

Identification and Analysis of Social Components Affecting Sexual Harassment of Women in Eastern Golestan Province

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Abstract:

The present study aims to identify and analyze the social components affecting sexual harassment of women in eastern Golestan Province, with a focus on the city of Gonbad. Conducted during 2024–2025, the study is based on in-depth interviews with women who have experienced harassment and knowledgeable informants. Findings indicate that sexual harassment of women is influenced by multiple social components, including harassing behaviors and abuse of power, insecurity in urban and family spaces, patriarchal beliefs and inadequate sexual education, as well as inefficiency of supportive institutions. The results also show that women's actions in response to harassment—such as silence, empowerment, advocacy, and the creation of family and social support—play a significant role in shaping and sustaining this phenomenon. The analysis of social components in this study, emphasizing cultural, familial, and institutional structures, provides a local framework that aligns with both national and international studies and can serve as a basis for preventive and supportive policies at the regional level.

Keywords: social components, harassment of women, social analysis, Gonbad region, women's agency.

Introduction

Although women constitute more than half of the human society, the discrimination and injustices inflicted upon them throughout human history have positioned them as the silent half of the world. Throughout human history, men have rarely been ignored, but women have mostly been completely eliminated (Maktoubian et al., 2015). Throughout history, women have always faced numerous forms of violence; one of the most significant types of violence is sexual harassment against women. A key characteristic of the harassment of women worldwide is that it is often hidden from view, and women do not speak about their sexual harassment until the situation becomes unbearable (Turanovic & Park, 2014). In Iran, women have become accustomed, due to a thousand-year-old tradition rooted in extensive prejudice, to conceal a large part of their violent life situations, such as sexual harassment, from others. They particularly refrain from resorting to judicial centers and service providers. They feel insecure in the social atmosphere dominated by misogynistic traditions and have become so accustomed to harassment in their mental and behavioral framework that they rarely show a reaction (Kordi & Hosseini, 2015). Sexual harassment takes two forms: behavioral sexual harassment and verbal sexual harassment (Iman et al., 2011). According to the research by Camu & Wright (2022), the sexual harassment of women is an issue that challenges the health of society. The dominant sociological viewpoint regarding sexual harassment is the criminalization of the victim and blaming them for the occurrence of such events. The results of the research by Shah et al. (2016) show that the sexual harassment of women is a significant social problem, and on the one hand, the victims have the least role in the occurrence of this incident. The imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, and on the other hand, the patriarchal attitude of society, the socialization of women, the attention paid to women as sexual objects, the lack of supervision in certain job sectors, the incorrect attitude towards

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women, and blaming them are among the important reasons that lead to the sexual harassment of women in society (Vakavick et al., 2017). To cope with sexual harassment, women often resort to ineffective methods such as silence, tolerance, and endurance, which in most cases do not lead to the cessation of sexual harassment and create more problems (Lee, 2018).

Ambroski et al. (2021) concluded that the experience of female victims of sexual harassment showed that the chaotic state of society and disorders in the normative order of society lead to the reinforcement of men's views against women, which necessitates structural changes to the rules and norms of society to confront such events. In examining sexual harassment, it can be stated that the violence exerted by men reflects the systemic dominance of men over women and indicates the method of subjugating women against male dominance. Therefore, male violence is not a function of biological or personality factors but rather the result of the granting of the right to sexual abuse by masculine cultural structures to male actors. The scale of male surveillance over women is accompanied by the disempowerment of women in the context of production and management, the denial of women's mobility, the unequal division of labor, the recognition of male ownership over women, the scientific justification for the necessity of male sexual harassment to maintain order or the emphasis on sexual color blindness in this area, and the confrontation with any feminist critique, while the conditions of globalization conflict with this surveillance (Rostamian et al., 2021).

