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A Study of Farmers' Perception of Urmia Lake (UL) Crisis with Grounded Theory Approach

Mohammad Abbaszadeh*
Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Tabriz, Iran
m-abbaszadeh@tabrizu.ac.ir
Hossein Banifatemeh
Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Tabriz, Iran
banifatemeh@tabrizu.ac.ir
Narmin Nikdel
Ph.D. Students of Sociology, University of Tabriz, Iran
n.nikdel@tabrizu.ac.ir

Introduction
Water crisis is the major threat to food security in the world. On a global scale, however, freshwater resources are not scarce. But, their uneven distribution across continents, countries, and social groups makes remarkable divisions in terms of access to water. The consequence of such contradictions leads to a divergence between 'water for nature' and 'water for human activity' approaches. While many experts aim to restore the right of water for nature, others give the priority to the right of access to water to produce food for human being. Urmia Lake is one of the most critical cases of environmental drought crisis during recent 50 years. This lake is located in the middle of Urmia Basin surrounded by more than 60 permanent and seasonal rivers and an important agriculture spot in Iran. Agriculture is also known as the major cause of water scarcity in this area. Many studies have addressed the factors affecting the UL crisis. They often focused on the responsibility of the agriculture sector and the farmers' water abuse. In this study, using the interpretive approach and GT method, the understanding of the farmers regarding UL Basin, and the causes of persistent water crisis in this area, and farmers' exposure to this phenomenon were discussed. Therefore, the main question is: how do farmers living or working in three provinces of East and West Azarbaijan, and Kurdistan understand and interpret the phenomenon of water crisis?

Material & Methods
Grounded Theory was selected as the research approach to obtain a paradigmatic model explaining the farmers' perception of the water crisis in the UL. Data were collected through semi-structured interview with 28 farmers lived or worked in the UL Basin. The data analysis was based on the GT coding practice of systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1991). In this regard, three basic types of coding including open, axial, and selective coding were applied to every single word came from interviews. In the final integration, we related categories and subcategories to one another in terms of the basic paradigm features, conditions, context, actions/interactions (including strategies) and consequences. To test the validity of the collected data, triangulation and member control methods were applied.

Discussion of Results & Conclusions
An in-depth look at the narratives of the farmers in this study shows that a change from water shortage to water crisis is a process caused by breaking the discipline of structures that have been around for hundreds of years and were capable of managing and solving natural and human crises. Thus, the core issue that emerges in this research is the 'collapse of the configuration of the former order'. What is at the forefront of the respondents' narratives is the disturbance, disorder, and disruption of the order existed in their past, albeit with different defects. Also, the government weakness in exercising its sovereignty and being replaced with local governors in addition to the lack of transparency in defining and controlling new situation have made the competition for the share of existing waters a disaster. Farmers in the UL basin find the government's responsibility for any disruption and shortages to be the only reliable factor. Because they think that the government's exclusive decision- and policy-making in all aspects of their material and spiritual life and its full control over natural resources have restricted their individual activities. In other words, because of its dominance over the resources of the society, the government is the first and most powerful decision-maker and actor in social and economic structures, and

* Corresponding author: +989143182795

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therefore is responsible for the Urmia Lake crisis due to its inability to coordinate the quality and quantity of farmers' water rights, lack of seriousness along with a corrupted, unreliable, and populist bureaucracy. As a result, farmers imagine their roles in the crisis as the 'victims' of the situation, not as the agents, facilitators, or even actors. From the farmers' point of view, with the disruption of traditional irrigation systems and the loss of local sovereignty, water resources have not only been disappeared, but also they have penetrated into social capital and the deepest moralities, causing distrust in interpersonal and social relations. A path that seeks to maximize individual profits irrespective of resource conservation for the future severely undermines local governance. Ultimately, the result of all these conditions has triggered a water crisis over the last few decades. Indeed, farmers' sense of powerlessness over decision-making structures, their obedience to government systems on the type of crop, the guarantee of crop sales, the amount of water resources consumed, etc., are signs of structured passivity among them. This is why despite seeing the decline in their available water resources, they are making the most of it. Distrust of political institutions, lack of confidence in government support in times of crisis, distrust of each other, and the ambiguous future of agriculture are blocking any personal intervention and burying morals under personal interests. Ethics that can only prove their meaning to activists if they are followed collectively.

Keywords: Water Crisis, Urmia Lake Basin, Farmers, Grounded Theory.

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