



Investigating the effect of generation gap on the occurrence of running away from home among adolescents in Tehran

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Background and Aim: The family, as the first center of common life and socialization of children, will be effective in the occurrence of many social harms in case of disorder and critical relations between members. The present study was conducted with the aim of studying the effect of generation gap on the occurrence of running away from home among the youth of Tehran. **Methods:** This research is descriptive analytical research and in terms of method, it is quantitative and survey type, taking into account the cross-sectional time criterion. The statistical population includes families with children aged 10 to 19 years old in Tehran city, who were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling in a period of nine months according to the families living in areas two, nine and sixteen using the Cochran formula, 324 people. The tool is a researcher-made questionnaire and an interview, which was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire using the face validity method, Cronbach's alpha method was used to calculate the reliability, and SPSS software were used to analyze the data. **Results:** The findings showed that the generation gap has a significant and direct relationship in the occurrence of running away from home among the youth of Tehran ($T=3.51$). Also, a statistically significant difference was observed between the two different age groups of 14-10 and 19-15 years old in terms of average social damage ($p = 0.001$). **Conclusion:** According to the results, it can be said that training parents in order to increase the ability to establish a relationship with their children, especially in the face of generational differences, can be a very important step in preventing the emergence of many deviations and social harms. For this reason, it is very necessary to raise the level of awareness in families in order to improve the mentioned process.



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Introduction

In our country, Iran, the issue of a values gap between generations has been a concern for some time, both among experts and those responsible for affairs, as well as among families (Parsakia et al., 2023). Many parents complain about their children's disregard for their standards, criteria, and values, and in many cases, they consider it one of the major problems in their family life. Conversely, children do not fully understand their parents' values and criteria, and their desires, expectations, needs, actions, and beliefs often cause concern for parents and sometimes lead to tensions within families between parents and children, younger and older siblings, and even between spouses due to differences in how to deal with their children's expectations and how to meet them.

Since the family is the fundamental unit of society and has strong and genuine bonds such as parental, sibling, and filial relationships that support its members against social uncertainties, the role of this institution in preventing intergenerational distance is not hidden from anyone. However, some families not only do not help separate generations, but also deepen the gaps. Granting unlimited freedoms to children, complete trust in society for the socialization of new generations, and distancing children from the family environment under the pretext of parents' work and through their placement in nurseries and educational centers are some of the problems in this area that need to be addressed in the behavior and responsibility of family members, especially parents.

In addition, the lack of emotional ties and verbal communication in the family leads to the distance between generations remaining hidden until it reaches a crisis stage and the fundamental conflicts become apparent, and the valuable opportunities that this institution has for family convergence become ineffective and useless (Mostakhdemin Hosseini et al., 2022). Running away from home without the permission of parents or legal guardians is, in fact, a reaction to conditions that are perceived by the individual as unfavorable, intolerable, and sometimes unchangeable. This action is usually seen as a defensive mechanism to reduce unpleasantness and escape from harmful

and damaging motives and achieve desired and often long-term aspirations. Sociological and psychological studies suggest that home and family are the most important centers and safe havens for children, but runaways not only do not consider home a place of peace but also consider it a prison of their desires and aspirations and are prone to various social deviations in search of a better and desirable life, both voluntarily and involuntarily.

The phenomenon of adolescent and youth runaways is caused by a complex set of psychological and social factors that are evident in all countries. The occurrence of this phenomenon in Iran, especially in recent years, is on the rise. The issue of running away is important in that it can easily lead from individual and family behavior to illegal and dangerous activities, meaning that the adolescent first runs away and then easily falls victim to the misuse of anti-social individuals and groups and engages in activities that have effects beyond the family dimension. In other words, although running away from home may seem like an individual phenomenon at first glance, given its adverse consequences, it disrupts social order and causes turmoil and is the source of many anti-social and deviant behaviors (Hashemi et al., 2011).

According to the World Health Organization statistics, one million adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19 run away from their homes annually, unfortunately, 74% of them are girls and this phenomenon is increasing every year (Iranian & Ebrahimi, 2009). Although no one knows exactly how many young people run away from home each year, reports from law enforcement agencies in Iran show that police arrest 90 runaway youths daily who have become victims of rape and other crimes, most of whom are found in railway terminals and parks (Rasouli Zadeh Tabatabaie et al., 2015). Unfortunately, due to the confidential nature of official crime statistics in our country, it is not possible to provide statistics on the rate of girls running away from home and to study it longitudinally and comparatively in different time periods and by province. However, some reports and statements by officials, as well as survey research, indicate an increase in the phenomenon of running away from home. Running away from home is a warning and alert

to interested and caring members of society; the increase in the number of runaway cases has forced officials to seek solutions, and in this regard, examining the factors of girls' running away from home in this study can be helpful; in terms of cognitive understanding, this study can help to better and more comprehensively understand the problem, and in terms of practicality, the achievements of this study can be used to provide practical solutions appropriate to the indigenous situation.

