

# Children's Sense of Security in Social Spaces: A Case Study of Middle-Class Children in Iran

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## Abstract

This article is a study of the sense of security of middle-class children in Iran. Through taking a grounded theory approach, it explores the concept of insecurity in homes and cities and children's reactions to feeling insecure. To do so, Draw and Write, Picture-Aided Questionnaire, and interview were applied to 100 children between 7 and 14 years of age. The findings revealed an ever-present feeling of anxiety and helplessness which was rooted in the human security conditions and in children's status in society. The children showed two different reactions of active and passive when facing this feeling. As a consequence of active strategy, children grow a sense of fear management, become optimistic, and feel satisfied. Those who passively react to feeling insecure grow a desire for power and become depressed and unable to trust others.

## Keywords

sense of security, children, home space, urban space

## Introduction

In less than half a century, Iran has seen massive social changes that have affected its population, especially children. Thirty-five years ago, a revolution led to a regime change. The new state soon got involved in a war that took 8 years. In addition to its critical geopolitical situation, Iran has often been facing natural disasters. Ten years ago, a massive earthquake killed 27,000 and injured 30,000 in the south of Iran and after that, several smaller earthquakes have occurred across the country during the last few years. In 2012, 200,000 people were affected by one flood alone that ruined some northern parts of the country.

The researcher's generation spent their entire childhood in the post-revolution–post-war restless era. Aside from problems such as stress and lack of social security, children of this generation were treated as members of an army whose duty was to propagate and develop ideological principles of the revolution, which were fed to them by schools, educational centers, or the media. They were expected by the society to be children who are somber, hardworking, committed, and faithful to the revolution. Being happy and feeling secure were not thought to be ideal for their childhood.

By the end of war and the beginning of country's developmental process and the relative improvement of society, children of the next generation, especially those coming from the middle-class families, started to experience more stability, freedom, and happiness. However, they were thought to be spoiled by child-centered parenting styles and were treated as means of showing off of their families' socioeconomic

situation. They became an army to promote consumption in the post-war market.

Apart from that, in Iran, children have a low position in society. This low stance is a deeply rooted culture. Its modern manifestation could be found in Parsonian and Piagetian approach to children; they perceive children to be potential dangers to social order, unreliable beings, and human beings who are always dependent on adults.

Piaget and development psychology tend to treat children as unreliable informants. They see them as always not yet capable of competencies defined against a grown-up standard (Hogan, 2005), and in developmental psychological approaches, the child is seen as fundamentally different to adults, requiring powerful conditioning processes to make her or him conform to adult normalities (Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford, & Davies, 2006).

Parsons and the powerful tradition of socialization theory that extends from his work successfully abandon the child to the dictates of the social system. The social practice of childhood is sublimated by the theorist's presumptive motives in sustaining integration and order at the analytic level. The child, like the deviant, signifies difference. In an unsocialized state, the child is manifestly profane; it threatens to

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bring down social worlds, and the threat can only be mollified within theory by treating the child through an archetype as a proto-adult (Jenks, 2005). Moreover, children are not taken seriously because they do not have access to the sources of power, and for the same reason, they feel powerless.

Coming from a middle-class family, the researcher has been sensitive to these conditions and features of childhood in different generations of Iranian children. She has been interested in asking children themselves about their feelings and experiences to see whether they feel secure and are happy with their improved conditions of life. In this study, the researcher has tried to listen to children's voices by applying diverse qualitative methods. As this was not common in social research in Iran to ask children themselves about their everyday lives, facing challenges of the public and experts' pessimism and lack of trust in children's competency to participate in the study has been hard. Overcoming the barriers to accessing children and persuading their guardians has also been demanding.

This article discusses the results of a research based on grounded theory approach using three techniques to survey children's sense of security. In this study, the researcher has tried to uncover the social factors affecting the sense of security, the ways children react to these factors, and the consequences of the chosen strategies.

