

**Generation Gap and Communication Barriers between Parents and Youth:
A Sociological Study**

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the communication gap and generation gap between parents and youth from the sociological point of view. The research seeks to examine the effect of parents' and youth's values, lifestyle, media technology use, education, and family decision-making and expectations on parent-youth relationships. The research paradigm used was interpretivist, ontological position constructivist and epistemological position was subjectivist. The approach to the study was qualitative to gain insight into the lived experiences and perceptions of youth in relation to family communication. Ten respondents who met the authors' purposive sampling criteria were interviewed using a semi-structured format to gather data. Data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results show that the traditional parental authority, modern youth culture, the use of social media, dependence on mobile phones, and weak family discussion are the main factors that form the gap between generations. Parents being judgmental, strict and lacking in emotional support and trust, young people's reluctance to discuss personal matters and worries with parents are identified as reasons for not being able to share this information. The study also revealed that lack of communication leads to emotional distance, secrets, misunderstanding and family conflicts. It is concluded that the need of the hour in this era is to have open communication, active listening, respect and balanced parenting in order to diminish communication barriers and enhance parent-youth relationship.

Keywords: Generation gap, communication barriers, parents, youth, family conflict, qualitative study

INTRODUCTION

Family is one of the most critical social institutions since it molds the attitude, values, personality and socialization of humans. Parental communication with youth is a key aspect of establishing trust, emotional ties and family understanding in all societies. In the current era, however, there is a generation gap between the parents and the youth because of the differences in their lifestyles, education, technology usage and social values. Such a gap can be a cause of misunderstanding, poor communication and family conflict (Nadeem, 2025; Khan, 2022; Wahab et al., 2022).

The difference in thinking, values, attitudes and behavioral between older and younger generations is known as generation gap. Within the family, it should manifest itself when parents are traditional,

disciplined, accepted and respected, and youth are independent, free from restrictions, expressive, and living in the modern world. According to recent studies, technological devices, social media, the changed cultural values, parental control, and emotional deprivation in their busy lives are the primary reasons for communication gaps between parents and children (Dilawar et al., 2023; Rehman, 2024; Nasir & Johari, 2023).

The barriers to communication between parents and youth can take various forms including: lack of open communication, fear of being judged, strict parental behavior, not listening to parents, language barriers, disagreement over education, career, friends, mobile phones and lifestyle. Nadeem (2025) identified that tone, language and generational slang can lead to misunderstanding in the Pakistani family. Likewise, Dilawar et al. (2023) reported that children might not feel at ease to share everything with their parents, due to authoritarian parenting style, emotional distance and pressure of family.

The topic is of sociological significance as it corresponds to broader patterns in society: in the area of family structure, family authority, youth identity, modern education and digital culture. Poor communication among parents and youth can lead to emotional distance, conflict and behavioral issues, but good communication among the family can positively impact adjustment, prosocial behavior and family wellbeing (Zahra & Saleem, 2022; Zapf et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2021). Hence, the present study will focus on the issue of the generation gap and the communication gap between the parents and youth from a sociological point of view.

Background of the Study

The Pakistani society traditionally values the elderly, obedience, family decision making and high authority of parents. Generally, parents have high expectations for their children to adhere to their family's values, religious beliefs and social norms. But, because of the current education, the urbanization, media and digital technology, the youth are gradually becoming more independent in their thinking and choices. This social transformation has led to greater disparities between parents and youth in terms of their everyday lives in the family (Wahab et al., 2022; Khan, 2022; Rehman, 2024).

Various studies in Pakistan conducted recently reveal that generation gap is linked with the problem of communication, technologization, lifestyle differences, traditional value systems, social norms and parental decisions. According to Wahab et al. (2022) the most crucial reasons for the generation gap in the Pashtun community of Buner, KP were: lack of communication, technology use and traditional values. Also, Khan (2022) explained that the gap between parents and children is created by differences in attitudes, beliefs, communication and cultural change.

