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# Comparison of Anger Rumination, Self-Compassion, and Unpleasant Childhood Experiences from the Perspectives of Mothers of Adolescents with and without Delinquency in Isfahan

**Faeze Asadollehzadeh[1], Alireza Molazadeh[2]**

[1]*Master of Science in Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran*
[2]*Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Ashtian Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ashtian, Iran*

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## Abstract

**Purpose**: The aim of the present study was to compare anger rumination, self-compassion, and unpleasant childhood experiences from the perspective of mothers in adolescents with and without delinquency in Isfahan in 2021.
**Methods**: The present research method was applied in terms of purpose and comparative in terms of causal method. This study had two statistical populations, as follows: the first statistical population consisted of women with delinquent adolescents aged 15 to 18 living in the Isfahan correctional center in 2021, and the second statistical population consisted of all mothers without delinquent adolescents aged 15 to 18 in Isfahan in 2021. The final sample size was 60 people. The sampling method in this study was non-random and purposive. To collect data, the self-compassion questionnaires of Neff (2003), anger rumination of Sokodolsky et al. (2001), and unpleasant childhood experiences of Bernstein et al. (2003) were used. The hypotheses of this study were examined by multivariate analysis of variance and independent t-test.
**Results**: The findings showed that anger rumination was more prevalent in mothers with delinquent adolescents than in mothers without delinquent adolescents. Self-compassion was less prevalent in mothers with delinquent adolescents than in mothers without delinquent adolescents. Unpleasant childhood experiences were more prevalent in mothers with delinquent adolescents than in mothers without delinquent adolescents.
**Conclusion**: Emotional, physical, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect among adolescents with delinquent behavior can be the source of abusive behaviors outside the individual.

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## Introduction

Today, one of the most complex and disturbing issues that has attracted the attention of many psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists is the issue of delinquent children and adolescents, which is becoming more widespread day by day (1). Crime is a very complex social phenomenon that is seen in different forms in different social environments. The definition of crime and criminal behavior in any society is determined by the legal laws and social norms of that society. Although in most societies, crime is defined as behavior punishable by law, the legal concept alone is not sufficient to explain the issue. Crime, in the sense of a variable number of acts committed against legal provisions, can have different natures, and is a common feature of all human societies (2).

**Correspondence:**
Faeze Asadollehzadeh. Master of Science in Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran.
**E-mail:** faeze76iam@hmail.com

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The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2010) uses delinquency under several different labels, based on the severity of the behavioral problem, including oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, and antisocial personality disorder (3). One of the topics to be examined in this research is self-compassion. The construct of self-compassion, conceptualized by Nef (1997), is a healthy form of self-acceptance that has three components that interact with each other. These three components are: self-kindness, awareness of general humanity, and mindfulness (4). A person with high self-compassion is able to have a gentle and kind attitude towards themselves even when faced with failure and misfortune. Such a person understands that all humans fail and experience pain; having such characteristics enables the individual to experience their feelings and emotions appropriately, without pushing them away or being completely dominated by them (5). Thaddeus, Pace, Adame & Cole (2014) conducted a study to examine the effect of self-compassion on behavioral and neuro-internalizing responses to anxiety and psychosocial stress, and the results indicated the effect of self-compassion on anxiety and psychosocial stress.

Anger rumination is a type of rumination defined as the tendency to focus on mood-related thoughts during angry events (6). Anestis. Anestis, Selby & Joiner (2009) showed in a study that anger rumination is a predictor of physical and verbal aggression and hostility, and that aggressive behaviors may play a role in distracting the individual from anger rumination and leading to a temporary reduction in anger.

Like shame, anger is an emotion or feeling that inappropriate expression or, according to Tangeni, a destructive response to it can cause personal and interpersonal harm to individuals (7). Controlling and expressing anger adaptively can be a useful behavior, but experiencing anger as an emotion that affects the physical and mental state of the individual requires control and awareness of this painful experience. Accordingly, recognizing the underlying factors or factors related to the creation or expression of anger, hostility, and aggression is effective in controlling and moving toward adaptive and adaptive behavior and in general, anger management (8).

On the other hand, childhood trauma is one of the factors that can contribute to delinquency. Childhood trauma is a general term used to describe all forms of child abuse, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, inattention, emotional abuse, and more recently, domestic violence (9). The phenomenon of child abuse can be divided into four types: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. According to the World Health Organization (2021), child maltreatment is a global problem that has a variety of adverse consequences. Adverse childhood experiences are associated with numerous physical and mental illnesses in adulthood, maladjustment, and unhealthy lifestyles (10).

