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Research Paper

Men and the Problem of Women's Persuasion: Analyzing the Rotation of Men's Exercise of Power in the Experience of Everyday Marital Life



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ABSTRACT

Objective: Marital life is the cause of the development of social relations and provides a ground for the exercise of power, from domination to hegemony. The purpose of this study is to investigate the methods of persuasion used by women in the experience of everyday life among married people in Guilan province, Iran.

Methods: This research used a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling among 45 married men and women in Guilan province. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data obtained from the interviews.

Results: The data analysis revealed 15 basic themes, 7 organizing themes, and 2 global themes. The findings indicate that, in the past, men used social, economic, and psychological dominance against women, in addition to physical dominance. However, in the new society, with women's resistance, such dominance has become negative and illegitimate. Women now accept men's superiority not by force but through internal desire and persuasion. Therefore, today, the exercise of men's power against women has shifted from a state of dominance and asymmetry to a more symmetrical but hegemonic state.

Conclusion: In the past, men used more dominance but less authority against women, but today's men use less dominance and more authority. New men's exercise of power is more persuasive, hidden, and corresponding to Rutherford's new masculinity, Connell's hegemonic masculinity, and Bourdieu's symbolic violence.

1. Introduction

Marriage is a complex and multidimensional matter that has been the subject of study in sociology, demography, anthropology, psychology, educational sciences, philosophy, etc. Sociologists examine the phenomenon of marriage at the macro level. They view marital relationships as bonds between two opposite sexes, requiring a social contract to legitimize physical relations (Saroukhani, 2022). Psychologists, on the other hand, focus on the individual and micro

levels of marriage. They consider marriage as the union of two people for the generation of offspring, intended to form a life together and achieve shared goals (Campbell & Wright, 2010).

The important point is that marriage is concretely linked to culture, society, and power. Sociologically, the nature of power differs between past and modern societies (Bourdieu, 2022). According to Max Weber (2020), dominance in a patriarchal society is sanctified

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by traditional values. Patriarchal domination is rooted in the belief in the material and spiritual superiority of men over family members. According to [Weber \(2020\)](#), patriarchy refers to a situation in which economic organization or kinship rules are usually determined by hereditary laws. He emphasizes that in traditional pre-capitalist societies, traditional power held by male heads of the family gave them the authority to exercise power not only over women and children but also over young men, servants, slaves, and other dependents of the household ([Weber, 2020](#)). The significant point is that some later sociologists, such as [Bourdieu \(2022\)](#), believe that power plays a crucial role in persuasion. By possessing social benefits and acquiring social, cultural, and economic capital, men play a role in the process of persuasion and exercising power within the family. Women are also active in changing the balance of power through emotional capital and expressive power. According to [Bourdieu \(2022\)](#), with the changing social fields and the acquisition of social, cultural, and economic capitals, the dominance and exercise of power in the family have transformed. The social changes in the family have also been noted by other sociologists, especially Connell. According to [Connell \(1987\)](#), there is a specific gender order in every period within the family, which legitimizes men's power. In the past, this specific gender order led to male domination, and men often used the mechanism of force to exercise power. However, in modern society and families, the mechanism of force has lost its functionality, and men now employ a more complex mechanism involving soft and hegemonic power.

So far, a lot of research has been conducted in the field of "power in the family" and under the discussion of "gender and power," but the relationship between the structure of "power in the family" and the phenomenon of "persuasion" has been analyzed less. The research findings of [Mianae et al. \(2023\)](#) showed that considering the important role of communication skills and patterns in the occurrence or prevention of domestic violence, communication skills training in premarital and marital counseling seems necessary. [Hajiabasi and Taher \(2022\)](#) show in their research that there is a significant relationship between action flexibility and marital adjustment. Action flexibility allows individuals to adapt well to traumatic events in life, demonstrating positive adaptation, which can lead to marital adjustment.

The research findings of [Sharifi-Saei and Azadarmaki \(2021, 2022\)](#) show that women's resistance in different fields has a complex and multi-layered function. It is an interpretation of women's actions to reveal themselves. In addition to economic and cultural resources, women use emotional capital as a tool to resist men's power. [Zarei Toopkhaneh et al. \(2017\)](#) found a significant positive relationship between the scale of the dominant man's power structure in the family and family

functioning (general family functioning, emotions, and problem-solving).

