The Effect of Intervention Based on Changing Perceptions of Power Structure in Family on Attitudes toward Patriarchy and Self-Compassion in Women Victims of Domestic Violence: A Baseline Case Study

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A R T I C L E I N F O	BSTRACT
  Article Type ***Research Paper*** 	Many factors affect the incidence of domestic violence and its acceptance in women. This study aimed to investigate the effect of intervention based on changing perceptions of family power structure on attitudes toward patriarchy and self-compassion in women, victims of domestic violence. According to the baseline case study design, two women victims of domestic violence were selected by purposeful sampling method and received an intervention program in 8 sessions. The Domestic Violence Scale and Self-Compassion Scale were used to collect data during the baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases. The data were analyzed using visual analysis, improvement percentage, and reliable change index. The reliable change index and the trend of changing scores showed that with the continuation of intervention sessions, attitudes toward patriarchy and self-compassion in women had decreased, and increased, respectively, and changes were maintained after a month follow-up. According to the findings, it can be concluded that the intervention based on changing the perception of family power structure can change the traditional and patriarchal misconceptions of women victims of domestic violence and improve their self-compassion.

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Introduction

Violence against women as a violation of human rights is known as a global health problem in all societies, ethnicities, races, and religious schools; According to WHO, approximately 35% of women have experienced violence at least once in their lives (World Health Organization, 2014) and 38% of women's murders were committed by their partners. Although the level of violence against women in Iran is not clearly mentioned in the official statistics, studies show the extent of violence. In a study conducted on a sample of women living in Tehran, the prevalence of violence against pregnant women was 46%, which includes mental violence (35%), physical violence (8.7%), and sexual violence (2.3%), respectively.

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm"; Also, exposing women to suffering by threatening them, arbitrating deprivation of their liberty, whether occurring in public or private life, is defined as domestic violence (United Nations, 1993). These injuries lead to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal thoughts in women (Perez et al., 2012). Victims' reaction to violence is to use unfunctional coping strategies such as surrendering and blaming themselves, which can increase the intensity and duration of their distress (Bauman et al., 2008). In such situations, women victims of violence report that they need emotional support, security, help to cope with negative emotions, and improve self-esteem; Self-compassion can be helpful for these women who have experienced very complicated and traumatic events in their lives (Allen et al., 2021). Teaching self-compassion helps victims cope more effectively with physical and psychological abuse (Tesh et al., 2015). As a result, it can reduce their depression, anxiety, self-harm, surrender, and self-loathing and increase self-confidence (Gilbert & Procter, 2006).

The violence against women is related to patriarchal culture and attitude in society, so many people mistakenly think the power in a healthy family belongs to the father or the husband exclusively. Gender stereotypes and gender inequalities that reinforce each other can be two critical factors in committing violence against women (Mashhadi & Karami, 2020). Gender

socialization approaches hold that the language families use to describe boys often focuses on physical attributes, strength, and agility, while families may refer to characteristics such as affection, expressiveness, delicacy, or fragility when describing girls (Burke, 2009). The different strategies of families in dealing with children lead to girls and boys internalizing these beliefs and building their identity based on their parent's attitudes and defining their identity and position after marriage according to these stereotypes and beliefs. These attitudes, which are legally, customarily, and religiously supported in patriarchal societies, create a gap in the rights, privileges, and rights of men and women in the family and marriage, which can provide a platform for violence against women (Riahi & Aboohamze, 2020). In traditional societies, violence can occur when changes occur in traditional gender roles. For example, if a woman disobeys or challenges her husband or does not play her gender role, the husband can use violence to punish her. The man does this violence to maintain his power and control in the family (Benebo et al., 2018). Sikweyiya et al. (2020) showed that men use violence to control women and emphasize their authority and power. Evidence shows that women living in countries where domestic violence is more prevalent tend to view domestic violence as more acceptable than women living in other countries. A study in Ghana found that, in women's viewpoints, wife-beating is generally unacceptable; however, some interviewees stated that spousal violence is justified in some circumstances, including when a woman disobeys her husband and ignores or refuses to have sex with her husband (Asante & Premo-Minkah, 2016). In other words, in a patriarchal society, the attitude towards women is such that women are considered the weak sex and the second sex. In these societies, the rule of men over women is manifested in the form of humiliating women in the family and society, destroying their personal and familial rights. These humiliating behaviors with the female sex cause her to internalize this patriarchal attitude and think of herself as a being in the service of men and ignore the happiness and meaning of her life. This way of life causes self-alienation in the woman and as a result affects her lifestyle (Hajhashemi et al., 2017).