Understanding the issues of victims of sexual harassment acquires meaning within the framework of society for the purpose of preventing these conditions. In a society that says: Women themselves give life to their sexual harassment and are actually the instigators, or claims that all women want to be raped, or insists that a woman cannot be raped if she does not want to be, or insists that when a woman says no, she means yes, grounds are certainly provided for justifying sexual harassment, especially by men. The acceptance of these ideas, coupled with the socialization of stereotypical gender roles and the weakness of legal protections for women, contributes to the escalation of sexual harassment (Nadaf et al., 2018). In sexual harassment against women, the feeling of shame that prevents the expression of sexual behaviors, especially their deviations, causes this event to remain veiled in silence. It is likely that this feeling of insecurity and the ambiguity of women's personal boundaries prevent sexual actors from expressing relationships they have or do not have with others and increases the social costs of such a situation (Banoumi et al., 2018). Therefore, due to the necessity of the issue and the lack of research in this area, the widespread prevalence of this event, the Islamic nature of Iranian society, where such immoral and religious behaviors are doubly reprehensible, and considering the numerous individual and social consequences of this matter, the research question of the present study is to sociologically examine sexual harassment and the social factors affecting it among women in the east of Golestan Province. Accordingly, the present study seeks to answer the question: How is the identification and analysis of the social components affecting the sexual harassment of women in the east of Golestan Province?"

Review of Theoretical Literature and Research Background

Sexual harassment of women, as one of the complex social phenomena, has consistently attracted the attention of researchers in sociology, social psychology, and gender studies. This phenomenon is not merely considered an individual or deviant behavior; rather, it is shaped and perpetuated within the framework of social, cultural, and institutional structures. Studies indicate that various factors, including patriarchal beliefs, power imbalance in social institutions, weak educational systems, and ineffective responsiveness of support institutions, can set the stage for sexual harassment (Margaux et al., 2019). Within the sociological framework, the sexual harassment of women can be analyzed as a result of the interaction between individual, cultural, and structural factors. Classical and contemporary feminist theories emphasize the role of gender inequalities and male power in reproducing violence against women. For example, structural feminism believes that sexual harassment is not merely the result of isolated behaviors but the product of unequal social systems and patriarchal power structures that limit women's positions in various social spheres (Camu & Wright, 2022). Furthermore, contextual theories, such as the ecological approach, state that the phenomenon of women's sexual harassment occurs at various levels: individual, familial, communal, and institutional. For instance, the insecurity of urban and domestic spaces, weak sexual education, and traditional beliefs can facilitate the creation and

perpetuation of sexual violence as contextual factors. On the other hand, harassing behaviors and the abuse of power, as causal conditions, play a direct role in the occurrence of this phenomenon, and women's actions, including silence, demand-making, empowerment, or the creation of social support, can have an intervening effect (Hashemi, 2021).

International studies also show that the consequences of women's sexual harassment are extensive and are not limited only to psychological damages. Reduced social participation, decreased trust in formal institutions, limitations in job opportunities, and the reproduction of gender inequalities are among the consequences of this phenomenon. In this regard, sociological analysis and the identification of social components can provide a practical framework for preventive and supportive policies (Fitzgerald, 2020). From a methodological perspective, qualitative approaches, especially the Grounded Theory method, allow for deep analysis and the localization of findings. By focusing on in-depth interviews and extracting concepts from women's lived experiences, this method enables the identification and explanation of the social components affecting sexual harassment. Grounded Theory studies have shown that integrating data with existing theories both allows for alignment with international findings and creates analytical innovations in analyzing contexts, actions, and social consequences (Bonomi, 2018). Given the cultural and social atmosphere of the eastern part of Golestan Province, patriarchal beliefs and local power structures, as important social components, play a significant role in the occurrence and perpetuation of women's sexual harassment. These conditions, along with weak sexual education, the ineffectiveness of support institutions, and the limitations of urban and domestic spaces, provide the ground for the continuation of violence. At the same time, the actions of women and civil society, including creating family and social support, demanding change, and empowerment, indicate potential capacities for reducing and managing this phenomenon.

Consequently, the sociological examination of women's sexual harassment and the identification of its social components not only helps in a more precise understanding of the phenomenon but can also provide an indigenous and operational framework for designing preventive, educational, and supportive policies at the regional level. This analysis, while aligning with domestic and international studies, provides the possibility of offering effective solutions in the field of improving women's status and reducing gender inequalities.

