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Lived Experiences of Mothers Parenting Preschool-Aged Children in Bafq County, Iran: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore the lived experiences, stressors, and coping strategies of mothers parenting preschool-aged children (3–6 years) in semi-rural Bafq County, Yazd Province, Iran.

Methods and Materials: We conducted a qualitative study using a descriptive phenomenological approach. Purposive sampling recruited mothers with preschool children from local health centers. Twenty-two participants completed semi-structured, in-depth interviews (60–90 minutes). Audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed with Colaizzi's seven-step method (1978). Rigor was enhanced through member checking, expert/peer review, and methodological triangulation; two independent coders achieved inter-rater agreement ($\kappa \approx 0.85$).

Findings: Analysis yielded ~200 initial codes condensed to 83 validated codes, organized into nine subthemes under three overarching themes: (1) Distressing/Traumatic Parenting Experiences (fear, anxiety, helplessness, shame, psychological distress); (2) Growth-Oriented Parenting Experiences (parental aspirations, achievements, and satisfaction signifying personal growth alongside the child); and (3) Dominant Parenting Strategies, encompassing effective (acceptance, role-modeling, confidence, flexibility, problem-solving, religious coping) and ineffective approaches (impulsivity, poor communication, inconsistency, perfectionism, emotional withdrawal). Quotations illustrated both burden and meaning-making in motherhood within constraints of traditional gender roles, limited services, and geographic isolation in Bafq.

Conclusion: Mothers in Bafq experience a dual reality of strain and growth. Context-sensitive supports—such as community-based parenting groups, spousal communication workshops, and accessible mental-health services (including telehealth)—may bolster resilience and optimize child outcomes. Future work should include diverse rural settings and longer-term follow-up to examine change over time.

Keywords: Lived experiences, mothers, preschool children, parenting strategies.

Introduction

Parenting is a complex and vital role that influences both child development and parents' mental, emotional, and social well-being (Novianti et al., 2023). It evolves as children grow, requiring continuous adaptation, with mothers playing a central role in teaching life skills and emotional regulation (Frosch et al., 2021). Early childhood, especially ages three to six, is a critical period for rapid cognitive, emotional, and social development (Mengxia, 2024; Meriem et al., 2020). The quality of parenting during this stage directly affects children's cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes (Prime et al., 2023), with positive practices linked to improved language, emotional intelligence, and social skills (Doinita & Maria, 2015; Jones et al., 2015). For mothers, caregiving is demanding yet rewarding, requiring significant time, energy, and emotional labor while balancing household and professional responsibilities (Hosseini et al., 2024; Jeong et al., 2021).

In Bafq County, a semi-rural region characterized by its desert climate and traditional social structures, mothers face distinct challenges shaped by cultural norms, economic constraints, and limited access to resources (Massoumeh Mangeli et al., 2017). Traditional gender roles often place the primary burden of childcare and household management on women, reinforcing expectations of self-sacrifice and intensive mothering. These roles can limit mothers' autonomy and access to personal time or professional opportunities, contributing to emotional and psychological strain. For instance, cultural expectations in Bafq County may emphasize mothers' roles as moral and behavioral guides for their children, adding pressure to instill specific values, such as modesty and respect for elders, in young children (Ardakani, 2019).

Economic challenges further exacerbate these pressures. Bafq County's economy relies heavily on mining and agriculture, with limited job opportunities for women, particularly mothers of young children. This economic dependency often restricts access to affordable childcare, forcing mothers to manage caregiving without external support. Additionally, the region's geographic isolation means limited access to healthcare facilities, mental health services, and early childhood education programs. Mothers may need to travel significant distances to access pediatric care or

developmental resources, which is particularly challenging given transportation barriers and financial constraints (Ardakani, 2019; Massoumeh Mangeli et al., 2017).

The lack of mental health resources is a significant concern, as maternal mental health directly influences parenting quality and child development outcomes. In rural Iran, stigma surrounding mental health issues often discourages mothers from seeking help, leading to unaddressed stress, anxiety, or depression. This is particularly acute in Bafq County, where community expectations and traditional norms may discourage open discussions about emotional struggles, leaving mothers to cope in isolation. Moreover, the absence of community-based support groups or parenting programs limits opportunities for mothers to share experiences or learn adaptive strategies, further impacting their well-being and ability to foster their children's development (Ardakani, 2019; Jannati et al., 2021).