Women's perception of the power structure in the family can affect their patriarchal attitude. Power is defined as the potential or actual ability of each member to influence and change the behavior of other family members

(Cromwell & Olsen, 1975). According to structural family therapy, power refers to both authority (who makes decisions) and responsibility (who implements decisions). Power depends on circumstances and situations and is rarely absolute (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2017). Haley (1998) believes that every family should determine the hierarchy and rules regarding who is in the primary position and who is in the second position. According to Haley (1998), when the hierarchy in the family is disturbed, conflict occurs among the family members. A healthy and normal family has a hierarchy and each family member has a different strength with each other and complements each other (Minuchin, 1981). However, many mistakenly think that the distribution of power in a healthy family goes back to the father or the husband; In traditional cultures, the man is considered the head of the family. Bari (2016) argues that in traditional societies, women do not have much involvement in decisions such as children's education, marriage, divorce and child custody, pregnancy rights, and even choosing a job.

In Iran, as in other traditional societies, violence against women has become a social and ponderable issue. Due to the dominance of patriarchal attitudes, women have become so socialized as they justify most of the harassment of their husbands and hide the negative consequences of violence. On the other hand, accepting violence and justifying it on the part of women provides the basis for the increase in wife beating; For this reason, there are no accurate statistics on spousal abuse in Iran. Antai (2011) showed women who justified wife-beating was more exposed to physical and sexual violence; On the contrary, women who had independence in decision-making were less likely to experience physical and sexual violence. Also, Murugan et al. (2021) showed that women who had secondary education or higher, owned property, and had the power to make decisions at home, were less likely to experience spousal violence.

What makes this issue more critical is that violence against women is a reflection of a patriarchal society, a society whose people, including women themselves, have accepted the authority and dominance of men over women. Violence against women, in addition to its harmful effects on life, results in negative consequences such as disruption in social relations, feelings of insecurity, and lousy upbringing of children, and deprives women of the

opportunity to properly and adequately use their abilities and talents. In this study, by convincing women more than men and women to have the same right to express ideas, needs, and feelings and make decisions about important life issues, an attempt has been made to change women's beliefs and viewpoints regarding the power structure in the family. On the other hand, in this intervention, women are taught to repair negative feelings towards themselves with compassion and acceptance as people who deserve love and respect. This study aimed to investigate the effect of intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family on attitudes toward patriarchy and self-compassion in women victims of domestic violence.

Methods

Study Design

In the present study, a single-case experimental design was used. The statistical population of this study was all women victims of spousal violence referring to Yazd Welfare Organization. a single-case design was used because, despite the high prevalence of domestic violence, many women were not willing to participate in the intervention sessions due to cultural reasons, poverty, husband's opposition and access to the samples were difficult. Also, due to the in-depth discussion in the intervention sessions, which required an in-depth conversation with the clients, the intervention was conducted individually in the form of a single case study. Among women who were victims of domestic violence and referred to the welfare rehabilitation organization of Yazd City (Iran), in 2020, two women were selected by purposeful sampling. The criteria for inclusion included women victims of violence who had been exposed to physical violence at least two times in the last six months and had injuries such as bruises, fractures, deep wounds, or were hospitalized as a result of violence (which was confirmed by a legal physician or has been seen and confirmed by the social workers of the Welfare organization), had a proper understanding to answer the questions, had school education, had been married for at least two years, and had an age range of 25 to 50 years. The exclusion criteria were considered to have a physical and psychological disorder in themselves or their spouses. The intervention protocol was taken from Badakhsh (2018), which analyzed the perception of women victims of violence regarding the power structure in the family and derived an intervention program based on this qualitative analysis (Table 1).

