

## Assessing Social Behaviors of High School Teenagers of Tabriz-Iran

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**Abstract:** Paying attention to teenagers' issues and their problems is necessary to have a healthy society. This research with the aim of identifying behavioral patterns of Tabriz teenagers in regards to themselves, their families and communities in order to develop a baseline data and to have a correct perception of teenagers' behavior, to design appropriate interventions to promote the situation. This study was conducted in Tabriz private and public high schools in 2006. Five hundred students were selected by random sampling method. To analyze the data, we used SPSS, Chi-square and Fisher's Exact and Compare mean tests. Findings of this research indicate that the mean of social behavior of teenagers was 76.57 of 100 points. Also 91.91% of teenagers believe that relation with God has profound effect in physical and mental health of them. Only 54.84% of teenagers believe that it is useful to consult with teachers in important issues and 58.4% of teenagers are able to control their temper in nervousness and sadness. We recommend more studies to identify emotional and behavioral characteristics in order to improve their behavior.

**Key words:** Teenagers, maturity, social behavior, risky behaviors, relation with God, consultation, healthy society

### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is achievable through holistic health oriented comprehensive social systems which are partially compatible with WHO's definition of health (Hatami *et al.*, 2006). In this regard healthy behaviors such as being able to interact with others in an appropriate manner and also to be committed to social values are essential ingredients of a healthy society. This issue is much important for a young society. Whereas, the maturity that means puberty occurs in young age and thereby it is clear that physical, mental, spiritual and social maturity occurs in adolescence stage (Hatami *et al.*, 2006). The period of adolescence includes multiple transitions namely, the transition to puberty (Muuss and Porton, 1998) that self-perceptions of maturity mediate the relation between pubertal change and adolescent behavior (Kelly *et al.*, 2007). During this transition individuals behavior mostly depends on the nature of parent, school, peers interactions and cognitive and emotional abilities of individual. This period is also characterized by an increase in risk-taking behaviors, e.g., those linked to careless driving, substance use, unprotected sexual behaviors, disorders, delinquency, homicidal and suicidal behaviors and dangerous sports (Keren Michael and Hasida Ben-Zur, 2007) which are categorized as risky behaviors since they are usually voluntary and their outcomes are

uncertain and they entail negative consequences (Irwin, 1990). Society today is concerned with high rates of youth involvement in risky behaviors. Youth risky behaviors continue to be an important social issue which might be of some trouble to society, sometimes erode families and pose tremendous challenge to society (Sinha *et al.*, 2007). Adolescents crimes have become the most serious problems. Statistical data demonstrate that the majority of world countries suffer from increase in teenagers crimes. Increasing in teenagers' criminal rate is very serious social issue in developing countries. Since 1347 near 40000 children and teenagers had been detained and kept in youth centers in Tehran (Javadi, 2004). Social pathologists believe that all types of abnormal behaviors depended on compatibilities effecting individual-community relationship (Shokr and Mohammadi, 2004). This is true for young society of Iran, too. According to 1375 census, 10-19 years of old population includes 25% of Iran population that is more than 16 millions (Anonymous, 2007). It is estimated that this rate will be more in 1385. Nowadays youth are expected to lead the future society. So, paying attention to youth health is just like investing for future. In other words, not paying attention to youth will drive them to risky behaviors in older age (Hatami *et al.*, 2006). In order to overcome this problem, identifying perceiving youth, attitudes, wants and their emotional and behavioral

characteristics is a necessity. Thereby we do this research with the aim of identifying behavioral patterns of Tabriz teenagers in regards to themselves, their families and communities in order to develop a baseline data and to have a correct perception of teenagers' behavior, to design appropriate interventions to promote the situation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Total 500 boys and girls of Tabriz public and private high school students were selected by random sampling method. In this cross-sectional study, data was collected using a 2 part questionnaire; part 1 included demographic questions of teenagers. Part 2 included 24 questions about social behaviors of teenagers. The scale used was 1-5 and the maximum point of every social behavior was 100. Any increase in points shows that teenagers had more desirable behavior in regards to themselves, their families and society. To prepare questionnaire, a specialist team designed primary questionnaire individually and then discussed in a panel about each of the questions. After revising the questionnaire and finalizing, the validity and reliability of questionnaire were tested among 42 students (15 boys and 27 girls) with mean age of  $16.93 \pm 0.62$ . Correlation coefficient obtains 61% that were significant. To analyze the data, we used SPSS, Chi-Square and Fisher's Exact and Compare mean tests.

## RESULTS

Findings of this research indicate that the mean of social behavior of teenagers was 76.57 of 100 points.

The points of each topic of social behaviors have been shown in Table 1.