Recent qualitative studies in Iran provide some insight into parenting challenges but are limited in scope and geographic focus. For example, a 2016 study in Kerman Province explored the experiences of teenage mothers, highlighting themes of social stigma, economic hardship, and limited access to education (M. Mangeli et al., 2017). While this study sheds light on the challenges faced by young mothers, it focuses on an urban-adjacent context and a specific demographic (teenage mothers), which differs from the broader age range and semi-rural setting of Bafq County. Another study conducted in northwest Iran in 2015 examined the experiences of student mothers aged 24–50, identifying conflicts between academic pursuits and parenting responsibilities (Behboodi Moghadam et al., 2017). This study, however, was set in an urban context and focused on mothers balancing higher education, which is less relevant to the predominantly non-student, working-class mothers in Bafq County.

In contrast, this study targets a more diverse group of mothers in a semi-rural setting, focusing on the interplay between traditional socio-cultural norms and modern parenting demands. Unlike previous studies, which often centered on specific subgroups (e.g., teenage or student mothers), this research examines mothers of varying

ages and backgrounds, emphasizing the unique challenges of parenting young children (ages three to six) in a geographically isolated and culturally conservative region. Additionally, while prior studies addressed general parenting challenges, this study specifically explores the impact of socio-cultural expectations on maternal mental health and child development, areas underexplored in the Iranian context.

Unlike previous Iranian qualitative research, which often focuses on urban or specific demographic groups, this study prioritizes a semi-rural context and examines the broader socio-cultural influences on parenting. By adopting a phenomenological approach, it seeks to capture the subjective meanings mothers assign to their roles, offering insights into how they navigate cultural expectations, resource scarcity, and mental health challenges. The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of mothers parenting preschool-aged children in Bafq County, Iran.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

The present study used a qualitative research design and a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of mothers raising young children.

We chose this method because it focuses on finding subjective meanings and emotional processes that quantitative studies often miss. The phenomenological approach gives us a more nuanced picture of the challenges and changes that mothers face in the early years of their child's development by focusing on individual stories.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling from health centers located in Bafgh, Yazd Province, Iran. Eligibility criteria included (1) being a mother of a child aged between three and six years, (2) possession of a health record for the child at the health center during the first quarter of 2024, and (3) demonstrating emotional stability throughout the interview process. Mothers who did not fully cooperate during interviews or who had children with diagnosed psychiatric or significant medical conditions were excluded from the final sample. Of the initial 26 participants, a total of 22 mothers were included in the final analysis after theoretical saturation was achieved—when no new themes emerged from additional data. To ensure diversity in perspectives, efforts were made to include participants from varied demographic backgrounds, including differences in age, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Mothers and Children in the Experimental and Control Groups

Characteristic	Experimental Group (n=30)	Control Group (n=30)
Mother's age (years)		
26–32	60%	40%
33–39	7.6%	53.3%
40–46	33.3%	6.7%
Mean ± SD	33.8 ± 3.74	33.07 ± 4.84
Occupation		
Homemaker	66.7%	73.3%
Office worker	33.3%	26.7%
Education level		
High school diploma	40%	13.3%
Associate degree	26.7%	33.3%
Bachelor's degree	13.3%	53.3%
Master's degree	20%	0%
Child's age (years)		
Mean ± SD	4.6 ± 1.05	4.73 ± 1.03

Instruments

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, detailed accounts of the participants' parenting experiences. Questions were informed by existing

literature and adapted iteratively based on insights from previous interviews. Examples of guiding questions included:

“What has been your experience of parenting during the early years of your child's development?”

“How do your expectations of parenting compare with your actual experiences?”

“What challenges have you faced in raising your child during this period?”

“How do you manage your emotional well-being while navigating these parenting challenges?”

“What strategies have you found effective in fostering your child's emotional expression?”

Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted in two sessions where necessary, and all sessions were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent.