Communication gap is not just a matter of not talking as much, it is also not a matter of not understanding the feelings, opinions, needs of others. Both children and parents may feel as if they are not listened to, while the parents may feel that children are turning into disrespectful or too independent. The lack of emotional expression, haste of life, authoritarianism in parenting and gender roles have been found to widen the communication gap in families by Dilawar et al. (2023). It has also been demonstrated by Nadeem (2025) that the family type of protection and low openness and high conformity contribute to hindering the communication between the parents and children.

So too has technology been an important contributor to the generation gap. Many parents think that mobile phones, social media and online platforms are distracting influences or poses a moral risk on youth, whereas for many youth it is part of everyday life. Research in recent years has demonstrated that technology can impact family communication, parent-child trust, and parental awareness of youth behavioral (Nasir & Johari, 2023; Yu et al., 2024). For this reason, parents and youth could find

themselves at odds with one another over mobile phone usage, privacy, and online friendships or social media use.

Family communication also has an impact on youth behavioral and emotional wellbeing. Findings by Saleem et al., (2021) revealed that family communication is positively associated with pro-social behavioral and negatively associated with emotional and behavioral problems in adolescent Pakistani children. Zahra and Saleem (2022) also concluded that family cohesion and interpersonal skills are crucial for the adjustment of adolescents in the Pakistani collectivistic society. Parent–adolescent interactions are also found to influence mental health: poor communication between parents and adolescents is associated with mental health issues, conversely, open communication is associated with adolescent wellbeing in international studies (Wang et al., 2022; Zapf et al., 2023). The present study is significant because it focuses on the communication barrier that is formed due to the generation gap between parents and youth. It will help to grasp how value differences, technology differences, lifestyle differences, discipline differences, and authority and decision-making differences impact family relationships. This research can also emphasize the importance of parenting that is open, listening, supportive and understanding to the teens.

Problem Statement

The generation gap between parents and youth has widened in modern society due to differences in values, lifestyles, technology utilization among others, and differences in education and decision making. This division can lead to communication disruptions, lack of understanding, emotional estrangement and family disputes. The studies conducted recently revealed that weak communication between parents and children has a negative impact on family relations and adjustment of the youth particularly in Pakistani society where traditional family values and modern youth culture are conflicting with each other (Wahab et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2021; Nadeem, 2025). The aim of this study, therefore, is to explore the communication barriers between parents and youth created by the generation gap.

Significance of the Study

The study is important as it will help to understand the reasons for communication barriers between parents and youth. It will describe how value differences, mobile phone usage, social media, lifestyle, expectations about education and family roles lead to conflict within family relationships. For parents, youth, teachers, counselors and sociologists, the study will be useful to learn the need for open communication, respect and emotional support in the families. It will also help develop sociological understanding by providing insights into the impact of social change on family structure and parent-youth relationships.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine reasons for differences between the generations in relation to parents and youth.
- To look at the key communication challenges between parents and youth.
- To analyze the role of technology and social media in increasing communication gap.
- To recognize that misunderstanding and family conflict can arise out of a generation gap.
- To suggest ways to improve communication and understanding between parents and youth.

Research Questions

1. What do you think are the primary reasons for the gap between parents and youth?
2. What are the communication challenges between youth and parents?
3. What is the impact of technology/social media on parent-youth communication?
4. How can there be misunderstanding and family conflict due to generation gap?
5. How to enhance parent/youth communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The gap between the younger and the older generations is a significant sociological topic due to the fact that the younger generation is facing a different set of values, a way of life, a different style of communication, technology engagement and decision-making processes than the older generation. This is more apparent in Pakistani society as family life is deeply intertwined with respect to elders, obedience and collective decision making and religious values. Wahab et al. (2022) identified some major factors responsible for the formation of generation gap among parents and children such as technology, lifestyle, social norms, poverty, religiosity, communication gap in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Likewise, Khan (2022) posited that the gaps between youth and parents exist because of the differences in their beliefs, behavioral, social change and communication. Furthermore, Niazi et al. (2020) also mentioned that generation gap has impact on family relationship as children deviate from their parent's expectation as the values in society change.