The increase in delinquency in various dimensions among adolescents and young people has attracted the attention of experts in the humanities. The emergence of social problems, including delinquency, social and moral deviations such as theft, murder, rape, addiction, etc., which eventually turn into social crises, are among the harms that have befallen urban societies following the process of industrialization. Unfortunately, this process is so rapid that it has many social effects and consequences and has led to the growth and spread of social problems, such that judicial and police measures in this field are not very effective (11). Now, in view of what has been said, the present study seeks to answer the question: is there a difference in anger rumination, self-compassion, and unpleasant experiences in childhood from the perspective of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency in the city of Isfahan?

## The Method of Research

The research method was applied-fundamental in terms of purpose and descriptive causal-comparative research in terms of method. The present study had two statistical populations, as follows: the first statistical population consisted of women with delinquent adolescents aged 15 to 18 living in the Isfahan correctional center in 2021, and the second population consisted of all mothers without delinquent adolescents aged 15 to 18 in Isfahan in 2021. In this study, to increase external validity, a total of 60 people (30 mothers with a history of delinquency and 30 mothers without delinquent teenagers) were considered as the sample size. The sampling method in this study was non-random and purposeful. The research collection tools include:

- Self-compassion Questionnaire: The self-compassion scale was developed in 2003, which measures self-compassion. This instrument consists of 26 items that measure four components: self-compassion, human common feelings and mindfulness, exaggeration, and isolation. In other words, this scale has six subscales: self-compassion; human common feelings and mindfulness; exaggeration; and isolation. Responses are on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). In Iranian studies, the internal consistency of the self-compassion scale has been confirmed based on Cronbach's alpha with a correlation coefficient of 0.70 (12).

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- Anger Rumination Questionnaire: This scale was developed by Sokodolski et al. (2001) and measures the tendency to think about current anger-provoking situations and recall past anger episodes. This scale consists of 18 items and 4 factors: Anger afterthoughts: "After arguing with someone, I keep fighting with them in my mind," Anger memories: "I think about injustices that have happened to me," Revenge thoughts: "After a conflict, I have a lot of fantasies about revenge," and Causal understanding: "I think about why people mistreat me." Scoring is based on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). High scores on this scale indicate high Anger Afterthoughts. Cronbach's alpha for Anger Afterthoughts is 0.86, revenge thoughts is 0.72, anger memories is 0.85, understanding of causes is 0.77, and for the total scale is 0.93 (13). In the study by Abdi et al. (2018), Cronbach's alpha was 0.80 for the entire scale, 0.82 for anger afterthoughts, 0.76 for revenge thoughts, 0.69 for anger memories, and 0.68 for understanding the causes.
- Childhood Trauma Questionnaire: The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) was developed by Bernstein, Stein, Newcamp, Walker, Pogue, et al. (2003) to measure childhood trauma and harm. This questionnaire is a screening tool to identify individuals with experiences of childhood abuse and neglect. It can be used with both adults and adolescents and measures five types of childhood maltreatment, including: Sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and emotional and physical neglect. The questionnaire has 28 questions, 25 of which are used to measure the main components of the questionnaire and 3 of which are used to identify people who deny their childhood problems. In the study by Bernstein et al. (2003), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire on a group of adolescents for the dimensions of emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and emotional neglect were 0.87, 0.86, 95, 0.89, and 0.78, respectively (Bernstein et al., 2003). In Iran, Ebrahimi, Dejkam, and Thaqe'ol-Salam reported Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire ranging from 0.81 to 0.98 for its five components.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were entered and categorized in Excel software. Also, descriptive and inferential statistics methods were used to summarize and analyze the data and test the statistical hypotheses related to the data using SPSS statistical software. Multivariate analysis of variance and Student's t-test were used to compare the four variables in the two groups.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the study are presented as follows:

**Table (1):** Frequency table of statistical sample status by group breakdown

| | Frequency | Percentage of frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Mothers with delinquent teenagers | 30 | 50 |
| Mothers without delinquent teenagers | 30 | 50 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