In this study, a triangulation technique was employed to assess internal validity, which included the following sources: 1) participants' experiences of parenting based on the interviews, 2) review and sharing of the analysis results with experts in the field, and 3) relative comparison of the interview data analysis with existing theoretical literature and research. Considering that the data analysis was based on Colaizzi's (1978) method, the use of a feedback mechanism to return sentences and phrases to participants facilitated a deeper exploration of the information and details. Next, a table summarizing the interview results was reviewed by five experts, who indicated that the information provided a comprehensive coverage of mothers' lived experiences in parenting. Additionally, a comparison with the theoretical literature suggested that the results from the analysis of the interviews had a relatively good theoretical similarity with findings from other related studies.

With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded, and interviewers focused on maintaining a structured interview process. Triangulation, incorporating input from participants and external experts, and member checking, utilizing participant feedback, were employed to ensure the study's validity. The trustworthiness of the qualitative data collection and analysis was evaluated using recognized guidelines, resulting in an inter-rater reliability score of 0.85, which shows a strong agreement among the people coding the data.

With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded, and the interviewers focused on maintaining a consistent semi-structured approach. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation, incorporating insights from both participants and external experts, as well as

through member checking, whereby participants reviewed and confirmed the interpretations of their statements. To ensure methodological rigor, two independent researchers coded the interview transcripts. After initial coding, both coders compared their assigned codes and discussed any discrepancies until consensus was reached. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to determine the level of inter-rater reliability, resulting in a value of 0.85, which indicates a strong agreement between coders.

This study applied purposive sampling to select participants with direct and relevant lived experiences. Although 26 mothers were initially invited, only 22 were included in the final analysis after excluding non-cooperative participants and those not meeting the inclusion criteria. While many phenomenological studies recommend a sample size of 5 to 15 participants [Creswell et al., \(2021\)](#), recent qualitative literature suggests that larger samples may be required when participants are heterogeneous or when the phenomena under study are contextually complex. In this study, the decision to continue interviews beyond the initial range was justified by the need to ensure maximum variation and capture diverse perspectives among semi-rural mothers. Data saturation was monitored continuously during data collection and was only confirmed when no new themes or codes emerged, indicating that the final sample size of 22 was adequate to fully capture the depth and range of the mothers' lived experiences.

Data Analysis

For the analysis and interpretation of the interviews, Colaizzi's method (1978) was employed. Initially, all recorded interviews were carefully listened to and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was read multiple times to allow the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of the participants' narratives. In the next step, repetitive, irrelevant, and unrelated content was excluded from the analysis to maintain focus on the core research objectives. From the remaining data, significant statements directly related to the participants' experiences of parenting were extracted. These statements were then assigned descriptive labels that accurately captured their intended meanings. This process was systematically applied to all interviews, with each sentence examined until the final line of each transcript was processed. Following the extraction of meaningful statements, the

researcher proceeded to translate these into formulated meanings and grouped them into thematic categories, reflecting shared patterns and commonalities across participants. To ensure the credibility and reliability of the thematic findings, a cross-checking process was conducted. This included both peer review by field experts and member checking with selected participants to verify that the themes accurately represented their lived experiences. The final themes were then validated and synthesized into a cohesive narrative, capturing the essence of mothers' experiences in raising children aged three to six years.

Findings and Results

In the first stage of analyzing the lived parenting experiences of mothers, approximately 200 initial codes were extracted from the interview data. In the second stage of analysis, through summarizing the themes, the number of open codes was refined to 83. These codes were then conceptually grouped into 9 sub-themes based on their theoretical similarity and coherence. In the final stage, these sub-themes were organized into 3 overarching main themes, reflecting the emotional, developmental, and behavioral dimensions of the mothers' parenting experiences.

Main Theme 1: Traumatic Parenting Experiences

This theme captures parents' experiences of fear, anxiety, stress, depression, helplessness, guilt, and shame, affecting personal goals and mood.

Sub-Theme 1: Fear and Worry in Parenting

Parents experience daily anxiety related to their child's dependence, independence struggles, and lack of spousal support.

- "When 'parenting' comes up, I feel anxious" (Interviewee 1).
- "My anxiety and exhaustion transfer to my son" (Interviewee 1).
- "My main challenge is my son's extreme dependence" (Interviewee 1).
- "My husband helps, but we sometimes disagree, which causes anxiety" (Interviewee 6).

