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Analyzing the Role of Education and Upbringing in Reducing the Value Gap and Promoting the New Generation's Cultural Perception of Hijab in the Digital Age in Lamerd County

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to analyze the role of education and upbringing in reducing the value gap and enhancing the cultural perception of hijab among the new generation in the digital era in Lamerd County. The research was conducted using an exploratory mixed-methods (qualitative-quantitative) approach.

Methods: The study population consisted of 15 female teachers and principals from junior and senior high schools in Lamerd County, selected through purposive sampling. In the quantitative phase, data were collected using a questionnaire, while in the qualitative phase, data were gathered through seven semi-structured interview questions and analyzed using exploratory thematic analysis.

Results: The quantitative findings indicated that from the participants' perspective, family and upbringing are the most critical factors in shaping cultural attitudes toward hijab, and media and cyberspace also exert a significant influence on altering the new generation's attitudes and deepening the intergenerational value gap. Conversely, the effectiveness of formal education was not evaluated as optimal, indicating a gap between current educational methods and the cultural needs of the new generation. The qualitative data analysis led to the extraction of seven main themes: cultural and social transformations, the redefining role of cyberspace, rethinking the educational system, the family as the primary context for value transmission, effective education for the conscious acceptance of hijab, pathology of current cultural programs, and strategies to reduce the value gap.

Conclusions: The integrated findings demonstrated that enhancing the cultural perception of hijab requires synergy among the family, the educational system, and the media, as well as a transition from prescriptive education to dialogue-oriented, persuasive, participatory, and media literacy-based approaches.

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Introduction

With the expanding use of information and communication technologies (ICT), the world is undergoing a major transformation commonly referred to as the "information age." Today, ICT exerts such a powerful influence across diverse spheres of human life that it can undoubtedly be considered a symbol of a new civilization, or the emergence of a new civilizational wave (Escouares, Talbot, Harris, Wilson, Joshua, & Barn, 2021). Rapid developments in ICT, the spread of the internet, the growth of social networking platforms, interactive media, and the increasing application of artificial intelligence over the past two decades have fundamentally reshaped communication structures, socialization patterns, and mechanisms for transmitting cultural values. In the digital era, socialization is no longer confined to traditional institutions such as the family, school, religious organizations, and official media. Rather, the new generation is continuously exposed to a broad stream of information, values, norms, lifestyles, and identity models disseminated and reproduced through social media, transnational media, content creators, influencers, and algorithm-driven intelligent systems. Consequently, cultural value transmission has shifted from a linear, one-way process to a networked, interactive, and multi-source process—one that, while creating new learning opportunities, also introduces new challenges related to value transmission, cultural identity preservation, and the continuity of socialization (Castells, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

From the perspective of network society theory, Castells (2021) argues that human identity in the digital era is shaped less by formal institutions and more within communication networks and transnational interactions. As a result, individuals are simultaneously confronted with diverse—and sometimes conflicting—value systems; through comparison, selection, and reinterpretation, they reconstruct their cultural identity. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2023) likewise indicates that digital technologies not only alter learning methods but also transform socialization processes, identity formation, and the transmission of cultural values. Accordingly, educational systems must revise their pedagogical and educational approaches in order to maintain cultural cohesion and strengthen the cultural capital of the new generation.

One of the most salient consequences of these transformations is the emergence of a value gap between the new generation and previous generations. A value gap refers to differences in attitudes, interpretations, prioritizations, and lived experiences of cultural values across

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generations. This gap does not necessarily imply a complete rupture from cultural values; rather, it reflects changes in socialization patterns and shifts in identity-forming resources in the digital era. Today's adolescents and youth, in addition to values transmitted through family and school, encounter diverse daily narratives about identity, personal freedom, lifestyle, cultural consumption, and social values within cyberspace. This continuous exposure creates conditions for comparison, reflection, and redefinition of certain cultural values; thus, the formation of cultural attitudes moves from a one-way value transmission model toward an interactive process grounded in conscious choice and/or value reinterpretation (Foroutan, 2020; Bayat & Hodges, 2022).

