Self–Esteem and Its Consequences of Internally Displaced Victims of Sexual Violence: From the Perspective of Iraqi Yazidi Females

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ABSTRACT*: Self-esteem is the backbone for psychological resilience, and the psychological resilience of a person determines his or her overall resilience nature. Obviously, armed conflict-driven protracted displacements and associated tragic events often possess the potential to alter the self-esteem of individuals with ailing war-related experiences. As far as esteem needs are concerned, in the armed conflict-driven displacements in lower and lower-middle-income countries, the self-esteem needs of the victims of sexual and gender-based violence are not adequately addressed in some instances. To support the arguments, the psychosocial nature of the internally displaced Iraqi Yazidi females was considered, and a detailed narrative review of the documents related to Iraqi Yazidis' displacement, subsequent sexual violence, and Yazidis' psychosocial landscape in post-conflict context was performed. The results of the review have identified the followings: (i) a negative correlation between sexual and gender-based violence and self-esteem; (ii) no correlation between social honour or social pride and the self-esteem of Yazidi females; (iii) negative correlation between self-esteem and psychiatric or psychopathological incidents as well as suicidal intentions among Yazidi females; (iv) fulfilling esteem needs of the Yazidi Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees in Iraq should need further backing to improve the quality and quantity. The aim of this paper is to examine the importance of fulfilling the esteem needs of armed conflict-driven internally displaced populations, especially those, who experience sexual violence during armed conflicts from the context of Iraqi Yazidi female IDPs.*

KEYWORDS - *armed conflict, displacement, internally displaced persons, Iraqi Yazidis, Islamic State, self-esteem, sex-slavery, suicide*

I.   INTRODUCTION

This decade is remarkable in history for yielding the highest number of refugees and IDPs across the globe. The report of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2019) estimated that at the beginning of 2019, there were 28 million newly displaced persons registered in total. Among them, around 11 million were armed conflict-driven displacements and 17 million were other types of disasters-driven displacements. Obviously, regardless of the types of disasters, the world is obliged to fulfil the needs of the internally displaced populations to make sure of their survival. From Maslow's perspective, human needs are classified in a hierarchical order viz. physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs (Huitt, 2007). When people displaced from their habitats due to various reasons, their hierarchically ordered needs should be fulfilled even in the displacement context in order to boost their resilience nature.

First, it is vital to know the definition of self-esteem to get the subject matter adequately clear. In psychology, (Madsen, 2014 & Anastácio, 2016) described that the meaning of self-esteem is a person's self-assessment of his or her own worth. Jordan et al. (2015) explained that self-esteem is conceptualized at global, which means overall self-assessment, as well as domain-specific such as academic, social, appearance, etc. levels, and self-esteem, reflects self-feeling. E.g., "I like myself" or "I like my body construct", etc. (Jordan et al, 2015 & Anastácio, 2016). Self-esteem needs are therefore defined as the needs, which help to keep a person's own worth at a desirable level by his or her own appraisal or assessment, refer to a person's needs for

respect, and self-confidence. Esteem needs arise based on human desire of having himself or herself accepted and valued by others. Moreover, self-esteem needs directly correlates with a person's psychological resilience. If a person cannot accomplish his or her self-esteem needs, it would cause inferiority and subsequent adverse psychological outcomes. This paper briefly analyses self-esteem and its consequences in the context of sexual and gender-based violence by the narratives of the experiences of Iraqi Yazidi women and girls, who were brutalized, and sexually enslaved by the Islamic State members from 2014 till 2017.

In Iraq, when the Islamic State overran their habitats in Sinjar district and from Bashiqa areas of Mosul, large chunk of Yazidi population managed to escape the terror scene towards Dohuk, while a portion of Yazidis were captured by the Islamic State (Amnesty International, 2015; Cetorelli et al., 2017; Al Shahid, 2018; Hosseini & Seidi, 2018). Among the detainees, thousands of men were slaughtered, while the captured women and girls were subjected to sexual slavery and violence in between Iraq and Syria from 2014 (Amnesty International, 2014; & Amnesty International, 2015 & Azzarello, 2016). Even though the Islamic State had completely been defeated in 2017 and the normalcy has been established in northern Iraq by the Kurdish Peshmerga forces with the backing of the international community, until today, most of the Yazidi people have not returned to their places of origin and still in displacement camps (Reliefweb, 2018) with unprecedented psychological burden (Free Yazidi Foundation, 2018 & IOM, 2018).