Sub-Theme 2: Parenting Helplessness

Parents feel inadequate, hopeless, and exhausted, struggling to manage their children's behavior.

- "When my son misbehaves, and my spouse blames me, I feel sad" (Interviewee 1).

- "I wanted to be a kind but firm mother" (Interviewee 2).
- "All duties rested on my shoulders" (Interviewee 10).
- "I feel very tired and hopeless" (Interviewee 18).

Sub-Theme 3: Shame and Parenting Failures

Guilt and self-blame arise from time constraints, limited knowledge, and perceived judgments.

- "I feel guilt that my job and attending university have kept me from spending enough time with him" (Interviewee 1).
- "I always feel guilty for not knowing how to raise my son correctly" (Interviewee 11).
- "I feel like others judge me for how I parent" (Interviewee 10).

Sub-Theme 4: Psychological Distress

Parents experience depression, anxiety, stress, fatigue, and isolation, often worsened by lack of support.

- "I experience anxiety and panic attacks due to work, my child's behavior, and balancing everything" (Interviewee 2).
- "I feel constantly tired and have little energy to engage with my children" (Interviewee 14).
- "My husband is unaware of my emotional struggles, adding to my distress" (Interviewee 19).

Main Theme 2: Growth-Enhancing Parenting Experiences

Parents experience growth through aspirations, achievements, and satisfaction, reflecting personal and child development.

Sub-Theme 5: Parental Aspirations

Parents focus on their children's mental, emotional, and social well-being.

- "I want my son to have a calm mind and not experience the obsessions that I have had" (Interviewee 1).
- "I want him to manage on his own in society" (Interviewee 6).
- "I want him to be polite, creative, focused, and socially engaged" (Interviewee 7).

Sub-Theme 6: Parenting Achievements

Parenting fosters self-awareness and personal growth.

- "I thought I was very patient and understanding, but in reality, it's not like that" (Interviewee 4).

- “Parenting for me means growing and living alongside my child” (Interviewee 5).

Sub-Theme 7: Satisfaction in Parenting

Parents derive joy from children’s growth, independence, and positive behavior.

- “I feel joy when I see signs of physical growth...and cognitive growth through games” (Interviewee 1).
- “I feel a sense of pride and happiness in being a mother” (Interviewee 6).
- “Despite the challenges, I experience joy. I never imagined I could love a being so much” (Interviewee 15).

Main Theme 3: Dominant Parenting Strategies

Focuses on parents’ behaviors and strategies, divided into effective and ineffective approaches.

Sub-Theme 8: Effective Strategies

Parents employ acceptance, modeling, self-confidence, and flexibility.

- “Children learn through imitation, not just discipline” (Interviewee 16).
- “I try to accept myself as a good enough parent” (Interviewee 1).
- “Children require practice and patience” (Interviewee 3).

Sub-Theme 9: Ineffective Strategies

Impulsivity, poor communication, and inconsistent expectations harm parenting outcomes.

- “I’m not patient, and I react quickly to my child’s actions” (Interviewee 4).
- “Sometimes I know things he doesn’t,” causing inconsistent parenting (Interviewee 5).
- “Exhaustion sometimes leads to giving in to my child’s demands” (Interviewee 1).

The stages of qualitative data analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Concepts of Parenting Experiences in Mothers of Children Aged 3 to 6

