



Analysis of women's poverty experiences with grounded theory approach

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ABSTRACT

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Even though poverty is a general problem observed in many societies, increasing share of women among the poor in recent years has brought the concept of poverty of woman into question. While poverty influences all segments, it particularly influences disadvantaged groups such as women, elders, handicapped and children more deeply. Social inequalities between women and men in the society, exploitation that women are exposed to, unbalanced distribution of income and exclusion have an increasing impact on poverty. A woman in poverty is deprived of labor, education, fundamental rights and freedoms, healthcare services and social activities. If it is considered that the women who experience the problem of poverty have different perspectives and properties, then it is important to evaluate the poverty of women on a multi-dimensional basis. In this context, the purpose of the study is revealing poverty experiences, emotions, attitude and behaviors of women. In the study, profound interviews were performed with 30 women living in the province of Burdur and the data acquired were evaluated within the frame of grounded theory, which aims to develop a theory. At the end of the interviews, it is observed that ongoing poverty of women ever since their childhood continues in later periods of their lives. The noticeable findings of the study are that majority of women are exposed to physical, social and psychological deprivations due to poverty but try to cope with it for the sake of their children.

Keywords: Grounded theory, poverty of women, woman.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the oldest problems in human history. Poverty, which was more of a problem with nutrition and housing in the past, has become a multidimensional problem today. In particular, the social conditions created by the capitalist world system led to the globalization of the poverty problem and caused the poverty problem to evolve into a social problem area that is difficult to cope with. Poverty affects people who do not have enough income to live, who are starved or

malnourished, who do not have access to education and basic health services or have limited access, who have to live in unsafe environmental conditions, and who are subjected to social discrimination and exclusion at different levels. In particular, population groups that are in a more weak, vulnerable, and fragile position in social life, such as children, women, elders, people with disabilities, and immigrants, are seriously affected (1). Moghadam (2005) states that urban and rural poverty has become more chronic in women than in men (2). Women are the group most affected by poverty in

the world after children. Women make up the majority of the poor, unemployed, landless, and propertyless around the world (3). Despite some significant progress in recent years, women in no country have achieved economic equality with men, and women are still more likely to live in poverty. It was stated that approximately 7.9% of the world's population lives in extraordinary poverty (4). In Türkiye, the relative poverty rate was reported to be 14.4% (5). According to OECD 2015 data, the poverty rate of women up to the age of 17 in Türkiye was 25%, while the total female poverty rate, including women aged 0-17 and over 66, was around 17% (6). The poverty rate in Türkiye was 17.10% for men and 19.03% for women (7).

D. Pearce first used the concept of feminization of poverty in an article published in 1978. In her study, Pearce used it to explain the problems experienced by women living alone with their children after the 1970s, when the understanding of nuclear families in America was fragmented and increased divorces. With the increase of divorces, the phenomenon of the single-parent family has become more visible in society. The new family model that emerges from divorces usually consists of the mother and children. This situation not only weakens the female parent's bond with the labor market but also reduces the possibility of being employed. Thus, women face poverty (8). In addition to the fact that the proportion of poor women was higher than the proportion of poor men, numerous studies have also revealed that poverty was experienced by men and women in different ways. Accordingly, in 1995, the issue of "The Feminization of Poverty" was raised in the Action Plan of the 4th World Conference on Women (9).

Rahnema (2009) states that the feminization of poverty is a secondary phenomenon of modernized poverty. Due to cultural norms and values, gender inequalities, and power dynamics between men and women, women make up the majority of the poor (10). The social disadvantage and inequality they face because they are women shape their experiences of poverty differently than men's,

increasing their vulnerability and making it difficult for them to get out of poverty. In most societies, gender norms define the role of women largely at home, as mother and caregiver, and men's roles as responsible for productive activities outside the home. These norms influence institutional policies and laws that define women's and men's access to productive resources such as education, employment, and land and credit. Many evidence from around the world shows that women are more disadvantaged at accessing production resources than men. Persistent gender inequality and differences in the role of men and women greatly affect the causes, experiences, and consequences of female poverty (11). Medeiros and Costa (2008) emphasize that poverty increases in families where women are head of the family, and gender inequalities also reinforce this situation (12).