Participants were measured in three baseline phases using the domestic violence against women questionnaire (Mohseni Tabrizi et al., 2012) the and self-compassion scale (Neff, 2003b). The intervention protocol was implemented in 8 sessions of 80 minutes. The participants in the intervention phase were measured four times in the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth sessions. Finally, one week and one month after the end of the intervention, the participants were measured in the follow-up phase. The data were analyzed using visual analysis, improvement percentage, and reliable change index.

Measurements

Domestic Violence Against Women Scale

This is a self-report questionnaire that includes 71 items and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree). This questionnaire measures spousal abuse, patriarchal beliefs, family traditions and upbringing, and learning violence. The items were designed based on the evidence of spousal abuse in the context of Iranian society; the face and content validity of this questionnaire was confirmed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .83. The scores had a significant relationship with the prevalence of violence in the family as well as the experience of violence in women (Mohseni Tabrizi et al., 2012). The test-retest reliability was .9 (Parhizkar, 2017). In another study, Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire was .8 (Shafiei & Qudsi, 2019). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was .83. In this study, for evaluating the attitudes toward patriarchy, the entire domestic violence questionnaire was implemented, but only the second part of the questionnaire, which includes items 37 to 65 and measures the patriarchal attitude, was used. The reliability of the second part of the questionnaire was assessed using the test-retest method among 10 women who were victims of domestic violence; The correlation between test-retest in a two-week period was .91 and the standard deviation was 14.47. The test-retest method was used to calculate the reliable change index as one of the methods of data analysis in single-case studies.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

This scale contains 26 items and 6 components of self-compassion, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to

strongly agree (5). The higher score indicates greater self-compassion (Neff, 2003b). The validity and reliability of the original version of the SCS have been confirmed Neff, 2003b). The validity and reliability of the Persian version of the scale have also been confirmed. The factorial structure of the scale was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis and its Cronbach's alpha was .76 (Khosravi et al., 2013). In this study, the test-retest reliability of SCS in 10 women who were victims of domestic violence was .88, and the standard deviation was 12.56.

Table 1. content of Interventions sessions based on changing the perception of women victims of violence

Session	Content of Sessions	Aim	Homework
First	Introduction, explain roles and goals; introduction of interventional sessions, the definition of violence and its components, discuss out negative consequences of domestic violence and consequences of accepting violence, discussing reasons why a person should not accept violence under any circumstances.	Awareness of the consequences of violence on the physical and mental health of women and their children	Pointing out the reasons why a person tolerates her husband's violence and suggesting ways to reject these reasons
Second	Reviewing the homework of the previous session, discussing the question of whether married life should be preserved in any situation. Are divorce and separation ugly forever? under what circumstances can a person stay in a relationship with domestic violence? discussing the consequences of domestic violence.	Familiarity with the characteristics of satisfactory relationships, awareness of false beliefs that prevent the right decisions in marital life	Answers to these questions: Does her relationship with her husband have the characteristics of a healthy relationship? When do men have the right to abuse their wives? What action has she taken against her husband's violence so far?
Third	Reviewing the homework of the previous session, defining the family structure and its necessity, discussing the factors that can cause the family structure to have an unhealthy function, The definition of family borders, and description of the problems that arise due to the lack of a border among the subsystems	Determining the family structure and extracting the family map, which includes subsystems, collusion, and coalitions, and understanding the type of family borders.	Determine the type of boundaries in the family. Determine the power hierarchy in the family and her position in this hierarchy.