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Concepts
Traumatic Parenting Experiences	Fear and Anxiety in Parenting	Parenting anxiety; Transmitting parenting anxiety to the child; Doubting parental competence; Shock from parenting responsibilities; Worry about child’s excessive dependence; Anxiety due to differences in parenting styles; Lack of spouse’s involvement; Unpredictability of parenting; Maternal worry–child control cycle; Fear of child mimicking mother; Repeating childhood trauma; Fear of child’s harm; Fear of more children; Worry about being unavailable; Anxiety from illness; Fear of child’s humiliation due to illness; Increased stress after second child
	Parenting Helplessness	Sadness from spouse’s criticism; Difficulty managing child behavior; Confusion in parenting decisions; Feeling burned out; Lack of experience; Feeling alone; Child’s avoidant attachment; Childhood trauma impact; Hopelessness over child’s limitations; Lack of societal empathy; Emotional divorce; Lack of parenting knowledge; Facing future challenges; Inability to understand emotions; Frustration due to illness; Spouse’s addiction; Rejection by child
	Shame and Parenting Failure	Guilt over unavailability; Inadequacy due to different parenting styles; Supportive parenting guilt; Inadequacy managing behavior; Parental perfectionism; Guilt over hereditary illness
	Perceived Personal Limitations	Lack of personal progress; Sacrificing personal goals
Growth-Oriented Parenting Experiences	Parental Aspirations	Aspiration for mental health, life satisfaction, academic/career success; Independence and autonomy; Social skills; Creativity and politeness; High self-esteem; Positive role modeling
	Parenting Achievements	Self-awareness; Growth alongside child; Development in personal attributes
	Satisfaction with Parenting	Joy in physical/cognitive/emotional growth; Spouse’s involvement; Fulfillment in parenting; Enjoyment despite difficulty; Pleasure in obedience; Positive feedback; Curiosity and empathy; Strong sibling bonds

Parents adopt a range of strategies in response to the challenges of child-rearing. Effective strategies, such as acceptance of limitations, role modeling, self-acceptance, religious coping, and problem-solving, promote resilience, confidence, and positive child development. In contrast, ineffective strategies—like impulsivity,

avoidance of communication, giving in to demands, perfectionism, and emotional withdrawal—can hinder parent-child relationships and contribute to stress. Distinguishing between these approaches helps identify practices that support healthy parenting and those that may require modification (Table 3,4).

Table3*Effective Parenting Strategies and Their Concepts*

Strategy	Description / Concepts
Acceptance of limitations	Accepting personal or situational limits
Role modeling	Demonstrating positive behavior as an example
Self-acceptance	Acknowledging and accepting oneself
Religious coping	Using faith or religious practices to cope
Teaching assertiveness	Educating children to express themselves confidently
Confidence	Parental self-confidence
Flexibility and resilience	Adaptability and psychological resilience
Problem-solving	Addressing challenges proactively
Avoidance of blame	Avoiding blaming others for difficulties
Maternal employment	Benefits from mother's work outside home

Table 4*Ineffective Parenting Strategies and Their Concepts*

Strategy	Description / Concepts
Impulsivity	Acting without thinking; hasty reactions
Avoiding communication	Evading communication with child or spouse
Giving in to demands	Yielding to child's demands easily
Conditional validation	Offering approval only under certain conditions
Entitlement	Feeling of special rights or privileges
Perfectionism	Excessive striving for perfection
Verbal anger	Expressing anger verbally
Procrastination	Delaying necessary actions
Overdependence on validation	Relying too much on external approval
Emotional distance due to obsession	Withdrawing emotionally because of fixation

This analysis reveals the multifaceted nature of early childhood parenting. Traumatic Parenting Experiences reflect the emotional struggles many mothers face, including anxiety, helplessness, and shame. In contrast, Growth-Oriented Parenting Experiences highlight moments of fulfillment, personal growth, and aspirations for their children's success. Dominant Parenting Strategies show a mix of effective and ineffective coping approaches, emphasizing the need for support systems that strengthen resilience and promote healthy parenting practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study illuminate the emotional and psychological complexities of parenting, particularly for mothers in Bafq County, Iran, where cultural norms and resource constraints uniquely shape these experiences. The overarching theme of Traumatic Parenting Experiences reveals a constellation of fear, anxiety, guilt, helplessness, and psychological distress that profoundly impacts parental well-being and role fulfillment. These findings resonate with global literature identifying parenting as an emotionally taxing role (Dong et al., 2022; Mistry et al., 2007), but in Bafq County, traditional gender roles amplify these challenges for mothers, who often bear primary caregiving

responsibilities due to cultural expectations of maternal sacrifice and domesticity. Limited access to mental health resources in this rural setting further exacerbates stress, as parents lack institutional support to address their psychological burdens.