Within the framework of the concept of female poverty, it is important to understand and evaluate many elements of women's living spaces. Many details about women's poverty and women's impoverishment process, which are generally considered within the poverty problem, are overlooked. Therefore, it should not be overlooked that the extent of women being affected by poverty and the solutions it produces have a place in women's life (1-13).

It will not be easy to understand women's poverty situations unless women's different experiences of poverty are taken into account. Poverty measurements used in theory do not help to understand these different experiences. These statistics do not provide information about the depth of poverty of people living in poverty and the impact of economic and social deprivation (14). The first step in understanding women's poverty is to investigate and try to understand how they live and experience this poverty. With a stable structure and limited statistics measured by quantitative techniques, it is difficult and ineffective to understand the poverty experiences of women. Therefore, qualitative studies on this subject are important.

This research aims to develop different perspectives on women's poverty by developing a basic theory to increase social sensitivity by drawing attention to poverty in general and women's poverty in particular, and it is assumed that it will be useful to academicians who will work in this field in terms of methodology and the theory to be formed. The purpose of choosing the grounded theory as a research method is that this theory explains a phenomenon, an event in its own social world, and develops it by observing theoretical knowledge and data.

This theory-building study aims to understand, develop and reveal women's poverty experiences, attitudes and behaviors, perspectives, ways of coping with poverty, and the factors affecting this process.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

In this study, the grounded theory research method, which is one of the qualitative research approaches, was used to develop a model and a mid-level theory.

Grounded Theory is a research method developed by two American sociologists, Glaser and Strauss. This method is called "grounded" because the theory that is intended to be reached at the end of research designed and carried out with it is based on data collected and analyzed "systematically" in the research process (15).

The main view in the based theory is that the development of theory did not come from a "ready-to-use source"; it is "grounded" and revealed from the data obtained from the participants who have experienced the process. Based on this, establishing a theory is a qualitative research method in which the researcher provides a general explanation about a process, action or interaction within the framework of the views of many participants (16).

From the point of view of the grounded theory, everything in social life is integrated with each other. In other words, this theory is an approach that

accepts that actions and concepts are related to other actions and concepts, that nothing is independent of each other, and that they do not happen for no reason. Grounded theory is a research pattern that provides tools to explain processes, provides clarity for all possible theoretical understandings, provides temporary interpretations of data through coding and categorization, and systematically elaborates data. The purpose of the grounded theory is to produce an abstract analytical diagram of the phenomenon, which relates to a theory or a specific situation based on the experiences and perceptions of the participants. This method distinguishes itself from the methods that set out with a theory at the beginning of the study in order to verify or disprove a theory and then support the theory with the data it collects (17).

Coding in data analysis of the grounded theory is the main goal. Thus, by analyzing the data, it will be possible to conceptualize and identify patterns or events within the data. In this theory, the data is encoded in three stages: open, axial, and selective. There is no need to follow these procedures in any particular order when analyzing; shifting to axial coding while performing open coding, or shifting to open coding or selective coding while performing axial coding is possible (16).

Sample of The Study

Since there is no specific universe and sample understanding in grounded theory studies as in other qualitative research designs, the number of participants in the sample of the study was determined by achieving theoretical satisfaction within the framework of the theoretical sampling principle. In grounded theory studies, the sampling is not exactly pre-planned. Theoretical sampling is used to further explore the categories. This sampling is more purposeful than random sampling, and it is the selection of a sample based on the analysis of the collected data (18).

Purposeful sampling was used at the beginning of

the study. Then, it was continued with theoretical sampling according to the codes and categories revealed by the data. The purposeful sampling, which was initially used when selecting samples, allows for an in-depth study of situations that are thought to have rich knowledge.