Communication between parents and youth is an integral part of a family relationship. Healthy communication allows for parents and youth to fully understand each other's needs, emotional response and expectations. But if there is less communication, the family relationships can be stressful. Often fear, lack of openness, gender roles and strict family patterns make it difficult for children to communicate with their parents (Dilawar et al., 2023). This is also emphasized by Nadeem (2025) since parents and children do not understand each other in Pakistani families due to tone, language choice and generational slang. According to Rehman (2024) communication issues in the desi families within Pakistan hinder the emotional health and relationship among the family members, particularly in the context of joint and nuclear families.

There is a strong association between parent-adolescent communication and adolescent behavioral and emotional adjustment as demonstrated in several studies. The study of Saleem et al. (2021) revealed that positive family communication is associated with prosaically behavioral and reduced emotional and behavioral issues of adolescents in Pakistan. Family cohesion and interpersonal skills are also found to be important factors in mitigating emotional and behaviorally issues of youth, (Zahra and Saleem, 2022). Zapf et al. (2023) conducted a review of research on parent-child communication, and they discovered that generally higher quality communication is correlated with higher mental health functioning within adolescents. In addition, Lyu et al. (2024) highlighted the significant role in measuring the strength of family relationships of parent-child communication quality.

During the teenage years, there are usually communication barriers due to the youth wanting to be more independent while parents want them to be obedient and disciplined. However, Mastrotheodoros et al. (2020) discovered that there may be a difference in perceptions of conflict between parents and adolescents, which can lead to more misunderstandings. According to Ravindran et al. (2020),

adolescence is the time when children become more independent and conflict might arise when parents resort to control rather than support. Zheng et al. (2025) have also reported that parent–adolescent discrepancies in perceptions of psychological control and autonomy support are associated with adolescents' outcomes. These studies reveal that generation gap is more than just age gap; it is an expectation gap for freedom, control and responsibility.

Changes in family communication are also due to technology and social media. Mobile phone, internet and social media are part of young people's everyday life, but may be perceived by parents as a distraction, a privacy issue or a potential for moral risk. The role of parental mediation of adolescents' cell phone use has been associated with changing parent-adolescent relationships due to the need for independence of the teen and the need for connection and control by the parents (Warren, 2023). Kawas et al. (2021) demonstrated that screen time can be a source of conflict between parents and children and this conflict can be present even in instances of good screen time. Yu et al. (2024) also discovered that while parents and youth might have various notions of digital safety, this can lead to fresh difficulties in interaction.

In recent qualitative research it has been revealed that adolescents are seeking emotional support, being listened to, and being treated with respect and dignity from parents. Adolescents suffer from family communication gaps because of low level of family involvement and non-availability of open communication in the family (Nasir & Johari, 2023). The relationship and communication between them and their family members can either enhance or hinder their social health, as described by Solhi et al. (2023). Wecht et al. (2024) additionally discovered that obstacles and enablers inside the parent/teen conversation are vital to knowing youth psychological health support. These studies indicate that youth are not just looking for parental control but listening, emotional understanding and trust as well.

The literature further indicates that family conflict has a negative impact on youth's social competence, confidence, mental health. Ahmad and Amin (2019) concluded that parent–adolescent conflict was significantly associated with social competence of Pakistani youth and the gender role was also a significant factor. Huang (2022) demonstrated that the family functioning has an indirect relationship with the variables of adolescent depression via self-esteem and peer relationships. Wang et al. (2022) identified family and school experiences as factors that are correlated with adolescent depression and found that positive communication between family and their adolescent children is a protective factor. The parent adolescents relationship issues can also play a role in the behavioral/emotional issues occurring during adolescence as mentioned by Panahi et al. (2023).