Session	Content of Sessions	Aim	Homework
	of the family, understanding the importance of hierarchy in the family and describing the problems caused by the lack of hierarchy among family members.		
Fourth	Reviewing the homework of the previous session, the definition of imposition and coercion. Becoming aware of the necessity of dealing with issues that have been imposed on us, the consequences of accepting orders that are imposed on us by our spouse or any other person in our marital life, and discussing the reasons that make the client give in to the wishes of others.	Coming to the belief that it is up to us to make important life choices	Reviewing a few examples of decisions that others have made for her and examining the reasons that prevented her from carrying out her wishes, reviewing at least one or two decisions that she made decisively, and expressing how she felt at that moment.
Fifth	Defining extreme self-sacrifice and its consequences, encouraging women to pay attention to their interests and desires and the positive consequences that can bring in their lives, promoting independence in decision-making, and teaching self-assertion skills.	Prioritizing personal desires and interests, self-assertion	Express at least one desire boldly and try to implement it
Sixth	Investigating why women feel inferior and the consequences of accepting this feeling, discussing the role of childhood factors in creating a sense of inferiority in women and patriarchal culture, defining patriarchy and its effect on married life, introducing clients to new roles and abandoning traditional roles that Patriarchal culture has defined for men and women.	Creating a sense of self-worth, getting to know society's misconceptions about the roles of men and women	Realizing the differences in upbringing between girls and boys, not raising their children based on a patriarchal perspective and parenting based on gender equality
Seventh	Teaching skills for self-reliance and empowerment, challenging the attitude towards women's weakness, introducing women to their rights, and discussing	Awareness of the benefits of self-reliance and freedom from dependence, empowering women	Acquiring skills to earn income, following the example of women who have earned income with minimal means (in

Session	Content of Sessions	Aim	Homework
	that she and her husband have the same rights.		order to raise motivation)
Eighth	Reviewing the factors that are necessary to having a sense of happiness in life, teaching self-compassion, emphasizing the beliefs that make a person feel happier, and summarizing the contents of the previous sessions.	Getting to feel good about ourselves	self-compassion

Data analysis

Visual analysis of a graphic diagram was used to analyze the data (Lane & Gast, 2014). Trend, level, and stability of the graphic diagram of each participant between study conditions were assessed. In addition, the improvement percentage from pre- to post-treatment was also used to assess the clinical significance of the changes (Ogles et al., 2001). The following formula was used to calculate the improvement percentage:

$\Delta A\% = (A0 - A1) / A0$

% ΔA: Improvement percentage, A0: baseline or pre-treatment score, A1: post-treatment score.

Finally, the reliable change index (RCI) was used to assess the clinical changes (Jacobson, 1992). To calculate this index, the individual's score before the intervention minus their score after the intervention of follow-up is then divided by the standard error of the difference (Sdif). If the RCI is 1.96 (p <.05) and 2.58 (p <.01) or greater then, the difference is statistically significant.

Finding

Both participants were victims of domestic violence, were 30 years old, had a school education, were housewives, and had one child. Both participants had been together for more than 10 years.

Table 2. Participants' scores in baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases

Phases	Attitudes toward Patriarchy		Self-Compassion	
	PA 1	PA 2	PA 1	PA 2
Baseline 1	67	69	67	74
Baseline 2	50	56	70	73
Baseline 3	49	56	73	80
Mean of Baseline	55.33	60.33	70	75.66

Intervention Session 2	45	31	74	95
Intervention Session 4	43	26	76	96
Intervention Session 6	42	24	80	96
Intervention Session 8	40	11	85	96
Reliable Change Index	-2.50	-8.04	2.48	3.37
Improvement Percentage	-27.70	-81.76	21.42	26.88
Total Improvement Percentage	-54.73		24.1	
Follow-Up 1	36	2	80	108
Follow-Up 2	38	4	82	110
Mean of Follow-Up	37	3	81	109
Reliable Change Index	-2.99	-9.35	1.82	5.52
Improvement Percentage	-33.12	-94.57	15.71	44.06
Total Improvement Percentage	-63.84		29.88	