While determining the participants in this study, the criteria of volunteering to participate in the study and receiving aid from the governor's office or the municipality were taken into account.

The sample of this study consists of women (30) who live in Burdur Province city center, receive poverty aid at various levels from SYDTF (Social Assistance and Solidarity Incentive Fund) and Burdur Municipality, and agree to participate in the research. For sampling purposes, women living in these neighborhoods were chosen. Three households from each neighborhood were included in the study. It is recommended to study with 20 to 30 people in order to develop a good theory in the study of theorization. According to the results of the 2016 Address Based Population Registration System, the total population of Burdur province is 260,401. The total population of the central district is 104,875. The total male population of the central district of Burdur province is 52,642, and the total female population of the central district is 52,233. The number of villages affiliated to the center is 51, and the number of neighborhoods is 35. Among these neighborhoods, Akın district, Sinan district, Necati Bey district, Çeşmedamı district, Karasenir district, Üç Dibeğ district, Mehmet Akif Ersoy district, Değirmenler district, Yenice district, and Cemil district are the neighborhoods where poverty is relatively high.

Data Collection

Research data were collected by interview technique, which is one of the basic research techniques of qualitative research method. The interview form consists of a questionnaire stating the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants prepared by the researcher and a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire prepared to determine

the participants' experiences and thoughts about poverty.

Accordingly, face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 women living in Burdur Center between June and December 2015. The interviews lasted at least 40 minutes and a maximum of 2 hours and carried out at the women's homes. After the initial interviews ended, the women were interviewed again. During face-to-face interviews, open-ended questions were asked to the participants and supported by drill-down questions when necessary.

In the study, in-depth interviews were recorded with an audio recorder in accordance with the permissions and information of the participants. The participants were informed about the necessity of the audio recorder, but the interviews of the participants who still did not want to be audio recorded were recorded only by writing.

Data Analysis

Since the aim of the study was not to validate or test a theory, no hypothesis was established. The aim here is to establish a theoretical basis for the subject being investigated. At the end of the data collection phase, a conceptual model was created with the theoretical satisfaction of the categories obtained from the data by the researcher. As a result of the continuous comparison method that exists in the grounded theory research strategy, the codes were obtained from the data by continuously comparing the data collected in the study both within themselves and with each other, and then these codes led to the emergence of categories that explained the selected subject at a higher level. The data collected from the beginning of the theoretical sampling to theoretical satisfaction were analyzed in accordance with the principles of the grounded theory.

The collected data was constantly compared with each other during encoding. As a result of these comparisons, categories were created from raw data. In coding with the continuous comparison method,

the opinions and experiences of different participants were compared, and data were compared within the category and with other categories. The aim is to uncover the theoretical elements contained in the data and to create categorical labels (19).

The Ethical Aspects Of The Study

In this theory-building study, participants' consent was obtained in order to ensure the harmony between the researcher and the participants and to enable the participants to express their point of view in detail. In addition, necessary written permissions were obtained from Burdur Governorship and the Ethics Committee of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (79325306-299) in order to conduct the study in Burdur province city center.

FINDINGS

The mean age of the women surveyed was 51.80 ± 13.61 . The youngest of the women interviewed is 30 years old and the oldest is 80 years old. Among the women who participated in the study, 56.7% of them are primary school graduates and 33.3% are illiterate. Reasons such as the fact that women are obliged to participate in the working life at an early age and their families do not have the income to devote to education may have prevented them from accessing educational services. Considering the marital status of the women participating in the study, it was determined that 50.0% (15 women) are married, 33.3% (10 women) are single, and 16.7% (5 women) her husband passed away. When we looked at the working status of the women interviewed, it was determined that 73.3% of them are employed. All working women work in unskilled jobs that do not generate regular income. One of the main factors that force women to work in the informal labor is that they lack the necessary income for living and subsistence. Increasingly, most women are forced to join the informal labor because they are in need of income, albeit at a low level and irregularly, and because they have no other options in terms of the field to work. 43.3% of the women included in the

research have a green card.