In general, the preceding research shows that social change, technology, parenting style, family structure, emotional distance and youth independence are important factors in the formation of generation gap and communication barriers. Studies conducted in Pakistan have elaborated on the issue of generation gap and the problem of communication has been explored; in other countries studies have been conducted on parent-adolescent communication, autonomy, conflict and mental health. Nevertheless, research is needed on how the generation gap in particular, contributes to the communication barriers between parents and youth from a sociological viewpoint. So, the present study will focus on the barriers of communication, and family conflict that is caused by difference of values, technology use, lifestyle, authority and decision-making of parents and youths.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is guided by Family Communication Pattern Theory that proposes two types of family communication patterns: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. There is also a distinction between conversation orientation (open discussion, sharing of ideas and self-expression of feelings) and

conformity orientation (submission, agreement and respect of family authority) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). The generation gap could be greater if the parents are looking for conformity, discipline and traditional values, and the youth are looking for open communication, independence and personal decision making in the context of this study. Families with low conversation orientation and high conformity orientation could have more communication barriers, misunderstanding, and parent youth conflict (Barnes & Olson, 1985; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Thus, this theory provides insights into the dynamics of emotional distance and conflict between parents and youth as a result of the difference of family communications style.

Methodological Approach.

This study has a paradigm of Interpretivist because it tries to understand the lived experience, meaning and perceptions of the young generation about Generation gap and Communication barriers with their parents. Given its focus on family communication, emotions, values and authority and social relations, the study is not aimed at measuring the numbers of respondents, but rather focuses on their interpretation of their family experiences.

The ontological approach of this study is constructivist. It believes that social reality is not set in stone, or equal across all people; rather, it is social reality socially constructed through human interaction, family values, cultural expectations and personal experiences. For this study, the terms generation gap and communication barriers refer to the realities constructed by the parents and the youth due to their different experiences of traditional values, modern lifestyle, technology and decision making etc.

The study epistemological position is a subjectivist. It is the knowledge that is created by the views, meanings and experiences of the participants. The researcher gathers knowledge through interaction with respondents and their understanding of their individual explanation of communication barriers, parental control, lack of trust and family conflict.

The position of the study is that values are important in social research, which is recognized by the axiological position. The researcher respected, kept the confidentiality of the data and was neutral in the interviews because the study involved sensitive family issues. They were treated with respect and their identities were anonymised using codes e.g. P1, P2 and P3.

A qualitative research approach and a descriptive research design was used. The respondents were ten people who were selected using purposive sampling method, from which the data were collected using semi-structured interview. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, which identified themes including: generation gap, communication barriers, technology usage, parental authority, emotional distance and family conflict.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

<i>Respondent Code</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Family System</i>	<i>Residential Area</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
P1	22	Female	BS Sociology	Joint family	Urban	Student
P2	24	Male	BS English	Nuclear family	Urban	Student

<i>Respondent Code</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Family System</i>	<i>Residential Area</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
P3	21	Female	BS Psychology	Joint family	Semi-urban	Student
P4	23	Male	BS Sociology	Joint family	Rural	Student
P5	25	Female	BS Education	Nuclear family	Urban	Teacher
P6	20	Male	BS Computer Science	Nuclear family	Semi-urban	Student
P7	22	Female	BS Social Sciences	Joint family	Urban	Student
P8	26	Male	BS Administration	Business Nuclear family	Urban	Private employee
P9	21	Female	BS English	Nuclear family	Rural	Student
P10	24	Male	BS Sociology	Joint family	Semi-urban	Student

Summary of Demographic Characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Gender	Male	5
	Female	5
Family System	Joint family	5
	Nuclear family	5
Residential Area	Urban	5
	Semi-urban	3
	Rural	2
Occupation	Student	8

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
	Teacher	1
	Private employee	1

Ten respondents were included in the study: P1-P10. All the respondents fell in the age group of 20-26 years. Equal representation of male and female respondents was included, with five males and five females. Majority of the respondents were students and one respondent was a teacher and another respondent was private employee. The respondents were sampled from joint families and nuclear families; there were five respondents in each family type. Five respondents were from urban area, three were from semi-urban and two from rural areas.