Aim of the study:

The aim of this paper is to examine the importance of fulfilling the esteem needs of armed conflict-driven internally displaced populations, especially those, who experience sexual violence during armed conflicts from the context of Iraqi Yazidi female IDPs via the following objectives.

   i.   To examine the impact of sexual and gender-based violence on the self-esteem of Iraqi Yazidi females in the internal displacement context.

   ii. To examine the relationship between Yazidis' self-esteem and psychological consequences.

   iii. To examine the impact of diminishing social pride or social honour on the self-esteem of the Iraqi Yazidi community during the displacement and in the post-conflict context.

   iv. To examine the impact of self-esteem and suicidal ideation of Iraqi Yazidi females.

   v.   To examine the status of fulfilling the self-esteem needs of Yazidi females, who have been enslaved and sexually abused by the Islamic State (ISIS) in the post-conflict context.

II. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The research paradigm was constructed on the foundation of qualitative content analysis of all relevant documentation, which was filled with the narratives of personal experiences of Iraqi Yazidi women and girls, during and after their enslavement by the Islamic State as well as the post-Islamic State context. The qualitative content analysis was performed as per the regulations of COCHRANE (Higgins & Green, 2011) and Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses PRISMA-P (Moher et al., 2015).

Literature Available from electronic database online

In the process of data collection, literature containing narrative data relevant to the research objectives were gathered from sources viz. peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, the reports of Non-Governmental Organizations as well as the United Nations, related working papers. Searching relevant literature was not confined to the specific period of publication of materials, however, in the selection process, materials, which were launched after 2014 were chosen to include. Moreover, the searches were performed based on research objectives and the selected literature were grouped based on different research objectives.

Types of materials coded

To achieve the research objectives, there were two types of materials were coded (i) materials related to the Iraqi Yazidis during and the aftermath of the Islamic State's atrocity; (ii) for verification of our findings, other

general Non-Iraqi Yazidi/Islamic State materials with the context of displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, and psychological consequences with self-esteem.

Criteria used for selection of literature

As per the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), among the relevant literature, some of them were eliminated from the inclusion on the ground of (i) duplication; (ii) errors in search; (iii) unavailability of materials; (iv) the material is not having enough relevant content or aspects. The other materials, which were well suited with the objectives and the other inclusion criteria of PRISMA were included.

Content analysis by using "NVivo 12 Plus" software

The very best methodology identified for achieving the objectives was 'qualitative content analysis' using NVivo 12 Plus, one of the prominent software being used by the qualitative researchers across the world.

Procedure

All electronic journal articles, working papers, newspaper articles, reports of Non-Governmental Organizations as well as the UN were selected under the criteria for inclusion, and were grouped into five classes viz; social pride and self-esteem; sexual and gender-based violence and self-esteem; self-esteem and psychological issues; and self-esteem and suicidal issues; the status of fulfilling self-esteem needs / psychosocial needs of Iraqi Yazidi victims. All selected literature was then imported into the "NVivo 12 Plus" software and allowed the software auto code for relevant sentences.

In each class of literature, 'codes' created, were then analyzed. All codes, which are irrelevant to the research objective were eliminated. The remaining similar codes were then merged and formed categories. Categories that are similar were further merged and formed as a broader theme.