In sociological literature, intergenerational conflict is defined as differences among generations in values, attitudes, beliefs, lifestyles, and ways of interpreting reality. Such differences become more pronounced when societies experience rapid cultural change, expansion of communication technologies, proliferation of new media, and transformations in value systems. Under these conditions, socialization is no longer limited to family, school, and other formal institutions; social media, cyberspace, peer groups, and global cultural flows play a fundamental role in shaping the attitudes and identity of the new generation. Consequently, young people—drawing on diverse knowledge resources—may develop different understandings of cultural concepts such as hijab, and these differences can contribute to the formation of a value gap or intergenerational conflict in the domain of social values and norms (Inglehart, 2021).

Contemporary studies also suggest that the meaning of hijab in women's everyday experience is neither fixed nor uniform; rather, it is continuously reproduced and redefined through interactions among individual experiences, family conditions, cultural capital, educational environments, occupational positions, social relationships, and the media sphere. Using perspectives associated with Bourdieu, Foucault, and Butler, Fattahzadeh (2020) showed that hijab, in addition to being a social and religious norm, can be interpreted as a form of "embodied ethical practice," meaning that women construct different meanings for hijab in interaction with power structures, culture, and everyday experiences, and these meanings vary across social contexts.

One arena in which the effects of this value gap have become particularly visible is cultural attitudes and perceptions toward hijab. In Iranian society, hijab is not merely an outward form of dress; it is a cultural, religious, identity-based, and social phenomenon tied to the value system,

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collective identity, cultural capital, and social cohesion. Therefore, attitudes toward hijab are not solely derived from individual beliefs; they are shaped by socialization processes, education, family, peer groups, cultural capital, media, and lived experiences. With the growth of digital media and social networking platforms, the new generation is exposed to diverse models of dress, identity, and lifestyle—models that often present alternative understandings of hijab. Moreover, social media algorithms, by continuously recommending similar content, can reinforce or shift users' attitudes and thereby play a meaningful role in shaping their cultural perceptions. Under these conditions, the new generation's attitudes toward hijab cannot be explained solely through traditional variables; instead, they should be understood as the outcome of a complex interaction among family, education, media, and digital living.

Empirical findings further support this view. Foroutan (2020) reported that attitudes toward hijab are influenced by factors such as age, education, cultural capital, and the extent of new media use; the younger generation—particularly those with greater engagement in cyberspace—tends to offer interpretations of hijab that differ from those of previous generations. Similarly, Bayat and Hodges (2022) found that many young women and girls redefine the meaning of hijab within the context of lived experience, personal identity, and media interactions. These findings indicate that shifts in attitudes toward hijab emerge from the interaction of cultural transformation, changing socialization patterns, and the expansion of digital life.

In this context, education and upbringing remain among the most important tools for transmitting cultural values; however, their function and mode of operation have changed compared to the past. In the digital era, education can no longer rely primarily on prescriptive transmission of values; rather, it should adopt dialogue-based, participatory, problem-centered approaches that emphasize critical thinking and media literacy in order to facilitate understanding, analysis, evaluation, and internalization of cultural values (UNESCO, 2023; Salimi & Rahimi-Rad, 2024). From this perspective, education shifts from mere knowledge transmission toward empowering the new generation to critically analyze cultural messages and make responsible value choices.

In the specific domain of hijab, Zolfaghari, Sattari, and Benhan Qomi (1402) argue that internalization of this value is more likely when education moves beyond behavioral recommendations and instead explains the philosophy, individual and social functions, identity dimensions, and cultural implications of hijab for learners. Therefore, educational approaches

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grounded in cognitive persuasion, constructive dialogue, and active participation have greater potential than prescriptive approaches for reducing the value gap and strengthening the cultural perception of the new generation.

Despite the expansion of hijab-related research, a review of the literature suggests that many studies have focused primarily on sociological, psychological, legal, or political dimensions of the topic. The role of education and upbringing in reducing the value gap and enhancing the new generation's cultural perception of hijab—especially within the digital-era context—has been less frequently investigated in an integrated manner. Moreover, much of the existing research has been conducted in major metropolitan areas, and there is limited scientific evidence from southern regions of the country, including Lamerd County. Yet the cultural, religious, social, and economic characteristics of Lamerd, together with industrial development, increased access to digital media, and lifestyle changes, may significantly influence socialization processes and the new generation's attitudes toward cultural values.

