



## Comparison of personality traits and attribution styles among runaway and normal girls in Tehran

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to compare the personality traits and attribution styles of runaway and normal girls. This is a comparative causal study. The population of the study involve 30 cases of runaway girls residing in the crisis intervention center of Nawab, affiliated to State Welfare of Tehran at autumn of 2015, they and were selected based on convenience. Normal girls who were matched counterpart for runaway girls are selected by clustering sampling and then systematic sampling from first and high school first and second degree. To assess personality traits, a NEOFFI.60 Personality Inventory short form was used and for attribution styles, Seligman and Peterson ASQ attribution style questionnaire was used. In order to analyze the data, we applied multivariate and univariate statistical variance analysis. The results of the study showed that there is difference between personality traits and attribution styles of runaway girls and normal girls that means in comparison to normal girls, runaway girls significantly suffer from a higher state of neurosis. Moreover, runaway girls tend to apply more pessimistic attribution styles in dealing with life events, in comparison with their normal counterpart girls, which means runaway girls attribute pleasant life events to external, unstable and specific factors, and attribute unpleasant life events to internal, stable and general. These indicate a cynical attribution styles. Therefore, understanding the personality and behavioral traits, as well as recognizing the type of adopted attribution style of runaway girls and normal girls in face of life events, is an effective step to prevent them from running away by identifying and screening individual girls at risk and providing treatment and adopting appropriate attribution style for these individuals.*

**Keywords:** Attribution style, normal girls, personality traits, runaway girls

### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Running away from home occurs in different age and gender groups but its occurrence in childhood and adolescence has causes, effects and outcomes that distinguishes it from other age groups. Although this situation is different for runaway girls and boys, it is evident that if the runaway child is a girl it is more probable that experience a worse situation. Hence girls' running away more is emphasized [1].

In the first look maybe running away can be considered a fully personal issue that finally affects on the individual's family, but since presence of runaways girls without having a given place can results in insecurity in a community and as most of these girls due to lack of income are forced to live through prostitution that because of lack of attention and care, they often are carriers of serious diseases, such as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and hepatitis that can affect on a family's health and additionally can shake family foundations in a society, hence girls' running away convert from a fully personal issue into a social problem that requires extensive attention in a society level regarding prevention, correction and rehabilitation. Some social pathologists believe that biological factors such as physical defect and certain genetic and neurological status must to be considered as cause of malefaction. As Isnek (1977) assumed that criminals' behavior is a result of interaction between a certain environment situations and inherited features of nervous system, in fact combination of environmental conditions and neurological and personality factors

results in different kinds of crimes. Isnek also claims that there is a relationship between personality features like extroversion and deviant behavior. Many studies have shown relations of personality disorders and crime.

Aronen and colleagues (1996) in a study in Finland showed that antisocial personality disorder increases possibility of committing murder 10 and 25 times in men and women, respectively (Ansari, 2009). Also studies have shown that imprisoned women suffer more frequent than imprisoned men from personality disorders and mental illnesses. Moreover runaway adolescents while escaping perform behaviors that often are antisocial and criminal, this situation is seen mostly in suggestible and personality disordered individuals [2].

As mentioned, environmental and personality factors are two main focus of controlling human behaviors, but the kind of underlying causes that a person considers for his/her behaviors or what is called attribution style, again as an important indicator of personality, provide the person's orientation for a desirable or undesirable behavior. Past research has shown that there is a high correlation between negative valuation and incorrect attribution style with undesirable behaviors. In the other words, individuals' style or ways to explain stressful events can play an important role in mental health. Girls subject to running away confront with many tensions at home that may escape home in response to these tensions. It has been found that stressor factors in runaway girls are in higher level than in normal ones. Research also show that runaway girls in confrontation with stressor events, because of low tolerance threshold, use inefficient emotional strategies instead of effective cognitive approach and often due to their illogical thoughts consider unfavorable conditions are unchangeable, so lose their tolerance quickly in face of failures [3].

The present era's transformations whether or nor influences on young people's thoughts and raises new issues for them. Attention to these issues and then finding logical solutions are the first step in proper training way and in the other hand a society considers a runaway girl as a symbol of immorality and depravity and a virus contaminating community and unfortunately the same viewpoint makes difficult any improvement or change of the situations [4].

In a research, Lindsiet. al. [5] studied factors that makes an adolescent overcome on tensions and as a result wouldn't run away. In this research internal self-recognition and relying of internal attributions are among most important factors of success to overcome on challenges and to prevent running away. In fact attributions help to prediction and control of events, explain our feelings, attitudes and behaviors and not only impact on our expectations and emotions, but also influences on an individual's future performance so they play a role in responding to stressful events.