Manual coding to verify computer coding

All materials, which were coded by computer were again coded manually by two separated data analysists to verify computer coding. Differences in the coding process were then adjusted and finally, a conciliatory coding was accepted as the final coding of materials.
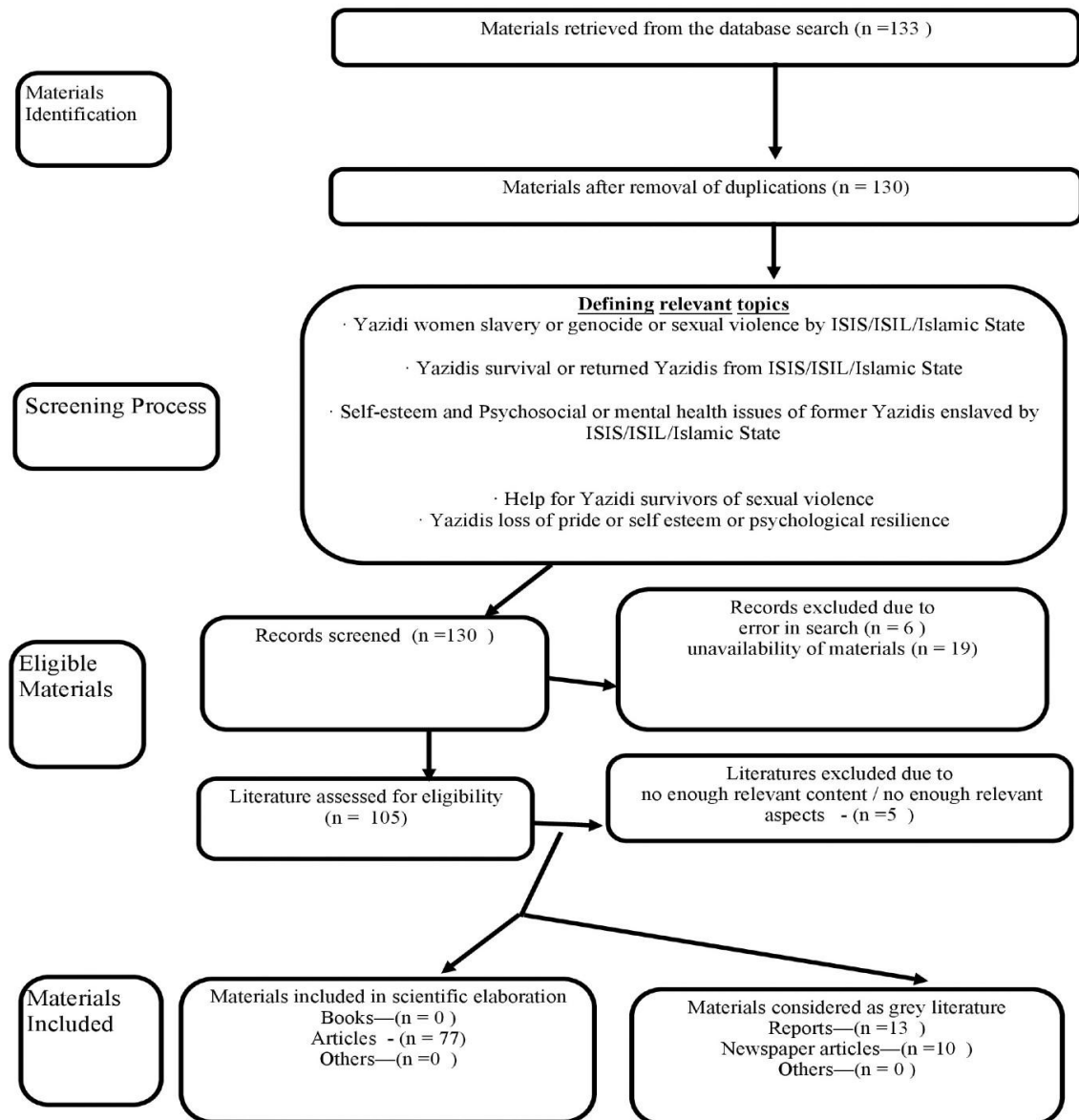
Cross Referencing

Moreover, the findings were validated by 'cross-references' and those cross-references are indicated especially in the reference list.

Findings/Results

Retrieving the literature from cyberspace, selection, and the inclusion of relevant literature on the ground of the guidelines of PRISMA is illustrated in figure 1.