Research on runaway youth has shown that negative poles of each of these dimensions are strongly found in the families of these young people, such as rejection, neglect, and over-control of parents towards their children in the families of these young people before they become runaways. Amirpour (2021) showed in his research that the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were positive and significant predictors, and the authoritative style was a negative and significant predictor of children's running away from home. Also, Pirnemayi and Abdoli (2018) showed that increased social participation and diversity had a positive relationship with the probability of children running away, and increased interaction with family and life values had a negative relationship with the probability of children running away. Bahrami and Hosseini (2017) showed that there is a significant relationship between family factors, psychological factors, social factors, economic factors, and girls' and women's running away from the family environment. Ebrahimi Ghavam and Khatibzadeh (2020), in examining the family situation of runaway girls with an emphasis on their abuse, showed that physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of runaway girls existed.

The title of this scientific article can be called "The Beginning of Homelessness and Refugees and Its Relationship with Family Issues". This situation provides the grounds for committing many crimes, and runaway girls resort to theft, begging, distributing drugs, alcohol, and illegal goods, prostitution, joining terrifying and dirty gangs, and engaging in immoral acts. Therefore, since the ultimate result of children's escape is being trapped in corrupt and immoral gangs and committing moral crimes, runaway individuals cannot return to their families by getting involved in unethical issues. The situation of

children being in dangerous situations creates sensitivity and severe reactions among the public. Thus, it should be noted that such harmful behaviors do not occur in a vacuum, but are strongly related to other family issues such as economic and social status, undesirable facilities, poverty, parental addiction, social isolation, uncontrollable family crises, divorce, violence, child abuse, and neglect. This undesirable situation in the family leads to children being expelled from the family and ultimately being thrown out of their homes. At the same time, during this period of misery at home, school is also full of problems for most children. Their academic achievements are minimal, and their relationships with peers and teachers are problematic. The undesirable behavior of an individual, which is the result of their undesirable social acceptance in the family and school environment, reinforces mechanisms that ultimately lead to their expulsion and rejection from all social environments, such as relatives and former friends who now consider them undesirable. In such a situation, even professional and special organizations that are responsible for their protection and maintenance and have been created for this purpose also consider them irreparable individuals. By being expelled from various areas of life that are important for their survival, troubled youth become more isolated and feel powerless and helpless against the structures that surround their lives. It should be noted that studies in this area have shown that family history is the most important causal variable because the process of expulsion and rejection begins there, and the starting point is the confusion and destruction of the individual's life. Therefore, in this study, the role of the generation gap between parents and children in the occurrence of running away from home was examined in order to highlight the importance of the generation gap and the necessity of educating parents, improving family function, and increasing family social capital as an effective step towards reducing this phenomenon.

Method

The present study is considered a descriptive-analytical research in terms of data. In descriptive studies, the characteristics of the study population can be evaluated through survey and data collection is done through questionnaires. In terms of execution type, it was a cross-sectional survey. The statistical population of the present study included families

with 10 to 19-year-old children residing in districts 2, 9, and 16 of Tehran, from which a multi-stage cluster sampling was performed and a total of 374 individuals were selected.

Materials

1. Researcher-made questionnaire and interview:

The measurement tool was a questionnaire and interview, which was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire through formal validity method and to calculate the reliability through Cronbach's alpha method. The questionnaire was used as a closed-ended response and scored based on the Likert spectrum. The content validity of the questionnaire was determined through content validity, and the overall CVR of the tool was equal to 0.742. The reliability of the tool was determined through Cronbach's alpha method, and the Cronbach's alpha was higher than 0.75 in all indices.

Implementation

According to the information of the Statistical Center of Iran, the number of households with 10 to 19-year-old children in different districts of Tehran was obtained, and based on the economic conditions, households were divided into three categories (districts 1 to 4 as the first category, districts 5 to 12 as the second category, and districts 12 to 22 as the third category). Then, to obtain the sample size, based on the proportion of districts, district 2 was randomly selected from the first group, district 9 from the second group, and district 16 from the third group, according to the size of the households. SPSS software was used for data analysis.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the study population and descriptive findings are presented in the table below.

Table 2. The mean and standard deviation of students' academic burnout scores in the pre-test and post-test phases

Variable	Stage	Index	Mean	SD	N
		Group			
Academic burnout	Pre-test	Exp.	40.24	11.50	20
		Control	38.44	14.57	20
	Post-test	Exp.	30.69	12.65	20
		Control	37.19	14.55	20
Fatigue	Pre-test	Exp.	25.69	5.66	20
		Control	24.20	5.87	20
	Post-test	Exp.	19.53	6.48	20
		Control	22.70	6.06	20
Pessimism	Pre-test	Exp.	6.74	3.08	20
		Control	6.24	4.47	20
	Post-test	Exp.	4.29	3.50	20
		Control	6.23	4.42	20
A feeling of inadequacy	Pre-test	Exp.	5.59	3.26	20
		Control	5.60	4.45	20
	Post-test	Exp.	3.79	2.78	20
		Control	5.97	4.22	20

The data in the above table represents the age variable of the sample population in two groups, indicating that 54% of individuals were in the 15-19 age group and 46% were in the 10-14 age group. The result of the two-sample t-test showed that the two groups had a statistically significant difference in mean escape from home (p=0.001). The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the sig

value was 0.49 or higher for all questions, indicating a normal distribution. The evaluation of the "M-Box" statistic also showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance of dependent research variables was met (p<0.05). Furthermore, the result of the Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p>0.01), indicating that the assumptions of regression analysis were met.

