



Destabilizing Factors of Family in the View of Ayatullah Khamenei

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Abstract

Islamic commandments regarding the formation of a family and Islam's attention to the rights and responsibilities of the family members are an indication of the importance that Islam attaches to the family. This research was conducted through a qualitative analysis based on grounded theory to analyze the factors that destabilize families in the view of Ayatullah Khamenei. After analyzing his discourses with a total population sampling approach between the years 1368 and 1398, a model of the elements that weaken families in his view was structured. In the analysis that took place in the open coding phase, 238 concepts were identified under 26 categories. The outcomes of the research show that the four elements, namely economic, cultural, social, and individual elements are the principal causes of the destabilization of families. Also, the ignorance of women concerning Islamic teachings and their inability to reconstruct their own identities were identified as the intervening conditions. The deficiency and lack of laws regarding family rights and lack of any guarantee of their enforcement, non-implementation of Islamic laws, the cultural atmosphere of the society concerning women issues, moral and intellectual security of the society, and non-presentation of Islamic view regarding family rights were identified as the contextual conditions.

Keywords: Islam, destabilization of families, Ayatullah Khamenei, the grounded theory

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Introduction

As a fundamental institution in society, a family has always been an object of attention. However, now this institution is exposed to serious threats. These threats, through endangering the foundations of family, are targeting the foundations of society as well. Thus, with the valuable discourses of the Leader of the Revolution (Ayatollah Khamenei) in mind, one can duly understand that the collapse of the family is followed by expensive consequences such as the disintegration of society. The present study, through qualitative research based on grounded theory, aims to answer this question: What are the elements that destabilize families in the view of Ayatollah Khamenei? Analyzing the discourses of Ayatollah Khamenei between the years 1368 and 1398 SH presents the factors that destabilize the family in a paradigmatic model. Precise identification of the types of social issues allows the possibility of describing the subject and obtaining effective solutions. This paper seeks to describe and explain precisely the causes of the destabilization of families and to present the solutions, based on the words of Ayatollah Khamenei, which will help the policy-makers to implement what he seeks.

Sociologists have analyzed the elements that destabilize families from various perspectives. Actor-network theory emphasizes the relationship between spouses and the familial network and says that the lesser the relationships in the network, the better the spouses perform their responsibilities. In the case of the network being strong, they ought to accept the interference of others in their lives which avails the grounds for disagreements (Ḥusaynī, Riḍāpūr and 'Iṣmat Sā'atlū, 1394 SH). As per exchange theory, if the wife and husband assess the cost (efforts they spend) of the relationship to be more than its benefits, then due to the imbalance in the exchange the possibility of severance of the mutual relationship between spouses increases (Şedāqat and Asadiyān, 1393 SH). In matchmaking theory, more emphasis is put on the sameness of the attributes and qualities of spouses. Bowerman says that a person, consciously or unconsciously, is after selecting a spouse who possesses similar attributes. The more the similarity of the spouses with each other in attributes relating to ethnicity, religion, race,

etc. the firmer the matrimonial life they live (Sārūkhānī, 1385 SH). Functionalists consider any kind of disorder in the functions of the family as something that prepares grounds for inattentiveness towards each other, inappropriate behavior, violence, and so on. (Kaffāshī and Sarābādānī, 1393 SH). According to Parsons, for the family to be able to play an effective role, there ought to be a division of labor by sex, and if the functions of wives and husbands were to become similar to each other, competition within the family would cause derangement in the family. He also speaks of the overlapping of the roles which cause disorder in the family environment. In other words, the male breadwinner should not be negligent of his important role in the family (Ṣadāqat and Asadiyān, 1393 SH).

Theoretical Research Framework

Definition and Importance of Family in the View of Ayatollah Khamenei

Regarding the definition and importance of family Ayatollah Khamenei asserts:

Society is also formed by cells and these cells are families. Each family is a cell of the frame and body of society. If they [families] are sound, if they have appropriate behaviour, then the body of society, the frame of the society will be sound.

He has also said on other occasions:

The objective of marriage is the formation of a family. This very bond of matrimony and the formation of a new unit is a source of tranquility for the wife and husband and a source of perfection and completion of their personality. Without it, both the woman and man are incomplete. All other issues are secondary. If this institution becomes sound and firm, then it will influence the future as well as the current condition of society. Marriage is actually a gate for entering into [the process of] formation of family, and the formation of a family is the foundation of all the social and human nurturing and training. A society without families is a disheveled society, an infirm society. It is a society in which the heritage of culture, thought, and beliefs belonging to one generation is not easily transferred to the other generation. It is a society in which the training of a human being does not happen

conveniently and smoothly. If a society does not have families or if, in a society, families are unstable, then the man will not be nurtured in the best nurturing place (i.e., family). If the family is not there, then there are no youngsters, no children, no human beings, no righteous men and women, no morals, and no transfer of positive, good and valuable experiences of the previous generation to the next generation. If the family is not there, then the center of the creation of faith and religiousness is no more there. In societies - in which the family is [considered as something] frail and foundationless – either families are not formed at all or they are seldom formed or if families are formed, they are unstable and exposed to annihilation. In such societies, the psychological and nervous problems are very much more than the societies in which families are firmly established and women and men are connected to a point and center. (Ayatullah Khamenei's Speeches during the solemnization of marriage contracts on 10-2-1376, 18-5-1374, 30-3-1379, 12-11-1372 and 21-12-1379)

Even though a few studies have been conducted regarding the elements that destabilize families under various and even non-explicit conditions, no research has been done yet regarding the elements that weaken families in the view of Ayatollah Khamenei. Thus, the necessity of studying this subject based on Grounded theory is clearer than ever. The most important papers related to and closer to this subject were reviewed.