The results of [Yaghoobi's research \(2016\)](#) in Guilan province indirectly show that there is a relationship between Ancient and new masculinity in persuasion. Ancient men used to persuade their wives through physical strength and force, while new men used gentle behaviors to convince their wives. The results of [Enayat and Soroush's research \(2009\)](#) also show that if women marry at an older age, work, and live with a more educated husband, they will have more power in the family and show less resistance. Additionally, the more men recognize women's power and have more persuasive power, the less resistance they face.

[Mahdavi and Sabouri Khosrowshahi \(2003\)](#) found in their research that persuasion is the dominant way of exercising power in Tehran's families. The husband's authoritarian view of his wife, women's participation in choosing a spouse, women's view of the submissive role, and women's level of education play important roles in the democratization of families in Tehran.

In the field of external research, [Zhang and Liang \(2023\)](#) found that the level of education has a positive and significant effect on marital satisfaction. Mechanism analysis shows that the level of education can affect marital satisfaction through the mechanism of income, the mechanism of spiritual abundance, and the mechanism of the age gap between spouses. [Rodríguez et al.'s research \(2020\)](#) showed that marital compatibility and life satisfaction have a significant positive relationship. The results of [Unal & Akgon's research \(2020\)](#) showed that positive problem-solving styles of spouses predict life satisfaction through marital compatibility.

Based on [Dańczak's \(2011\)](#) research, conversation as one of the factors of internal integration of the couple has an important effect on the whole life of the family. [Larner \(2009\)](#) found that male language is an effective tool for politics. Feminine language is popular and unified, considered passive for politics, and views rhetoric as effective for achieving speech goals. In her books "Masculinities" (2005) and "Gender and Power" (1987), Connell critically examines hegemonic masculinity, considering it related to justifying the legitimacy of patriarchy and guaranteeing the position of men. This hegemonic power has a significant effect on persuading women.

[Bilgin \(2004\)](#) believes that masculinity has infiltrated the ideological structure in argumentative ways throughout the modernization of Turkey. In the course of globalization and modernization, new public spaces have opened, and a new type of masculinity has emerged that challenges traditional masculinity. [Kulik \(1999\)](#) also showed in his research that each spouse with more resources has more power. The power relations of couples are formed under the influence of gender role norms and accessible resources.

In general, the sources of power in the Iranian family have undergone changes, and as a result, the process of influencing and persuading men against women has faced major challenges (Sharifi-Saei and Azadarmaki, 2021, 2022). Recent social changes, such as the 1979 revolution, the era of reforms, and socio-cultural phenomena such as urbanization, medialization, and increased education, have played significant roles in changing the discourse of couples. Guilan province has also been influenced by these factors, especially due to its proximity to the former Soviet Union, its location as a transit point for goods and passengers, and its attraction of tourists, all of which have played significant roles in changing the discourse of power within families in Guilan.

The findings of the research in this field are contradictory. Some have mentioned the violence of Gilani men, while others have highlighted the kindness of men in Guilan towards women compared to other parts of Iran. In this regard, some anthropologists, such as Christian Bromberger (1999), emphasize the lower violence of men in Guilan compared to other regions of Iran. It seems that although patriarchal rule and power in Guilan are more flexible than in other regions of Iran, traditional masculinity has still been considered the ideal type of masculinity.

Most researchers have examined marital compatibility or the phenomenon of power in the family from a positivist perspective, but they have rarely analyzed the phenomenon of "women's persuasion" in the everyday lives of couples. However, the rhetoric of most men has changed, and instead of power, they now use the mechanism of authority in the marital process. Despite this, one of the challenges faced by couples is the process of persuading women. The lack of studies related to persuasion and its relationship with the concept of power in modern life makes such research more necessary than ever before.

With this introduction, the basic questions of the research are: How do men in Guilan exercise power, and what changes has this way of exercising power

undergone? What strategies do men use in today's society to persuade women?

2. Materials and Methods

The current research approach is qualitative, and the data collection method is semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with married men and women living in Guilan province. The process of interviewing continued until theoretical saturation of the data was reached, and finally, 45 individuals were selected as the research sample. To achieve maximum diversity and richness of information, individuals with different characteristics in terms of age, gender, and education were purposefully selected. The criteria for entering the sample included being married, over eighteen years old, being from Guilan, interested in participating in the research, and having the ability to communicate and express personal experiences. Each interview session lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

The interviews were conducted as in-depth conversations with the participants, and the responses were recorded. After transcribing the recorded interviews, the written text was reviewed several times. Additionally, other methods, such as observation and documentary methods, were used to ensure the validity of the research. In terms of reliability, the interviews were categorized after transcription, and experts' opinions were obtained for data classification.

Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic network analysis method was used to analyze the data from the interviews. Sterling's thematic networks consist of six stages: familiarization with the text, coding the data, searching for basic themes, organizing themes, overarching themes, and compiling the final report.

3. Results

Interviews were conducted with individuals of different ages and educational levels, ranging from elementary school to a master's degree. Participants included married individuals aged between 19 and 78 years. The occupations of the participants were diverse, including housewives, teachers, private business owners, etc.

3-1. Ways of Exercising Power by Ancient (Old) Men

Table 1. Identification of Basic, Organizing, and Global Themes (Different Ways of Exercising Power by Men in the Past)

Rank	Primary codes	Basic themes	Organizing themes	Global theme
1	Use of punishment such as beating	Physical violence	Physical domination	Different ways of exercising the power of men of the past
2	Speaking with orders, talking loudly, cursing	Linguistic violence	Linguistic domination	
3	Rhetoric, soft language, and promises	Language skills		
4	The way of calling wife			
5	Thanks and appreciation in different ways	Social violence	Social domination	
6	By isolating women and making them passive in various matters			
7	Using force, coercion, and domination			
8	Lack of opinion and consultation	Mediation		
9	Through the mediation of parents, elders, and authoritative people			

Rank	Primary codes	Basic themes	Organizing themes	Global theme
10	By giving a gift	Allurement		
11	With patience	Patience in life		
12	With adherence in life	Commitment		
13	To scare			
14	Threat			
15	Persecution	Psychological violence	psychological domination	
16	To blame			
17	Failure to express feelings and love			
18	Through economic constraints	Economic violence	Economic domination	
19	Financial support and fulfillment of wishes and needs	Financial support		

3-1-1. Physical Domination: The organizing theme of physical domination was one of the most important acts of power against women in the past. The interviewees believe that physical violence, such as beating, was a significant tool for exercising power. Mohammad, a 56-year-old bank employee with a bachelor's degree, regarding the exercise of power by men in the past in naming children and allowing women to visit relatives, says: "In the past, in areas such as naming children or allowing women to visit relatives, if the woman did not listen to her husband, the man would beat her so severely that she couldn't move. In this case, the women had no choice but to obey their husbands because they had nowhere else to go. Divorce was not as common as it is today."

Traditional men used various methods of punishment to convince their wives if they disobeyed because the existing structure at that time considered men to have superior power over women. Femininity was seen as the secondary gender, while masculinity was considered the superior gender, and the exercise of power was limited and exclusive to the superior gender. Zeenat is 61 years old. She narrates her husband's violence during their marriage as follows: My husband is now old. When he was young, he used to beat me all the time. I was not comfortable even for a single day. I had no right to do anything. I married him when I was fourteen, and he didn't even let me study.

3-1-2. Linguistic Domination The organizing theme of linguistic domination includes two basic themes: verbal violence and verbal skills (the way of addressing one's wife). Verbal violence includes speaking loudly and cursing. Verbal skills include rhetoric, soft language, making promises, and using different metaphors when addressing one's wife. Violence is not limited to physical violence. Verbal violence generally consists of yelling, cursing, using vulgar words, anger, aggression, and domineering behavior. The effects of this violence are often more lasting than other forms of violence. Reasons for verbal violence include the consolidation of men's power, patriarchy and its values, and women's lack of financial independence.

Taha is 49 years old. His opinion is this: I think that special tricks were not used. For example, if the husband said that the name of the child should be the same as what I gave, it should have been the same. For example, if he had given his name Abulfazl, it should have been

Abulfazl, not Hasan or Hossein, only Abulfazl.

Babak, a 58-year-old with a bachelor's degree, working in the private sector and living in Rasht, says: "In more normal discussions where women got angry, men would attract their wives' attention by singing local songs and making rhythmic movements, but generally, small arguments would resolve themselves over time."

Ebrahim, a 44-year-old with primary education, self-employed, and living in Lashte Nesha, says: In the past, men and women did not call each other like today's youth. For example, my father or grandfather called their wives Khanum, Ibrahim's mother Zahra Khanum, and women called their husbands Agha Mohammad or Haj Agha.