GROUNDNED THEORY PROCESS and CONCEPT/THEORY FORMING

Open Coding

The study primarily created top categories based on the research questions and coded concepts emerging under these categories (18). By this way open codings of the study emerged.

In this section of the study, results for six main themes obtained in line with the analysis of qualitative data are included; these six main themes are: 1) causes of womens' poverty, 2) women's perception of poverty, 3) women's thoughts about being a woman, 4) women's negative thoughts about poverty, 5) women's positive thoughts about poverty, 6) women's ways of dealing with poverty. These themes are framed according to the purposes of the research, and the presentation of the themes is made by taking into account the priority of the presentation order of the qualitative objectives of the research. As a result of open coding, six main themes/categories, 30 sub-themes / categories, and 485 fixed codes were reached.

According to the codings performed as a result of profoundly examining the thoughts of women about poverty, the study determined "lack of education, spouse's bad habit, consideration of poverty a fate and a condition handed from generation to generation and unemployment". Sub categories explaining the thoughts and experiences of women about being a woman and poverty were "caregiver, informal sector, obligation to lead an unhealthy life, getting used to living with violence, being subjected to captivity and oppression, need for help, loneliness and exclusion". Sub categories explaining the perceptions of women about poverty were "being unable to access means of livelihood, getting used to difficulties, uncertainty about the future and deep deprivation". Sub categories explaining the negative thoughts of women about poverty centered upon concepts such as "deep perception of distrust, inadequacy and deficiency, unhappiness, regret,

burnout and despair". Sub categories explaining the positive thoughts of women about poverty were "sense of powerfulness, acceptance, looking at the future with hope, cooperation and collaboration". Sub categories concerning women's methods of coping with poverty were "being hopeful, neighborhood and solidarity networks, ignorance, being faithful and working".

Axial Coding

The aim of all categories in open coding is to try to understand women's thoughts, experiences, and perceptions about poverty. In axial coding, the central category was conceptualized as "holding on to life despite deprivations" due to all the deprivations experienced by women.

All of the categories obtained in open coding (causes of women's' poverty, women's perception of poverty, women's thoughts about being a woman, women's negative thoughts about poverty, women's positive thoughts about poverty, women's ways of dealing with poverty) explain the thoughts, experiences, and difficulties of women about poverty. This process was re-categorized by determining the causal relationship and similarities. Axial codes obtained as a result of re-categorization are conceptualized as physical deprivation, psychological deprivation, and social deprivation. These codes were sequenced in the form of processes that followed by affecting each other, and the story that led the researcher to the core code was revealed.