Table 1: Analysis of Previous Studies

Author(S)	Objectives or Questions	Method	Most Important Conclusions
Nūri (1389 SH)	Identifying the obstacles to the creation of sound relationships in a family	Documentary research	The factors that inflict the most damage upon effective and organised familial relationships include individual, cultural, familial, economic and legal factors which were briefly reviewed in this research.

Ishaqi (1391 SH)	Identifying the sociological elements effective upon women's request for divorce in Tehran	Survey	The results of the investigation show that from the viewpoint of social realities, the capital possessed by the spouses and matchmaking, there exists a considerable statistical difference between the two groups which were studied and these elements can be considered as the realities which were effective in the inclination of Tehrani women toward divorce. In this research, the results of logistic regression for analysing the probability of divorce show that the probability of divorce not taking place for someone whose marriage possesses a discipline in the family, mutual capital of the spouses, negative outlook towards divorce and similarity between the spouses, is 59% and on the other hand, there is a 41% possibility of divorce taking place even where these conditions exist.
Hajiyān Muqaddam (1393 SH)	The objective of this study is to compile and assimilate the results of the studies already done concerning families, to identify the factors that are the fundamental components and factors that are detrimental to Iranian families.	Meta-analysis	In this study, it came to light that the researchers have identified 104 elements, divided into 62 categories that make fundamental components and 42 elements that are erosive to Iranian families which respectively have the amplitude of 191 and 125 in individual, familial and social dimensions. Thus, the aggregate of these elements has an amplitude of 316 An overall evaluation shows that the first three categories in the order of priority belong to familial factors 55% (173 elements), individual factors 40% (137 elements) and social factors 5% (16 elements). The final analysis resulted in a specific model of elements that are influential in the institution of family based on the variables analyzed by the researchers drawn on eleven major subjects which are, in the order of priority, as follows: cultural elements (which, in this study, include faith, beliefs, ethical values), familial interactions, physical and spiritual soundness, individual growth, the method of managing familial life, economic issues and material welfare, the cultural-social-political atmosphere of the society, age difference between spouses, duration of matrimony, public services, public transportation, and health considerations of the society.

Taqawīpūr and Ṣalawāṭiyyān (1394 SH)	Presentation of a desirable model of an exemplary Islamic family	Analysis of qualitative data with an inductive approach	The final model of the Islamic family derived from the discourses of Ayatullah Khamenei can be divided into three general sections, namely theoretical views regarding family, practical strategies for strengthening families and the elements that cause instability in families.
Taqawīpūr, Ṣalawāṭiyyān and Ismā' īlī (1396 SH)	Presenting a comprehensive model of an exemplary family Islamic	Analysis of qualitative data with an inductive approach	The comprehensive model was presented based on three axes, namely practical strategies for strengthening families, theoretical views of Islam regarding family and the elements that destabilize families. Each of these axes has subsections. Under the first axis, Islam's view concerning the formation of a family, the desirable qualities of a family atmosphere, the relationship between a family and society and Islam's view regarding spouses have been presented. In the second axis, concepts of the economy of the family, the formation of a family and the responsibilities of the members of the family are presented. Finally, the elements that destabilize families, the obstacles in the formation of a family and the responsibilities of others in the case of disputes between spouses are the topics brought under the third axis.
Riyāḥī Dihkardī (1397)	Identification of cultural and religious elements that are effective in destabilizing the foundations of families in Tehran	Survey	The younger individuals can have easy and unrestricted pre-marriage relationships with each other, the more the family is afflicted with the instability of its foundations. The more the inattentiveness of the youth towards religious affairs the more the family becomes fragile. The more the youth are inclined towards Western clothing and culture the more the family comes in the danger zone of being shattered.

The above-mentioned studies have tried, to highlight the elements that weaken or strengthen families and their roles. Some of these studies are limited to describing these factors or have, at best, suggested a desirable model for a family in Islam. This research, through a precise study of the words of Ayatollah Khamenei, the present study attempts to introduce those elements which weaken families. The research method employed in this study has eventually been able to present a paradigmatic model of causes, contexts, interveners, strategies and consequences concerning the weakening of a family from the perspective of Ayatullah Khamenei.

Research Methodology

Method of Execution of the Study

The grounded theory which was first presented by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 starts with observation as opposed to the deductive approach and then puts its forward models, concepts or general categories. As a result, this approach avails the possibility of uncovering unexpected phenomena. (Babbie, 1385 SH, 2/587) This study, based on the grounded theory, through analysing the words of Ayatullah Khamenei, structures a model concerning elements that weaken families in his view. In this method, data is collected through interviews, observation and other sources such as governmental documents, newspapers, recordings, videos, letters and books (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The method of collecting data in this study has been library research. Interpretation of speeches took place based on Strauss and Corbin's method and based on that the coding took place in three stages of open coding, axial coding and selective coding (see: Jones and Alony, 2011). In the open coding, concepts were identified through a line-by-line analysis of Ayatollah Khamenei's talks and their characteristics and dimensions were determined (Corbin and Strauss, 1396 SH). In this stage, 238 concepts and 26 categories were identified.

