



A sociological study on the elements affecting the street harassment of women in Iran

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ABSTRACT

Living within a human community is a must for every human being upon which most scholars have agreed. The essentials of today's life require presence of women within the community as well as men to work and do everyday activities. However, the street harassment issue as a social anomie for women is growing and their peace & comfort is taken away. Since this social anomie is a serious threat against the social security of people, so, the present research has been carried out to study the amount of street harassment for women and social elements affecting it in Iran. The methodology used in this paper was survey and the statistical community which is being evaluated is all youth between 18 and 28 among which, 280 individuals are selected randomly by the Cockron formula as the final cases. The results are analyzed using SPSS software. The results proved that there is a correlation between independent variables like age, education, monthly income of the family, relationship with the parents, monitoring and the control of official agencies and religious beliefs and the dependent variable of street harassment. Also the outcomes of regression analysis showed that %38 of changes in street harassment variable by means of the rest of six variables are defined in regression model and among those variables the relationship with the parents, age and education had the most effects on the dependent variable.

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Introduction

Anomie behaviors are problems threatening the community seriously and prevent the fulfillment of many people's requests. Seeking peace and security always has been one of most important human needs & initial requests. The concept of security deals with the protection of all members within a society against the elements threatening their lives, properties, innocence and reputation (M. Jami, 1384: 83).

There might be individuals in a community that cause problems for others' lives whether consciously or unconsciously and do things which change the normal-natural circumstances of that community. Some of them can be harassment including public harassment like saying oaths (curses) to women and young ladies passing by or shoving them or sounding loud horns in order to annoy them. These are considered to be crimes in any way as a social anomie (Abhari, 1380: 24).

Today, social anomies, delinquency, and misbehaviors beside the other problems have become sources spreading fear among people. Besides, men as social beings have to interact with each other which lead to regularity, security, and organization of things (Mohammadi, 1385: 39).

This street harassment problem for women is spreading like a disease and affects them that make half of our community and takes away their peace and comfort; especially in present age which is the age of communications and interactions, people have to spend many hours out of home and they need feeling of safety and security during their presence in outside home, streets, offices, shops, public transport systems, etc. so that they could do their best not to be left behind. But the fear and stress caused by the unsafe feelings of insecurity and threatening

elements could stop the fulfillment of such achievements (Mashkati, 1381: 12).

There are many women and girls that are restricted and yet not allowed to get out of home and appear in public places because their families are afraid of the harassment. This is an up-to-date issue and is wide-spread in many large cities. As we can see in larger environments, more harassment are seen which harm the families (Standley, 2006: 59).

Therefore, everyday increasing of this social problem and its consequences threatening the continuance of social life (regularity, safety, peace, etc.) are of the main reasons why this experiment is carried out. Here are 3 questions that this paper is going to answer:

1. How much street harassment do women face in Iran?
2. Which social elements affect the street harassment of women in Iran?
3. How much is the effect of social elements on the variable of street harassment for women?

Theoretical framework

Biological-psychological theory of abnormality

Although the explanations and interpretations which follow biological (body and its features) approaches origin in Socrates and Plato's age, but from the beginning of 19th century-after great inventions and promotions in non-human natural sciences-an idea was suggested according to which if the scientific approach can be applied to study the nature and exploring its unknown profounds, it can also be applied to study human behaviors. Hence, the focus of their studies was on the relation between misbehaviors and the shape of skull, genetic effects,

chromosomal anomalies, body shape, skin lines and some initial features and blood types.

The biological-psychological theory of misbehaviors explains the individual features of the stimulating elements of such behaviors. The question is that what kind of biological and psychological features lead to such misbehaviors. The answer is in biological elements like genes, chromosomes, hormones or psychological elements like intelligence and personal characteristics. So, one's particular biological features or the unruly force existing within the nature of the subject or a combination of both can provoke one to commit crimes and delinquency.

The above interpretations also stated that there is a relationship between the wrongdoing and different types of characters. Hence, most of their attention is on the personal features and characteristics of the wrongdoer. For instance, Sigmund Freud states that human beings have violent characteristics that during the growing process in families and the society, they learn how to control them.