The first hypothesis was "the intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family can affect attitudes toward patriarchy in women victims of domestic violence". In Table 2, the changing scores of attitudes toward patriarchy for both participants in the baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases were presented. The change reliable index in both participants was higher than 1.96, which shows that with 95% certainty, the intervention has led to a change in attitudes toward patriarchy in women victims of domestic, and the first hypothesis is confirmed. The change reliable index in the follow-up phase was also significant, which showed that the change in scores of attitudes towards patriarchy remained stable in the follow-up phase. The improvement percentage, both at the end of the intervention phase and at the end of the one-month follow-up, is higher than 54, which shows that the intervention had a great impact on changing women's attitudes towards patriarchy.
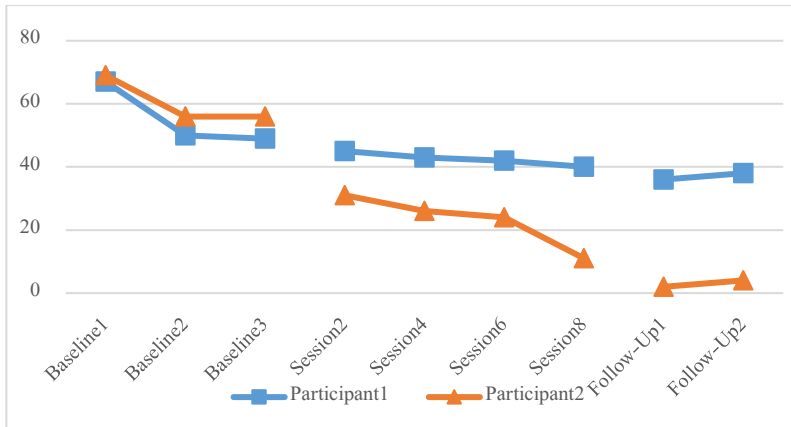
Figure 1. Changes in scores of attitudes toward patriarchy in the bassline, intervention, and follow-up phases

The changes in scores of the participants in attitude toward patriarchy during the baseline, intervention, and follow-up stages are also shown in Figure 1. As can be seen, the scores in the baseline phase do not change much, but in the intervention phase, the attitude towards patriarchy decreased and this reduction has been maintained in the follow-up phase as well.

The second hypothesis was "the intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family can affect self-compassion in women victims of domestic violence". The same results as the first hypothesis were obtained. The change reliable index was greater than 1.96 both in the intervention phase and in the follow-up phase, which showed that the intervention has led to an increase in self-compassion in the participants. The improvement percentage, both at the end of the intervention phase and at the end of the one-month follow-up, is higher than 24, which shows that the intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family results in an increase in the self-compassion of women. The changes in score of self-compassion during the baseline, intervention, and follow-up stages are also shown in Figure 2. As can be seen, the scores in the baseline phase do not change much, but in the intervention phase, the self-compassion of women increased and this increase has been maintained in the follow-up phase as well.
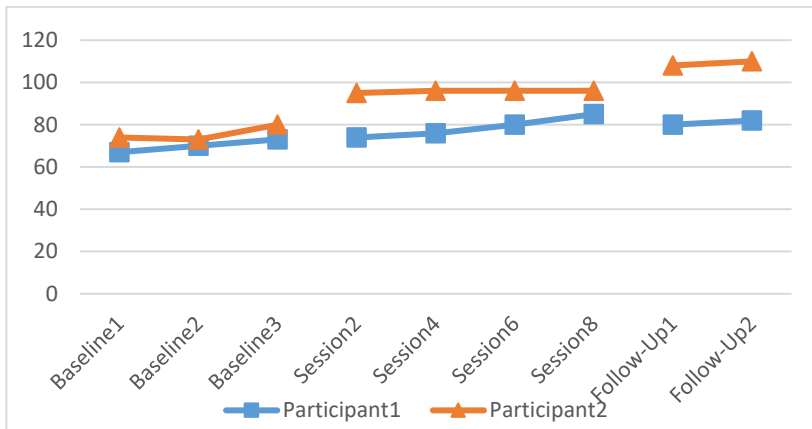
Figure 2. Changes in scores of self-compassion in the bassline, intervention, and follow-up phases

Conclusion & Discussion

The results showed that intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family had a significant effect on attitudes toward patriarchy and this intervention has been able to reduce the patriarchal attitude of women victims of domestic violence. This finding is consistent with the research of Heidarinejad and Navah (2019), who showed that acceptance of male authority has the greatest contribution to the level of violence against women, and with the study of Haj-Yahia (2003) who showed that stereotypes related to male gender roles, negative and traditional attitudes towards women, expectations related to unequal marital roles and family patriarchal beliefs were the most important predictors of beliefs about wife beating. Also, Sayem et al. (2012) showed that even women victims of spousal violence sometimes think that some types of violence by their spouses are normal and justified. For this purpose, in this study, an intervention program based on changing the perceptions of women victims of violence was designed with the aim of informing women about the equal rights of men and women and challenging their wrong patriarchal thoughts and attitudes. For this purpose, in this study, an intervention program based on changing the perceptions of women victims of violence was designed to inform women about the equal rights of men and women and challenge their wrong patriarchal thoughts and attitudes.