Accordingly, the existing gap in the research literature highlights the need for a study that can explain the role of education and upbringing in reducing the value gap and improving the new generation's cultural perception of hijab, taking into account the requirements of the digital era and the local characteristics of Lamerd County. Therefore, the central problem addressed in the present study is as follows: How can education and upbringing—by employing modern educational approaches that are dialogue-oriented, participatory, and grounded in media literacy—help reduce the value gap and enhance the cultural perception of hijab among the new generation in Lamerd County? Answering this question, beyond contributing to theoretical development in the field of cultural education, may provide scientific and practical recommendations for educational policymakers, school administrators, families, and cultural institutions in designing educational programs aligned with the needs of the digital generation.

Socialization theory (Berger & Luckmann; Bourdieu). Berger and Luckmann (1966) conceptualize socialization as a two-stage process: primary socialization within the family and secondary socialization through social institutions such as education and media, whereby social reality becomes internalized as part of individuals' subjective world. Complementarily, Bourdieu (1984) introduces the concept of habitus, suggesting that socialization is not merely a conscious transmission of values but an embodied, institutionalized process that sediments in mind and body.

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Habitus forms in the family but is reproduced and/or transformed in social fields such as school, media, and cyberspace. Recent scholarship also suggests that in the digital era, socialization has become multi-centered, with media increasingly competing with the family (Couldry & Hepp, 2020).

Agency theory (Giddens; Bourdieu). Agency refers to actors' capacity to choose, decide, and influence social structures. In structuration theory, Giddens (1984) argues that individuals are neither purely determined by structures nor entirely free; rather, they are simultaneously shaped by and producers of structure. Bourdieu (1990) interprets agency within the dynamics of habitus and field, emphasizing the role of cultural, social, and economic capital while acknowledging possibilities for change and reinterpretation. Recent studies indicate that women's agency in areas such as dress and cultural identity—especially in transitional societies—has increased and is strengthened by reflexivity and media access (Abu-Lughod, 2021; Mahmoud, 2020).

Habermas's theory of communicative action. Habermas (1987) contrasts communicative rationality with instrumental rationality and contends that social action becomes rational when grounded in mutual understanding and "domination-free" dialogue. He distinguishes between the lifeworld (values, culture, everyday communication) and the system (economic and political structures), arguing that conflict arises when the system colonizes the lifeworld. Recent research suggests intergenerational dialogue on cultural issues is more effective when grounded in Habermasian principles such as mutual respect, active listening, and free argumentation (Riyes, 2021).

Media, globalization, and hijab (2020–2025). Contemporary work shows that media and globalization play decisive roles in redefining cultural and religious identities; in newer communication theories, media is not merely a channel of information transfer but a "space of meaning production" (Couldry & Hepp, 2020). Regarding hijab, research suggests that in globalization contexts its meanings become less fixed and more plural, and social media facilitates cultural comparison and reflexivity about dress norms and identity (Geli, 2022). Relatedly, analyses of "liquid modernity" emphasize that identities are continuously reconstructed; within such a context, hijab can simultaneously function as a marker of religiosity, cultural identity, personal choice, and/or social representation (Bauman, 2021).

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Material and Methods

The present study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the factors influencing cultural attitudes toward hijab and the intergenerational value gap in Lamerd County. The study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. In the quantitative phase, data were collected to identify the general pattern of participants' attitudes toward the different dimensions of the subject. Subsequently, qualitative data were analyzed to provide a deeper explanation of the quantitative findings and to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and recommendations.

The integration of the two phases took place during the final interpretation stage. This integration made it possible to examine the research problem from both a numerical and an interpretive perspective and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting cultural perceptions of hijab, the role of formal education and family upbringing, the influence of media and cyberspace, and the intergenerational value gap.

Based on the sequence described in the present study—namely, the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the analysis of qualitative data—the design may more precisely be described as an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The term "exploratory mixed-methods design" is commonly used when the qualitative phase precedes the quantitative phase. If the study is intended to be reported as exploratory, the order and rationale of the phases should be clarified in the final manuscript.