## Sense of Security

In every country, the prerequisite to general security is psychological security, and psychological security, in turn, has its roots in the feeling of security, and this feeling is the demonstration of an attempt toward having a healthy society (Bolandian, 2000). Generally, experts believe that the sense of security in a society is as important as its actual existence in that society (Eftekhari, 2002).

The need for security is a basic need of human beings. The fulfillment of many other vital needs depends in one way or another on whether or not this one need is fulfilled (Eftekhari, 2002). Maslow in his *Hierarchy of Needs* placed the need for security immediately after the physiological needs. Accordingly, if the need for security is not fulfilled, the following needs, that is, the need to belong, the need for esteem, and the need for self-actualization, will not be satisfied (Haghtalab, 1993). Some of the major outcomes of feeling insecure in childhood are competitiveness and aggressiveness, tendency toward searching for security through unreal goals, and a strong thirst for power and social position. Those who have been insecure as a child feel guilty, helpless, and dissatisfied. They think they are not loved and they cannot trust others (Maslow, 1987).

Bowlby (1969) argued that early emotional experiences in childhood have an important influence on development and behavior later in life. Our early attachment styles are established in childhood through the infant/caregiver relationship.

Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Bowlby (1988) suggested that when children are raised with confidence that their primary caregiver will be available to them, they are less likely to experience fear than those who are raised without such conviction. Second, he believed that this confidence is forged during a critical period of development, during the years of infancy, childhood, and adolescence, and that the expectations that are formed during the period tend to remain relatively unchanged for the rest of the person's life. Finally, he proposed that these expectations that are formed are directly tied to actual experience.

Experts<sup>1</sup> have found that attachment patterns established early in life lead to a number of outcomes. For example, children who are securely attached as infants tend to develop stronger self-esteem and better self-reliance as they grow older. These children also tend to be more independent, perform better in school, have successful social relationships, and experience less depression and anxiety.

Research<sup>2</sup> suggests that failure to form secure attachments early in life can have a negative impact on behavior in later childhood and throughout life. Although attachment styles displayed in adulthood are not necessarily the same as those seen in infancy, research indicates that early attachments can have a serious impact on later relationships. Those adults who were securely attached in childhood tend to have healthy, happy, and lasting relationships.

Bowlby (1988) believed there are four distinguishing characteristics of attachment:

1. Proximity maintenance (the desire to be near the people we are attached to)
2. Safe haven (returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat)
3. Secure base (the attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment)
4. Separation distress (anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure)

Ainsworth (1970) expanded greatly on Bowlby's original work. She described three major styles of attachment: secure, ambivalent-insecure, and avoidant-insecure attachment. Ainsworth (1982) developed the concept of the "secure base," which suggested a geographical aspect of the Attachment Theory. When a child is exposed to threat, is ill or tired, attachment behavior is activated, leading the child to seek physical proximity to his or her secure base, a comforting, safe, protective person, usually a parent or caregiver. Exploratory behavior is inhibited until attachment needs are satisfied.

The secure base of the Attachment Theory posits a symbolic connection between person and space. Space, from a phenomenological point of view, is a social product and a

requirement for social reactions. It provides the background and the area for interactions (Afroogh, 1998). Space is the circumstance in which a particular set of conditions, values, and regulations, belonging to that particular circumstance rule. It is the background of the social and cultural phenomena, which influences them and is influenced by them (Monadi, 2006). Initially, the attachment tie is to a person, presumably to his or her physical characteristics: warmth, familiar appearance, smell, and reassuring sound of their voice (Holmes, 2008). Later, that link is extended to the spaces of security where they are to be found (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Recent empirical research has also linked attachment and spatial theories of agoraphobia. From an attachment perspective, agoraphobic responses to the spaces of fear can be seen as anxiety-driven attempt to find a secure base, represented by a safe person or a space associated with such a person (Holmes, 2008). Bowlby (1998) explained agoraphobia as an attachment deficit, that is, the temporary loss of the ability to tolerate spatial separation from a secure base (Jacobson, 2004).