**Table (2):** Descriptive characteristics of research variables

| | Group | Number of samples | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anger rumination | Mothers with delinquent teenagers | 30 | 55. 50 | 12. 83 |
| | Mothers without delinquent teenagers | 30 | 38. 64 | 13. 18 |
| self-compassion | Mothers with delinquent teenagers | 30 | 37. 96 | 13. 89 |
| | Mothers without delinquent teenagers | 30 | 51. 92 | 12. 49 |
| Unpleasant childhood | Mothers with delinquent teenagers | 30 | 107. 20 | 31. 03 |
| experiences | Mothers without delinquent teenagers | 30 | 71. 64 | 28. 44 |

**Table (3):** Results of multivariate analysis of variance test of anger rumination, self-compassion, and unpleasant childhood experiences in adolescents with delinquency compared to adolescents without delinquency.

| | Sum of squares | Degree of freedom | Mean squares | F-statistic | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-compassion | 12308.626 | 1 | 12308.626 | 29.077 | 0.005 |
| Unpleasant childhood experiences | 10893.426 | 1 | 10893.426 | 46.121 | 0.005 |
| Ruminating anger | 469.393 | 1 | 469.393 | 6.953 | 0.009 |

Table 2 shows that the average anger rumination in mothers with delinquent adolescents is higher with a value of 55.50 compared to women without conflict with a value of 38.64. And positive anger rumination is higher in mothers without delinquent adolescents with a value of 71.20 compared to mothers with delinquent adolescents with a value of 49.5. Table 2 also shows that the average self-compassion in mothers with delinquent adolescents is lower with a value of 37.96 compared to women without conflict with a value of 51.92. In

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addition, unpleasant childhood experiences are higher in mothers with delinquent adolescents with a value of 107.20 compared to women without conflict with a value of 71.64.

The following is an examination of the research hypotheses:



Main hypothesis: Rumination of anger, self-compassion, and unpleasant experiences in childhood differ from the perspective of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency.

According to the findings in Table 3, the results of multivariate analysis of variance showed that there were differences in all variables of anger rumination, self-compassion, and unpleasant experiences in childhood from the perspective of mothers in adolescents with and without delinquency. In other words, according to the averages, from the perspective of mothers with delinquent adolescents, delinquent adolescents suffer more from anger rumination and unpleasant childhood experiences, and on the other hand, they have less self-compassion. According to the f-statistics, the largest difference is related to unpleasant childhood experiences and self-compassion.

Sub-hypothesis 1: There is a difference in anger rumination from the perspective of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency.

Table 4 shows the independent t-test for examining anger rumination between mothers with and without delinquent adolescents. Initially, Levine's test was conducted to examine the equality of variance of anger rumination between the two populations of mothers with and without delinquent adolescents. As shown in Table 4, Levine's test for equality of variances was not significant at the 0.05 level, and as a result, equality of variance between the two populations is confirmed.

| | | Levine test | | t-test to check equality of means | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Levine test statistic | Significance level | t-test statistic | Degree of freedom | Significance level | Average deviation | Standard error deviation |
| Anger Rumination | Equality of variances | 0. 308 | 0. 58 | -6. 555 | 98 | 0 | -21. 7 | 3. 31025 |
| | Non-equality of variances | | | -6. 555 | 97. 748 | 0 | -21. 7 | 3. 31025 |

**Table (5):** Independent t-test to examine the difference in self-harm from the perspective of mothers in adolescents with and without delinquency

| | | Levine test | | t-test to check equality of means | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Levine test statistic | Significance level | t-test statistic | Degree of freedom | Significance level | Average deviation | Standard error deviation |
| self-compassion | Equality of variances | 2. 589 | 0. 111 | -5. 282 | 98 | 0 | -13. 96 | 2. 6431 |
| | Non-equality of variances | | | -5. 282 | 96. 909 | 0 | -13. 96 | 2. 6431 |

**Table (6):** Independent t-test to examine the difference in adverse childhood experiences between mothers with and without delinquent adolescents

| | | Levine test | | t-test to check equality of means | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Levine test statistic | Significance level | t-test statistic | Degree of freedom | Significance level | Average deviation | Standard error deviation |
| Unpleasant childhood experiences | Equality of variances | 0. 627 | 0. 43 | 5. 973 | 98 | 0 | 35. 56 | 5. 95355 |
| | Non-equality of variances | | | 5. 973 | 97. 262 | 0 | 35. 56 | 5. 95355 |

In the following, the independent t-test to examine the equality of the mean of anger rumination in the two groups of mothers with and without delinquent adolescents has been significant at the 0.05 level. As a result, anger rumination in mothers with and without delinquent adolescents is different. And according to Table 4, anger rumination is more in the eyes of mothers with delinquent adolescents than mothers without delinquent adolescents.