So, the psychological methods derived from Freud's tests provide us with a better understanding of human character and its relation to the misbehaviors. Freud defines three forces (called the elements controlling behaviors) for the structure of any character:

Nature: that shows the needs and attitudes of men and follows the principle of joy and acts unconsciously relating to the failures and successes.

Self: This represents the social facts of life and provides one with understanding, thought and how to affect his/her environment.

Beyond-self: this represents the social restrictions which is gained from experiencing social groups especially the family and is initialized within one as the conscience or the understanding that are a set of rules and values (Ahmadi, 1384: 11).

When the self as the dominant element couldn't control the other two, one becomes disagreeable and may do something wrong while satisfying his needs; e.g. sexual aberration instead of marriage.

The environmental-social theory of abnormality

The theories proposed by both classic & contemporary sociologists have emphasized on the basic role of the environment in creation of social aberrations. Because all social norms, values, rules and regulations have been considered to be positive and fruitful, undoing them would mean social aberration. These theorists believe that elements like decrease in social institutions such as family and weakness of relative variables as the casual social control force, decrease of social cohesion-as a result of industrializing and moving to the cities-provides more opportunities for social anomalies (Baxter, 2006: 102).

Most criminologists believe that ignoring environmental and social elements while interpreting wrongdoings is wrong; as to understand such behaviors one can analyze devastating social powers which affect human behaviors. In fact they say that unsuitable social class is the primary reason to the crimes (Siegel, 2001: 85).

Wilson and Cling (1986), proposing the broken windows theory stated that the lack of public monitoring, environmental irregularity and impolite behaviors in such places lead to an increase in amount of crimes (Perkins, 1993: 35).

From the second half of the 19th century to the third quarter of the 20th, the theoretical development of the concepts of Anomie and Social Disorganization by Durkheim, Parsons, and Park and Burgess, helped studying European and American environments concerning crimes & delinquency. Their studies found a meaningful co-relation between misbehaviors and elements like age, sex, population & its growth, social control, social capital, big city life and the religion. According to them, the social elements control individuals and when these elements become unstable, people have less control on what they do (Ashraf, 1371: 52).

According to the Anomie theory, when there is no clear foundation in some certain aspects of life to guide the behavior, the anomie appears. According to Durkheim, the main reason of its appearance is the hasty economic changes; as such changes are followed by some kind of value & norm systems of a society (Lenderman et al, 1999: 25).

Here the family factors including social acceptability, emotional relationships between the members, family controlling, assimilation with parents, family separation, etc. play an important role in creating delinquent behaviors among the youth. Studying families as social-acceptability units of the youth has a long history (Chibucos, 2005: 27).

In interpreting social aberrations, Park & Burgess focused on variables related to the ghettos (like language, tribe, migration, residence areas and population concentration). Park believes that the urban areas prevents the promotion and improvement of residents and leads to the expansion of social aberrations. The physical system of cities has a profound effect on the socio-cultural patterns of city life (Sucher, 1978: 125).

Burgess believes that within the transitional area (area 2), due to the high level of crowd's move, migration, destruction of [old] houses and concentration of the population, the highest amount of crimes and delinquencies are seen. Increase in concentration & number and to intensify the differences is followed by many social aberrations (Piran, 1369).

Nie (2004) in his studies concluded that some family variables like the children-parent relationships, discipline, support and the socio-economic base of family have a meaningful relationship with the juvenile delinquency. Hirschi (1969) while testing the Control thesis realized that the increase of children's imitation of their parents and also spending more time with them decreases their will to delinquencies. Other studies about family and delinquency have stated the marital conflicts, separation and weak supports of parents as effective elements on the juvenile delinquency. Saterland considered the delinquency as a result of family mistakes where the parents couldn't teach their children the values & norms. From his point of view, normal individuals and the wrongdoers have the same concerns and unsatisfied needs but they differ in the way learned to react to such concerns and motivators. The family as the primary learning environment of the children affects the juvenile delinquency (Sotude, 1381: 105).

The results of his experimental test on 100 teenagers of 12-19 years old showed that the patterns of mutual interacting among the family members have meaningful relationships with the delinquency. Most delinquent ones in that case had apparent problems and conflicts with their parents; while they were easily interacting with their friends (Farjad, 1379: 121).