Thematic Analysis Table

<i>Main Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme / Code</i>	<i>Supporting Quotation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Understanding of Generation Gap	Difference in values and thinking	<i>“Generation gap means the difference in thinking, lifestyle, values and behavior between parents and youth.” P1</i>	The respondents understood generation gap as a difference in values, lifestyle, behavior and social outlook between parents and youth.
	Traditional vs modern worldview	<i>“Parents usually follow old traditions, while youth follow modern ideas and lifestyle.” P4</i>	This indicates that the conflict between tradition and modernity is a major source of distance between the two generations.
	Different life experiences	<i>“Parents think according to their past experiences, while youth think according to present social conditions.” P10</i>	The findings suggest that parents and youth interpret social life through different generational experiences.
Causes of Generation Gap	Technology and social media	<i>“The main causes are technology, social media, modern lifestyle, education, lack of time and weak communication.” P7</i>	Technology and social media were repeatedly identified as major causes of changing youth behavior and widening family distance.
	Modern education and lifestyle change	<i>“The main causes are modern education, social media, western culture, changing lifestyle and lack of proper communication.” P2</i>	Respondents linked modern education and lifestyle change with new attitudes, independence and disagreement with traditional family expectations.

Main Theme	Sub-theme / Code	Supporting Quotation	Interpretation
Communication Barriers	Lack of family discussion	<i>"Parents and youth do not always sit together to discuss their issues openly." P5</i>	Lack of regular and meaningful family discussion weakens mutual understanding between parents and youth.
	Fear of judgement	<i>"Many youth do not feel fully comfortable. They think parents may judge them, scold them or compare them with others." P8</i>	Fear of judgement prevents youth from sharing personal problems and creates emotional distance within the family.
	Strict parental behavioral	<i>"The main barriers are fear, strictness, lack of trust, different thinking and lack of listening." P4</i>	Strictness and lack of listening appear as key barriers that limit open communication between parents and youth.
	Lack of trust	<i>"Youth may feel that parents do not trust them, so they start hiding things." P10</i>	Lack of trust encourages secrecy and reduces honest communication within parent-youth relationships.
Emotional Distance	Lack of emotional support	<i>"Parents mostly discuss studies, discipline and responsibilities, but youth want friendly communication and emotional support." P10</i>	The responses show that youth expect emotional understanding, while parents often focus mainly on discipline and responsibility.
	Feeling unsupported	<i>"Poor communication creates misunderstanding, anger, emotional distance and lack of trust. It can also make youth feel unsupported and lonely." P5</i>	Poor communication affects emotional attachment and may make youth feel isolated within the family.
	Hiding personal problems	<i>"Many youth think that parents will not understand their problems or will blame them." P6</i>	Youth often avoid sharing personal matters because they expect blame instead of support.
Role of Technology	Mobile phone as a source of conflict	<i>"Youth spend more time on phones, and parents think they are wasting time. This creates arguments and misunderstanding in the family." P2</i>	Mobile phone use is a common source of conflict because parents and youth attach different meanings to technology.

Main Theme	Sub-theme / Code	Supporting Quotation	Interpretation
Family Conflict	Parents' limited understanding of digital culture	<i>"Parents usually do not understand online trends and digital friendships, so they become worried and strict." P6</i>	The digital divide between parents and youth contributes to suspicion, control and misunderstanding.
	Social media and lifestyle change	<i>"Social media exposes youth to new ideas, trends and lifestyles." P10</i>	Social media influences youth identity, choices and lifestyle, which may conflict with parental expectations.
	Conflict over education and career	<i>"Common issues include mobile phone use, study pressure, career selection, going outside with friends, dressing style and marriage decisions." P7</i>	Parent-youth conflict commonly appears around education, career, friendships, lifestyle and future planning.
	Conflict over personal freedom	<i>"Parents and youth often disagree on mobile phone use, career choice, friendships, study pressure, dressing and personal freedom." P6</i>	Youth's desire for independence often clashes with parental control and family expectations.
	Conflict over marriage and friendships	<i>"Friendship, love marriage, mental stress, career choice, social media use and personal freedom are difficult topics to discuss with parents." P3</i>	Sensitive topics such as friendship, love marriage and personal freedom are difficult to discuss due to cultural and family restrictions.
Decision-Making in Family	Parental authority	<i>"Mostly parents make important decisions. Youth are sometimes asked for their opinion, but the final decision usually depends on parents." P5</i>	Decision-making remains largely parent-centred, which limits youth participation in important family matters.
	Role of elders	<i>"In my family, elders and parents usually make important decisions. Youth can share their opinion, but the final decision is mostly made by parents." P10</i>	The role of elders reflects traditional family authority, especially in joint family systems.
	Limited youth voice	<i>"Youth can give their opinion, but the final decision is usually made by parents or senior family members." P1</i>	Youth participation exists, but it is often symbolic rather than decisive.