- Easson et al. (2024) investigated sexual harassment against women in universities and educational institutions in Ghana and showed that both traditional and power-related types of harassment are common in these institutions and women are at higher risk.
- Mariana et al. (2023) addressed the reduction of anxiety in deaf women who were victims of sexual harassment in Sumatra and showed that behavioral interventions can reduce their anxiety and are applicable for support organizations.
- Park et al. (2023) examined the role of sexual harassment in work-family conflict in Korea and found that a discriminatory and hierarchical culture is associated with sexual harassment, which increases work-family conflict.
- Camu & Wright (2022) studied sexual harassment against women in transportation organizations in Kenya and showed that female colleagues and passengers are exposed to gender-based violence, and government institutions and employers play a key role in prevention.
- Hashemi et al. (2022) examined sexual harassment and burnout in women in Pakistan and found that sexual harassment causes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement, but psychological capital can mitigate the negative effects.
- Moussa & Abdelkader (2020) analyzed the harassment of academic women in Egypt and showed that anti-harassment laws and violence-response units increase women's empowerment and responsiveness, although cultural norms hinder reporting.
- Fitzgerald (2020) studied sexual harassment against low-income women in the United States and showed that farmworkers, janitorial staff, restaurant workers, and single mothers have the highest experiences of harassment.

- Lee (2018) reviewed workplace sexual harassment in the US and showed that passive leadership increases the likelihood of sexual harassment, and the effects of hostility and gender ratio in organizations influence women's experience.
- Valipour et al. (2023) examined the challenges and obstacles to the prosecution and punishment of UN peacekeepers for sexual violence crimes against women and showed that international legal capacities face serious limitations.
- Keshavarz et al. (2022) sociologically reviewed sexual harassment in universities and found that a discriminatory gender system and power relations ignore women's complaints and reduce their trust in the university.
- Farajihah et al. (2022) analyzed the psychological, physical, and emotional consequences of incestuous sexual harassment and extracted three main categories: physical, individual psychological, and collective psychological consequences.
- Rostamian et al. (2021) surveyed sexual harassment against women with disabilities in Mazandaran and showed that lifestyle and appropriate goals have a direct and positive effect on the experience of sexual harassment, but the presence of an empowered protector did not have a significant effect.
- Yari & Sarabian (2021) examined the effectiveness of Young's schema therapy on moderating the early maladaptive schemas of abused girls and found that cognitive-schema therapy is effective in some dimensions but not in certain limitations.
- Nadaf et al. (2018) analyzed the effect of sexual harassment and job stress on dysfunctional behavior and showed that burnout plays a critical mediating role in affecting turnover intention and absenteeism.
- Maktoubian et al. (2015) presented a Grounded Theory model for examining sexual harassment and the feeling of insecurity in women in hospitals and showed that the weakness of social, legal, and organizational infrastructures and coping actions shape the storyline of women's feeling of insecurity.
- Kordi & Hosseini Nuzari (2015) examined the experience of various types of sexual harassment among women in Sari and found that non-verbal, physical, and verbal harassment is common in different groups of women and the experience of harassment is related to age and number of children.
- Sadeghi Fasani et al. (2014) examined women's perception and imagination of victimization and showed that victimization is associated with personality, social, and cultural factors and includes concepts of deprivation, lack of resources, and vulnerability."

Research Methodology

This study also utilizes the qualitative Grounded Theory method, but its focus is on identifying and analyzing the social components affecting sexual harassment. The statistical population includes women who have been harassed and informed individuals in the city of Gonbad and surrounding areas, who were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Data analysis was conducted through open, axial, and selective coding, and the social components influencing sexual harassment were extracted. This method allows for a more precise understanding of the role of social, cultural, and institutional factors in the occurrence and perpetuation of sexual harassment, and provides a framework for the structural and social analysis of the phenomenon.

The statistical population of this study includes women residing in the city of Gonbad in the east of Golestan Province who have experienced sexual harassment. Sampling was conducted using a purposive and stage-based method to identify individuals with relevant experience and awareness. In this regard, 18 women were identified and studied as a sample based on theoretical saturation, by referring to public places and organizations such as Welfare Organization (Behzisti), hospitals, forensic medicine centers, women's clinics, safe houses, and courts. Data were collected through in-depth interviews in three stages, and data analysis was accompanied by continuous coding and memo-writing, leading to the identification of the social components affecting sexual harassment and the extraction of key concepts. This approach allowed for a detailed examination of the structural, cultural, and institutional factors

influencing the phenomenon. Data analysis was performed using open coding and the constant comparison method. Each unit of meaning from the interviews was transformed into a conceptual code, and the data were gradually elevated from the empirical level to the theoretical level. With continued coding and analysis, key concepts, sub-categories, and core categories were identified, paving the way for the development of the Grounded Theory. This process enabled the researcher to identify and analyze the social components and patterns affecting women's sexual harassment and to examine the different dimensions of the phenomenon within the indigenous and multifaceted context of the region under study."