Our emotional relations and interactions weave through and help from the fabric of our unique personal geographies. Emotions can clearly alter the way the world is for us, affecting our sense of space (Davidson & Milligan, 2004). For some, the feeling of insecurity in space results in experiences of unbeatable intensity and distress that challenge the very boundaries of the self (Davidson, 2003; Parr, 1999).

Human geographers such as Twigg (2000) and Milligan (2003) researched the emotional impact of secure and phobic geographies of the home. Sibley (1995) paid particular attention to the family space, Gabb (2004) worked on parenting issues at home, and Cribb (1999) studied domestic tensions and abuses.

In their empirical work on urban spaces of fear, Newman (1972) and Coleman (1985) showed the extent to which fear places limits on mobility. Koskela (1997) explored potential means of coping emotionally with restrictive spatiality. To interpret an individual's geographical experience, his or her emotions and feelings should be considered (Rowles, 1978).

In this research, children's sense of security at home and city was studied as these are the major social spaces that are lived in and interacted by children (Shiee, 2006). In Iran, home space plays an important role in children's well-being. In a healthy family, sincerity, love, independence, satisfaction, tranquility, respect, and the feeling of value are expected factors that can make children feel secure (Shamlou, 1993). Urban children are in touch with different people from different age groups and sociocultural backgrounds. To get to school, children need to pass through streets, and they also spend a great amount of their free time in parks and playgrounds.

## Method

As it was intended to explore children's feelings about an unexplored field and grounded theory is proper for these

purposes (Baily, 1997; Hutchinson, 1988), this approach was chosen for data gathering and analysis. In grounded theory approach, the methods used involve developing codes, categories, and themes plus generating hypotheses from the data (Glaser, 1978). Data are analyzed with open coding, which is the examination of minute sections of text. Open coding is followed by axial coding, which puts data back together by making connections between a category and its subcategories. Finally, selective coding is done, which is the integrative process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Research approaches to hearing children's voices perceive children as active beings within their life experiences rather than as passive recipients of adult social worlds and are portrayed as dynamic in assessing, altering, and contributing to the societal circumstances they find themselves in (Christensen & Prout, 2005; Corsaro, 1997; Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998).

Christensen and James (2000) believe that "listening and hearing what children say and paying attention to the ways in which they communicate with us" will give researchers the means by which they may work "with" children rather than conducting research studies "about" children (p. 7).

For method selection, children were presumed to be similar to adults but to possess different competencies (James et al., 1998) and the researcher tried to use methods that were based on children's skills such as the Draw and Write technique (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999) along with conversational interview.

The advantages of the conversational interview are that it enables the researcher to hand over the agenda to children, so that he or she can arrive at good understanding about what matters to children (Mayall, 2000), and it is designed to assure that all respondents understand questions as intended (Conrad & Schober, 1998) and require partners to converse about what is being said until they are confident they adequately understand each other (Cicourel, 1973; Clark, 1992; Schgloff, 1984).

The Draw and Write technique involves drawing a picture and writing about feelings it provokes or more explanations about its details that could not be expressed through drawing (Sewell, 2011). This technique is proper for gaining children's views (Pridmore & Lansdown, 1997; Verma & Mallick, 1999). It can be used with children of a wide range of ages (Thorne, 1993; Williams, Wetton, & Moon, 1989). Wetton and McWhirter (1998) point out that Draw and Write has the facility of being flexible and easy to use, and is recognized as producing valid and reliable data. It also invites a mixed approach of methodologies in the same study, such as linking with interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and observation.

Use of the Draw and Write technique with children has several advantages. Virtually, all school-aged children are familiar with producing drawings and writing about them;

therefore, it is a child-friendly and non-threatening method of collecting data with children (Bradding & Horstman, 1999). Asking children to draw a picture first and then asking them to talk about it put them into the role of the expert and they are given the message that their thoughts are valued (Rollins, 2005).