Fig1. Flow diagram for the selection of literature.

Materials Identification

Materials retrieved from the database search (n =133)

Materials after removal of duplications (n = 130)

Screening Process

Defining relevant topics
· Yazidi women slavery or genocide or sexual violence by ISIS/ISIL/Islamic State

· Yazidis survival or returned Yazidis from ISIS/ISIL/Islamic State

· Self-esteem and Psychosocial or mental health issues of former Yazidis enslaved by ISIS/ISIL/Islamic State

· Help for Yazidi survivors of sexual violence
· Yazidis loss of pride or self esteem or psychological resilience

Eligible Materials

Records screened (n =130)

Records excluded due to error in search (n = 6)
unavailability of materials (n = 19)

Literature assessed for eligibility (n = 105)

Literatures excluded due to no enough relevant content / no enough relevant aspects - (n =5)

Materials Included

Materials included in scientific elaboration
Books—(n = 0)
Articles - (n = 77)
Others—(n =0)

Materials considered as grey literature
Reports—(n =13)
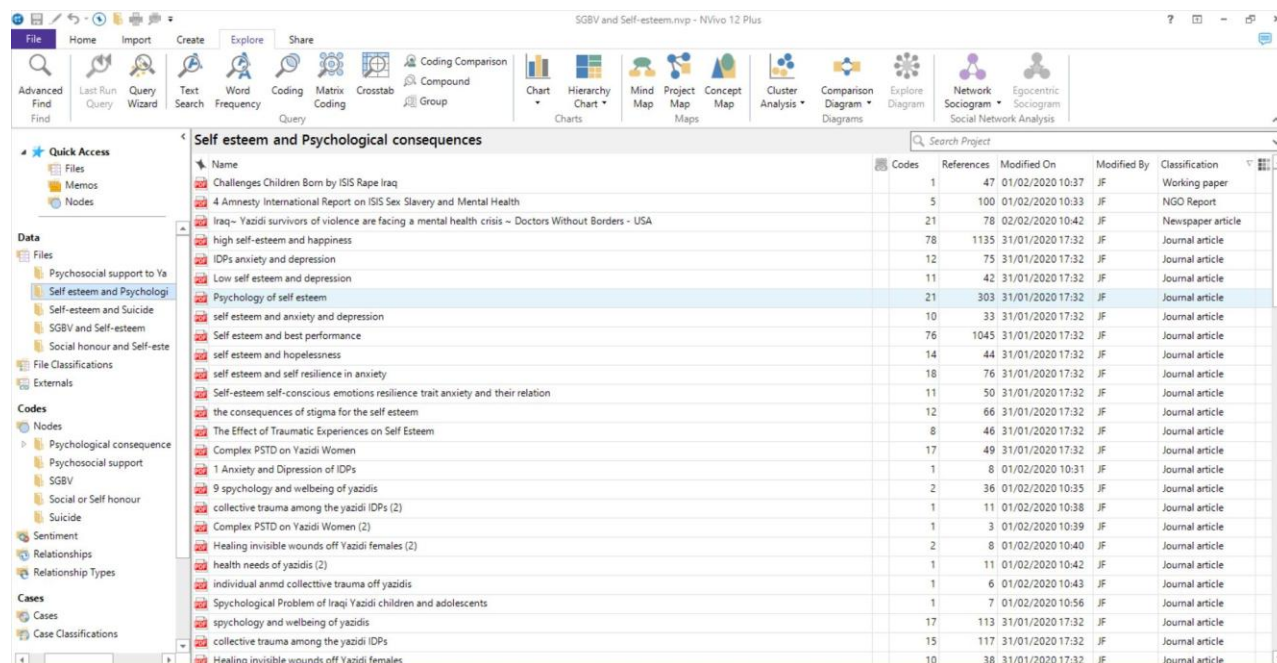Newspaper articles—(n =10)
Others—(n = 0)

After the screening process, the following literature selection resulted that is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Literature selection by research objectives