Table 2: A Sample of Open Coding

A part of Ayatullah Khamenei's talk during the recitation of a marriage contract on 9-12-1380	Codes
It is well known that in the Western world, especially in America and some of the North European countries, the foundations of the family are very unstable. Why? The reason is that sexual freedom and sexual unrestrainedness are more there. When shamelessness becomes prevalent, i.e., women and men satisfy these innate needs outside the institution of family, the institution of family, in reality, becomes something meaningless, it becomes something imposed and ceremonial; that's why they (the spouses) separate from each other sentimentally; well, they have not separated outwardly but they do not love each other and have no cordial attachment.	Sexual freedom, the prevalence of shamelessness, sexual unrestrainedness, sentimental divorce, lack of mutual love, weakening of family

After the primary coding of his talks, the concepts were classified into some categories. For instance, the concepts of white marriage, sentimental divorce, official divorce, single-

parent families, unmarried life, etc., together structured the category “weakening of family” and then in the stage of axial coding, this category occupied the central position and a network of connections was formed around it (see: Bohm, 2004) and with selective coding, the categories were unified and turned into a paradigmatic model. The purpose behind this coding is to reform and complete the categories involved in a theory (see: Lawrence and Tar, 2013). Finally, reliability was achieved through the performance of coding by two coders during two different periods thus confirming its correctness.

Statistical Population and Sample

In this research, the data was acquired by analyzing all the talks of Ayatollah Khamenei with total population sampling between the years 1368 and 1398 SH. The transcripts of his talks were taken from the website of his office.

Conclusions of the Study

Axial Coding and Formation of Categories

The Central Category

Table 3: The category of the central phenomenon 'weakening of family' in the talks of Ayatollah Khamenei

Concepts	Central Category
White marriage, sentimental divorce, official divorce, single-parent families, abandonment of spouse, the decrease of relationships within family and relatives, unmarried life, children without guardians, etc.	Weakening of family

As it is the subject of the paper, “weakening of family” was selected as the central category so that a network of connections is formed around it. The instances of the weakening of a family based on the views of Ayatullah Khamenei are presented in Table 3. For example, he remarked:

Today in the Western world, the family has very frail foundations. Families, especially women, suffer due to separation. If God forbid, a family is shattered, both the husband and the wife become perplexed, wayward and troubled, and experience suffering; however, in this situation, the wife suffers more. Today in the Western world women are afflicted with this suffering because families get disbanded, shattered, and annihilated very easily. Sometimes the women themselves initiate the annihilation of the family, but they are the ones who suffer more due to it. (Ayatollah Khamenei's Speech, addressing a group of women of the city of Urūmiyeh, 28-6-1375 SH)

Causal Conditions of Weakening of Families

The causal conditions of the weakening of families were classified under four categories: individual, social, cultural and economic elements. Based on the coding of Ayatullah Khamenei's talks, the greater number of identified concepts (94) belonged to the category of individual and personal factors. Thus, it can be concluded that according to Ayatullah Khamenei the most important elements that weaken families are individual and personal problems. Time and again he advises young couples, "Get along with each other". This sentence also confirms the individual elements that have more influence on the weakening of families in his view.

Table 4: Causal Conditions of Weakening of Families in Ayatullah Khamenei's View

Concepts	Number of Concepts	Category
unemployment of men, excessive occupation of men	2	economic elements
Luxuriousness, minimalist view of men regarding women, interchanging of roles, patriarchy, matriarchy, the greed of men, harming women, matrimony of the era of ignorance, sexual freedom, marriage age moving upward, disregard towards easy marriage, weakening of motherly role, forced marriage, sense of ownership of men towards women, etc.	68	social elements
Interference of the elders in particulars of the lives of young couples, imitation of Western culture, unreal family gatherings, competition with other families, etc.	10	cultural elements

Lack of love, cheating, unfaithfulness, insincerity or unpleasantness, lack of mutual closeness, lack of trust, immorality, bad behavior, violation of each other's rights, lack of spiritual influence, lack of cordial attachment of wife and husband, irresponsibility, lack of cordiality, lack of trusteeship, high expectations, lack of cooperation, two-facedness, lack of truthfulness, insult and degradation, greed, faultfinding, not expressing love, lack of truthfulness in expressing love, disregard towards each other's feelings, unkindness, revengefulness, instigation of each other's jealousy, suspicion, injustice towards each other, discrimination, incompatibility, etc.	94	individual and personal elements
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In Table 4 a sample of coding of causal conditions of weakening of families is given.

Context Category

After these four categories of elements are identified as causal conditions, it should be brought to mind that the causal conditions are generally valid only within a particular set of conditions. In the process of construction of a theory about action, conditions play the role of strengthening or limiting the possibility of action or interaction. (See Bohm, 2004) In other words, conditions are the customary actions and situations that may not take form in these contexts and make the backgrounds, arenas and limits in which the actions and processes take place (Saldana, 1395 SH). It follows that deficiency and lack of laws and guarantees of enforcement appropriate for those laws in the field of women and family rights, lack of implementation of Islamic laws, the prevalent cultural atmosphere of the society regarding women’s issues, ethical, and intellectual security in the society, and lack of explanation of Islamic views regarding family rights were identified as context conditions. In this context, Ayatullah Khamenei remarks, “In the construction of a family and its formation and in safeguarding a family, these Islamic laws must be observed so that the family persists. If the Islamic methods gain prevalence, the families shall become strong.” (A speech during the solemnization of marriage on 23-12-1379 and 15-1-1378 SH).