Linguistic domination has more complex dimensions and can be in the form of positive or negative words. Soft and calm language is very effective in attracting and influencing the audience to do things. In the past, masculinity was equal to majesty and dignity. Men considered the use of gentleness in talking to women as their weak point, and as a result, less gentleness was observed in the behavior and speech of traditional men.

3-1-3. Social Domination: Social domination includes basic themes such as social violence, mediation, satisfaction, tolerance in life, and commitment. In social violence, men exercised power over women by isolating them, making them passive in various matters, and forcing them to do things unwillingly and without consultation. They used mediators in disputes. Satisfaction, patience, tolerance, etc., were among other methods used by men to persuade women.

Babak, a 58-year-old with a bachelor's degree, working in the private sector and living in Rasht, says: "Women were usually passive and not decision-makers, which was the main reason for their disagreements. In most arguments and fights, women would usually say, 'I am going to my mother's house,' and pretend to pack their luggage, but they regretted it after a few hours. In general, they were more patient compared to today's women, but when discussions were intense, they would pack their things and go to their father's house. Men did nothing to get their wives back at first and waited for their wives to repent and return home. If they didn't respond, men would go to their mother-in-laws' house and talk to them to satisfy their wives. If they were still not satisfied, they would use their parents as intermediaries."

Sasan, 45 years old, has a master's degree and is employed. He believes that in the past, persuasion in women became an internal reality: one of the ways of persuasion in the old days was that men used force. Another way was that the woman would listen by herself. The woman had learned. Another way was that the man would create an obligation for that woman to do this, for example.

Therefore, in men's social violence, they exert power by limiting their wives' communication with family, friends, and relatives.

3-1-4. Psychological Domination: The organizing theme of psychological domination includes the basic themes of psychological violence, such as scare, threat, persecution, blame, failure to express feelings, and love. Sahar, a 19-year-old student, narrates a part of her husband's disobedience in agricultural activities as follows: Certainly, according to what we heard and saw and still see, in the old days, men or women were threatened that, for example, if you do not come to the farm today when I return home at night I will deal with you, or they say that if I see you step out of the house tonight, I will make your day black.

Behnam, 29 years old, a bachelor and working in the private sector, talks about the instrumental role of men in the past and the expressive role of men in the present: In the past, men were prevented from expressing affection and feelings towards themselves towards wives and their families, but now it is not like that at all. In most cases, they express their interest directly or indirectly.

3-1-5. Economic Domination: The findings indicate that in the past, men's ability to persuade was lower

compared to women's. They would satisfy women by providing basic needs like clothing, etc.

Reza, 65 years old, a middle school graduate and a shopkeeper, says: "In the past, men used to give some of their income to their wives to go to the local markets and buy for themselves, and sometimes they used violent words to convince them, and sometimes they used violent words to convince their wives to obey them. In the past, women were satisfied with little things; they would buy a set of clothes and shoes and wear them for several years.

Nilufar, a 28-year-old housewife, recalls her father's dominance over her mother: "I remember when we were children, my father wouldn't buy anything for the house, not for us, nor my mother. If my mother protested, saying we're humans too and that he only ate and bought things for himself, he would start hitting her. My mother couldn't do anything, unlike women today who might go back to their parent's house or seek a divorce."

Fatemeh, a 34-year-old with a master's degree, discusses the economic strategies used by men and women to persuade each other: "It also depended on their economic situation. Even in the past, if a man was wealthy, he would satisfy his wife's needs with that wealth. He would essentially buy her compliance. For example, if he wanted to marry another woman, a relatively good man might give money or land to his first wife so that she wouldn't object or be unhappy. Therefore, withholding money, coercing a woman for financial support, and preventing her from working are examples of economic violence.