Axial Coding

Axial coding is the second stage of analysis in Grounded Theory, where the relationships between the codes extracted in the open coding stage are established. In this stage, repetitive codes are removed, synonymous codes are integrated, and components are categorized into main and sub-categories. These categories include causal conditions, the core phenomenon, strategies and actions, intervening conditions, contextual conditions, and consequences, which together form the conceptual structure of the phenomenon of women's sexual harassment based on the analysis of the interviews.

Selective Coding

In this stage, the main categories from the axial coding stage are integrated, and the central concept of the research is determined. In the present study, the core category of "Women's Sexual Harassment and the Social Components Affecting It in Eastern Golestan Province" was identified, around which all other categories and components are structured.

Three key groups of factors influence this phenomenon:

- **Causal Conditions:** Including harassing behaviors, abuse of power and control, and lack of supervision in social environments.
- **Contextual Conditions:** Cultural and social factors such as patriarchal beliefs, insecurity in urban and familial spaces, and limitations in sex education.
- **Intervening Conditions:** Weak accountability of governmental and judicial institutions and insufficient social support, which leads to the continuation of women's vulnerability.

Women's actions range from silence and conservatism to efforts for awareness-raising, demanding rights, and gaining social support, and these interactions leave behind psychological, social, and cultural consequences. Understanding these processes and the related social components can guide the design of preventive and supportive policies and programs at the regional and institutional levels."

Research Findings

In this study, data were analyzed using the Grounded Theory method, which included three main stages: Open Coding: The data obtained from the interviews were carefully reviewed, and initial concepts and semantic units were extracted to identify the hidden and apparent patterns in the participants' statements. Axial Coding: In this stage, the initial codes were compared and grouped to determine the sub-categories and the relationships between them, clarifying the social structure affecting women's sexual harassment. Selective Coding: The core concepts were extracted and integrated into an analytical framework to explain the key patterns and social components that influence the occurrence and continuation of women's sexual harassment. This process enabled a more precise understanding and categorization of the effective social, cultural, and institutional factors on the phenomenon of sexual harassment and created a basis for the systematic and indigenous analysis of the phenomenon. Open Coding: In this research, data were collected from 18 women residing in Gonbad who had experienced sexual harassment, through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participants were selected purposefully to include demographic diversity in terms of age (15 to 25 years), ethnicity (Turkmen, Fars, Turk, Baluch, Kurd, and other minorities), level of education, marital status, and occupation. This diversity provided the opportunity to examine the experience of sexual harassment in various cultural, economic, and social contexts.

Table (1): Demographic Characteristics

Participant Name	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Place of Birth	Occupation	Marital Status
1-Setayesh	18	Turkmen	High School	Gonbad	Student	Single
2-Shabnam	21	Fars	Cycle (Middle School)	Gonbad	Unemployed	Single
3-Fatemeh	15	Baluch	Illiterate	Gonbad	Unemployed	Single
4-Sanaz	19	Sistani	High School	Gonbad	Student	Single
5-Fatemeh Zahra	16	Afghan	Illiterate	Azadshahr	Unemployed	Single
6-Mobina	25	Fars	Associate's Degree	Gonbad	Employee	Married
7-Mahdieh	17	Baluch	Elementary	Aliabad	Unemployed	Single
8-Raleh	24	Turk	Diploma	Ramian	Homemaker	Married
9-Zeinab	25	Kurd	Cycle (Middle School)	Tehran	Homemaker	Married
10-Aylar	20	Turkmen	Associate's Degree	Gonbad	Student	Single
11-Maryam	24	Fars	Student	Gonbad	Employee	Single
12-Mahtab	20	Turkmen	Associate's Degree	Gonbad	Salesperson	Single
13-Atefeh	18	Turk	Diploma	Gonbad	Unemployed	Single
14-Mehraneh	21	Fars	Student	Gonbad	Student	Single
15-Zahra	21	Fars	Student	Gonbad	Student	Single
16-Hanifeh	17	Turkmen	Student	Gonbad	Student	Single
17-Yasaman	23	Kurd	Bachelor's	Gonbad	Teacher	Married
18-Shiva	25	Fars	Diploma	Gonbad	Homemaker	Married

Table (2): Conceptual Model of Social Components Affecting Women's Sexual Harassment in Eastern Golestan Province