Table 5: Context category

Concepts	Subcategory	Category
Deficiency in-laws about women's rights, reforming laws, creation of required laws, designating severe punishments for violation of laws	Creation and reformation of laws	Deficiency and lack of laws and appropriate guarantees of enforcement in the field of women and family rights
The necessity of fulfilment of shariah and legal rights of women, lack of ethical and legal defense in favor of women inside the family, lack of legal defense, lack of legal and ethical support for women	Implementation of law and its guarantee	

In explaining the necessity of laws about family and women and their reform, Ayatullah Khamenei remarked:

Islam's purpose in defending the rights of women is, as was mentioned before, that the woman is not oppressed and the man does not consider himself her ruler. There are limits and rights in a family. The man has rights, the woman too has rights, and these rights have been ordered in a strongly just and balanced way. I am not talking about that which is wrong and only bears the name of Islam, I do not defend them. [I am talking about] that which belongs to Islam, which are the manifest and undeniable facts of Islam. These are the things which create a balance between the rights of husbands and wives in the family. (Ayatollah Khamenei's Speech during a meeting with a group of women on 30-7-1376 SH)

On another occasion, he said:

There are many shortcomings in our family atmosphere. It requires legal support, legal guarantee and guarantee of enforcement; and this must be actualized. This issue belongs to those fields in which less work has been done in the country, and the work must be done [there]. (Ayatollah Khamenei's Speech during a meeting with a group of distinguished women on 1-3-1390 SH)

In explaining the cultural atmosphere of the society regarding women and ethical and intellectual security, he remarked:

Women can pursue higher education. Some people think that girls should not pursue education. This is wrong, incorrect. Girls must receive education in those branches which are beneficial for them, and which they like. Society needs the education of girls just as it needs the education of boys. However, the atmosphere of learning must be sound for both boys as well as for girls.

University must be safe for people’s children, girls and boys alike. The streets and alleys must be secure in terms of morals and chastity for girls as well as for boys. If this security is achieved, then in the secure atmosphere, in the secure streets and markets, in the secure university, in the secure school, in which the moral and intellectual security has been availed – the officials and the parents must avail it – the Muslim girl, the Muslim boy, the Muslim man and the Muslim woman will be able to perform their activities. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s Speech addressing the gathering of women of Khūzistān on 20-12-1375 SH)

Intervening Conditions

The lack of women’s knowledge about Islamic teachings and their inability to educate themselves were introduced as intervening conditions:

The movement towards fulfilment of women’s rights must definitely take place in Muslim societies and our society; however [it should happen] as per the Islamic view and with the Islamic goal. Some people should not say [in objection] that what movement is this, what do women lack in our society?! Unfortunately, some people might think this way! This is superficiality. Women, in all societies including ours, are caught in injustice and inflicted with shortcomings which are imposed upon them, but these shortcomings are not the lack of freedom in the sense of unrestrainedness. This shortcoming is the lack of scope and opportunities for knowledge, awareness, training, morals, progress and flourishing of potential. These must be availed and pursued. This is the very thing which Islam emphasizes. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s Speech during a meeting with a group of women on 30-7-1376 SH)

Ayatollah Khamenei always encourages women to receive knowledge about human rights and Divine rights and he believes that the notion of moral and spiritual development of women should become widespread in women’s community. In the view of Ayatollah Khamenei, the woman is the axis of the compassionate institution that is family. Thus, a woman’s inability to educate herself and her lack of knowledge about [Islamic] teachings are followed by such consequences as the incorrect upbringing of members of the society and in turn, moral and spiritual problems at the social level. The point worth

reflecting on is that some analysts, through incorrect analysis of the prevalence of divorce and considering it is connected with women's awareness of their rights, corroborate this complication (Riyāhī, 1397 SH). But as per Ayatollah Khamenei's view, women's awareness of their rights prevents them from being oppressed and eventually brings about the strengthening of the family, reformation of society, humanity acquiring meaningfulness, and the spread of spirituality in society.

Table 6: Intervening category

Concepts	Subcategory	Category
Incorrect perspective regarding women, lack of scope for development and flourishing of women's knowledge	External factors	Women's inability to self-build
Non-prevalence of the notion of moral and spiritual development of women in women's community	Internal Factors	

The Category of Strategies

The strategies for solving the crisis of weakening families in Ayatollah Khamenei's view are the formation of family life, the persistence of that life and the Islamic way of life. Even though other strategies can be imagined such as disintegration [of marriages] and abandonment of matrimonial life, in Ayatullah Khamenei's view, these two are not the solutions for rising over this problem. He insistingly instructs the spouses:

If you happen to see that your spouse has a defect – no human being is without a defect – and you must (there is no way but to) tolerate them, then do tolerate them for they are also concurrently tolerating a defect of yours. People do not comprehend their own defects, they comprehend others' defects! So, decide to tolerate it. If it can be rectified, then do rectify it. If you see that nothing can be done, then get along with them. (Ayatollah Khamenei's Speech during the recitation of a marriage contract on 9-4-1378 SH)

His insistence marks up the importance of persistence in family life in his view. The importance of the formation of a family in his view is duly clarified in the following instructions:

As per the sacred shariah, the case of marriage [which results in] the formation of a family is a very important point and has many benefits, too. However, the most important of its benefits

and objectives is the formation of a family. This very bond of matrimony and the formation of a new social unit is a source of peace for the woman and the man and a source of perfection and completion of their personality. Without it, both the woman and the man remain incomplete. All the other issues are secondary. If this institution becomes sound and firm, then it will influence the future as well as the current condition of society. Marriage is actually a door for entering into [the process of] formation of a family, and the formation of a family is the foundation of all the social and human nurturing and training. The principal part of marriage is the matrimonial bond between the girl and the boy and the formation of a family. The very fact that the girl and the boy meet each other, the marriage contract as per shariah is recited, and they become husband and wife, causes an institution of family to get formed and a new family comes into existence. The Sacred Legislator (God) loves a Muslim and sound family. When a family is formed, there are many blessings in there; the needs of the wife and the husband are satisfied, and the generations of human beings persist. However, the main points are not children, beauty, and wealth. The main thing is that two individuals form a shared life, and this atmosphere [in which this shared life is formed] must be a sound atmosphere. The creation of an institution of family, a new institution in itself, is more important than anything else. The basis of the creation of human beings, whether women or men, is in such a way that a woman and a man ought to form a unit together so that life goes on with comfort, without worries, and with readiness for fulfilling the needs of human beings. If this does not happen, then an important foundation of life is breached. (Ayatollah Khamenei's Speeches during the recitation of marriage contracts on 10-2-1376, 18-5-1374, 23-9-1373, 16-5-1379 SH)

Regarding the importance of the Islamic way of life, he taught thus:

One of the dimensions of progress in its Islamic sense is the way of life or social behavior or method of life; these are all synonymous with each other. This is an important dimension. I want to discuss this subject to an extent today. If we look through the perspective of spirituality – that the purpose of human beings is [spiritual] felicity, success and prosperity, then we must attach importance to the “way of life”. If we were not believers in

spirituality and spiritual felicity, even then for a comfortable life, for a life with psychological and moral security it is important to pursue the issue of “way of life”. That’s why this issue is an important topic.

Why is divorce abundant in some parts of our country?! You see, so many of these various and widespread issues belonging to all the sections of life come under this concept of “way of life”. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s Speech in a meeting with the youth of the Province of Khurāsān-i Shumālī on 23-7-1391 SH)

He has emphasized in multiple instances that:

There are problems in our way of life. One of our problems is consumerism. One of our problems is wastefulness, excessiveness and excess spending. One of our problems is excessive convenience-seeking. One of our problems is aristocratic (luxurious) behavior. This aristocratic behavior, unfortunately, flows down from the higher classes to the lower classes. An intermediate individual - [i.e., someone] from the middle classes – when he wants to have a banquet or wants to hold a marriage ceremony, he holds the marriage ceremony in an aristocratic way. This is a flaw, this is wrong, and this harms the country. Consuming excessively, wanting, eating, and spending excessively are among the important flaws in our way of life. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s Speech addressing the gathering of natives and pilgrims in the shrine of Imam Riḍā on 1-1-1397 SH)

Thus, the following of the Islamic rulings and commandments regarding the formation of families and the way of life can guarantee the felicity of human beings throughout the generations, i.e., in society in its wide sense.

The Category of Consequences

The strategy of marriage and making the matrimonial life persist results in the formation and preservation of the family, human upbringing and training, fulfilment of human needs, preservation of the cultural identity, reformation of society, and spiritual, psychological and intellectual perfection of individuals of the society, etc. Ayatullah Khamenei asserted:

If the formation of the family takes place soundly and the moralities prevailing over both the spouses are right, rational and

following the principles of shariah, with what Allah has set, then such formation of the family is the foundation of reform of society and the foundation of the felicity of all the individuals of the society. (Ayatullah Khamenei's Speech during the recitation of a marriage contract on 8-3-1381 SH)

According to him, the preservation of principles and main elements of civilization and culture in society and their transfer to the next generations is achieved through the family.

When families are not there, everything is shattered. Why is it that Westerners try so much to promote lustfulness and corruption inside Eastern, Asian and Islamic nations? One of its reasons is this very thing, that they want to shatter the families through this so that the cultures of these societies are weakened so that they can dominate over them. Because unless the culture of a nation is weakened, nobody can subdue them, rein them and dominate them. The thing that makes nations vulnerable and brings them under the captivity of foreigners is losing their cultural identity. And [achievement of] this [loss of cultural identity] becomes easy through the disintegration of the foundations of families in a society. (Ayatollah Khamenei's talk during the recitation of a marriage contract on 26-1-1377 SH)

The formation of a family is the basis of all social and human nurturing. Ayatullah Khamenei believes that the weakness of family in the West – which has come to pass over many years – prepares grounds for the destruction of society and eventually results in the annihilation of material, intellectual and scientific wealth and resources of society. Peace and security in life, too, are but a result of adopting the Islamic way of life. He instructed thus:

What should we do so that the rights of the spouses – the rights of the wife, the rights of the husband – and the rights of the children are observed? What should we do so that divorce, the shattering of families, does not become prevalent among us just as it is prevalent in the West? What should we do so that not just the dignity of the woman in our society is protected and her familial honor is preserved but she is also able to act upon her social responsibilities and her social and familial rights are observed? What

should we do so that the woman is not compelled to choose only one of these things? These are among our fundamental issues because, in some of the big cities, bachelor homes exist. How has this Western disease penetrated our society? What is luxuriousness? Is it bad? Is it good? How much of it is bad? How much of it is good? What should we do so that it does not go beyond the extent of good and reaches the extent of bad? These are the different sections of the issues of “way of life”. There are tens of such issues. Some of them which I mentioned are more important. This is a list of those things which constitute the contents of a civilization. Civilizations are judged based on these. A civilization cannot be judged and admired just because it has cars, industries, or wealth while in that civilization such abundant problems encompass the whole society and lives of the people. These are the main things, [while] those (cars, industries, wealth, etc.) are the tools for actualizing this part so that people experience tranquility, so that they live with hope so that they live with security so that they progress so that they move [forward] so that they attain the desired human elevation. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s talk in a meeting with the youth of Khurāsān-i Shumālī province on 23-7-1391 SH)