Main Theme	Sub-theme / Code	Supporting Quotation	Interpretation
Effects of Poor Communication	Misunderstanding and weak trust	<i>“Poor communication creates emotional distance, misunderstanding and lack of trust.” P1</i>	Weak communication damages trust and increases misunderstanding between parents and youth.
	Stress and disconnection	<i>“Poor communication creates misunderstanding, emotional distance and weak trust. It can also make youth feel ignored, stressed and disconnected from family.” P6</i>	Poor communication has emotional consequences and may affect youth confidence and wellbeing.
	Frequent conflict	<i>“Poor communication creates misunderstanding, emotional distance, lack of trust and frequent conflict.” P10</i>	Communication barriers contribute to repeated family conflicts and weaken family harmony.
Suggested Solutions	Open communication	<i>“The best way is open communication. Parents should understand modern youth problems, and youth should respect family values.” P1</i>	Open communication was seen as the most effective way to reduce generation gap and improve family relationships.
	Mutual respect	<i>“The best way is mutual respect and open communication. Parents should understand modern problems of youth, and youth should respect family values and traditions.” P4</i>	Mutual respect allows both generations to understand each other without rejecting family values or youth independence.
	Active listening and patience	<i>“Parents should listen calmly and understand the situation before reacting. Youth should also explain their opinions respectfully.” P8</i>	Active listening and calm discussion can reduce emotional reactions and improve parent-youth communication.
	Balanced parental control	<i>“Parental control is useful when it is supportive, but excessive control creates pressure.” P6</i>	Respondents supported guidance from parents but rejected excessive control that creates pressure and secrecy.

The thematic analysis reveals that generation gap between parents and youth is mainly shaped by differences in values, lifestyle, technology use, education, family expectations and decision-making patterns. Respondents commonly viewed parents as more traditional and authority-oriented, while youth were seen as more influenced by modern education, social media and personal independence. Communication barriers were mainly linked with fear of judgment, strict parental behavioral, lack of

trust, weak listening and emotional distance. These barriers often prevented youth from sharing personal problems with parents and encouraged them to hide sensitive issues.

Technology and social media emerged as important factors in widening the generation gap. Respondents explained that parents often view mobile phone use as a distraction, while youth consider it part of education, entertainment and social connection. This difference creates misunderstanding and conflict. The findings also show that family conflict commonly occurs around career choice, education, friendships, dressing, marriage decisions, mobile phone use and personal freedom. Overall, the respondents suggested that open communication, mutual respect, active listening, emotional support and balanced parental guidance can reduce communication barriers and improve parent-youth relationships.

Thematic Analysis

The present study explored generation gap and communication barriers between parents and youth through ten semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis generated five major themes: differences in generational values, communication barriers, technology as a source of distance, parental authority and decision-making, and emotional consequences of weak communication. These themes show that generation gap is not only an individual family issue, but also a sociological issue shaped by social change, family authority, technology, cultural values and changing youth identity.

Theme 1: Generational Values & Lifestyle Differences

One of the main issues that have been found in the interviews is the discrepancy between the values, thoughts and life styles of both parents and youth. The parents were perceived as more traditional and youth were perceived as more influenced by modern education, social media and changing lifestyle. *"The youth would follow the old tradition while the parents would follow the modern ideas and lifestyle"* (P4). *"Parents think with the past experiences and youth with the social situation in the present"* (P10) explained another respondent. Socially, it is illustrated as different processes of socialization create the generation gap. Parents and youth live in different social settings, so there will be differences in their views and ideas about family, freedom, discipline and responsibility.