3-2. Methods of Exercising Power by Today's Men

Table 2. Identification of Codes, Basic Themes, Organizing Themes, and Global Themes (Ways of Exercising Power by New Men)

Rank	code	Basic themes	Organizing themes	Global theme
1	In some cases, involving anger, fighting, coercion, and force	Violence	Physical power	
2	Using logical reasons and evidence	Linguistic authority	Hegemonic authority	Different ways of exercising the power of new men
3	Talking, consulting, and interacting			
4	Being honest, loyal, and not hiding in life	Social authority		
5	Mutual respect for the wife and her opinions			
6	By complimenting	Emotional authority (masculinity)		
7	By repeating and insisting			
8	Being nice and caressing using romantic words and sentences			
9	Using a calm and soft tone, being precise in pronunciation			
10	Celebrating birthdays and wedding anniversaries, buying gifts, taking on outings, etc.	Economic authority providing the) spouse's material needs)		
11	Providing suitable living conditions and meeting the financial needs of the spouse			
12	Buying gold, housing, land, clothes, and gifts for the wife			

3-2-1. Physical Domination: Although the use of force and physical domination, which was common in the past patriarchal system, has weakened, it still persists among some men today. This type of exercise of power is less prevalent in society and is often met with resistance from women.

Maryam, a 34-year-old graduate and housewife, talks about her experience of violence in the past and present and her reaction to this issue: I have been married for six years. When my husband wants to do something, he does not consult me. I have to do whatever he says and have no right to protest. If I protest, he will beat me. That is, if my husband says that this coat is too short or don't wear this dress, I have to listen to him. My problem was that I gave him authority from the beginning, and now he is treating me like this. But let me tell you that when there is a verbal fight or when he tries to hit me, I don't stop and hit him and say whatever I want.

Therefore, in contemporary society, men use less physical violence and more hegemonic masculinity. Traditional and violent (physical) masculinity is losing legitimacy and is increasingly seen as unconventional.

3-2-2) Hegemonic Power

3-2-2-1) Linguistic Authority

In their strategies to exert power, men today rely more on verbal persuasion rather than physical domination. This hegemonic verbal approach often leads to the acceptance of male superiority through consent or necessity.

Mina (35 years old), a Doctor of Law, describes her approach to resolving conflicts with her wife: "When my wife and I discuss a problem if she presents a convincing argument backed by facts and reasoning that benefits both of us, I have no issue accepting it. However, if I believe her approach would be detrimental, I may resist, even if she insists. Sometimes, I prefer to let her vent her frustrations."

Alireza, a 65-year-old with primary education working in agriculture, shares his perspective on an ideal husband: "A good husband consults with his wife and ensures that others do not interfere in their lives. Women appreciate husbands who make efforts for them. If he makes a mistake, I avoid blaming him. I listen to him, let him express himself, and then share my thoughts. After all these years together, I understand her preferences and values."

Khadijah, a 33-year-old housewife with a middle school education, discusses her experience with persuasion: "If my husband presents a logical argument, I'm inclined to agree. However, if it involves significant risks or impacts our lives, I conduct my research before making a decision."

3-2-2-2) Social Authority: Social dynamics also contribute to men's authority in family settings, fostering

transparency and mutual respect.

Mahsa, a housewife, emphasizes honesty and integrity as crucial values in marital relationships: "Today, most women expect honesty from their partners."

Mahin, an employee, values her husband's commitment to their family: "As long as my husband remains faithful and transparent, I trust his decisions."

Shaukat, another housewife, stresses the importance of honesty and openness in her husband: "I expect him to be truthful and not conceal anything."

These values strengthen social bonds within families and enhance men's authority.

3-2-2-3) Emotional Authority: Men use various methods and strategies to exert power over women, often employing emotional, linguistic, and symbolic approaches. Reza, 65 years old, with a middle school education and working in the private sector, explains: "Nowadays, men try to keep their wives satisfied by celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, buying gifts and flowers, and taking them out for trips, movies, parks, and so on. To persuade and keep their wives content, they use terms like 'my lady,' 'my dear,' 'my love,' and so forth."

Maryam, a 34-year-old graduate and housewife, defines an ideal man as someone trustworthy and honest: "I believe in a man who can persuade his wife through honesty and trustworthiness. Not everyone is capable of achieving this. Financial stability and societal respect are also crucial."

Rahman, a 50-year-old with a master's degree and employed, emphasizes the importance of a man's role in life and society: "A man's ability to provide a suitable life and fit into societal norms plays a significant role in persuading his wife. Without a meaningful role in life and social affairs, a man may struggle to succeed."

3-2-2-4) Economic Authority: Men often leverage economic resources to persuade and provide for their spouses, underscoring the significance of financial stability in marital dynamics.