We explained to the participants that although most of the women who were victims of violence grew up in a family with a patriarchal culture and when choosing a spouse, they chose unhealthy marital relationships willingly or unwillingly, the responsibility of how to respond to the violence of their husbands is with them. Abused women may feel powerless to change their lifestyle when they are subjected to violence. By changing their beliefs, they will no longer have to accept their husbands' violence. But the results of this study were inconsistent with the findings of Asnet and Permominka (2017). They showed that women who challenge accepted gender norms are likely at risk of domestic violence because they may be punished for not conforming to established behavioral norms.

In addition, in this intervention, women were helped to learn about their rights and duties and not feel weak and self-blaming just because they are women. The women participating in this study came to the belief that they should pay attention to their desires and interests in their married life and value themselves as human beings. But since some women who are victims of domestic violence are financially dependent on their husbands, and because of the economic and social support that they receive from their husbands, they have to endure some violence (Sanawar et al., 2019). This finding was consistent with Madhani et al. (2017), which showed that patriarchal attitudes, women's lack of financial independence, and women's dependence on men are effective in the formation of violence against women. Others, however, argue that women's empowerment may increase the risk of male violence, as the woman appears to challenge gender norms and threaten her husband's position of dominance or power (Choi & Ting, 2008). In other words, as women gain economic independence, men who feel their authority is being challenged or undermined may use violence to reassert their control (Abramsky et al., 2019). Therefore, according to Dalal (2011), economic empowerment is not the only protective factor; Economic empowerment, combined with higher education and modified cultural norms against women, may protect women from intimate partner violence.

In this study, abused women became aware of the characteristics of an efficient family structure, which includes the equality of power between men and women so that the share of women in the power structure is not less, the existence of hierarchy between family members, and the existence of clear

boundaries between individuals and sub-systems; They came to know that the more efficient the family structure is, the fewer conflicts and fights they will witness. Also, this intervention protocol was able to increase self-care and self-compassion by affecting the traditional view of women as victims of violence. In other words, components of self-compassion training protocol were included in this intervention, which could have led to coping with loneliness, distress, and suffering in women. Teaching self-compassion heals negative feelings about oneself and prepares one for a healthy relationship (Karakasidou & Stalikas, 2017).

In the intervention program from the fourth session, in addition to changing women's perception of the power structure in the family and the patriarchal attitude, it tried to work on self-worth and self-kindness in abused women. Also, by teaching women empowerment and self-assertive skills, the goal was to reduce their feelings of shame and helplessness, which was similar to the concepts of self-compassion therapy. Evidence suggests that self-compassion is a combination of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness that may help victims reduce self-critical thoughts and feelings of isolation, as well as teach them how to cope with difficult experiences to maintain self-balance (Neff, 2003a). Also, Valdez & Lilly (2016) showed that self-compassion could increase people's tolerance to anxiety and also reduce stress and anxiety.

According to the results of this study, it can be concluded that although women in patriarchal societies are exposed to spousal violence more than in other societies, implementing an educational protocol to change women's perception of the power structure in the family, is possible to change their patriarchal attitude and increase self-compassion. However, based on one study alone, such a general conclusion cannot be made and more studies are needed. We suggest that this intervention should not only be available to women but should be taught to other sections of society, especially men, in order to institutionalize the culture of equality and confront gender norms and wrong patriarchal attitudes. It is also suggested to implement this intervention in a group of single girls and even women who are in the stage of divorce and separation with the aim of changing their perception of the power structure in the family and their patriarchal attitude. Finally, it is suggested to repeat this intervention in future studies with a larger sample size in Yazd city; also

considering the cultural differences of each region, it is recommended to conduct a similar study in other cities to increase the validity of the results.

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