The acquisition of high human virtues is also a result of adopting the Islamic way of life. In this regard, the following words of Ayatollah Khamenei can be pointed out:

This “transformation policy” must take us closer to the Islamic goals, it must take society towards a truly Islamic way of life, and it must be able to bring into existence the high human virtues inside us. (Ayatullah Khamenei’s talk in a meeting with a group of intellectuals on 18-2-1392 SH)

The independence of the society depends on the Islamic way of life. Imitating foreigners is against independence, especially cultural independence. Ayatollah Khamenei considers inconsiderateness and irrationality to be the cause of many divorces. Through rationality, comfort and security are achieved in life and many of the psychological, moral, will not appear. Obeying the judgement of human wisdom and intellect – which is adopted from the Divine teachings and Islamic way of life – prepares

grounds for the formation of a sound family and Islamic society.

One of the things that the Quran and Divine guidance have taught us is to follow the judgement of human wisdom and intellect. This is Quranic, i.e., following that which is concluded by the sound intellect and that which has the backing of the intellect’s judgment is a Quranic as well as a religious affair. These are the criteria. That which was taught to us by the selected servants of Allah, the Infallibles in His sight, makes the criterion. These are the criteria. Now [if it were to be said] that the people of the Western countries, the materialistic people, the people belonging to such and such part of the world act in this manner in their behavior, in their actions, in the affairs of their lives, in their relationships, in the formation of families, [so] we too ought to act in that manner; this [belief that we should imitate them] is wrong. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s talk in a gathering of Quran reciters on 19-4-1392 SH)

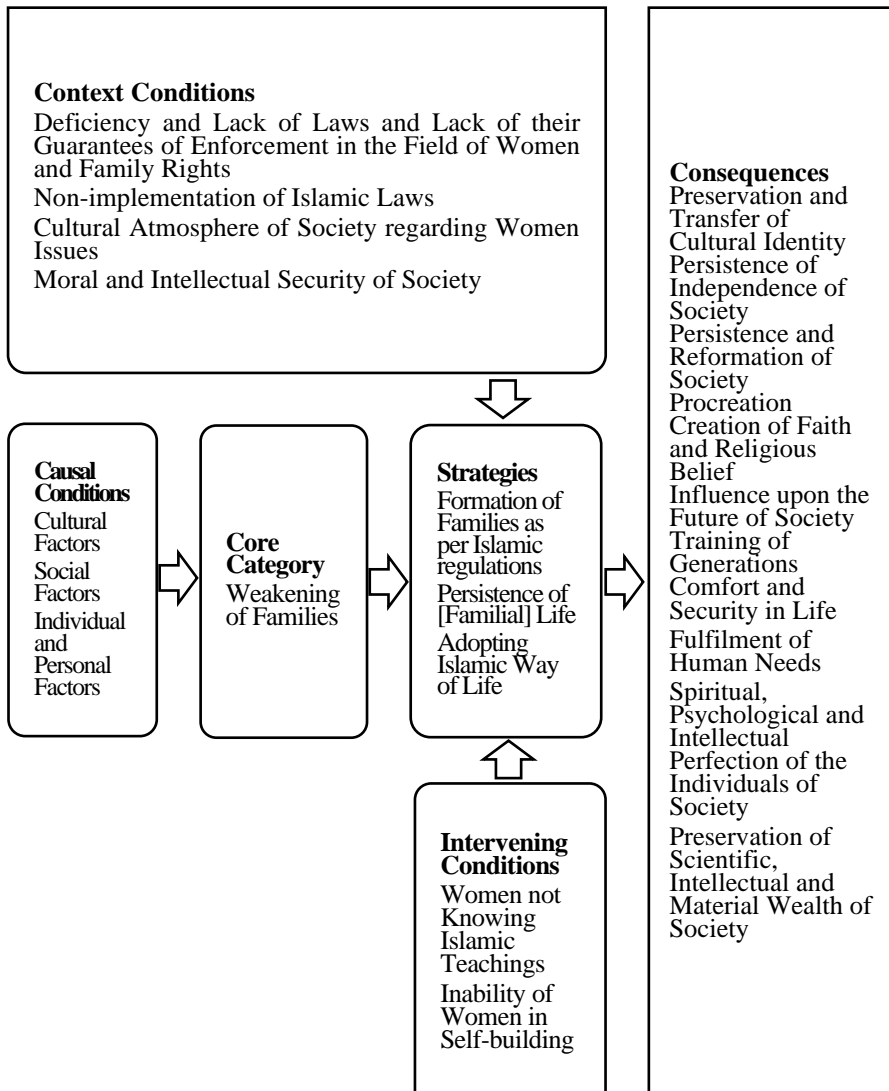
The Islamic way of life avails the possibility of preservation of the scientific, intellectual and material wealth of society.