Qasim, a 51-year-old who works in the private sector and has a diploma, says that men use the economic field to persuade women. Today, the conditions of society are such that a man provides everything a woman wants: a house, housing, etc. If they solve all the needs of life, maybe women will be satisfied. But all men are not the same. Some men are financially weak. Alireza, the 65-year-old agricultural worker, reflects on past expectations and challenges: "In earlier times, women endured hardships and valued financial stability. Today, divorce rates have risen because money alone doesn't sustain a marriage."

Sina, a 29-year-old teacher with a bachelor's degree, emphasizes the role of gifts and financial support in marital persuasion: "I use various strategies to achieve my goals, like buying jewelry or fulfilling long-standing desires."

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the methods men employ to persuade women in everyday marital life, comparing past practices with present-day realities among married individuals in Guilan province. After data collection and coding, 15 basic themes, 7 organizing themes, and 2 global themes were identified.

The findings of this research reveal five organizing themes of men's dominance in physical, linguistic, social, economic, and psychological aspects aimed at ensuring women's obedience and subordination. Physical domination historically involved corporeal punishment, while linguistic domination included speaking loudly, cursing, using rhetoric and soft language, making promises, and employing metaphors to influence women. Social domination encompassed practices such as social violence, mediation, satisfaction, tolerance in life, and commitment. Psychological domination was characterized by psychological violence, fear, threats, blame, emotional suppression, and restrictions on expressing feelings and love. Economic domination included financial coercion, withholding money, and restricting women from working.

In the past, traditional masculinity was upheld as the ideal within patriarchal structures, legitimizing men's authority through cultural norms, values, metaphors, and symbols. These men wielded power through physical strength as well as social, economic, and psychological capital, as described by Bourdieu (2022).

Another key research question addressed the strategies men currently employ to persuade women. The study identified five basic themes, two organizing themes, and one global theme. Within the organizing theme of hegemonic power, physical domination through violence, coercion, and force was acknowledged but is increasingly challenged by societal resistance, especially from women. A new form of hegemonic masculinity has emerged, conferring legitimacy on patriarchal systems in novel ways.

Moreover, linguistic authority plays a pivotal role, emphasizing logical reasoning, dialogue, and interpersonal interactions to establish male dominance. Social authority underscores consultation, honesty, loyalty, mutual respect, and transparency within marital dynamics. Emotional authority, on the other hand, involves affectionate gestures, romantic expressions, gentle tones, and celebratory acts like birthdays and anniversaries, bolstering men's influence. Economic authority revolves around provisioning material needs and buying assets like gold, homes, land, clothes, and gifts, all of which consolidate masculine power.

In Guilan province, the predominant form of power within families has shifted towards hegemonic power, which not

only enjoys male approval but is also increasingly accepted by women. This transformation aligns with research by Mianaie et al. (2023), Zhang and Liang (2023), Rodríguez et al. (2020), Unal & Akgon (2020), Sharifi Saei and Azadarmaki (2021 & 2022), Yaghoobi (2016), Mahdavi and Sabouri Khosrowshahi (2003), Connell (1987 & 2005), and Larner (2009). These findings echo the conclusions drawn by Enayat and Soroush (2009) and Sharifi Saei and Azadarmaki (2021 & 2022), which suggest that women employ emotional capital to resist male dominance alongside economic and cultural resources. This discussion also references Connell's (1987) theory of hegemonic masculinity and Bourdieu's (2022) concept of symbolic violence, highlighting how these theoretical frameworks illuminate the dynamics of power and inequality within society.

Study Limitations: Regarding the limitations of the research, although this research has more credibility and internal depth, its results should not be generalized to the studied community and Guilan province. Therefore, it is suggested that a similar research that is quantitative, with a larger and random sample, will complete the gap and limitations of this research to a significant extent.

5. Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles are considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information and were free to leave the study whenever they wished, and if desired, the research results would be available to them.

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Authors' contributions

Study design: Shabnam Rajabdoust, Ali Yaghoobi Choobari and Mohammad Amin Kanani.

Data collection: Shabnam Rajabdoust and Ali Yaghoobi Choobari.

Data analysis: Ali Yaghoobi Choobari and Shabnam Rajabdoust.

Study supervision: Ali Yaghoobi Choobari and Shabnam Rajabdoust.

Manuscript writing: Ali Yaghoobi Choobari and Shabnam Rajabdoust.

Critical revisions for important intellectual content: Shabnam Rajabdoust, Ali Yaghoobi Choobari and Mohammad Amin Kanani.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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