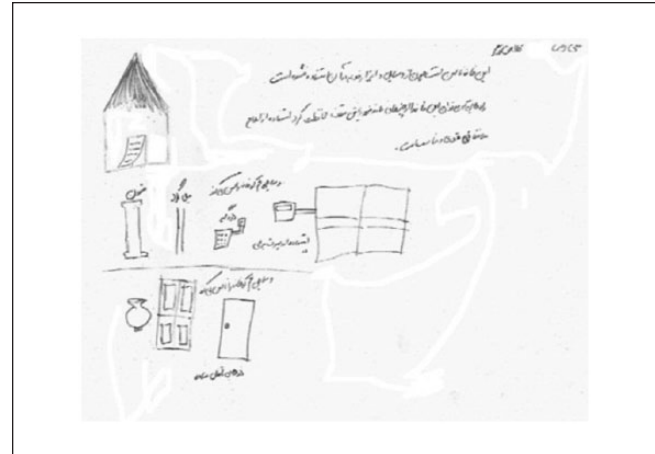
## Research Design

Being inspired by Scratchley's (2003) thesis, Draw and Write technique and conversational interviews were planned to be used for better results. However, after beginning to work with a small group of children, some problems were faced: the first problem was what the word "security" meant in Farsi (the language spoken in Iran). Moeen Farsi dictionary (Moeen, 2004) defines security as "immunity, safety, safe, health, protection, support, not to have any fear, fearlessness." So in the language spoken in Iran, the term "security" includes both safety and security. However, in ordinary conversation, it is used often with the meaning of safety. Therefore, when children were asked to describe a secure home, they would only use the concepts related to safety. The second problem was that in response to the technique of Draw and Write, children only pointed out the objective cases, and what they had in mind, and their thoughts remained unarticulated. The third problem was some children would deny their feelings of anxiety and fear. For example, "*No I am not afraid of anything; I know Karate*" or "*I am not worried at all.*"

To solve the problem, it was decided to use another technique alongside the first. The faces of a boy and a girl were drawn on separate pieces of paper, and children would be given different drawings according to their gender. Several speech bubbles were also drawn close to the face. Afterward, the children were asked to imagine that the boy or the girl drawn on the piece of paper was the same age as them, and to write down what would worry this child about his or her parents, brothers, and sisters; his or her home; or about himself or herself. The children were also asked to write about what ever could worry the child in the picture about the street, neighborhood, park, and the road from home to school on another piece of paper.

It was also decided not to use the word "security," and instead to mention concepts such as worry, upset, and discomfort, which are signs of insecurity; thus, the responses were not limited to security. Naming people and places in speech bubbles prevented the feeling of partiality in children and helped them to think more specifically about their worries.

Consequently, children who denied their anxieties because they did not trust the researcher, or they had the habit of repressing their feelings, consented to answer the questions. And while pretending to write about somebody else's worries and concerns, the children actually noted down some of their personal concerns: "*This boy is worried that his mother*



**Figure 1.** A Draw and Write sample of an insecure home.

*should love his brother and sister more than him*" or "*This girl is worried that her father should get sick because he works too hard.*" This technique was called Picture-Aided Questionnaire. This technique not only helped me to find out many factors affecting the sense of security in children, but also, due to its difference from the Draw and Write technique, it brought about some changes in the research method, and in this way, it appealed more to the participants.

Eventually, the research design turned out to be as follows:

1. Draw and Write tasks about how insecure homes and cities look like (see Figure 1).
2. Picture-Aided Questionnaires about the worries of girls or boys of participants' own age at home and in the city (see Figure 2)
3. Conversational interviews about concepts of security/insecurity, secure/insecure places, and children's reactions to feeling insecure

## Participants

One-hundred children, aged 7 to 14, took part in this research. These children were chosen from among those who went to the library of the cultural center of their neighborhood in Tehran. The proportion of boys to girls was almost equal (52 girls and 48 boys) and most of the participants were aged between 9 and 12 years.

