Perceived Generational Gap and Interpersonal Difficulties as Predictors of Deviant Behaviour in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT: The generational gap between young adults and older generations has emerged as a significant psychosocial concern, with implications for interpersonal functioning and behavioural outcomes. This study investigated the relationship between perceived generational gap, interpersonal difficulties, and deviant behaviour in young adults and identified significant predictors of deviant behaviour. A cross-sectional correlational research design was employed, involving 400 university students (200 males and 200 females) aged 18 to 26 years, recruited through convenience sampling from public and private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Data were collected using a demographic information sheet and three indigenously developed and psychometrically validated instruments: the Perceived Generational Gap Scale (Sarwar & Javed, 2023), Interpersonal Difficulties Scale (Saleem & Mahmood, 2014), and Deviant Behaviour Scale (Mushtaq & Kausar, 2018). Correlational analysis revealed significant positive correlations between perceived generational gap, interpersonal difficulties, and deviant behaviour. However, the communication breakdown subscale of perceived generational gap demonstrated a significant negative correlation with deviant behaviour. Multiple linear regression analysis identified communication breakdown as a significant negative predictor of deviant behaviour, whereas low self-confidence and unstable relationships emerged as significant positive predictors. Overall, perceived generational gap was also identified as a significant positive predictor of deviant behaviour among young adults. The findings highlight the role of perceived generational gap and interpersonal difficulties in shaping behavioural outcomes. The study emphasizes the importance of preventive clinical and counselling interventions, including culturally informed strategies targeting intergenerational conflicts and interpersonal dysfunction, to address deviant behaviour and support the psychosocial well-being of young adults.

KEYWORDS: Perceived Generational Gap, Interpersonal Difficulties, Deviant Behaviour, Young Adults, Pakistan, Intergenerational Conflict, Clinical Implications

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Introduction

Young adulthood, typically defined as the developmental period, is characterised by significant self-exploration and identity formulation. This stage of life is marked by numerous challenges, including an increased risk of injuries, mental health concerns, substance abuse, and reproductive health issues. People are especially susceptible to substance abuse, behavioural dysregulation, risk-taking tendencies, and mental health issues during this stage. The perceived generational gap, or the subjective sense of differences between generations in terms of values, attitudes, beliefs, and communication styles, is a crucial but little-studied element contributing to these difficulties (Mendez, 2007; Weeks & Schaffert, 2019). When this disparity is significant, it might hinder social interactions and encourage young adults to adopt abnormal behavioural patterns.

Even though this phenomenon is common, there hasn't been much empirical research done on it in Pakistan. Young people in educational contexts are substantially understudied because the majority of current research has either concentrated on Western populations or looked at generational disparities in working settings (Suad, 2019).

These generations are categorized based on the years in which they were born. Named as the lost generation, interbellum generation, greatest generation, silent generation, baby boomer, generation X, generation Y or millennials, generation Z, and now generation Alpha and Beta (Max, 2023). Young adults might perceive their elders as resistant to change or not aware of innovations. And sometimes the older generations might consider them as rebels. It is noticeable that this gap is mostly between the youth and their parents, and in some cases, it is seen between the grandparents and grandchildren (Aggarwal et al., 2017).

Rapid technological development, changing cultural values and gender roles, and the growing supremacy of digital communication all contribute to these misconceptions (Burn, 2020).

According to research, there are several ways in which the generational divide appears. Disparities in interpersonal communication result in relatively smaller levels of perceived gap, whereas differences in social behaviors and cultural norms typically cause moderate levels (Suad, 2019).Gender significantly moderates this experience: in collectivistic societies like Pakistan, women are disproportionately exposed to intergenerational power dynamics based on patriarchal norms, making them especially vulnerable to experiences of control and dominance (Hussain et al., 2015; Ishfaq & Kamal, 2025). A young adult's ability to engage in healthy interpersonal relationship may be hampered by persistent intergenerational disconnection (Shearman & Dumlao, 2008).

Renner et al. (2012) interpersonal difficulties are characterized by recurrent patterns of relational failure that can be attributed to maladaptive emotional, cognitive, or behavioral tendencies. Emotional dysregulation, impulse control issues, traumatic experiences, and pre-existing mental health illnesses like depression and personality disorders are contributing factors. A person's ability to create personal friendships, romantic partnerships, and professional connections is put to the test during the transition to adulthood (Afzal et al., 2023). The probability of negative psychosocial outcomes, including deviant behaviour, is significantly increased when these capacities are compromised by intergenerational pressure (Zhao et al., 2020).