Participants and Sampling

The study population consisted of female teachers and female administrators working in first- and second-cycle secondary schools in Lamerd County. A total of 15 participants were selected through purposive sampling. The participants were selected because of their direct professional experience with adolescents and their familiarity with educational processes, family-school interactions, cultural issues, and the changing attitudes of the younger generation.

Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study sought information-rich participants who could provide informed perspectives on the role of education, family upbringing, formal schooling, media, and cyberspace in shaping cultural attitudes toward hijab. The participants' professional positions also enabled them to reflect on the practical challenges of

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transmitting cultural values and addressing value differences among generations within the school context.

Data-Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of two sections.

The first section included 25 closed-ended items organized into five conceptual dimensions:

The role of formal education

The role of family and upbringing

The influence of media and cyberspace

The intergenerational value gap

Cultural perceptions of hijab

The items were measured using a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” The use of a four-point scale eliminated a neutral midpoint and encouraged participants to express a clearer position regarding each statement. The quantitative section was designed to identify participants’ perceptions of the relative importance and influence of educational, familial, media-related, and cultural factors associated with attitudes toward hijab.

The second section consisted of seven open-ended questions. These questions were designed to elicit participants’ experiences, interpretations, observations, and recommendations concerning the transmission of cultural values in the digital era. The qualitative questions addressed issues such as the role of the family and school, the influence of social media and cyberspace, changes in the attitudes of the younger generation, the limitations of existing cultural and educational programs, and possible strategies for reducing the intergenerational value gap and improving cultural understanding of hijab.

Data-Collection Procedure

After identifying eligible participants, the researcher provided them with information about the purpose and general procedure of the study. The questionnaire was then administered to the selected participants. Participants were asked to respond to the closed-ended items according to their professional experiences and personal observations of students and school-related cultural processes.

Following the completion of the quantitative section, participants responded to the seven open-ended questions. The qualitative responses provided an opportunity for participants to elaborate

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on the issues addressed in the questionnaire and to identify aspects that could not be adequately captured through fixed-response items. The collection of qualitative data therefore served to clarify and contextualize the quantitative patterns.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequencies, percentages, and, where appropriate, measures of central tendency were used to summarize participants' responses across the five dimensions of the questionnaire. The descriptive analysis was intended to identify the dominant patterns in participants' perceptions rather than to test causal relationships or generalize the findings to a larger population.

The qualitative data were analyzed using exploratory thematic analysis. First, the responses to the open-ended questions were reviewed repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. Next, meaningful statements and relevant units of text were identified and assigned initial codes. Similar codes were then compared, grouped, and organized into broader categories. Finally, the categories were examined to identify recurrent patterns and overarching themes related to cultural change, family and educational socialization, media influence, cultural perceptions of hijab, and strategies for reducing the intergenerational value gap.

In the final stage, the quantitative and qualitative findings were compared and integrated. Convergent findings were used to reinforce the interpretation of the results, while divergent or complementary findings were examined to provide a more nuanced understanding of the research problem. Accordingly, the quantitative results presented the general pattern of participants' attitudes, whereas the qualitative findings explained the meanings, experiences, and contextual factors underlying those attitudes.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the way in which the collected information would be used. The confidentiality of participants' responses was maintained, and the findings were reported in an aggregated form without identifying individual participants. Participants were also free to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study.

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Results

Quantitative Findings

The demographic analysis of the participants indicated that they were female, held either Bachelor's or Master's degrees, and engaged with cyberspace for approximately two to four hours daily. These demographic characteristics suggest that while the respondents possess relatively stable social and familial experiences, their consistent interaction with digital media exposes them to ongoing cultural transformations and modern communication patterns. Consequently, their responses reflect the interaction between traditional practices and the cultural dynamics of the digital era.

Dimension 1: The Role of Formal Education

The quantitative responses indicated that the participants evaluated the effectiveness of formal education as conditional. While they agreed that school curriculum content can increase cultural awareness and that educational dialogues play a constructive role, they observed that current curricula fail to explain the concept of hijab beyond a superficial, outward requirement. Furthermore, they indicated that current educational methods do not sufficiently align with the needs of the younger generation. Conversely, the implementation of modern pedagogical methods was identified as an effective factor in fostering positive attitudes toward hijab. This finding suggests that, from the participants' perspective, the primary challenge in educating youth about hijab lies not in the core message itself, but in the methods of transmission and their alignment with the contemporary needs of the younger generation.