This result corroborates the study conducted by Wahab et al. (2022) which revealed that the lifestyle change, technology, social norms and communication gap were the main reasons for the occurrence of generation gap in Pakistani families. Likewise Khan (2022) noted that the conflict between values and modernization in education has an impact on parents and children.

Theme 2: Communication Barriers and Fear of Judgment

Communication issues between parents and youth was the second major theme. There was a high level of youth resistance to disclosing personal issues due to fear, strictness, judgment and lack of trust. *"Many youth respondents indicated that they are not completely comfortable, they may feel that their parents can criticize them, punish them or compare them with others"* (P8). Another person said, *"Fear and strictness, lack of trust, different thinking, lack of listening"* (P4). The responses demonstrate the power imbalance in the family that affects communication. Parents will typically be in charge and the youth may feel that he or she is not being heard.

The result is in line with Family Communication Patterns Theory, which is used to explain that a high conformity orientation in families is oriented to obedience, agreement, and parental authority, while low conversation orientation in families decreases open discussion (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). This is also consistent with previous studies. Dilawar et al. (2023) concluded that children have problems with

communication with parents in the form of strictness, lack of openness and family pressure. It was also found by Nadeem et al. (2025) that tone and language differences and generational differences between parents and children lead to misunderstanding.

Theme 3: Generational Distance Technology and Social Media

This one of the most resilient causes of generation gap in the interviews was technology. Respondents described how the use of mobile phones and social media has impacted on the behavioral, interests and communication of youth. *“Parents believe youth are wasting their time on phones, and youth spend more time on phones, leading to arguments and misunderstandings in the family” (P2).* The other participant stated that *“parents are generally unaware of online trends and digital friendships and end up being worried and strict.” (P6)*

From a sociological standpoint, it's a digital generation gap. Youth use technology as a means of learning, entertainment, identity formation and socialization, while parents view its use as a distraction or a moral threat. This is a conflict, as both generations give different labels to the same behaviors. Parents and youth may have different experiences with digital media, which can expand generational differences, according to Clark (2009). In addition, recent studies indicate that digital safety, screen time and online behaviors can be a source of conflict within parent-child relationships (Lyu et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024).

Theme 4: Parental Authority and Limited Youth Participation

The other theme was the issue of family decision-making. When it comes to key decisions, most respondents indicated that it is most often taken by elders or parents, and youth involvement is limited. Most of the respondents explained that *“most of the time it is the parents who make decisions, sometimes it is the youth, but parents make the final decision” (P5).* Another commented, *“Youth may provide their input, but it is usually the parents or older family members who make the decision (P1).* This suggests a high degree of parental-centrality in family decision making.

From the sociological point of view, this is a typical condition of the Pakistani families, in which elders' authority is respected and age is important. But youth are seeking increased involvement in the decisions concerning their schooling, their careers, their friendships, marriage and lifestyle. This interplay of parental control and youth independence leads to conflict. According to Mastrotheodoros et al. (2020), parent-adolescent conflict tends to escalate when parents and youth have different interpretations of the amount of control, autonomy, and disagreement. Similarly, Ravindran et al. (2020) argued that autonomy and control are important issues in parent-adolescent relationships.

Theme 5: Emotional distance, secrecy and family conflict.

The last theme was the impact of lacking emotional connection due to poor communication. Emotional distance, secrecy, loneliness and family conflict result from weak communication, according to respondents. One respondent stated: *“Poor communication leads to emotional distance, lack of understanding, lack of trust (P1)”. “Youth may feel that parents don't have trust in youth, so they begin to hide things” (P10)* was another explanation. These results indicate that communication problems are not limited to the communicative aspects of everyday interaction, but also have an impact on the emotional dimension of family relationships.