Deviant behaviour is defined as behaviour that violates the norms and values that are being accepted, and also the ethical standards of a given society (Colman, 2015; Dullas et al., 2021). Its manifestations are diverse including, encompassing aggression, bullying, theft, substance abuse, sexual misconduct, and cyberbullying, among others (Ifeyinwa & Muriel, 2023). There are multiple causes for deviant behaviour. It can be biological, societal, or psychological. Biological factors include genetic factors, inherited traits, neurological disorders, and brain injuries, and there is a tendency for antisocial behaviour that is passed down to the families (Gaybulloyevna & Farkhodovna,

2021). The societal causes are in the form of socioeconomic status or income, unemployment, education, and peer pressure (Ahmad et al., 2022).

The psychological explanation of deviant behaviour is that a person's personality traits are linked with maladaptive behaviour. It has been proven that certain personality traits are linked with deviant behaviour. Such as low self-control, difficult temperament and psychopathy, contribute to behaviours that are considered antisocial (Tharshini et al., 2021).

Furthermore, certain external factors can act as protective factors and can lower the likelihood of risky behaviour in young people. Such as supportive parenting, affection, warmth, and open communication from parents can act as a buffer for maladaptive behaviours (Daspe et al., 2018). There are several theoretical frameworks that highlights the relationships between the study variables. Social learning theory indicates that deviant behaviour is acquired through observation and imitation of others who engage in such conduct (Bosiakoh, 2012). Labeling theory suggests that societal labelling of behaviour as deviant leads individuals to internalize the label, perpetuating further deviance (Besemer et al., 2017; Bernburg, 2009). Strain theory explains that whenever individuals are denied legitimate means of achieving socially approved goals, it ultimately precipitates deviant responses (Kamal, 2018; Agnew, 2009). Attachment theory further reveals how insecure intergenerational attachment, increasingly prevalent among younger generations experiencing rapid social and technological change, may predispose young adults to resist authority and deviate from established norms (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Meyer et al., 2021).

Perceived generational gap has been also recognized as a source of interpersonal difficulties, particularly within family and educational paradigms. The generational differences in values, communication styles, and societal expectations between generations frequently produce misunderstandings and relational conflict. Young adults who feel misunderstood or unsupported by older generations are particularly vulnerable to social disengagement (strawser et al., 2021)

Stewart and Bennett (2018) similarly observed that generational misalignment in values may results as young adults to engage in norm-challenging behaviours. Zhao et al. (2020) further demonstrated that weakened social connectedness arising from interpersonal difficulties increases the likelihood of maladaptive behavioural responses.

Rationale and Objectives

Life transitions are the periods when people experience major changes in their lives. Young adulthood is the transition period from adolescence to adulthood where their roles, expectations, and responsibilities change, and during this transition, they face various challenges (Lenz, 2002).

Thus, this study aims to study some of the challenges young adults face due to generational gap, interpersonal difficulties, and deviant behaviour, by investigating and finding the intricate relationship between these variables. Moreover, another purpose of this study is to explore further and to gain an in-depth understanding of the variables that play a role in causing deviant behaviour in young adults. The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: It is hypothesized that there will be a significant positive correlation between perceived generational gap, interpersonal difficulties, and deviant behaviour in young adults.

H2: It is hypothesized that perceived generational gap, interpersonal difficulties will be significant positive predictors of deviant behaviour in young adults.

Method

Research Design and Sample

The cross-sectional correlation study design was used in the current study. The study used a purposive sampling strategy to gather data from a sample of 400 participants. The study included young adults, both males and females age range from 18 to 26 years from government and private universities. The data was collected from government and private universities, including undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Measures

For the data collection, the demographic sheet and Scales were used as follows:

Demographic Information Sheet

A demographic sheet was used to record the different demographic characteristics of the participants. The demographic variables included age, gender, type of educational institute, number of siblings, birth order, educational level, family system, area of living, marital status, parent's education and occupation.

Perceived Generational Gap (Sarwar & Javed, 2023)

A highly reliable (α=.93) and indigenously developed scale was used to measure the understanding of the perceived generational gap experienced by young adults. There were 23 times on the scale. The responses were measured using a Likert Scale ranging from 0 representing Strongly disagree, 1= Disagree, 2= Neutral, 3= Agree, and 4 representing Strongly Agree. This scale had three subfactors, including: Domination, Paternalism, and Communication Breakdown (Sarwar& Javed, 2023).