Initial Codes	Sub-category	Main Category
Relative security in the urban space, lack of security in the family space, dual understanding of security, insecurity in intimate environments, experience of sexual harassment in the home environment, vulnerability in the private sphere, threat to security in the inner family space, hidden harassment in the home, occurrence of harassment in relatives' homes, psychological insecurity in the family, unsafe work and living environment, low security for women, harassment in public places, harassment in the private domestic environment, lack of moral security	1.1. Insecurity in Various Spaces	1. Insecurity and Vulnerability
Lack of maternal supervision, planning in the occurrence of harassment, harassment by a relative, father's abuse of family power, betrayal of parental roles, family damage (addiction, prison), high-risk environment without support, lack of effective supervision, crisis in the victimized family, mutually damaging family relationship, psychological pressure in childhood, harm in childhood without support, lack of stable family support, vulnerability of deprived individuals, victim's misplaced trust, family tension, family lack of affection, family anxiety	1.2. Individual and Family Factors of Vulnerability	
Violation of physical and psychological boundaries, severe psychological reaction to harassment, tendency toward violence in response to violence, psychological despair after harassment, internal disgust, self-blame and reduced self-esteem, alienation, chronic fear of others, feeling of social exclusion, disorder in the formation of social identity, feeling of loneliness and helplessness, prejudice against men, emotional depression, social pessimism, regret and sorrow over the incident, fear of repeating the harassment experience, fear and terror after harassment, physical reaction (nausea), deep psychological harm and lasting grief, social anxiety and stress, recalling bitter memories	2.1. Psychological and Emotional Damages	2. Harassment Damages
Social mistrust, disorder in the formation of social identity, feeling of familial disgust and alienation, compounded damage in the supportive environment, feeling of lack of support, feeling	2.2. Social and Communicative Damages	

of insecurity in the family, lack of societal attention, avoidance of society, disruption in daily life, mistrust of men, difficulty in social connection, inability in social life		
Silence surrounding harassment at home, family evasion of responsibility, maternal failure in prevention, role of officials in non-intervention, collective responsibility burden in the occurrence of harassment, fear of telling parents, fear of being blamed, collective blaming, parental inattention, shared responsibility of the family and the victim, threat of silence, culture of women's silence, fear of family disintegration	3.1. Role of Family and Society in Silence and Continuation of Harassment	3. Social and Cultural Triggers
Blaming the victim, cultural control of women's behavior, blaming women, patriarchal culture, resistance to change, the role of patriarchal culture in the victim's silence, social taboos regarding sexual harassment, victim-blaming in society	3.2. Role of Cultural Beliefs and Values	
Need for parental education, education on body care, emphasis on appropriate dress, empowerment of girls, sex education from childhood, preventive awareness-raising, role of formal education in prevention, family failure in sexual upbringing, key role of the Ministry of Education, shortcomings of the educational system, necessity of structured education, collective awareness-raising, education about puberty and relationships, acquaintance with coping skills, training in refusal skills, encouragement of reporting, preventive education by family and school, role of officials in education, creating a safe space for dialogue, changing societal culture	4.1. Empowerment and Awareness-raising	4. Prediction and Preparedness
Necessity of legal intervention, judicial dealing with intra-family harassment, structural support for the victim, strong legal action, legal support for victims, governmental and safe center support, officials' support for victims, inefficient supervisory organizations, avoiding solitude with unsafe individuals, seeking refuge with a more compassionate person	4.2. Legal and Structural Support	
Maternal supervision as a protective shield, prevention of the dangerous private meeting, mother's role in protecting the daughter, prevention of risky situations, prevention of being placed in solitude, institutional and family cooperation, reporting harassment to a trusted person, fleeing to a safe house	4.3. Preventive Role of Family and Society	
Principle of consent-based boundary setting in sexuality, repetition of daily harassment, experience of repeated harassment, sexual coercion, use of family relationships for abuse, verbal harassment	5.1. Types of Harassing Behaviors	5. Harassment and Abuse
Vulnerability in the private space, threat to security in the inner family space, harassment in the seemingly safe home environment, experience of sexual harassment in the home environment, occurrence of harassment in the private sphere, lack of maternal supervision, planning in the occurrence of harassment, harassment by a relative, father's abuse of family power, betrayal of parental roles, family damage (addiction, prison), high-risk environment without support, lack of effective supervision, crisis in the victimized family, mutually damaging family relationship, psychological pressure in childhood, harm in childhood without support, lack of stable family support, vulnerability of deprived individuals, victim's misplaced trust, family tension, family lack of affection, family anxiety, insecurity in intimate environments	5.2. Backgrounds for the Emergence of Abuse	
Investigation of structural factors of harassment, governmental accountability, demanding practical action from officials, inefficiency in information dissemination	6.1. Role of Institutions and Government	6. Accountability
Public awareness-raising, changing societal attitudes, sensitizing society to sexual harassment, breaking the silence, encouraging	6.2. Social Response	

reporting, supporting victims, creating a public discourse on sexual harassment, increasing media awareness, continuous training and information dissemination, social mobilization to combat harassment, changing wrong beliefs, positive culture-building		
Initial Codes	Sub-category	Main Category