Theories like the Ecological theory (Shaw & Maki, 1942) and the Pressure theory (Masen, 1928) regarding the official

statistics of social aberrations, suggest that the socio-economic base of family is of variables relating to the delinquency.

Shaw & Maki (1942) supposed that the concentrated & big urban areas encourage only the surface of human relationships that respectively increases the interpersonal conflicts and makes it urgent to have an official control & monitoring. The results of social disorganization accompany with the poverty and selective move of the crowd to the suburban areas and leads to a weakness in social control which increases violence (Galea S et al, 2002: 1380).

The founders of such theories believe that the sense of indigence among the youth in families with low socio-economic bases, the lack of proper conditions of life and incorrect satisfaction of their needs leads them to the delinquency. These theories consider the job opportunity, education and parents' income as the main indexes of the socio-economic base of family and have evaluated their effects on the juvenile delinquency (Ahmadi, 1384: 89).

Also the results of the studies of Masen (et al) [1380], Krechtkofuliek (1380), Ghaemi (1381), Kariminiya (1380), Soltani-e Fotovvat (1379), Sharafi (1374) show that there is a wide range of interactions and immoral relationships for the youth, especially ladies in the streets. In other words, such relationships mostly destroy the basis of spiritual, family and educational life of the ladies rather than the boys (Movahhed et al, 1385: 46).

Research Hypotheses

According to what is mentioned in the literature review section, the research hypotheses are suggested as followings:

- There is a relationship between the population variables (age, number of family members, education, and family's monthly income) and the street harassment for the women.
- There is a relationship between the quality of relationship with the parents and the street harassment for the women.
- There is a relationship between the control of official institutions and the street harassment for the women.
- There is a relationship between the quality of interactions with the friends and the harassment for the women.
- There is a relationship between the religious beliefs of the youth and the street harassment for the women.

Methodology

The method used in this study is applicable due to its purpose. According to the way the survey data are gathered, it is widespread and periodical.

Sampling process

The statistical community of the present study includes all youth (male & female) between 15 and 20 years old among which 260 individuals were selected randomly; 100 females and 160 males were elected and studied.

Instruments

To measure the variables of this research, a multiple choice questionnaire made by the researcher was used hierarchical. To validate it, the face validity and to establish its reliability, the Cronbach's alpha technique has been used. The results showed that the final reliability index for all cases was more than 0.6 and though acceptable (Table 1).

Data analysis

The statistical methods of Single variable (descriptive, double variable and several variables have been used in this paper; but the tests applied here according to its nature and level of variables are the Pierson and several-variable regression.

Eventually, the resulted data were analyzed by the SPSS software.

Table 1. Reliability of the sub-scales (α)

Factors	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Relationship with parents	.777
Control of official institutions	.888
Relationships with the friends	.688
Religious beliefs of the youth	.722

The Single-variable descriptive statistics

Age: among the 260 cases, their average age was 27.3 and standard deviation=2.77

Family dimension: among the 260 cases, the family dimension mean was 3.27 and standard deviation=1.23

Job: %57 of cases was employees.

Education: %75 of cases had finished their high school and %14 of them was literate.

Relationship with parents: among the 260 cases, the average of their answers was 16.84, with the standard deviation=5.54 and range=14

Control of official institutions: among the 260 studied cases, the average for this variable was 21.09 with the standard deviation=9.5 and range=33

Relationships with the friends: the average for this one was 22.1 and its standard deviation=6.5

Religious beliefs of the youth: the average and standard deviation for this variable were respectively 31.3 and 7.5

Street harassment: average of this variable was 27 and standard deviation=6.7

Inductive analysis of the double-variable

To evaluate the co-relation between the independent variables with the dependent variable (street harassment), Pierson's co-relation test has been used. Results showed that:

The co-relation between the variable of age and the street harassment for women was confirmed with %99 of certainty and meaningful level of 0.01. The intensity of this co-relation and the kind of relation was reverse i.e. as the age increases, the street harassment decreases.