Therefore considering that how events of an adolescent's life is explained is more important than these events nature and also the undeniable impact of personality features on social deviance, this research aims to answer to this question that if there is a relation between personality and attribution styles in runaway girls and normal girls?

### ***Review of literature***

Abbasgholi and colleagues [6] in a research examined causal attributions of male elite athletes and sub-elite athletes and individual sports (from athletes and coaches). Findings of this research showed that elite athletes displayed more unstable and specific attributions in confrontation with failure circumstances. In contrast, sub-elite athletes displayed more stable and general attributions in failure situations. Also elite athletes in success dimension displayed more stable and specific attribution than coaches of sub-elite athletes and elite athletes have stated success factors as more internal, stable and general.

RostamOghli and colleagues [7] also compared attribution styles and tolerance in students with special learning disability, blind and normal students. Results showed that students with learning disability and blind, differs in internal-external attribution, general-specific attribution and tolerance from normal students such that these students have a more pessimistic attribution style and lower psychological tolerance than normal students.

Arjmand and Eghbali[8] in a research compared personality patterns, coping with stress strategies and attribution styles between individuals dependent on drugs and withdrawers. Results showed that there is a significant difference in the most measures of personality patterns, attribution styles and coping with stress strategies between two groups of dependent on drugs and withdrawers. Drugs dependent individuals when face with stress compared to withdrawers, use more ineffective ways (superstitious thinking, wishful, denial, using drugs ...). They were also characteristically higher in terms of neuroticism, psychoticism and introversion than withdrawers and in face of negative events and adopted more pessimistic attribution style.

Son Joan and Maglaras (2009) in a research on longitudinal study of negative explanatory style and uncontrollable attributions as a predictor of depression symptoms examined for 7 weeks mutual effects between negative explanation and uncontrollable attributions for negative events to predict depression symptoms in 130 female

undergraduate students in Spain. Results showed that individuals with negative attribution style intended to attribute unpleasant events to internal, stable and general causes.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study is descriptive and of causal-comparative type. Statistical population of this study include all runaway girls residing in autumn of 2015 at the crisis intervention center of Nawab, affiliated to State Welfare of Tehran (two groups were matched counterpart in terms of age). Research size included 30 runaway girls and 30 normal girls (two groups were in a peer group in terms of age). The method of sampling runaway girls was based on convenience and normal girls sampling method initially was in clustering and then systematic way.

Data gathering tool includes two NEO FFI-60, Seligman and Peterson ASQ attribution style questionnaires that are introduced.

**a) NEO Inventory - short form (NEOFFI.60)**

This questionnaire has been developed by Costa and McCrae (1989) and includes 60 items that assesses five personality factors of nervousness, emotional instability or neurosis (N), extraversion (E), flexibility (O), agreeableness (A), and responsibility and conscientiousness (C). Subjects answer to questions in a five points Likert range. Answering time is 10 to 15 minutes. Costa and McCrae (2004) in a research on 1429 people reported the reliability of this questionnaire through calculation of Cronbach's alpha for 5 factors of responsibility, neurosis, extraversion, flexibility and agreeableness .86, .80, .75, .69 and .79, respectively.

**b) Attribution styles questionnaire (ASQ)**

This questionnaire was developed by Seligman and Peterson (1984) following the revision on the learned helplessness theory that that measures individuals' causal attributions for positive and negative consequences along the internal-external, stable-unstable, and general-specific dimensions. The questionnaire in the format of 48 questions include 12 hypothetical situation of which 6 positions include positive consequences, and the other 6 positions include negative consequences.

Breech (2001) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80 for the questionnaire. Moosavi, Islamdoost and GhobariBonab (2011) also reported total alpha coefficient of 0.76 for the whole questionnaire and for dimensions of internal bad outcome, persistent bad outcome, overall bad outcome, internal good outcome, stable good outcome and general good outcome, Cronbach's alpha coefficient equal to .55, .66, .68, .60, .67 and .58, respectively. After gathering data of questionnaires, raw data were analyzed using SPSS16 software in two sections of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Before variance analysis the assumption of homogeneity of error variances about all variables of this research is examined. This assumption is verified using Levine test. In order to assume variances equality this test has not to be significant ( $p>0.05$ ). In fact of significance level is less than 0.05, it shows that groups' variances aren't same and assumption of variances homogeneity has been violated. Results related to this test are presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Levine test to evaluate the assumption of error variances homogeneity**

	<b>F</b>	<b>Df1</b>	<b>Df2</b>	<b>Significance level</b>
Neurosis	2.441	1	58	0.124
Extroversion	0.240	1	58	0.626
Flexibility	0.776	1	58	0.382
Agreeableness	0.076	1	58	0.783
Responsibility and conscientiousness	0.110	1	58	0.741
Internal-external attribution style in pleasant events	2.913	1	58	0.093
Stable-unstable attribution style in pleasant events	3.593	1	58	0.063
General-specific attribution style in pleasant events	3.260	1	58	0.076
Internal-external attribution style in unpleasant events	1.552	1	58	0.218
Stable-unstable attribution style in unpleasant events	2.788	1	58	0.100
General-specific attribution style in unpleasant events	1.583	1	58	0.179