Table 3. The results of univariate analysis of variance on the mean of post-test scores of subjects of two groups with pre-test control

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p	Eta ²	Power
Pre-test	7107.79	1	7107.79	305.84	<0.001	0.88	1.00
Group	483.15	1	483.15	20.87	<0.001	0.38	0.994
Effect	827.02	36	21.50				

Based on the information in the table above, the relationship between the dimensions of the generation gap and escape from home was estimated to be 0.593. In other words, the dimensions of the generation gap explain about 23.4% of the variance related to "escape from home" in the sample population ($R^2=0.234$). The F-statistic calculations also showed that the regression model was a suitable model and the predictor variable was able to explain the variations in the criterion variable well ($p=0.001$, $df=373$, $F=3.24$).

Conclusion

Based on the research literature and the results obtained, it can be said that there is a significant and direct relationship between the generation gap and escape from home. The final conclusion of this study was in line with the questions raised at the beginning of the article and confirmed the theories put forward in the field of the generation gap and escape from home. It can be interpreted that the generation gap reduces the understanding and communication between parents and adolescents and creates differences between them. On the other hand, these conditions lead to increased feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression, delinquency, and social deviance among adolescents, and cause them to face various cultural and social problems. In general, the findings obtained and the theories put forward in the field of escape from home consider escape as a response to restrictive parental behavior and attribute the causes of escape to the family's inability to deal effectively with individuality and independence of the youth. Sociological theories such as Hirschi's social control theory believe that humans are inherently inclined towards deviant behavior and only strong social controls and links with the community prevent deviant behavior. If a child runs away from home, it is due to improper supervision, in other words, running away from home requires a background condition that includes forced marriage,

generation gap, feelings of humiliation, and ignoring the individual's desires. If these background conditions are combined with factors such as financial poverty, they provide the grounds for girls to escape. However, these conditions are still necessary conditions and not sufficient conditions for girls to escape. Escape becomes a reality when factors such as family instability, such as parental addiction, divorce, inappropriate relationships, and improper use of virtual space, are combined, and in the presence of these factors, girls escape. The results of this study are consistent with the studies of Pirnemayi and Abdoli (2018) and Behboodi and Hossein (2013).

Given the trend of the social phenomenon of girls running away and their decreasing age, a detailed and thorough examination of the causes and consequences of their escape can be an effective help to families and policymakers in preventing the spread of this phenomenon, which itself is a cause of many social harms. This is also an important part of the mission of social workers, which can easily be done in the prevention section and reduce intervention costs. Considering the importance and determining role of children and adolescents as national assets of any society in ensuring and sustaining the future of that society, losing these assets will cause irreparable damage to that society, and in the absence of prevention and control of the phenomenon of runaway girls, we may face the phenomenon of street women and prostitution in the near future, and we will have to look for their future in prisons or corrupt centers. Also, given the negative attitude of society towards the phenomenon of runaway girls and their families, and considering the cultural and religious taboo of this phenomenon in Iranian society, preserving the health of girls and the family unit is of particular importance. Promoting the idea of a desirable family, regardless of the issues and problems that families face, without government support and

support for families and their members, not only leads to social harms but also takes the form of deviant behaviors regarding the formation of the family institution.

Based on the research results and the above-mentioned issues, it should be noted that parental education to increase the ability to communicate with children, especially in the face of generational differences, can be a very important step in preventing the emergence of many deviations. Also, the serious attention of parents to strengthen friendly, loving, and non-discriminatory relationships with their children can turn the family unit into a peaceful and loving environment and play an important role in increasing the sense of belonging and attachment to the family. Therefore, in order to reduce the tendency of children to run away from home, the following suggestions are proposed:

- Interaction and dialogue between the old and new generations (youth) and negotiation over conflicting values of these two generations based on logical patterns.
- Giving importance to the expectations and values of the new generation by the old and adults.
- Transferring guiding values and norms to the present generations by adults by putting themselves as appropriate models.
- Reducing the gap in values of the two generations by using cultural and educational workshops to create a common goal for a healthy and useful life.
- Monitoring children's social interactions is very effective in preventing the process of harmful interactions (socializing with rare and deviant friends) and can be used to warn young people of the consequences of these interactions through logical approaches to prevent this harmful process. Controlling and persuading young people through negotiation and argumentation is desirable.
- Planning to increase and enhance the biological, psychological, and social abilities and skills of families.
- Educating families to help them solve their problems.
- Helping runaway individuals to return home, as this can be effective in preventing and reducing social deviations.
- Creating counseling programs in police counseling centers and coordinating these centers with welfare and related organizations.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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