Interpersonal Difficulties Scale (Saleem & Mahmood, 2014)

A reliable and indigenous scale was used. It consisted of 59 items with six factors including: F1 Dominated by Others, F2 Low Self-confidence, F3 Mistrust, F4 Lack of Assertiveness, F5 Lack of Boundaries, and F6 Unstable Relationships. The scale consisted of a Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 to 4. Moreover, α=.97 was the reliability of the scale (Saleem & Mahmood, 2014).

Deviant Behaviour Scale (Mushtaq & Kausar, 2018)

An indigenous and reliable scale consisted of 26 items was used to measure deviant behaviour in young adults. The responses were recorded on the Likert type scale ranging from 1=Almost never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Almost always. The scale comprised of the three different settings in which the individual interacts, including home, institute, and with friends. The scale was bilingual, including both English and Urdu, but only the Urdu version statements were used. The alpha value of this scale was .87 (Mushtaq & Kausar, 2018).

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant departmental committee, and permission to administer each scale was secured from the respective authors. Following institutional permission, data were collected through university visits. Participants were briefed on the study's purpose and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout. Data were scored according to each scale's guidelines and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. The study was conducted in full accordance with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, and participants were protected from potential physical, psychological, and social risks.

Statistical Analyses

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation of Age (N=400)

Variables	*M*	*SD*
Age	20.94	2.24
Father's Age	52.10	6.55
Mother's Age	47.30	6.13

Note: M= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows the Mean and Standard deviation of demographic variables for a sample of 400 participants. These variables include participants' age, fathers' age, and mothers' age. This table provides insight into the age distribution of the participants and the age of participant's father and mother.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentages of Demographic Variables (N=400)

Variables	*f*	%
Gender		
Male	200	50.00
Female	200	50.00
Birth Order		
1st	124	31.00
2nd	96	24.00
3rd	93	23.30
4th and above	87	21.80
No. of siblings		
1-3	167	41.80
3 and above	233	58.30
Education		
Undergraduate	355	88.80
Graduate	45	11.30
Institute		
Government	200	50.00
Private	200	50.00
Family System		
Nuclear	278	69.50
Joint	122	30.50
Residential Status		
Day Scholar	269	67.30
Hostelite	130	32.50
Living Area		
Urban	302	75.50
Rural	97	24.30
Father Occupation		
Job	229	57.30
Business	171	42.80
Mother Occupation		
Housewife	318	79.50
Job	82	20.50

Note: *f*=Frequency, *%*= Percentage

Table 2 shows the frequency (*f*) and percentage (%) distribution of demographic variables for a sample of 400 participants. There were equal number of participants including 200 males and 200 females. Similarly, the number of participants were equal in government and private institute. In the category of birth order, there were higher number of participants fall under the first-born category including 124 participants and only 87 participants were in the category of fourth or above. A larger number of participants have three or more siblings on the other hand, only 167 participants' have one to three siblings. The majority of the sample size belong to nuclear families while only 122 participants were from joint families. The number of participants living in urban areas and day scholar were high. More than half of the fathers were employed in jobs while majority of mothers were housewives.

Table 3

Skewness and Kurtosis Analysis for Perceived Generational Gap, Interpersonal Difficulties, and Deviant Behaviour in Young Adults (N=400)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
D-F1	24.66	9.28	.11	-.31
P-F2	13.31	4.57	.06	-.49
CB-F3	10.93	3.94	-.06	-.57
PGGT	48.90	15.73	.20	-.24
DO-F1	24.60	9.54	.45	1.13
LS-F2	20.59	7.11	.01	.07
M-F3	22.44	7.62	.09	.32
LA-F4	17.85	5.96	.04	-.02
LB-F5	15.27	5.38	.08	-.08
UR-F6	12.89	4.89	-.05	-.33
IDST	113.63	33.65	.01	.36
AH-F1	44.76	13.86	.67	-.29
I-F2	46.39	15.83	.57	-.71
WF-F3	48.13	17.02	.56	-.66
DBST	139.27	43.95	.53	-.69

Note. D-F1= Domination, *P-F2*= Paternalism, *CB-F3*= Communication Breakdown, *PGG*= Perceived Generational Gap, *DO-F1*= Dominated by others, *LS-F2*= Low self-confidence, *M-F3*= Mistrust, *LA-F4*= Lack of assertiveness, *LB-F5*= Lack of boundaries, *UR-F6*= Unstable relationships, *IDS*= Interpersonal Difficulties, *AH-F1*= At home, *I-F2*= Institute, *WF-F3*= With friends, *DBS*= Deviant Behaviour Scale, *M*=Mean, *SD*=Standard Deviation

Table 3 shows the Skewness and Kurtosis scores for Perceived Generational Gap, Interpersonal Difficulties, and Deviant Behaviour among young adults. The results showed that the value of Skewness and Kurtosis in scales total and their sub factors lie within the range of +-3 which indicates that the data is normally distributed.