In this regard, the paradigmatic model of the social components affecting women's sexual harassment in Eastern Golestan Province is shown as follows:"

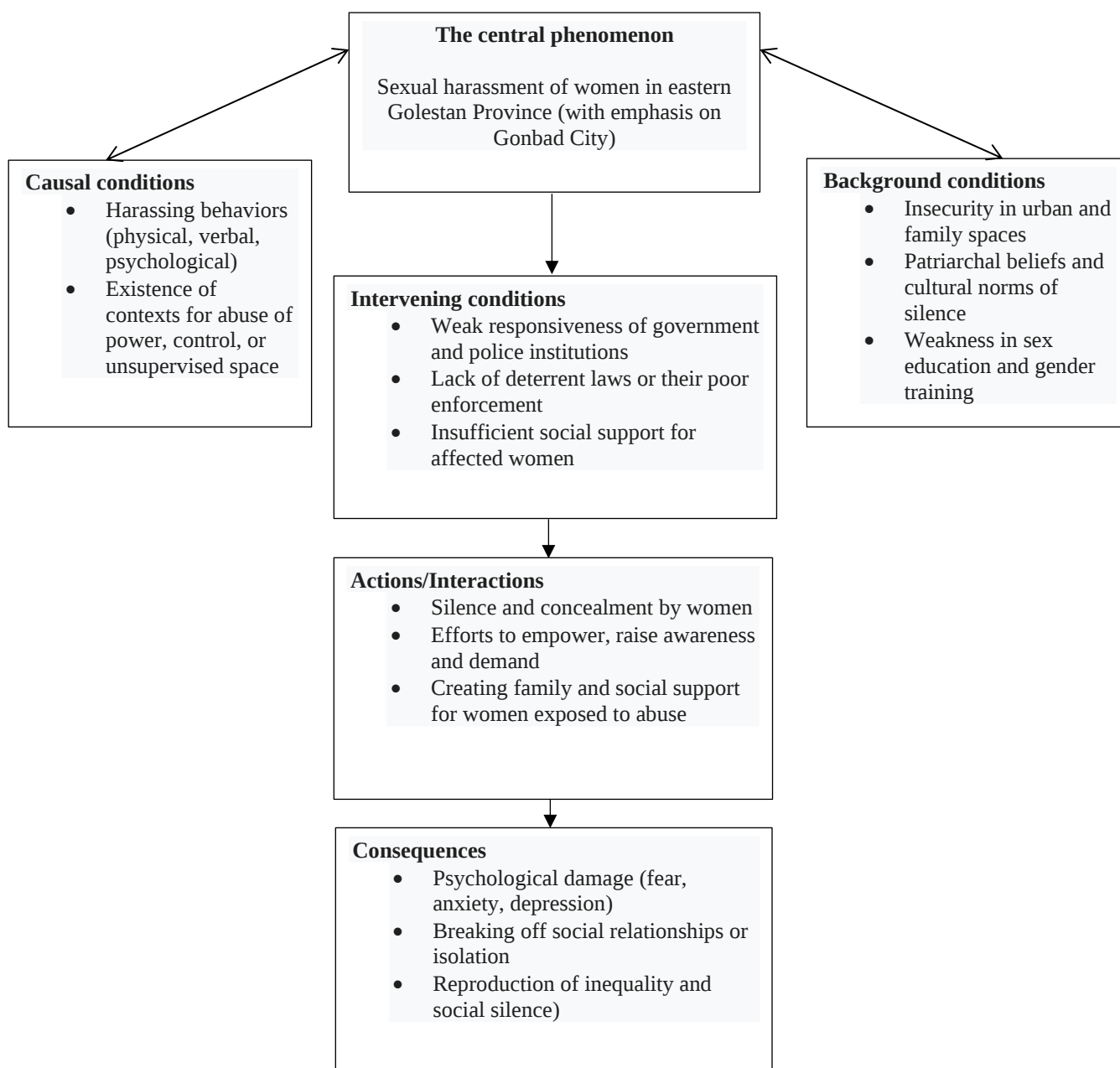


Figure (1): Paradigmatic Model of Social Components Affecting Women's Sexual Harassment in Eastern Golestan Province