Children were approached by the researcher who would describe the research and ask whether they were interested in taking part. If they were accompanied by their parents, their parents' consent would be asked for as well. The study was conducted in a place where they were feeling safe and secure. The researcher tried to respect the rights of the participants, ensure confidentiality, and gain their informed consent. As the process of consent to take part in the study must be voluntary, and if necessary, the researcher must facilitate





**Figure 2.** Picture-Aided Questionnaires.

non-participation in such a way that the child is protected (Horstman & Bradding, 2002), no child was forced to engage in the research even if the child's parents had the tendency for that. In any stage of the research process, the participants had the right to withdraw themselves. This happened when a few children did not like their interviews to be recorded and their will was appreciated.

The study was not carried out in schools because the researcher did not want the students to give unreal answers under the influence of the school environment and their teachers. Children were first introduced to the process of the research in the familiar atmosphere of their neighborhood and library and then they could take part in the research if they wanted to.

Throughout the research, some enthusiastic participants also were benefited from who helped as assistants to persuade other children into participating in the research. This proved to be a useful tactic, because children would trust more easily their peer group, and consequently, they rarely denied their feelings or concealed the reality. Eventually, the children who participated were given some presents in appreciation of their contribution to the study and to leave them with a good memory.

## Validity and Reliability

Denzin and Lincoln (1989), Cohen and Manion (1989), and Verma and Mallick (1999) point out that it is important to test

and report the validity and reliability of the techniques used to become confident in the results. In this study, reliability was to be sure about the confidence in the data and validity to check whether the chosen categories reflected what children tried to tell us.

When planning the research, the differences of the context of Iran and the Western context—where my chosen methods were designed—were born in mind. The issues Iranian children have with self-expression and trust in a strange researcher were taken into consideration as these children are rarely asked about their views and experiences. By choosing Draw and Write, the researcher took good advantage of this technique to build rapport with the children and promote their participation in research (Sewell, 2011). In addition to that, considerable time was spent on piloting the data collection to find the most proper design for the study. This also helped in practicing applying the methods prior to going to the research field.

In terms of data collection in this study, conversational interviews, Picture-Aided Questionnaires, and Draw and Write assisted the researcher in representing the reality of children's sense of security from multiple child perspectives (alongside my perspective and interpretations). The purpose of using multiple data sources was to gain a richer and more comprehensive picture, adding to the credibility of findings. The multiple data sources assisted with consideration of socially desirable responses (Madill, Stratton, Gough, Hugh-Jones, & Lawton, 2001). The researcher believes the unstructured, flexible approach and variety of data collection methods utilized in this study enhanced the accuracy and truthfulness, and reduced the suggestibility of children's responses (Lambert, Glacken, & McCarron, 2013).

The balance of power between the participants and the researcher was taken notice of (Bradding & Horstman, 1999), and it was insisted that the children felt valued and gained confidence in expressing their concerns and feelings of security/insecurity. When working with children, constant reflection was done on the data to be "representative of children's voices and leading them to perceive *right* answers" (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999) was avoided.

In terms of data analysis, despite the considerable volume of drawings and comments completed by the respondents, verbal and visual content of all of them were carefully analyzed. Picture-Aided Questionnaires and interviews were also coded cautiously. To establish validity, two auditors were asked to check the categories chosen for classifying the concepts. One of them was a child psychologist and the other one a sociologist skilled in grounded theory-based studies.

## Findings

Family, insurance, police officers, and fire fighters in addition to rest and calmness resemble security to children. Earthquake, noise, fear, theft, and loneliness bring insecurity to their minds. Their own friends' or relatives' homes, library,

school, and cultural center are secure places to them. Urban spaces such as streets, parks, and playgrounds are regarded insecure places by children.