Psychometric Properties of Scales

Table 4

Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of Perceived Generational Gap, Interpersonal Difficulties, and Deviant Behaviour among Young Adults (N=400)

Scales	*M*	*SD*	*RANGE*	α
D-F1	20.39	7.90	3-48	.83
P-F2	13.31	4.57	3-24	.72
CB-F3	10.93	3.94	1-20	.72
PGGT	48.94	15.71	14-92	.90

Scales	*M*	*SD*	*RANGE*	α
DO-F1	24.61	9.53	2-63	.74
LS-F2	20.59	7.11	3-44	.77
M-F3	24.44	7.62	1-48	.78
LA-F4	17.84	5.96	2-32	.79
LB-F5	15.27	5.38	2-32	.72
UR-F6	12.89	4.89	1-28	.67
IDST	113.63	33.64	25-236	.94
AH-F1	44.76	13.87	26-95	.90
I-F2	46.39	15.83	26-98	.95
WF-F3	48.13	17.02	26-98	.94
DBST	139.27	43.95	78-291	.97

Note. D-F1= Domination, *P-F2*= Paternalism, *CB-F3*= Communication Breakdown, *PGG*= Perceived Generational Gap, *DO-F1*= Dominated by others, *LS-F2*= Low self-confidence, *M-F3*= Mistrust, *LA-F4*= Lack of assertiveness, *LB-F5*= Lack of boundaries, *UR-F6*= Unstable relationships, *IDS*= Interpersonal Difficulties, *AH-F1*= At home, *I-F2*= Institute, *WF-F3*= With friends, *DBS*= Deviant Behaviour Scale, *M*=Mean, *SD*=Standard Deviation

Table 4 shows the internal consistency of the measures used in this research with the help of the reliability coefficient Cronbach's alpha. The Perceived Generational Gap Scale (PGG) demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of .90, indicating strong reliability.

The Interpersonal Difficulties Scale (IDS) had an overall high reliability (α = .94). Its subscales, including DO-F1 (α = .74), LS-F2 (α = .77), M-F3 (α = .78), LA-F4 (α = .79), and LB-F5 (α = .72), demonstrated moderate to strong reliability. However, the UR-F6 subscale had a slightly lower reliability (α = .67), suggesting relatively weaker internal consistency.

The Deviant Behaviour Scale (DBS) showed excellent internal consistency, with an overall alpha of .97. Its subscalesAH-F1 (α = .90), I-F2 (α = .95), and WF-F3 (α = .94) also exhibited strong reliability. These findings indicate that the measures used in the study demonstrate good to excellent reliability, making them suitable for further analysis.

Correlational Analysis

Table 5

Pearson Correlation among Perceived Generational Gap, Interpersonal difficulties, and Deviant Behaviour among Young Adults (N=400)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. D-F1	24.66	9.28	-	.74**	.55**	.43**	.39**	.37**	.30**	.36**	.42**	.46**	.27**	.18**	.19**	.23**
2. P-F2	13.31	4.57	-	-	.61**	.39**	.31**	.29**	.33**	.31**	.26**	.39**	.18**	.09	.09	.12*
3. CB-F3	10.93	3.94	-	-	-	.24**	.21**	.15**	.29**	.15**	.15**	.24***	-.00	-.12*	-.09	-.08
4. DO-F1	24.60	9.54	-	-	-	-	.72**	.67**	.55**	.64**	.63**	.88**	.30**	.24**	.25**	.28*
5. LS-F2	20.59	7.11	-	-	-	-	-	.72**	.59**	.64**	.64**	.88**	.34**	.32**	.29**	.34**
6. M-F3	22.44	7.62	-	-	-	-	-	-	.51**	.65**	.68**	.86**	.36**	.35**	.31**	.36**
7. LA-F4	17.85	5.96	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.52**	.41**	.72**	.12*	.08	.06	.09
8. LB-F5	15.27	5.38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.62**	.81**	.29**	.26**	.26**	.29**
9. UR-F6	12.89	4.89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.79**	.36**	.38**	.37**	.39**