Dimension 2: The Role of Family and Upbringing

In this dimension, almost all items received strong agreement. The participants identified the family as the primary institution of cultural socialization, asserting that parental behavior—especially dialogue-based interactions—exerts a decisive influence on shaping attitudes toward hijab. Additionally, they noted that family upbringing can moderate the potential negative influences of certain cyberspace content. This finding indicates that the family continues to be perceived as the most vital agent for transmitting cultural values, although families themselves require empowerment and education to perform this role effectively.

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Dimension 3: The Influence of Media and Cyberspace

Within this dimension, the participants confirmed the broad impact of cyberspace on the younger generation's attitudes toward hijab. From their perspective, social networking platforms contribute to the intergenerational value gap, and continuous exposure to diverse cultural representations leads to shifts in youth attitudes. However, the responses also indicated that digital media is not viewed solely as a threat; rather, if appropriate cultural content is produced, digital platforms can serve as opportunities for the indirect education of cultural values. This finding demonstrates a dual perspective on modern media among the participants.

Dimension 4: The Intergenerational Value Gap

The findings indicated that the participants acknowledge differences in how different generations perceive the concept of hijab. However, they did not attribute these differences solely to shifting social conditions. They asserted that appropriate cultural education, intergenerational dialogue, and the use of persuasive approaches are the most effective strategies for narrowing this value gap. Thus, from the participants' perspective, the intergenerational gap is a manageable phenomenon that can be reduced through targeted interaction and education.

Dimension 5: Cultural Perception of Hijab

The findings in this dimension showed that the participants view hijab as an integral part of the society's cultural identity and believe that understanding its underlying philosophy and cultural functions plays a critical role in its conscious acceptance. Furthermore, they evaluated cultural understanding as more important than legal enforcement. Nonetheless, they maintained a more cautious perspective regarding the role of media literacy in enhancing cultural understanding; their responses suggested that increasing media literacy alone is insufficient to alter attitudes and must be accompanied by other educational and cultural factors.

Qualitative Findings

A thematic analysis of the open-ended responses revealed that the participants' experiences are organized around several core themes:

1. **Cultural shifts and lifestyle changes** were identified as the primary drivers of the value gap. The participants highlighted the growing influence of peers, declining parental supervision, and the popularity of new lifestyles depicted in cyberspace as major factors changing the younger generation's attitudes toward hijab.

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2. **Cyberspace** was described as a platform that fosters new inquiries and redefines attitudes toward hijab. The widespread exposure to diverse global lifestyles, combined with a lack of convincing answers to the questions raised by youth, has contributed to shifting perceptions of hijab.

3. **Within the educational system**, the participants emphasized the necessity of creating spaces for open dialogue, introducing successful veiled role models, and utilizing engaging teaching methods, suggesting that effective education must be interactive and persuasive.

4. **The family** was reinforced as the primary agent of value transmission. The participants emphasized the modeling role of parents—particularly mothers—and the importance of respectful communication within the household.

5. **The primary weaknesses of current cultural programs** were identified as the dominance of prescriptive and punitive approaches, a disregard for the inquiries of the new generation, and the exclusion of youth from the design and planning of these programs.

Thematic Analysis Table

The table below presents the main themes, sub-themes, and initial codes extracted from the qualitative phase of the study.

