Research Proposal: Enhancing Midwifery Services for Maternal Health in Iran Tehran

# Research Proposal: Optimizing Midwifery Practice and Access to Improve Maternal Outcomes in Iran, Tehran

## I. Introduction

The health of mothers and newborns remains a critical priority within the Iranian healthcare system, particularly in densely populated urban centers like Tehran. As the capital city with a population exceeding 9 million residents and significant demographic diversity, Tehran presents unique challenges and opportunities for maternal healthcare delivery. This **Research Proposal** focuses on the pivotal role of the **Midwife** within Iran's primary healthcare framework, specifically examining barriers to optimal midwifery services and strategies for enhancement in Tehran. Despite Iran's commendable progress in reducing maternal mortality over recent decades, disparities persist, especially concerning equitable access to skilled birth attendants like midwives across Tehran's varied neighborhoods. This study aims to generate actionable evidence directly relevant to **Iran**'s public health goals and the specific context of **Tehran**.

## II. Problem Statement

While Iran has implemented a National Midwifery Strategy aiming for universal access to skilled midwifery care, significant gaps remain in Tehran. Urban sprawl, high population density in certain districts (e.g., peripheral neighborhoods and informal settlements), and the influx of migrants create complex barriers. Current data suggests inconsistent utilization of **Midwife**-led care, with many women opting for hospital-based obstetric services even for low-risk pregnancies due to lack of awareness, perceived quality concerns, or logistical issues. This over-reliance on hospital settings strains resources and may contribute to non-essential medical interventions. Furthermore, the workload of practicing midwives in Tehran public health centers is often excessive, impacting service quality and provider well-being. The specific needs and experiences of vulnerable populations within Tehran – including low-income families, ethnic minorities, and migrant women – are insufficiently documented regarding their interaction with the **Midwife** workforce. Addressing these gaps is essential for Iran to meet its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 3.1 (reducing maternal mortality) and the Ministry of Health's Health Transformation Plan objectives.

## III. Research Objectives

1. **To assess** the current landscape of midwifery services in Tehran: including workforce distribution, caseloads, service utilization patterns across different socioeconomic and geographic areas within the city.
2. **To identify** specific barriers (systemic, cultural, financial) hindering optimal access to and utilization of Midwife-provided care for diverse populations in Tehran.
3. **To explore** the perspectives of key stakeholders – including midwives themselves, pregnant women (across different demographics), healthcare administrators at Tehran health centers, and referring physicians – regarding the quality, accessibility, and perceived value of midwifery services.
4. **To develop** evidence-based recommendations for policymakers within Iran's Ministry of Health and Tehran's Department of Health to enhance midwifery integration, capacity building, and service delivery models specifically tailored for Tehran's urban context.

## IV. Methodology

This study will employ a mixed-methods approach to ensure comprehensive insights. The design is pragmatic and grounded in the Iranian healthcare reality.

* **Quantitative Component:** A structured survey will be administered to 400 pregnant women receiving care at public health centers across 10 diverse districts of Tehran (representing urban, peri-urban, and socioeconomically varied zones). Data will include demographics, access patterns, satisfaction with midwifery care (or lack thereof), and factors influencing their choice of birth attendant. Concurrently, administrative data from the Tehran Department of Health on midwife staffing ratios and patient volumes at these centers will be analyzed.
* **Qualitative Component:** In-depth interviews (n=30) with practicing midwives from various health centers in Tehran, focusing on workload challenges, professional autonomy, training needs, and perceived obstacles. Focus group discussions (2 groups of 8-10 women each) will be conducted in selected neighborhoods to gather nuanced experiences and community perspectives on accessing midwifery services.
* **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and regression analysis. Qualitative transcripts will undergo thematic analysis using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns and insights related to the research questions. Triangulation of findings from both components will strengthen validity.

## V. Expected Significance and Impact

This **Research Proposal** directly addresses a critical gap in understanding how the vital role of the **Midwife** can be maximized within Iran's most populous city, Tehran. The findings are expected to provide concrete, locally relevant evidence for Iranian health policymakers. Specifically, results will:

* Inform targeted interventions to optimize midwifery workforce deployment across Tehran's urban landscape.
* Highlight specific training needs for midwives serving diverse populations within Iran's capital.
* Guide the development of culturally sensitive patient education materials to increase awareness and utilization of Midwife services in Tehran.
* Support the Ministry of Health in refining the National Midwifery Strategy implementation at the municipal level, particularly for Tehran, ensuring resources are allocated where they will have the greatest impact on maternal health equity.

## VI. Ethical Considerations

All aspects of this research involving human participants in Iran will strictly adhere to national ethical guidelines (Iranian National Bioethics Committee) and international standards (CIOMS). Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Data collection protocols will be reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. Special attention will be given to the privacy and vulnerability of participants, particularly women from marginalized groups within Tehran.

## VII. Conclusion

The health outcomes for mothers and infants in Iran, especially within the complex urban environment of Tehran, are deeply intertwined with the effectiveness and accessibility of midwifery services. This research is not merely an academic exercise but a crucial step towards strengthening Iran's primary healthcare system at its most vital point: supporting women through pregnancy and childbirth. By meticulously examining the current state of **Midwife** practice within **Iran Tehran**, this study aims to produce practical, implementable solutions that empower midwives, improve maternal experiences, reduce unnecessary interventions, and ultimately contribute to safer motherhood for all women in Tehran. The findings will directly feed into the evidence base required by Iran's healthcare leadership to make informed decisions that advance maternal health equity within its most significant urban center.

**Word Count: 856**