Research Objective	No.	Type of literature	No. of materials selected
Research Objective 1	Examining the impact of sexual and gender-based violence on the self-esteem of Iraqi Yazidi females in the internal displacement context		
	1	Journal article online	13
		Grey literature	
	2	Newspaper article online	2
	3	NGO report online	1
	4	UN report online	1
Research Objective 2	Examining the relationship between Yazidis' self-esteem and psychological consequences		
	1	Journal article online	47
		Grey literature	
	2	Newspaper article online	1
	3	NGO report online	1
Research Objective 3	Examining the impact of diminishing social pride or social honour on the self-esteem of the Iraqi Yazidi community during the displacement and in the post-conflict context		
	1	Journal article online	3
		Grey literature	
	2	Newspaper article online	2
Research Objective 4	Examining the impact of self-esteem and suicidal ideation of Iraqi Yazidi females		
	1	Journal article online	10
		Grey literature	
	2	Newspaper article online	3
Research Objective 5	Examining the status of fulfilling the self-esteem needs of Yazidi females, who have been enslaved and sexually abused by the Islamic State (ISIS) in the post-conflict context		
	1	Journal article online	2
		Grey literature	
	2	Newspaper article online	2
	3	NGO report online	8
	4	UN report online	4
Total no. of literature considered for coding			**100**

Fig 2. NVivo12 Plus software with relevant imported document files for part of the coding process

Data analytical process consisted of coding of various relevant minor themes in relation to the research objectives; aggregation of minor themes into major themes; as well as identifying the correlation between major themes, which are classified below.

IV.   RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Relationship Between Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Self-Esteem

The results show, in general, severe forms of sexual and gender-based violence negatively impact the self-esteem of the affected females (Banuelos, 2015; Kim et al., 2017). In the case of Iraqi Yazidi females, who were adversely subjected to the barbaric sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by the Islamic State (Free Yazidi Foundation, 2015), their self-esteem adversely dropped down to extreme lower or the negative level, that was consistent with other studies. Reports with the ordeals of escaped Yazidi women and girls, who escaped from the captivity of the Islamic State indicate that many young Yazidi women and girls attempted suicide and many of having suicidal ideation during the captivity (Amnesty International, 2014 & Amnesty International, 2015). Moreover, interviews of former Yazidi captives narrate their strong feeling of 'negative self-worth', in other words, negative self-esteem.

The Relationship Between Yazidis' Self-Esteem and Psychological Consequences

The research of Nguyen et al. (2019) proved a very strong correlation between self-esteem and psychological consequences such as anxiety and depression, early sexual activity and eating problems, etc. in general, and this result was concordant with (Ali et al., 2017 & Ceri et al., 2016). Materials related to Yazidis as well as non-Yazidis indicated strong evidence of inverse or negative relationship between self-esteem and psychological consequences. Many pieces of literature indicate that those who possess extreme lower or negative self-esteem tend to suffer by psychological problems (Hosseini & Seidi, 2018) such as depression, anxiety, nightmares, and

various forms of disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, complex post-traumatic stress disorder, etc. (Medicines Sans Frontiers, 2019).

The Relationship between Social pride or Social Honour issues and Self-Esteem

Results indicate that in general, in communities, which are highly intertwined with honour culture, the self-esteem of individuals highly correlated with individual self-honour or in other words, how do the others value every individual in the community. When it comes to the Yazidi females, who were sexually enslaved by the Islamic State and subsequently fathered their kids between 2014 till 2017, all their social honour should have been dropped to a negative level. However, among a hundred materials subjected to the analysis, no material showed a positive correlation between social honour or social pride of the affected Iraqi Yazidis with their self-esteem. However, Khalil et al. (2018) noted that loss of pride among Syrian Yazidis observed in Iraqi camps, which caused suicidal ideation in some individuals.

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Suicidal issues

The results of the analysis have indicated, in general, a very strong negative correlation between self-esteem and suicidal issues, which is consistent with (Thomson, 2010). In detail, the self-esteem of those, who possess suicidal ideation or attempt suicide would normally be extremely lower or negative. In the case of Iraqi Yazidi females, who were subjected to the sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by the Islamic State, suicidal issues such as suicidal ideation, suicidal attempts, suicidal behavioural increase, as well as increased suicidal risks were observed during and after the captivity of the Islamic State and loss of self-esteem or negative self-esteem was justified for this phenomenal change.