In the Islamic Awakening movements, the bitter and awful experiences of following the West in politics, ethics, behavior, and way of life should always be kept in mind. During more than a century of following the culture and politics of the arrogant (domineering) governments, Muslim nations have been afflicted with fatal calamities such as political dependence and abjectness, economic misery and poverty, fall of virtue and morals, and shameful scientific backwardness. (Ayatollah Khamenei’s talk in the World Assembly of Scholars and Islamic Awakening on 9-2-1392 SH)

Table 8: The Category of Consequences

Concepts	Subcategory	Category
The glory of the generations, the growth of the generations, the mature generation	Social training	Training of the generations
The teaching of Islamic laws, creating perfection, nurturing the elevated human being	Human training	

Figure 1: Paradigmatic Model of the Factors that Weaken Families in Ayatollah Khamenei's View



Theoretical Presentation of the Destabilizing Factor of Family

In Ayatollah Khamenei's view, the family possesses special importance because the family is the place of nurturing human beings and in turn, that of perfection of society. Therefore, its weakening or annihilation must not come to pass. The weakening

of a family has many dimensions and forms. According to him, increases in the rate of divorce, unmarried life, decrease in the rate of marriage, monogamy, spouses' relationships outside of marriage under different names such as house sharing, live-in relationship and white marriage, illegitimate childbearing, etc. are the manifestations of weakening of families in the Western societies and, to some extent, in Iran. In explaining the factors that weaken families he points out a vast scope of elements such as individual, cultural, social, and economic elements. The individual elements have an important role in this regard. In his view, a person's incorrect individual training causes him to be at the lowest level of skills in having a familial and social life and makes him an incompatible person. Preparatory elements such as defect and lack of laws and their guarantee of enforcement, non-implementation of Islamic laws, the cultural atmosphere of the society regarding women issues, moral and intellectual security of the society, and lack of presentation of Islam's view regarding family rights are also influential in this regard and strengthen the role of the causal conditions. If Islamic laws are implemented duly, if Islamic rulings are observed in the laws of the country, and if family rights are cultivated into a culture through correct and suitable explanation of the views of Islam in that regard, then every individual, through acquiring moral virtues, can acquire the correct life skills in an appropriate environment and can preserve what he has learnt. A sound atmosphere guarantees the moral soundness of an individual and its existence is necessary for every society. For this reason, Islam emphasizes the formation of an Islamic government and considers an appropriate atmosphere necessary for individual and social life.

Women's ignorance of Islamic teachings and their inability to self-build are among the intervening elements. These intervening conditions are more focused on women because according to Islamic views, the basis and foundation of every family are women. Allah the Great has put inside women's existence a potential which enables them to be the axis of the family and in turn the axis of society. Thus, training women and strengthening their abilities concerning life affairs can guarantee the persistence of society. Accordingly, the lack of women's abilities in managing a family can make the grounds for the weakening and

disintegration of the family and society. That which delivers the family from this situation are the strategies of formation of the family according to Islamic regulations, the persistence of [familial] life, and the Islamic ways of life. These strategies result in three levels namely social, familial and individual levels. For societies, these strategies have such consequences as preservation and transfer of the cultural identity, persistence of the independence of the society, persistence and reformation of the society, procreation, influence upon the future of the society, spiritual, psychological and intellectual perfection of the members of the society, and preservation of the scientific, intellectual and material wealth of the society. And for families, these strategies have consequences such as the creation of faith and religiosity, comfort and security in life. And for the individual, they bring about the fulfilment of his needs.

Conclusion

Many studies have only touched upon some of the elements that destabilize families. For example, the meta-analysis of familial studies regarding the elements that are erosive to Iranian families presented only 42 elements which are classified into three groups individual, familial, and social elements. Whereas in the discourses of Ayatollah Khamenei, numerous elements have been identified as being influential in the weakening of families such as cultural, social, individual and economic elements. This meta-analysis considers unfavorable cultural, social, and political atmosphere, lack of means and facilities, and legal vacuum to be among the causes of the erosion of Iranian families; this outcome is in line with the results of this study. In the paper regarding the qualitative study of experiences of divorced men and women, non-adherence of individuals and families to religious and moral values is introduced as one of the cultural elements that prepare grounds for divorce. In the discourses of Ayatullah Khamenei also non-implementation of Islamic laws is considered as one of the factors that weaken families. It can be said that the outcomes of this paper which are focused on the discourses of Ayatollah Khamenei have more comprehensiveness in identifying the elements that destabilize families for it has also presented the strategies.

Sociologists have also analyzed the elements that play a role in

the weakening of families from different perspectives. Even though the actor-network theory emphasizes on relationship between spouses and the network of relatives, Ayatollah Khamenei is more of the opinion that the existence of the familial network or attachment of the spouses to that network in itself does not cause any damage to the family, rather it is the type of the attachment and the excessive interference of the surrounding individuals in the family which causes damage to the family in other words, a sound network of relatives can assist in creating cohesion in the family; however, an unsound network of relatives can put a negative influence on the spouses. The exchange theory is grounded in ontological pragmatism and explains the relationships between individuals based on a profit-loss perspective. This theory is also unacceptable in the view of Ayatollah Khamenei because the solution suggested by him for many of the problems is that the spouses should make up and get along with each other. In the matchmaking theory, emphasis is put upon outward qualities such as class, occupation and education. But as per Islam and Ayatollah Khamenei, the only qualities that need to be similar between spouses are piety and faith. These two qualities can dispense with all the other qualities and can cause the spouses to be beside each other for many long years even despite many differences between them.