Sub-hypothesis 2: Self-compassion differs from the perspective of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency

In Table 5, the independent t-test is shown to examine self-compassion from the perspective of mothers in adolescents with and without delinquency. Initially, Levine's test was performed to examine the equality of variance of self-compassion between the two populations of mothers in adolescents with and without delinquency. As shown in Table 5, Levine's test for

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equality of variances was not significant at the 0.05 level, and as a result, equality of variance between the two populations is confirmed.

In the following, the independent t-test to examine the equality of the mean self-compassion in the two groups of mothers with and without delinquent adolescents has been significant at the 0.05 level. As a result, self-compassion in mothers with and without delinquent adolescents is different. And according to Table 2, self-compassion from the perspective of mothers with delinquent adolescents is lower in delinquent adolescents than in adolescents without delinquency.

Sub-hypothesis 3. Adverse childhood experiences from the perspective of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency

In Table 6, the independent t-test is shown to examine adverse childhood experiences between mothers with and without delinquent adolescents. Initially, Levine's test was conducted to examine the equality of variance of adverse childhood experiences between the two populations of mothers with and without delinquent adolescents. As shown in the table, Levine's test for equality of variances was not significant at the 0.05 level, and as a result, equality of variance between the two populations is confirmed.

In the following, the independent t-test to examine the equality of the mean of unpleasant childhood experiences in the two groups of mothers with and without delinquent adolescents has been significant at the 0.05 level. As a result, unpleasant childhood experiences in mothers with and without delinquent adolescents are different. And according to Table 3, unpleasant childhood experiences are more in mothers with delinquent adolescents.

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to compare anger rumination, self-compassion, and unpleasant childhood experiences from the perspectives of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency in Isfahan. The findings of the study are presented as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in anger rumination from the perspective of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency.

In evaluating the first sub-hypothesis, the results showed that anger rumination is different in mothers with and without delinquent adolescents. As a result, anger rumination is more prevalent in mothers with delinquent adolescents than in mothers without delinquent adolescents. In other words, the first hypothesis of the study was confirmed. These findings are consistent with previous studies such as studies (14 and 15) that have examined anger rumination.

Hypothesis 2: Self-compassion differs from the perspective of mothers of delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents

As a result, self-compassion is different in mothers of delinquent adolescents. Self-compassion from the perspective of mothers of delinquent adolescents is lower in delinquent adolescents than in non-delinquent adolescents. As a result, the second sub-hypothesis of the study was confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: There are differences in the perceptions of mothers of adolescents with and without delinquency regarding adverse childhood experiences.

In evaluating the third hypothesis of the study, the results showed that the unpleasant childhood experiences of mothers with and without delinquent adolescents are different. Unpleasant childhood experiences are more in mothers with delinquent adolescents. As a result, the third hypothesis of the study was confirmed. The findings of the present study are consistent with the findings of (16).

## Conclusion

In explaining the first sub-hypothesis, it can be said that anger rumination, through analysis and weakening of anger management, is associated with an increased likelihood of unhealthy behaviors (such as violence), and in this way can pave the way for increased risky behaviors. Therefore, anger rumination perpetuates negative affect by increasing negative thinking, ineffective problem solving, and interfering with goal-directed behaviors, and motivates individuals to engage in harmful behaviors to regulate negative affect. Therefore, risk-taking behaviors occur as a response to rumination or violent thoughts. Therefore, adolescents who experience anger rumination are likely to resort to risky behaviors as a coping strategy (10).

In explaining the second hypothesis, we can point to the role of self-compassion in individuals' expectations, cognitions, and emotions; in such a way that self-compassion causes individuals not to have high expectations of themselves in difficult situations, not to ruminate cognitively about events, and to manage their emotions well. Deficiencies in these skills predispose individuals to risk-taking.

In explaining the third hypothesis, it can be said that severe child abuse and other traumatic experiences can cause abnormal brain development in childhood and also changes in brain function in older children. Traumatic childhood experiences are abundant in individuals with high-risk behaviors, and these experiences often occur in a chaotic family context where parents themselves have mental problems and are unable to provide a safe and predictable

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environment and prevent trauma, or are themselves the cause of the trauma (14).

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**Authors contribution**
F. A. conceptualized the study objectives and design.

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None

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