As corroboration of the above results, Medicines Sans Frontiers (2019) & Robinson (2019) stated that an extreme mental health crisis, which includes many suicidal attempts and ideation is occurring in Sinjar district in north-western Iraq. The Medicine Sans Frontiers (2019) further states that in Sinjar district, everyone has lost at least one family member or friend and therefore, there is an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and loss, which is the indication of lower or negative self-esteem. Cetorelli et al. (2017) mentioned that apart from mass killing and sexual slavery, forced religious conversion of Yazidi captives by the Islamic State was the major cause for Yazidis' suicidal issues.

Many Yazidi women and girls escaped from the ISIS captivity are still heavily indebted to their lenders, who offered them money to pay ransoms to the intermediaries, who assisted the Yazidi females' escape from the captivity of the Islamic State. The 'debt burden' makes the self-esteem of many indebted Yazidi women and girls extremely lower or negative and subsequent suicidal ideation.

In addition, among the women and girls who are not enslaved by the Islamic State and living in displacement camps, poor living conditions (Al Shahid, 2018; Hosseini & Seidi, 2018), the experience of forced early marriages with grooms of huge age difference, make their self-esteem very lower or negative, resulted with many adverse psychosocial issues and the result is consistency with (Hassan, 2019).

The status of fulfilling the self-esteem needs of Yazidi females in the post-conflict context

The results of the analysis indicate that severe psychological burden has been plagued by the Yazidi community in northern Iraq during and after the rampage of the Islamic State that has unprecedentedly inflicted the entire Yazidi community. To respond the mental health and psychosocial as well as traumatic issues among the Yazidi population, especially the women who were subjected to the slavery and sexual violence, the central, regional governments with the backing of the United Nations and the International NGOs and the donor community, a number of interventions in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services along with interventions for sexual

and gender-based violence have already been implemented and still ongoing (United States Agency for International Development, 2019).

More specifically, Yazidi women and girls are being trained in basic Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Interventions by psychologists, which focuses on trauma, stress, stabilization techniques, suicide prevention, and conflict management (Free Yazidi Foundation, 2018). However, many documentations of the United Nations, international NGOs, and independent researchers point out that there are gaps in the psychosocial service provision (International Medical Corps, 2016). Obviously, the gap in mental health and psychosocial support services and trauma stabilization exists mainly due to the gap in funding for the interventions coupled with the efficacy of service provision (Reliefweb, 2018).

In the Iraqi context, the efficacy of mental health and psychosocial support services and trauma stabilization points are entwined with institutional and human resource capacities. When northern Iraq was liberated from the Islamic State in 2017, and the return of the Yazidi IDPs had started, the regional government, many local as well as international NGOs, and the United Nations were struggled to offer their service mainly due to lack of institutional capacity, that means lack of hospitals with required medical facilities and that situation was further exacerbated by the lack of mental health professionals and other types of human resources in the health sector.

As verifying the results of the analysis, United Nations Population Fund (2019) highlighted that the hindrances identified in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Service (MHPSS) provision are (i) lack of community awareness about the importance of MHPSS service provision to the affected population; (ii) shortage of MHPSS health professionals; (iii) lack of monitoring and evaluation of MHPSS programmes. Although the situation has since been improving, documents narrate that there is still a gap exists in service provision due to a gap in funding and human resource. Kizilhan & Noll-Hussong (2017) indicated that for the affected Yazidis, self-esteem and intimacy are needed to overcome the trauma that would increase the security and stability.