The linear relationship between the family's income and the street harassment was also confirmed with the %99 of certainty and a meaningful level of 0.05. This is also a reverse relationship.

The co-relation between the two variables of relationship with the friends and the street harassment wasn't confirmed.

The linear relationship between the education and the street harassment was confirmed with %99 of certainty and a meaningful level of 0.01. This also is a reverse relationship.

The co-relationship between the number of family members and the street harassment was confirmed with %99 of certainty and a meaningful level of 0.01. This one, too, is a normal reverse relationship i.e. the more monitoring and relationships between the family members exist, the street harassment for women decreases.

The co-relation between the amounts of controls applied by official institutions and the street harassment was confirmed with %95 of certainty and a meaningful level of 0.05. This one is a weak reverse relationship.

The linear relationship between the religious beliefs of the youth and the street harassment was confirmed with 95% of certainty (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation between independent variables and dependent variable

	Street harassment
Age	-.420**
Family dimension	-.050
Monthly income of the family	-.157*
Education	-.653**
Relationship with parents	-.542**
Control of official institutions	-.152*
Relationships with the friends	.033
Religious beliefs	-.159**
**P < .01, *P < .05	

The regression analysis of several-variable for the street harassment of women

To evaluate the amount of the effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable, the regression analysis of several-variable has been used. The results are the followings: The relationship between the independent and dependent variables based on the one-way variance analysis table regarding the meaningful level is linear and shows that the independent variables are able to change the dependent one i.e. the street harassment. The independence of errors, too, according to Watson's camera has been confirmed to perform the regression analysis.

The co-relation index (R) between the variables is 0.618 that shows there is an upper intermediate co-relationship between the independent variables and the dependent one. $R^2=0.381$ that proves %38 of all changes in the street harassment among the studied case can be explained by the 6 remaining variables in regression model including relationship with the parents, education, age, control by official institutions, religious beliefs and family's income.

Among the effective variables, relationship with parents, age and education had the most effects. Also effects of total other remaining variables in regression model were reverse and negative (Table 3).

Table 3. Regression analysis summary for IVs predicting Street Harassment

Predictor	R ²	F	Beta	t
	.41	48.91		
Relationship with parents			.324	- 8.43**
Age			.260	- 5.61**
Education			.220	- 4.59**
Control of official institutions			.130	- 3.45**
Religious beliefs			.127	- 3.26**
Monthly income			.116	- 3.10**
**P < .01				

Results and Discussion

Different kind of street harassment of women as one of social-political issues in big cities has caused the feeling of unsafety and insecurity within the society. Hence, the present study is aimed to evaluate the social elements affecting the street harassment in Iran and its results proved that %75 of cases had finished their high school and most of them (%57) had side jobs. The average for street harassment of women was 27 i.e. lower

than normal. Also the average for the relationship with parents was 16.84 which are somehow normal.

The co-relation between the variables of the family's income, age, education, religious beliefs of the youth and the street harassment of women was confirmed. Other significant result is that the linear relationship between the variables of relationships with parents, control by the official institutions and the street harassment of women was confirmed with %98 of certainty that is the same as Nie's research results (2004). Also the contents of Hiruschi's theory and social control are applicable in the statistical community which is being studied. So it can be concluded that the more intimate the relationship between parents and children is, the less harassment of women will occur. The following suggestions are given according to the confirmed hypotheses and the statistical results of the present study to reduce this social anomie:

- To develop an effective co-operation between schools, families, social services and other elements and institutions in order to create suitable social acceptability opportunities and conditions to better positive growth for the youth
- Accurate and suitable identification of the needs of the youth and make a bridge between the old and the present generation
- To encourage the youth for higher education; creating centers to meet parents and talking to them about the importance of the role of home and family in the behaviors of children in the environments out of home
- Proper interference such as advices of the police and other security agencies countering the street harassment issue

Eventually, we finish our study with a quotation from Imam Ali:

Imam Ali in his orders to Malik Ashtar talks about classification of different classes of the society due to their roles in facilitating social life and says:

"O Malik, remember that the society consists of different classes that it is impossible to alter them unless using the others, and none is needless to the other one."

{Nahj-al-Bilaqa, Sobhi Salih, N 53}

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