Youth may feel more comfortable talking about their personal issues with their friends or on social media platforms rather than with their parents if they feel they are not being heard or judged. Positive family communication has been shown to be related to pro-social behaviors and reduced emotional and

behavioral issues among Pakistani adolescents (Saleem et al., 2021). Similarly, family cohesion and interpersonal skills also have a significant role in the adjustment of adolescents, found Zahra and Saleem (2022). Likewise, the quality of a parent's communication with the child was found to be strongly associated with the mental health of the adolescent by Zapf et al. (2023).

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study suggest that differences in values, lifestyle, technology use, level of education and social expectations are the most significant factors influencing the generation gap between parents and youth. Respondents attributed more traditional and authority-oriented parenting style to parents, and more influence of modern education, social media and individual decision making to youth. From a sociological perspective, this is a shift in family life away from the traditional family and the values and norms of collective living that is being challenged by the rise of new youth identities in today's world. These results are in line with the study conducted by Wahab et al. (2022) who concluded that technology, lifestyle change, social norms and communication gap are responsible for generation gap in the family in Pakistan. Likewise, Khan (2022) maintained that disparity in beliefs, attitudes and social experiences leads to distances between parents and children in Pashtun society.

The study also showed that there is a strong relationship between communication barriers and fear of being judged, rigid parenting, limited emotional expression and lack of trust. Most of the respondents said they were reluctant to mention personal problems out of a fear of being scolded, compared and understood wrong by parents. This is congruent with Dilawar et al. (2023) who reported that because of family pressure, strictness and lack of openness, children often face problems in communicating with parents. Nadeem et al. (2025) also pointed out that tone, language and communication style are other factors that cause misunderstandings between parents and children. The findings from a Family Communication Patterns Theory perspective indicate that families can produce a narrow range of communication by setting up a high conformity orientation and a low conversation orientation, leading to emotional distancing and poor parent-youth relationships (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Moreover the research evidence indicated that poor communication is a factor that leads to family conflict, family secrets and a lack of trust among the parents and youth. Areas of disagreement, mentioned by respondents, included mobile phone use, social media, career choice, friendships, marriage decisions and personal freedom. This demonstrates that family conflict does not only stem from the individual behavior, but is also a product of broader social change, of digital culture and evolving ideas of autonomy. This is also found in previous studies with Saleem et al., (2021) reporting the association between positive family communication and positive youth behaviorals, and emotional well-being, Zahra and Saleem, (2022) reporting the importance of family cohesion in youth adjustment. Also, Mastrotheodoros et al. (2020) noted that conflicts between parents and adolescents tend to escalate when parents and young people have conflicting perceptions of control, autonomy and communication. Based on the above, the present study recommends the role of open communication, active listening, mutual respect and parental guidance in minimizing the generation gap and enhancing parent-youth relationships.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, it was concluded that the difference in values, lifestyle, technology, education, decision making and family expectation is the greater cause of the present study's finding of generation gap between the parents and the youth. The results revealed that youth frequently encounter barriers in communicating because they are afraid of being judged, have strict parenting style, lack trust in parents and poor emotional support. The use of mobile phones and social media were also emerging as key contributors to misunderstanding between parents and youth. In overall results of the study, they found

that lack of communication leads to emotional distance, lack of trust and family conflicts and a weak level of trust. Thus, an open dialogue, respect among parents and teens, and balanced parenting is essential to enhance parent/teen relationships.

Recommendations

1. An atmosphere should be established for parents to communicate with youth in a non-threatening way so they will feel free to talk about their issues without fear of judgment or punishment.
2. Youth should voice their views with respect and attempting to understand the concerns of parents.
3. Families need to have limited discussion on education, career, friendship, technology usage and personal choices.
4. Parenting should be restrained and done with trust, patience and emotional support.
5. Educational institutions should be used for organizing awareness sessions with parents and youth on proper communication within the family.
6. Counselors, teachers and family elders should be supportive as they help to remove communication barriers between family and youth.
7. Parents need to become familiar with contemporary technology and social media to minimize the conflicts that can occur over the use of mobile devices.

Future Suggestions

This could be expanded in the future to a larger sample size and involve parents and youth to see how they differ. The study may be carried out in rural and urban areas separately to see the impact of family system and social environment on generation gap.

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