V. Discussion

Obviously, conflict-driven displacements alter the psychosocial landscape of the people, who experience it (Hosseini & Seidi, 2018). From the outlook of human development under the sustainable development goal (SGD), when considering the human development initiatives, no one should leave behind (United Nations Development Programme, 2018), regardless of their status, even if they are on the move. The development of human beings affected by disasters is one of the main pillars of the sustainable development goal. To achieve the said goal, boosting the overall resilience nature that includes economic, social, physical, and psychological resilience of the affected people would be inevitable. Fulfilling the self-esteem needs of the people on the move is the cornerstone of their psychological resilience. However, the self-esteem of people on the move is not much affected, unless they are extremely traumatized by incidents such as amputation, sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, loss of their belongings and or beloved ones, forced assimilation, genocides, etc.

The self-esteem of individuals is much regarded in communities, where 'honour culture' (i.e. social honour on the ground of individuals, families & kinship, cast/clan, religion, communities and societies) is the backbone (Novin et al., 2015). These communities can highly be seen in Asia and Africa. If an internal or external factor, in these communities, alter their honour culture, the communities would start to face extinction. Iraqi Yazidis are one of the closed endogamous communities in the world, which highly regard honour culture, as it supports their unique identity. Their social honour should have severely been altered by the enslavement of Yazidi females by the Islamic State. Fortunately, the decision made by the supreme leader of the Iraqi Yazidi community to accept and integrate all women and girls who were enslaved by the Islamic State (Chulov, 2019) has saved thousands of Yazidi females from terminating their lives and this decision is seen as a strategic intervention in preventing from dropping the self-esteem of Iraqi Yazidi community.

In the case of Iraqi Yazidis, empirical pieces of evidence show that the self-esteem of the entire Yazidi population dropped due to (i) thousands of Yazidi females were sexually enslaved by the Islamic State terrorists and fathered their children; (ii) during the displacement, countless forced marriages were imposed on the young Yazidi female children; (iii) Yazidi women and girls who managed to escape the enslavement paid ransom to the intermediaries by indebted to their financiers and they are forced to repay their loans. All the above collective events make them highly traumatized with suicidal ideation. Because women and girls think that they are not deserved to live anymore.

The psychosocial, mental health as well as trauma interventions sector still need tremendous backing from the international community in the forms of institutional support, which includes financial, infrastructure and human resource. Moreover, for the Iraqi Yazidi women and girls, psychosocial intervention should specially be designed to boost their self-esteem, which can only prevent them from ailing psychological outcomes including suicidal ideation.

VI.   CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

In general, wars stigmatize those, who experience it with mental disorders, and associated issues. The needs of human beings, who are affected by conflict-driven displacements should be fulfilled as their needs are fulfilled in normal circumstances. Generally, the armed conflict-driven displacements do not alter the self-esteem of human beings. Self-esteem would be affected only in exceptional tragic circumstances, where individuals' perceived self-worth becomes questionable. This paper argues that the self-esteem needs of the armed conflict-driven displaced population, in many instances, are not sufficiently addressed, especially in most tragic situations such as mass rape, sex-slavery, amputation and immobilization, forced assimilation, genocide, etc. of displaced persons

In the case of Iraqi Yazidis, lack of fulfillment of self-esteem needs of the affected population has resulted in detrimental consequences such as depression, suicide, attempted suicide and severe mental disorders in conflict and post-conflict contexts. This paper, therefore, argues in the extremely tragic situations, in which, if the esteem of affected population goes lower or negative, the esteem needs of the displaced population should be fulfilled with appropriate psychosocial interventions while their other emergency needs are fulfilled in the displacement contexts to get their self-reliance back.

Suggestions
Measures to raise the self-esteem of the armed conflict-driven displaced population
Some scientists argue that the self-esteem of individuals could be increased by increasing the level of success that individuals enjoy. Emler (2016) suggests that by implementing programs that focus on developing skills of various kinds could improve the self-esteem of the individuals. Emler further stressed that by altering the pattern of a person's association. For example, by avoiding the association of people with lower self-esteem and successful, attractive, conspicuously talented people. Bosqui & Marshoud (2018) indicated that "sourcing social support outside of immediate family whose capacity may be stretched and improving social skills to boost self-esteem". Therefore, in an armed conflict-driven displaced situation, the affected population should be offered opportunities to test their talents, innovative ideas, identify their full potential in order to improve their self-esteem.

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