Further findings indicate that:

- Girls had more respectful behaviors with peers and this difference was meaningful ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- Boys had more respectful behaviors with opposite gender in comparison of girls ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- Girls try to understand things before doing them more than boys and this difference was meaningful ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- Girls take into accounts values for doing any thing more than boys ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- It is more important for girls to be sensitive to their parents and family members' emotional security and tranquility than boys ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- Girls more believe that connection with God can be effective in their mental and physical health than boys ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- Girls more participate in useful activities and help their friends in comparison of boys ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- Teenagers that their mother had education up to 12 years, had more respectful behavior with opposite gender than those of fewer than 12 years education ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- Teenagers that their mother had education fewer than 12 years, were more commitment to traditions and costumes of society than those of up 12 years education and this difference was significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- Teenagers that lived in slums more paid attention to themselves values for doing things than others ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 1: Given point for any of social behaviors by teenagers

Topics	Points (of 100)
Have peaceful feeling beside family	84.48
Have respectful behavior with peers	78.81
Have respectful behavior with opposite gender	79.13
Try to overcome on negative charactrics	80.41
Try to understand any things before doing it	81.09
Have enjoyable feeling to life	77.39
Consult with parents before doing important things	81.18
Consult with teachers before doing important things	54.84
Take into account personal values (e.g. being educated, being human, living in human society and ...) in doing any thing	82.60
Try to be relaxed and peaceful once I am sad and angry	58.40
Accept the responsibility and outcomes of all acts and behavior (e.g. breaking the schools window, pushing the friends and probably telling lie)	70.63
Accept useful verities from others	71.14
Pay attention and respect to others opinion in all ages	75.57
Be sensitive to parents and family members' emotional security and tranquility	88.63
Believing that connection with God can be effective in mental and physical health	91.91
Respect the law and know see it as important and necessary	80.50
Plan for future (such as decide for a career, chose a study course)	84.47
Say no to inappropriate requests without having an embarrassing and sham feeling	77.94
Plan for daily activities (such as study, sleep and sport time)	63.56
Tell opinion and point of views whenever it is necessary without fear	71.50
Have commitment to traditions and costumes of society (such as participate in and respect to religious and national ceremonies)	76.71
Try to participate in useful activities and help friends	80.50
Try to listen to others talking eagerly and respectfully even it is against my personal ideas	73.88
Respect others rights in all situations and conditions	82.69

- There was a divert relation between family income and respectful behavior with opposite gender and this difference was meaningful at ( $p < 0.01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Findings indicate that the mean point of social behaviors of teenagers was 76.57 of 100 points. It means that more than 75% of teenagers have suitable social behavior. Also, according to the findings, more than 90% of teenagers believe that relation with God has profound effect in physical and mental health of them. It is clear that, in spite of being Moslem and having a religious society, this attitude is not far from expectation. Findings of a study in Pennsylvanian youth shows that being religious, measured as perceived importance of religion associated with reduced undesirable social behaviors and teenagers involved in religious activities (for example participation in religious youth group) are less involved in risk behaviors (Furrow and Wagener, 2000). Due to the fact that teenagers are prepared to accept spiritual and moral concepts (Farjad, 2004), therefore, it is necessary to try to involve them in religious activities and educate religious and believer concepts for them by families, schools and mass media. Further findings indicate that only 54.84% of teenagers believe that it is useful to consult with teachers in important issues that show a poor relationship between teenagers and their teachers. Whereas, in regards to their being adolescence stage and due to the fact that in this age they incline to individuals except their parents, it is necessary to have the teachers get more involved in consulting the youth. In other words, if they do not consult with right individuals, teenagers would go to not trustable that often forms the undesired behavior of adulthood (Hatami *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, it seems to be an important and worthwhile to develop appropriate interventions to promote to interactions between teachers and teenagers. Also, according to the results, only 58.4% of teenagers are able to control their temper in nervousness and sadness. In this regard the studies show that aggression leading to interpersonal violence usually results in self injuries and injuries to others and contribute illnesses and deaths (Griffin *et al.*, 1999). Studies show that teenagers' aggression is due to the mental and spiritual problems which results from a poor relationship with parents (Caffray and Schneider, 2000). Thereby, developing a positive interactions with parents reduces the incidence of depression and aggression (Field *et al.*, 1995; Lasko *et al.*, 1996). That is usually associated with a reduction of risky behaviors among them (Coogan *et al.*, 1998).

## CONCLUSION

We recommend hiring and using individuals who are aware of teenagers' psychological issues and have the enough communication skills to attract the teenagers to solve their problems, as teaches in high school settings. In the meanwhile, we recommend more studies to identify emotional and behavioral characteristics in order to improve their behavior.

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