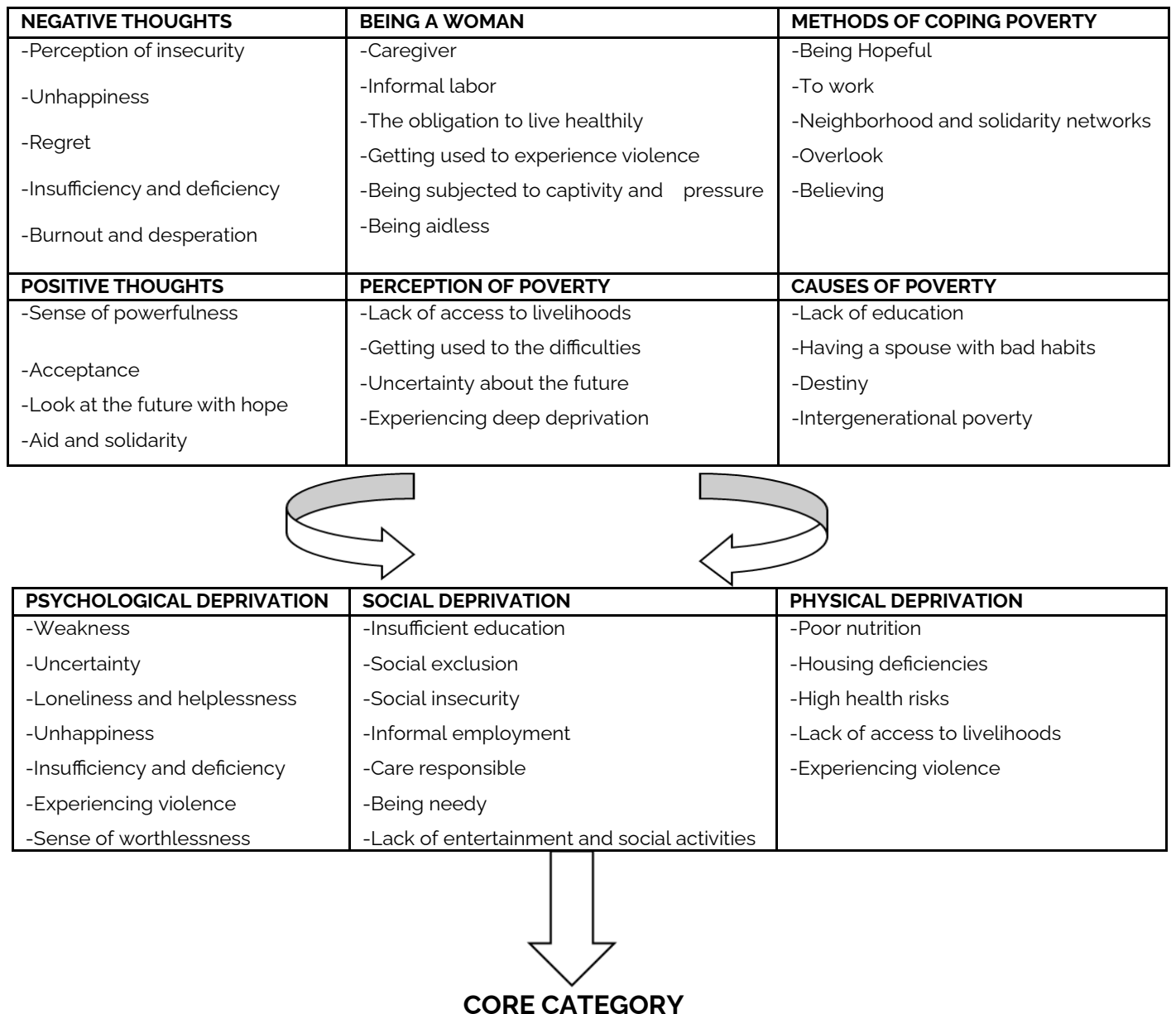


Figure 1. Axial Code Diagram

Based on the findings in open and axial coding, the deprivations experienced by women due to economic inadequacy were noted. These deprivations were grouped under three categories in axial coding and divided into subcategories. Inadequate housing, malnutrition, high health risks, inability to access livelihoods, and violence subcategories were created in the physical deprivation category. Weakness, inadequacy and deficiency, loneliness and helplessness, unhappiness, violence, feeling of worthlessness, and feeling of uncertainty subcategories were created in the psychological deprivation category. Inadequate education, need for assistance, social exclusion, social insecurity, unregistered employment, and deprivation of caretaker, entertainment, and activities subcategories were created in the social deprivation category. The resulting axial codes led to the emergence of the story that led the researcher to the core code.

Selective Coding

Considering the three categories that emerge in axial coding, the category that can be associated with each category was determined as "holding on to life despite deprivations". "Holding on to life despite deprivations" is a category that unites all categories, and it is the core category describing the impact of the problems caused by women's poverty. An important finding obtained from in-depth interviews is that despite all these deprivations, most of the women interviewed have often stated that poverty is a situation that must be tackled. The women interviewed are tirelessly trying to cope with poverty by working despite low wages and harsh conditions. In addition, it is noticeable that they try to hold on to life by thinking that poverty is their destiny, by being grateful to their current situation, by hoping that their children will study and lift them out of poverty, and by ignoring the deprivations they have experienced. Within the scope of the study, it was understood that