The sub-theme of Fear and Worry in Parenting underscores pervasive anxiety stemming from child-rearing responsibilities, compounded by cultural pressures to ensure children's success in a community that highly values familial honor and social standing (Nimphy et al., 2024; van den Hurk). Unlike Chapman et al., (2022), who focus on generalized parenting anxiety Chapman et al., (2022), this study highlights how fears of intergenerational trauma and societal judgment in Bafq County intensify maternal stress, particularly given expectations to raise children who uphold traditional values while navigating modern challenges. These cultural dynamics, rooted in collectivist ideals, may explain why parents here experience heightened guilt compared to Western contexts, where individualistic frameworks often prioritize personal well-being.

The sub-themes of Parenting Helplessness, Shame, and Perceived Personal Limitations reflect the emotional toll of perceived inadequacies, particularly when navigating children's behavioral challenges or spousal dynamics. In Bafq County, patriarchal norms often place blame on mothers for family discord, deepening feelings

of shame and emotional exhaustion (Aarntzen et al., 2023). This contrasts with studies in urban settings, where access to support networks may mitigate such pressures. The lack of spousal support, a critical factor in this study, aligns with Park & Lee, (2022) but is uniquely intensified by local expectations of male authority, limiting collaborative parenting (Park & Lee, 2022). Psychological Distress captures the mental health challenges mothers face, with anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms like panic attacks reflecting the strain of balancing caregiving with societal and economic demands. In Bafq County, limited employment opportunities and rigid gender roles heighten this distress, as mothers juggle work and family with minimal external support. The reciprocal link between children's behavioral difficulties and parental mental health, supported by attachment theory, is particularly pronounced in this context, where cultural stigma around mental health discourages seeking help.

In contrast, Growth-Enhancing Parenting Experiences reveals parenting as a source of personal growth and fulfillment, even within Bafq County's constraints. The Parental Aspirations sub-theme shows parents prioritizing their children's emotional and mental well-being over traditional academic success, reflecting a shift toward holistic development influenced by globalized media and education trends penetrating rural Iran (Abidin et al., 2022; Le & Impett, 2019). The Parenting Achievements sub-theme highlights how overcoming cultural and resource barriers fosters resilience and self-awareness, as parents adapt to challenges like limited schooling options. Satisfaction in Parenting underscores the universal joy of milestones, but in Bafq County, these moments are tempered by societal pressures to conform to idealized parenting roles (Brown et al., 2020).

The theme of Effective and Ineffective Parenting Strategies offers insights into navigating these challenges. Effective Strategies, such as self-acceptance and role modeling, align with the parental role enhancement hypothesis and are particularly effective in Bafq County, where parents model resilience to counter resource scarcity. In contrast, Ineffective Strategies like impulsivity and inconsistent parenting, often exacerbated by poor spousal communication, reflect cultural tensions around authority and discipline (Lanjekar et al., 2022; Rachmad et al., 2023). These findings suggest that interventions tailored to Bafq

County should prioritize culturally sensitive mental health support and spousal communication workshops to address patriarchal dynamics.

This study's unique contribution lies in its exploration of how Bafq County's cultural and resource-limited context shapes parenting stress and resilience. Unlike prior research focusing on urban or Western settings, it highlights how traditional gender roles and rural isolation amplify maternal burdens while fostering unique pathways to growth. Interventions could include community-based parenting programs that integrate cultural values, such as collective family honor, with modern psychological strategies to enhance emotional regulation and reduce stigma around seeking help.

This study reveals the emotional and psychological complexities of parenting in Bafq County, Iran, where cultural norms and rural constraints amplify maternal stress while fostering resilience. Parenting is both challenging—marked by anxiety, guilt, and distress—and a source of growth and fulfillment, shaped by collectivist values and limited resources. To support parents, practitioners should offer culturally sensitive maternal mental health programs, including counseling and peer support, to reduce stigma and stress. Community workshops should enhance spousal communication and emotional regulation. Policymakers should improve access to rural mental health services, such as telehealth, and provide economic support for working mothers. Limitations include the study's focus on Bafq County, limiting generalizability, potential self-selection bias, and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce recall or social desirability biases. Future research should explore diverse settings and use objective measures.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines

for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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