In the view of Ayatollah Khamenei, many elements weaken families. When these elements are classified into economic, social, cultural, elements and individual elements, it can be noted that according to him the most important elements that destroy a family are individual and personal elements. The strategies that he has in his mind include the formation of families in accordance with Islamic guidelines, the persistence of [familial] life, and the adoption of the Islamic way of life. Based on the strategies presented in the paradigmatic model, such consequences as preservation and transfer of cultural identity, the persistence of independence of the society, persistence and reformation of the society, procreation, creation of faith and religiousness, influencing the future of the society, training and nurturing of human beings, comfort and security in life, fulfilment of human needs, spiritual, psychological and intellectual perfection of the individuals and members of the society, and preservation of the

scientific, intellectual and material wealth of the society can be anticipated. The category of intervening conditions includes women's ignorance regarding Islamic teachings and their inability to self-build and the category of context conditions includes deficiency and lack of laws about family rights and lack of guarantee of their enforcement, non-implementation of Islamic laws, cultural atmosphere of the society regarding women issues, moral and intellectual security in the society and the views of Islam regarding family rights not being presented.

To strengthen the station of families in Iran, an appropriate policy seems necessary. Ayatollah Khamenei declared the general policies of the System regarding family on 13-6-1395 S.H. Different kinds of tools and means are required for the realization of these policies which have legal or cultural dimensions. Keeping Islamic teachings in mind regarding family, the first policy is cultural cultivation. Based on moral teachings or in other words, the jurisprudence of morals in the field of family, the most important policy tool for managing this arena is cultural cultivation, discourses in moral discussions and propagation of moral rulings. The existence of an abundant number of family cases in courts shows that the appropriate and sufficient skills for a mutual (married) life do not exist in the individuals of society. That is why suitable programs must be designed in this field, all based on Islamic teachings in which priority should belong to the teaching of skills of the Islamic way of life in different stages taken from childhood until after marriage and even after divorce.

Giving importance to cultural packages containing Islamic teachings regarding family and its prevalence in society avail conditions in which individuals can fulfil their responsibilities in various roles and can easily take what is their right. Imparting awareness is a necessary and important preliminary condition for the fulfilment of responsibilities and rights. Thus, imparting information and awareness regarding Islamic teachings ought to receive special importance.

The second policy tool is laws and regulations. Even though Islamic jurisprudence has orderly compiled and suitable rulings regarding family (marriage and divorce) and children, the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this field are not so comprehensive and efficient. As the Shia jurisprudence is dynamic, the new

dimensions that have come up in the issues concerning family can be appended to the valuable and ancient jurisprudential texts. Based on what has been said, new laws must be sanctioned, the present laws regarding family be accumulated and a comprehensive law be devised in this regard. Being mindful of Ayatullah Khamenei's views mentioned in the overshadowing policies of the System regarding family is necessary for being able to sanction efficient laws in this regard. In this comprehensive law, the family should be taken as a unit and yet every member of the family should also be addressed directly. Thus this comprehensive law should have the following sections:

- The reciprocal rights and responsibilities of the family and the government
- The reciprocal rights and responsibilities of the members of the family
- The rights and responsibilities of the husband (vis-à-vis the wife and the children), those of
- The wife (vis-à-vis the husband and the children), and those of
- The children (vis-à-vis the father and the mother)

The point worth mentioning is that in this process, it is necessary to be attentive to the newly emerging issues because the rights and responsibilities of the members of the family vis-à-vis these new issues may undergo changes or may even become confusing. These changes and confusions must duly be treated. Being attentive to all the affairs that are connected with family in the formation of this comprehensive law will reduce unsuitability and deficiency. Also, separating family laws from civil laws and centralizing them all under a comprehensive law avails grounds for better reformation of those laws because changing civil laws has its own negative consequences. Even though it may seem necessary in some places.

As a strategic and implementational suggestion it seems essential to devise an appropriate program, a committee must be formed which should contain representatives of the three main branches of government namely the judicial branch, executive branch and legislative branch, the supreme council of the cultural revolution and all the concerned organizations and their responsibilities concerning the formulation and reformation of laws and cultural activities should be determined. And then in the

second stage, the process of formulation of the proposed program should begin by being attentive to the high-level policies in the field of family. In the formulation of the proposed program, the following points should be taken into account:

- Creation of a document containing the vision and objectives of this committee over four to eight years,
- Identification of strengths and weaknesses of the previous activities in the field of family and a summarized description of these activities,
- Identification of threats and opportunities that exist concerning the issue of family,
- Presentation of qualitative and quantitative objectives of the proposed program,
- Definition of indicators of key operations for attaining the qualitative and quantitative objectives specified in the program,
- Determination of executive strategies for attaining the objectives mentioned in the program,
- Determination of the structure of the implementation of the program, responsibilities of different sections, institutions and three main branches of the government in realization of the program and attaining its qualitative and quantitative objectives in the form of executive regulations of the program and communicating these regulations to aforementioned sections,
- Taking into consideration an appropriate budget for the execution of the program and availing said budget,
- annual inspection of the operations of the committee in different fields.

This special committee will require other intermediate committees and ground-level committees to be able to implement the regulations issued by them under this program. We propose that the intermediate committees should be formed in every province in the governorate of the province. The ground-level committees can be formed in the major universities of every province so that by reaching out to third-generation universities, members of their board of education too will participate in resolving the issues of the country, especially in the field of family and women. Benefiting from the institutions that have a public identity, especially Masjids, can - as an executive hand - also play an effective role in the expansion of cultural activities concerning the family.

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