Family members and friends are reliable people whereas strangers, criminals, and indecent neighbors are unreliable people. Whereas people who do not treat children well worry children, God and angels, teachers, kind neighbors, and celebrities of children's TV shows are considered soothing people by children. Having fun and parties, in addition to receiving presents and shopping for toys and sweets, makes them calm. When feeling anxious, thoughts of friendship with God, becoming a powerful adult, and daydreaming about a hopeful future help them feel better.

Although home means "security" to children, they have the fear of natural and unnatural disasters plus environmental pollutions. Lack of enough space and risk of crimes were also mentioned as features of insecure homes. Children think caution and protective measures should be taken into consideration in the construction process of homes. Besides, there should be sufficient space for all inhabitants and the surrounding environment should be clean. Parents' lack of trust in children and lack of love and sincerity at home make children anxious. Children are concerned about their own and family members' future, for instance, their possible unemployment, illness, or death.

In insecure urban spaces, there exist harassment and crime, environmental pollution, and risk of natural disasters especially earthquakes. In the city, unsafe playgrounds, unfriendly urban spaces, lack of police presence in public spaces, and poor social networks of neighborhoods affect children's sense of security. They are worried about getting lost in urban spaces especially in unlit places and witnessing scenes of violence such as gangs' fights with knives. Children were particularly afraid of drug dealers and observing consumption of drugs by strangers in their neighborhoods.

Children's reactions to feeling insecure could be categorized in passive and active strategies:

- Passive strategy: *escape the insecure place/busy themselves with some other stuff/seek their parents/cry/do not sleep well/hide/ adapt themselves with the situation/do not talk about it to anybody/do not leave home/ cannot study well.*
- Active strategy: *ask parents for help or consult them/pray/think to find a solution/think about good stuff/ calm down.*

Most children believe they cannot play a role in making their city a secure place as *nobody trusts children/children are too young/children cannot do anything/it is the job of the government and the society/when adults are angry, they do not listen to children.*

However, some children think they can have a share in improving security of social spaces: *if parents trust children/by listening to adults and obeying the rules and respecting*

*other people's rights/by organizing a community group/by consulting social workers/by keeping the environment clean/by helping parents/by taking care of the younger ones.*

Overall, participants were not optimistic about the possibility of having a secure home and city as *there are always bad people/we have been raised as irresponsible people/we do not know how to solve our problems/the government is not doing a good job.*

They suggested that to make child-friendly spaces *government and people should trust children/awareness of the public and government should be raised by the media/good laws and effective action of police is needed/unemployment and financial problems should be solved/offenders and criminals should be punished.*

## Discussion

Children, like adults, are worried about their economic security, health security, environmental security, and most important of all, their individual security. These issues are fractions of human security. Human security specifies integrity of security to human development and can be mainly associated with human well-being, which opens the door to a bottom-up knowledge of security (Alkire, 2003). Human security is generally defined as freedom from fear and freedom from want. Categories of human security are economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political.

The sense of economic security, health security, and environmental security in a child all depend on his or her family. Naturally, if a family is not in an established economic condition, they will not be living in a decent neighborhood and an environmentally secure place. In addition, parents' health will be at risk because of working too much to earn economical security. Thus, the feeling of insecurity will increase in children because they can feel their total dependence on their parents. This is mainly due to the fact that adults always have the right to ask the social welfare organizations for help, but children feel themselves quite helpless, for example, *"If mummy and daddy are not there, nobody else will think of us."*

In the city, children feel less individually secure because they are more exposed to kidnapping and child harassment. Moreover, they can get lost more easily in urban spaces, because they are not yet familiar with the city they are living in.

The general phenomenon observed was a feeling of anxiety accompanied with helplessness among children, which was modified at certain times of the year (such as at the time of school vacation) or intensified at certain other times (such as when watching horror movies), but was constantly present. Children adopt two different strategies when facing the feeling of anxiety. Of course, not necessarily did children choose the same strategy all the time; they might change their strategy depending on the circumstances.