Conclusion

The research conclusion, utilizing the Grounded Theory approach, indicates that sexual harassment of women in Gonbad city is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon stemming from the interaction

of structural, cultural, social, and psychological factors. These behaviors are not merely the result of individual actions but are shaped within a social and cultural context and are reproduced through patriarchal norms and the weakness of supportive institutions.

- **Causal Conditions:** Harassing behaviors include verbal and physical harassment, psychological threats, and abuse of power, which are facilitated by a backdrop of legal vacuums and a lack of social oversight.
- **Contextual Conditions:** Insecurity in public and family spaces, economic constraints, and conservative cultural beliefs create a suitable environment for the continuation of harassment and make victims more vulnerable.
- **Intervening Conditions:** The weak performance of legal and law enforcement bodies, along with the absence of social support, both exacerbates women's vulnerability and increases harassers' motivation to repeat their behaviors.
- **Responses and Actions:** Women and society exhibit diverse reactions to harassment; ranging from silence and concealment to efforts to raise awareness, empowerment, and advocacy. The effectiveness of these actions depends on the extent of institutional support and social acceptance.
- **Consequences:** Sexual harassment results in wide-ranging psychological and social consequences, including anxiety, depression, reduced self-esteem, isolation, and decreased social participation. These consequences reproduce the vicious cycle of continued harassment and gender inequality.

The conclusion of this research shows that the sexual harassment of women in Eastern Golestan Province, especially in Gonbad city, is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon shaped and sustained by causal, contextual, and intervening factors. This phenomenon not only causes psychological and social harms such as individual anxiety, depression, and isolation but also leads to the reproduction of gender inequalities and the reinforcement of a culture of silence.

Cultural factors, especially patriarchal beliefs and norms of silence, have driven women to silence and concealment when confronting harassment. Insecure public and domestic environments, coupled with a lack of gender education, have increased their vulnerability. The weakness of legal and supportive institutions reduces women's trust in formal support and perpetuates the cycle of harassment. Women's actions include silence and denial, or attempts toward empowerment, awareness-raising, and advocacy, which, depending on the level of familial, social, and institutional support, can lead to the reduction or continuation of the phenomenon.

Overall, confronting this issue requires a comprehensive and multi-level approach that includes reforming cultural attitudes, strengthening gender education, improving the performance of legal and supportive institutions, and increasing women's active participation in society to break the vicious cycle of harassment and silence and provide a safer and more equitable environment for women.

Generally, the research indicates that combating sexual harassment requires a comprehensive approach that simultaneously involves the family, society, legal, and educational institutions. Changing cultural attitudes, teaching coping skills, and strengthening legal and psychological support are the main prerequisites for reducing this phenomenon and creating a safe environment for women and girls. This study, focusing on Gonbad city and Eastern Golestan Province, provides a local and comprehensive model that analyzes the structural, contextual, and individual/social actions of women while also taking into account the cultural characteristics of the region.

Based on the results of the present study, the following suggestions are offered:

- **Strengthening Legal and Support Institutions:** Ensuring the effective implementation of laws, providing safe avenues for reporting harassment incidents, and enhancing the accountability of judicial and law enforcement agencies.
- **Education and Awareness Raising:** Implementing preventive educational programs in schools and families to enhance coping skills for harassment and recognition of individual rights.
- **Women's Empowerment:** Providing psychological and social support, establishing local support networks, and strengthening women's participation in social and economic activities.

- **Cultural Attitude Reform:** Reducing norms of silence, confronting patriarchal beliefs, and creating opportunities for dialogue about sexual violence and harassment.
- **Integrated and Coordinated Approach:** Simultaneous cooperation between family, society, schools, and legal institutions to reduce harm and provide a safe environment for women and girls.

Among the limitations of the present study is that the findings may only be valid for the context of the studied community and generalization to other areas may be limited. The number of participants and the method of their selection may not reflect the full spectrum of experiences. Qualitative or interview-based analysis cannot provide statistical and generalizable results to the entire community, and if data were collected only through interviews or limited observation, the ability to fully observe all dimensions of the phenomenon is restricted."

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