10. IDST	113.6	33.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.36**	.33**	.31**	.35**
11. AH-F1	44.76	13.87	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.82**	.76**	.91**
12. I-F2	46.39	15.83	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.89**	.96**
13. WF-F3	48.13	17.02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.95**
14. DBST	139.2	43.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. D-F1= Domination, *P-F2*= Paternalism, *CB-F3*= Communication Breakdown, *PGG*= Perceived Generational Gap, *DO-F1*= Dominated by others, *LS-F2*= Low self-confidence, *M-F3*= Mistrust, *LA-F4*= Lack of assertiveness, *LB-F5*= Lack of boundaries, *UR-F6*= Unstable relationships, *IDS*= Interpersonal Difficulties, *DBS*= Deviant Behaviour Scale, *M*=Mean, *SD*=Standard Deviation. *p< .05, **p<.01, ***p< .001

Table 5 shows that Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the study variable. Results indicated that the Domination factor was significantly positively correlated with Paternalism (r = .74, p < .01) and Communication Breakdown (r = .55, p < .01), and it demonstrated significant positive associations with all interpersonal difficulties factors, indicating that individuals who perceive greater intergenerational dominance also experience more interpersonal difficulties.

Domination by Others demonstrated strong positive correlations with Low Self-Confidence (r = .72, p < .01), Mistrust (r = .67, p < .01), and Unstable Relationships (r = .55, p < .01). The total Perceived Generational Gap Scale score was significantly positively correlated with the total Interpersonal Difficulties Scale score and with the total Deviant Behaviour Scale score. Interpersonal difficulties were significantly positively correlated with deviant behaviour. Notably, the Communication Breakdown factor demonstrated a significant negative correlation with deviant behaviour.

Regression Analysis

Table 6

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Predictors of Deviant Behaviour among Young Adults (N=400)

Variables	B	*SEB*	*β*	95% of CI	
				LL	UL
Age	1.41	.97	.07	-.50	3.32
Gender	.28	4.09	.00	-7.75	8.32
Residential status	-1.10	1.57	-.03	-4.19	1.99
Family system	7.76	4.30	.08	-.69	16.21
Age of father	-.31	.49	-.04	-1.28	.64
Age of mother	.09	.53	-.01	-.95	1.14
D-F1	.76	.35	.16*	-.26	1.45
P-F2	.37	.70	.03	-1.01	1.77
CB-F3	-2.60	.65	-.23***	-3.88	-1.33
DO-F1	-.14	.33	-.03	-.80	.51
LS-F2	1.12	.47	.18	.20	1.05
M-F3	.78	.42	.13	-.05	1.60
LA-F4	-1.20	.44	-.16	-1.06	-.35
LB-F5	.09	.54	.01	-.98	1.16
UR-F6	1.97	.61	.22	.77	1.18
IDST	-.15	.34	-.11	-.81	.51
R^2	.25***				

Note. D-F1= Domination, *P-F2*= Paternalism, *CB-F3*= Communication Breakdown, *PGG*= Perceived Generational Gap, *DO-F1*= Dominated by others, *LS-F2*= Low self-confidence, *M-F3*= Mistrust, *LA-F4*= Lack of assertiveness, *LB-F5*= Lack of boundaries, *UR-F6*= Unstable relationships, *IDS*= Interpersonal Difficulties, *B* = Unstandardized B, *SEB* = Std. Error, *β* = Standardized Beta, *LL and UL* = Lower Bound and Upper Bound of the 95% CI for B
$^{*}p< 0.05$, $^{***}p<0.001$

Table 6 shows that Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine predictors of deviant behaviour. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(16, 384) = 8.54$, $p < .05$, accounting for 25% of the variance in deviant behaviour ($R^2 = .25$). Domination emerged as a significant positive predictor of deviant behaviour ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), indicating that higher perceived intergenerational dominance is associated with greater engagement in deviant conduct. Communication Breakdown was identified as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$), suggesting that this dimension of the generational gap operates differently from domination in its relationship with behavioural outcomes. Remaining predictors, including demographic variables, paternalism, and total interpersonal difficulties score, did not reach statistical significance.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships among perceived generational gap, interpersonal difficulties, and deviant behaviour among young adults in Pakistan, contributing original empirical evidence from a collectivistic cultural context that remains underrepresented in the existing literature.

Perceived generational gap was significantly positively correlated with interpersonal difficulties. All three factors of Perceived Generational Gap Scale demonstrated significant positive associations with all subscales of the Interpersonal Difficulties Scale. These findings indicate that greater perceived generational gap is associated with more interpersonal difficulties, consistent with prior research demonstrating that generational misalignment in values and communication styles creates relational tension that undermines healthy interpersonal functioning (Suad, 2019).