The first strategy is the passive reaction; it is a way to ask for security whereby children choose to escape the situation or take refuge in their parents because of feeling too anxious. Moreover, under the influence of certain beliefs, they believe themselves to be helpless. In addition, they might try to adapt themselves to the insecure conditions, but to do so, they give up their wishes, such as the wish to go out and meet and play with their friends. In order not to arouse tension at home, children refuse to talk about their wishes to their parents. Because they feel powerless, children need to be supported by an extremely powerful authority, and that is why they, in this case, support any drastic measures taken for social control or against criminals. In this strategy, they try to ignore their unpleasant feeling of anxiety and thus keep themselves busy with toys and deny any feelings of worry.

Consequently, the first strategy leaves children with a false sense of security, which is very fragile and very much dependent on the circumstances. Children who choose this strategy suffer from interdependence on their family because they take refuge in the family as soon as they face a problem. They are not able to trust people or institution in the society; they also tend to run away from any social contact. When using this strategy, children get aggressive because they repress their wishes, and get depressed because they deny their true feelings. They also grow an unhealthy desire for power and begin following signs of power such as wishing to become sports champions or very wealthy people. To escape the troubles, they also start daydreaming, begin shopping, and spend a lot especially on sweets and toys.

The second strategy used by children when feeling insecure is an active one and is called creating security. In this strategy, children try to achieve calmness; they search for a solution to the problem, consult adults, and attempt to secure their surroundings. In this regard, children try their best, and in case they do not succeed, they ask adults for help. They feel responsible for themselves and their own security and do not exclusively hold adults responsible for creating security.

Consequences of this strategy are a feeling of autonomous security; a sense of security, which comes from within and does not depend on the outside conditions; a feeling of satisfaction with life and with what one already possesses and also with childhood; the ability to manage the feelings of fear and helplessness; and holding an optimistic prospect of the future and interest in having social contacts.

Whether children should choose the first or the second strategy depends on the interfering conditions: the way adults interact with children, that is, whether children are thought of as a human becoming or whether, on the contrary, they are given enough importance and respect as a human being who can be effective for his or her surroundings. Children aged 8 to 10 tend more to ask for security rather than creating it; children between 10 and 12 years of age mostly try to create security, but when they reach adolescence, and the feeling of insecurity increases, they try again to ask for security. Before they reach the age of 12 to 14, girls tend more to create

security. However, by adolescence, the process changes to the opposite and they start asking for security.

Children who are self-confident enough and have enjoyed enough security and trust at home tend more to create security. If they have a sense of belonging to their neighborhood, they do not think it impossible to make the place secure. They try to convince adults and local authorities to consider children in making the space secure. On the contrary, children who do not have any sense of belonging to their space of residence, even if they are given a more secure place to live in, they cannot believe that they could play an effective role in creating security.

## Conclusion

Most Iranian middle-class children are fed and dressed well, enjoy good quality education, and are bought whatever they desire. They seem happy and protected. However, findings of this study have identified their concerns and anxieties. The fact that their sense of security is not at a satisfactory level most of the time shows that some of their other needs are not satisfied. These include their rights to be respected, heard, and safeguarded well. These cannot be provided only by parents so child-friendly policies should be made to improve the well-being of children and state's support for parents in Iran.

This research has demonstrated children's competence in realizing and expressing the factors affecting their sense of security. Children's capabilities should be trusted in designing their well-being indicators and researchers should engage them in further areas of study. Also, children's voices should be heard when making policies regarding them and designing social spaces. To make child-friendly places, children's views should be taken seriously.

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## Notes

1. [http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/online/inge\\_origins.pdf](http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/online/inge_origins.pdf)
2. <http://psychology.about.com/od/loveandattraction/>

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