Results of analyzing multivariate variance for personality traits and attribution styles in runaway and normal girls are presented in the following tables:

**Table 2. Results of test of multivariate variance analysis for personality traits and attribution styles in runaway and normal girls**

Pillay test rate	F	Freedom assumption degree	Freedom degree
0.741	12.511**	11	48

\*\* p<0.01

As it is observed in table 2, Pillay test (p<0.01) is in significance level and this shows that there is a significant difference between two groups at least in one of the components of personality traits and attributions styles. To realize that which component is different between two groups, a univariate variance analysis was performed in multivariate variance analysis context (MANOVA) that its results are shown in table 3.

In table 3 all components significance level is p<0.01 that shows that there is a significant difference between runaway and normal girls in terms of these components. Given the obtained averages, except for neurosis in the other components of personality traits, normal girls have obtained higher scores than runaway girls. Also the average of internal-external attribution styles in pleasant events, stable-unstable in pleasant events and general-specific pleasant events in normal girls is higher than runaway girls and the average of internal-external attribution styles in unpleasant events, stable-unstable in unpleasant events and general-specific in unpleasant events in runaway girls is higher than normal girls.

**Table 3. Results of univariate variance analysis for personality traits and attribution styles in runaway and normal girls**

Variables	Squares sum	df	Average square	F
Neurosis	1324.366	1	1324.366	8.565**
Extroversion	1724.263	1	1724.263	12.728**
Flexibility	1229.300	1	1229.300	9.621**
Agreeableness	1139.518	1	1139.518	7.910**
Responsibility and conscientiousness	12.2.277	1	12.2.277	8.030**
Internal-external attribution style in pleasant events	37.119	1	37.119	14.600**
Stable-unstable attribution style in pleasant events	60.938	1	60.938	29.639**
General-specific attribution style in pleasant events	81.136	1	81.136	34.151**
Internal-external attribution style in unpleasant events	36.597	1	36.597	14.949**
Stable-unstable attribution style in unpleasant events	38.978	1	38.978	16.953**
General-specific attribution style in unpleasant events	38.764	1	38.764	12.310**

### CONCLUSION

Given the results obtained from this research and based on the other investigations regarding personality traits and attribution styles in which also it was indicated that criminal adolescent boys are significantly more neurotic than normal boys and criminal group have more neurosis state than normal group. Also patients dependent on drugs are higher than normal individuals in terms of neuroticism and that neurosis in couples subject to divorce is more than normal couples. Moreover, regarding attribution styles it was mentioned that criminal adolescents in failure position had more internal and persistent attributions than normal adolescents in the same positions and in the success positions, normal adolescents' attributions is stable than criminal adolescents and that drugs dependent people compared to withdrawers adopt more pessimistic attribution styles in face of negative events. It can be suggested that runaway girls also like the groups that were mentioned above importantly, compared to normal girls considering the neuroticism that cause intense fear and anxiety, mental instability that is in contrast with mental health and results in depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsivity, irrationality and moodiness, shyness and vulnerability and given that psychopaths are part of this group and this individuals apparently cant consider their actions outcomes and regardless of probable punishments, commit antisocial actions it can be argued that this personality trait, namely more neuroticism in runaway girls than normal girls has a much influence on these girls' running away and moreover regarding attribution style also considering that when negative outcomes are attributed to negative internal factors, the person's self-esteem is reduced largely and this results in helplessness and depression, such that the person would expect a little from much attempts and also result in a kind of pessimistic attribution style in an individual and considering that people having more optimistic attribution style are healthier than people having more pessimistic style, all of these issues provide an appropriate grounds for girls running away from home that following its horrible and often irrecoverable consequences of running away for girls and then for families and finally society are focused on it.

### Suggestions

- Considering that girls' running away from home is associated with some personality traits it is suggested that in order to identify these girls and to prevent their inappropriate decisions particularly in maturity age, counseling and group therapy sessions are hold;

- Considering that pessimistic attribution style is related with girls' running away it is suggested that training optimistic attribution style is paid attention in schools;
- Identifying attribution styles of clients of correction and rehabilitation center and attention to training optimistic attribution style in order to rehabilitate these individuals;
- Social work through providing contact with runaway girls' families and enhancing families awareness and performing sufficient counseling, provides grounds of returning home for these girls in an appropriate situation.

Necessary following-ups must be made after these girls discharge to solve their future problems and prevent their again running away.

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