing**

*Religiosity (religious emotions) \* attitude toward childbearing*

*Attitude toward childbearing*

		Very negative	Negative	Moderate	Positive	Very positive	Total
Religiosity (religious emotions)	Very low	9.1%	12.1%	60.6%	15.2%	3.0%	100.0%
	Low	10.5%	18.4%	47.4%	21.1%	2.6%	100.0%
	Moderate	5.0%	20.0%	45.0%	26.3%	3.8%	100.0%
	High	4.4%	20.0%	41.1%	32.2%	2.2%	100.0%
	Very high	8.4%	21.1%	35.8%	22.1%	12.6%	100.0%
Total		6.8%	19.3%	43.2%	25.0%	5.7%	100.0%

**Table 14: Spearman correlation test of religiosity (religious emotions) with attitude toward childbearing**

*Inferential table*

Religiosity (religious emotions)	Attitudes toward childbearing			
.067	1.000	Correlation intensity	Attitudes toward childbearing	Spearman test
.222	.	Significance level		
338	349	Number		
1.000	.067	Correlation intensity	Religiosity (religious emotions)	
.	.222	Significance level		
441	338	Number		

According to Table 15, The higher the level of a respondent's religiosity is, the more children they may have, and people with a lower level of religiosity have fewer children. The results obtained from the Spearman correlation test in Table 16 show that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is equal to  $p = 0.175$ , which is a low positive value with the validity level of  $p = 0.001$ . As the validity level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the main



hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, there is a relationship between the level of parents' religiosity and the number of their children.

**Table 15: The relationship between the level of religiosity and number of children**

*The level of religiosity \* number of children*  
*number of children*

		0	1	2	3	4 and more	Total
The level of religiosity	Very low	2.9%	48.6%	40.0%	5.7%	2.9%	100.0%
	Low	7.4%	25.9%	61.1%	5.6%		100.0%
	Moderate	7.6%	31.1%	51.3%	8.4%	1.7%	100.0%
	High	1.7%	20.7%	62.8%	14.0%	0.8%	100.0%
	Very high	8.5%	25.4%	35.6%	20.3%	10.2%	100.0%
Total		5.4%	27.8%	52.8%	11.3%	2.6%	100.0%

**Table 16: Spearman correlation test of religiosity and number of children**

*Inferential table*

The level of religiosity	Number of children			
.175**	1.000	Correlation intensity	Number of children	Spearman test
.001	.	Significance level		
388	425	Number		
1.000	.175**	Correlation intensity	The level of religiosity	
.	.001	Significance level		
414	388	Number		

## Conclusion

The present study showed that the level of parents' religiosity is effective on their attitude toward childbearing. In other words, the more religious the parents are, the more positive their attitude towards childbearing is. Therefore, experts who are concerned about the issue of population and childbearing can work more on enhancing the religiosity of parents and emphasize Islamic

teachings about childbearing in order to promote an increase in the population of the country.

The level of parents' religiosity (religious belief) affects their attitude toward childbearing. In other words, the more religious (religious beliefs) the parents are, the more positive their attitude will be towards childbearing, and on the other hand, the less religious (religious beliefs) the parents are, the more negative their attitude will be towards childbearing.

The level of parents' religiosity (commitment and performing religious duties) affects their attitude toward childbearing. In other words, the more religious (commitment and performing religious duties) the parents are, the more positive their attitude will be towards childbearing; and the less religious (commitment and performing religious duties) the parents are, the more negative their attitude will be towards childbearing.

There is no relationship between the level of parents' religiosity (religious emotions) and their attitude towards childbearing.

There is a relationship between parents' religiosity and the number of their children. This means that parents with higher levels of religiosity have more children and people with lower levels of religiosity have fewer children.

Overall, this study showed that parents' attitude toward childbearing are 26% negative or very negative, 43% moderate, and 31% positive or very positive. However, these statistics should not be generalized as the population sample of this research was only limited to married people in the city of Sari, Iran. On the other hand, as the benefits of population reduction and having fewer children in a family are constantly promoted by the western media, such propoganda has had a negative effect on parents' perspective in a way that while having a child was in the past regarded as a blessing, and source of provision, mercy and peace, the perspective of some parents today is laden with negative attributes towards having children such as considering children as a burden or obstacle to the parents' progress.

One of the factors that can play a positive role in influencing the attitude of parents towards childbearing is the issue of religiosity which promotes an increase in the population of the country, and deserves a more thorough

consideration as an effective strategy. It is suggested that a similar research be conducted at the national level in order to derive more general results.

Limitations of the current research included low cooperation of some of the participants in completing the questionnaire and time consuming, costly preparation of the questionnaire and its distribution in the city are among the limitations of this research

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