Young adults deal with different challenges that often characterized by a disconnection between societal expectations and individual emotions. Due to cultural norms, the patriarchal structure enforces male dominance, restricting female's autonomy and reinforcing traditional gender roles. This leads to the inequality among the gender. As Societal expectations of masculinity discourage emotional expression, leading to interpersonal difficulties (Ishfaq & Kamal, 2025).

Perceived generational gap was significantly positively correlated with deviant behaviour. This finding aligns with pervious research indicating that young adults who feel misunderstood or unsupported by older generations are more likely to engage in challenging behaviors (Meyer et al., 2021). However, a theoretically significant exception was observed that communication breakdown factor of perceived generational gap demonstrated a significant negative correlation with deviant behaviour. This inverse relationship suggests that when intergenerational communication breaks down, young adults may be more inclined to internalize their distress instead of externalizing it through deviance. This pattern indicates the complete absence of communication among the generations may leads to psychological distress inward rather than outward, contributing to internalized difficulties rather than behavioural dysregulation.

Interpersonal difficulties were significantly positively correlated with deviant behaviour. This finding is consistent with Zhao et al. (2020), who demonstrated that weakened social connectedness and reduced social support increase the likelihood of maladaptive behavioural responses. Within the Pakistani context, young adults experiencing persistent interpersonal difficulties may turn to deviant behaviour as a coping mechanism for unresolved conflict and psychosocial distress.

Regression analysis identified Domination as a significant positive predictor of deviant behaviour, consistent with conflict theory, which posits that individuals subjected to persistent power imbalances may resort to norm-violating behaviour as a form of resistance (Omer & Jabeen, 2021). This finding is also theoretically consistent with strain theory, which suggests that restrictions on individual autonomy and self-determination generate frustration that may precipitate deviant responses (Kamal, 2018; Agnew, 2009). Communication Breakdown emerged as a significant negative predictor, further corroborating the correlational findings and highlighting the complex, non-linear nature of the relationship between intergenerational communication difficulties and behavioural outcomes.

The findings of the present study carry meaningful implications for clinical practice and mental health intervention among young adults in Pakistan. The significant positive role of intergenerational domination in predicting deviant behaviour suggests that family-based therapeutic interventions should directly target power dynamics within parent-child relationships. Clinicians working with the population of young adults presenting behavioural difficulties should assess the quality of intergenerational relationships as a contributing factor.

Another findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive approaches. Given that young Pakistani women experience significantly greater generational strain, lower self-confidence, and reduced assertiveness, interventions and management plans targeting this population should incorporate assertiveness training and confidence-building components within a culturally framework. Finally, the negative predictive relationship between communication breakdown and deviant behaviour indicates these interventions should focus not only on increasing communication quantity but on improving the emotional quality, mutual respect, and psychological safety.

Limitations and Future Suggestions

This study carries limitations that should be considered when interpreting findings. First, the sample was drawn exclusively from universities in Lahore, limiting the geographic generalizability of findings to young adults from other regions of Pakistan. The future research should gather sample from multiple cities and provinces. Second, reliance on self-report measures sometimes leads to the possibility of response and social desirability bias, ultimately cause underreporting of deviant behavioural tendencies. Third, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference regarding the relationships among study variables. Future studies employing longitudinal designs would strengthen causal interpretations. Fourth, only the perspective of young adults was examined; future research would benefit from incorporating the perspectives of older generations to create a full understanding of the impact on every generation. Finally, future studies may consider developing indigenous measurement tools that specifically assess parent-child communication quality within collectivistic cultural framework.

Conclusion

This study explores the relationships among perceived generational gap, interpersonal difficulties, and deviant behaviour among young adults in Pakistan. Findings suggested that greater perceived generational gap is associated with more interpersonal difficulties and higher levels of deviant behaviour, with generational domination emerging as a significant positive predictor of deviant behaviour. The negative predictive role of communication breakdown adds theoretical emphasis on the existing literature, suggesting that the relationship between intergenerational communication difficulties and behavioural outcomes is considerably more complex than a positive association. Females experienced greater generational strain and interpersonal difficulties than males, reflecting the distinctive stress of traditional gender socialization within collectivistic culture. These findings carry meaningful implications for mental health professionals, school counsellors, and policymakers, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive interventions that address generational conflict, strengthen family communication, and promote healthy interpersonal development among young adults in Pakistan.

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