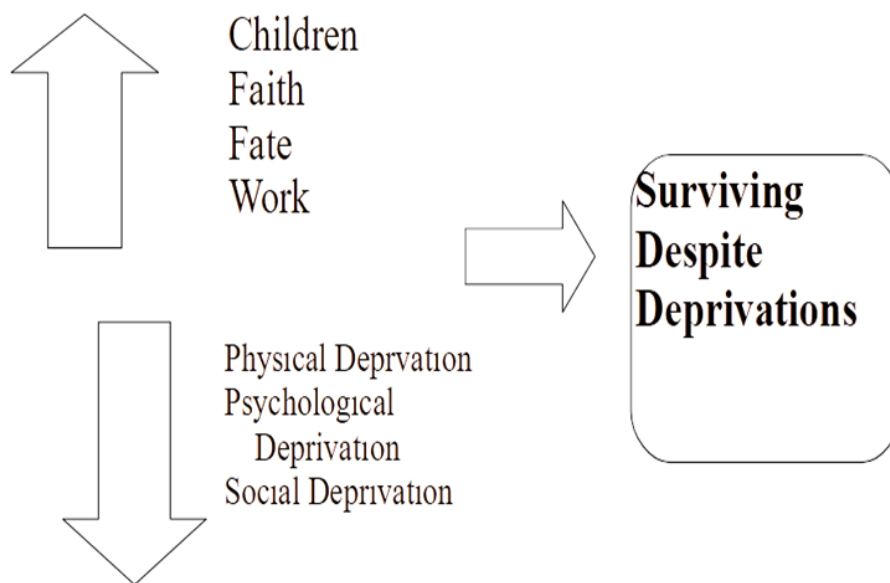


Figure 2. Core Code Diagram

women can struggle with all kinds of difficulties they will face when they do not feel helpless. The depth of poverty experienced by women, their lack of the benefits of life, and their struggle to cope with poverty, especially for their children, in a victimized and desperate life are among the remarkable results.

In addition, for most of the women interviewed in the study, neighbor solidarity and aids (from the municipality and the governorship) have an important place in combating poverty. Irregular and inadequate income leads women to poverty aids. Women's low education levels and lack of work experience lead them to work in informal labor. Most

of the women interviewed described poverty with negative emotions (such as inadequacy, deficiency, unhappiness, burnout, desperation) due to the severity of the poverty they experienced. It was determined that most of the women in the study were subjected to physical, economic, and psychological violence, they had many health problems, they were malnourished, and the housing conditions were inadequate.

CONCLUSION

The concept of women's' poverty emphasizes that poverty is becoming an increasingly female problem and that they experience poverty more deeply than men. With the change of family structure in the society, the increase in the number of female household heads, low educational level, the inability to participate in employment due to the responsibility of care or low paid work in the informal labor, as well as social, cultural and traditional social structure are among the factors that increase women's poverty.

In the study, some socio-cultural factors were observed that made women feel themselves subjectively poor. It has been determined that made women feel poorer due to reasons such as the inability of women to work due to child, patient, and elderly care, domestic responsibilities and patriarchal family structure, low education levels, the responsibility of supporting the family alone, and their families being poor like them. In summary, although women living in different categories of poverty live in similar poverty conditions, it has been observed that the processes, experiences, attitudes and behaviors, perspectives, coping strategies they develop, and efforts to change their lives are different.

In this study, which evaluated women's poverty, it was observed that women were subjected to physical, psychological, and social deprivations due to the poverty they experienced. It is obvious that women are not getting enough of the many basic requirements necessary to maintain an acceptable level of life. Almost all of the women who

participated in the study struggling with poverty by taking the risk of working under all circumstances to earn a family income and educate their children. Therefore, necessary measures should be taken to reduce the deprivation experienced by poor women. Governments need to develop social policies to address this and adopt regulations that will empower women, such as land distribution, education programs, job creation, employment services, access to housing, childcare facilities, and gender reform laws.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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