

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Suicide in the Political Discourses of the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Case Study: Ilam Province)

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Abstract

Background and Objective: The phenomenon of suicide in Ilam Province, as one of the underprivileged and war-affected regions of Iran, has reached a critical level in recent decades. Although numerous studies have examined the psychological, social, and cultural factors of suicide in this province, the analysis of how it is represented in official political discourses has been neglected. The present study aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the representation of suicide across different governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with a focus on Ilam Province.

Methodology: In this study, data were inductively extracted from official texts, documents, and narratives and organized through a three-stage coding process (open, axial, and selective coding). The research population comprised official, media, and governmental documents of the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1989 to 2024. Purposive sampling was employed, and the data were analyzed using Fairclough's three-level framework for critical discourse analysis (description, interpretation, explanation).

Findings: The findings revealed that each government, based on the central signifier of its discourse, produced a distinct discursive constellation regarding suicide, including denial (Constructionist government), limited taboo-breaking (Reformist government), moralization (Justice government), limited acknowledgment (Moderate government), and securitization (Resistance government). Analysis of provincial data from Ilam indicates that the absence of mental health policies, economic failure, cultural pressures, and lived experiences of war interact with these political representations.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that suicide is not merely a psychological or statistical phenomenon, but a discursive construct produced and naturalized through the official language of governments, highlighting the necessity for a critical rethinking of policy-making.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Suicide, Ilam Province; Representation, Social Policy, Political Discourse.

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