Table 1. Main Themes, Sub-themes, and Initial Codes Extracted from the Interviews

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Initial Codes	Illustrative Participant Quote
Cultural and Social Transformations Influencing Attitudes Toward Hijab	Changes in the lifestyle and values of the new generation	Shifting lifestyles, increasing individualism, changing priorities, freedom of choice, personal choice of hijab, shifting cultural identity	*"The new generation views hijab more as a personal choice."*
	Cultural globalization	Familiarity with global cultures, expansion of communications, diversity of values, changing beauty standards	*"The new generation has been exposed to diverse cultures around the world."*
	Intergenerational gap	Lack of effective dialogue, differences in lived experiences, differing agents of socialization, value distance	*"The lack of empathetic dialogue has widened the intergenerational gap."*

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Cyberspace as a Factor Redefining Attitudes Toward Hijab	Diversity of information and cultural models	Free access to information, observing different lifestyles, variety in clothing patterns, cultural comparison	*"Cyberspace displays a wide variety of lifestyles."*
	Normalization of new patterns	Normalization of non-hijab dress, media advertisements, influencer influence, shifting social norms	*"Cyberspace has normalized boundaries that used to be red lines for hijab."*
	Increasing inquisitiveness	Generating questions, critical perspective, reflexivity, declining acceptance of traditional instructions	*"Cyberspace has generated new questions about hijab."*
Rethinking the Role of the Educational System	Moving away from prescriptive education	Avoiding coercion, persuasive education, participatory education, active learning	*"Education should not consist merely of lecturing and advising."*
	Strengthening dialogue	Creating spaces for questions, addressing ambiguities, open-discussion forums, teacher-student interaction	*"Schools must establish environments for free dialogue."*
	Teaching the philosophy of hijab	The 'why' of hijab, philosophy of hijab, social functions, logical explanations	*"The new generation needs to understand the philosophy of hijab."*
The Family as the Primary Context for Value Transmission	Parental role modeling	Parental behavior, the mother's role, practical role model, indirect transmission of values	*"Parental behavior is far more effective than lecturing."*
	Empathetic dialogue	Respecting the child, answering questions, emotional connection, avoiding coercion	*"Families must engage in respectful and empathetic dialogue."*
Effective Education for the Conscious Acceptance of Hijab	Engaging education	Storytelling, art, films, media, podcasts, theater	*"Using art and media makes educational content much more engaging."*
	Experiential learning	Research projects, workshops, field investigations, collaborative activities	*"Research projects and educational workshops are more effective."*
	Introducing successful role models	Successful veiled women, scientific figures, social role models	*"Introducing successful veiled women can have a powerful impact."*
Pathology of Current Cultural Programs	Dominance of the prescriptive approach	Coercion, emphasis on rules, lecturing, punishment	*"Programs are mostly directive and top-down in nature."*

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	Incompatibility with the new generation	Outdated content, inappropriate language, ignoring audience needs, lack of updates	*"Programs are not aligned with the needs of the younger generation."*
	Weakness in interaction	Rejecting criticism, lack of feedback, ignoring inquiries	*"The questions of young people are left unanswered."*
Strategies to Reduce the Value Gap	Dialogue-oriented education	Intergenerational dialogue, debate, critical thinking, respecting differences	*"Open dialogue can reduce the value gap."*
	Utilizing modern media	Social networks, multimedia content, podcasts, art, gamification	*"The capabilities of modern media should be utilized."*
	Youth participation	Needs assessment, participation in program design, content creation by youth, collaborative decision-making	*"Young people themselves should play a role in designing the programs."*

Analysis of Table 1. Main Themes, Sub-themes, and Initial Codes Extracted from the Interviews

The findings derived from the exploratory thematic analysis showed that the lived experiences of the participants regarding hijab and the intergenerational value gap can be explained through seven main themes, twenty sub-themes, and a set of initial codes. This conceptual structure indicates that attitudes toward hijab are not a one-dimensional phenomenon; rather, they are shaped through the simultaneous interaction of cultural, social, media-related, educational, and familial factors.

The first main theme, "Cultural and social transformations influencing attitudes toward hijab," consisted of three sub-themes: changes in the lifestyle and values of the new generation, cultural globalization, and the intergenerational gap. Data analysis showed that the participants considered changes in lifestyle, increasing individualism, the expansion of freedom of choice, and changes in the sources of socialization to be the most important contexts underlying the transformation of the younger generation's attitudes toward hijab. In their view, the expansion of global communication and continuous exposure to diverse cultural patterns have led to the redefinition of the value system of the new generation compared with previous generations. Therefore, the existing value gap cannot be interpreted merely as the result of changing personal attitudes; rather, it reflects broader cultural and social transformations that have affected society in recent years.

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The second main theme was “Cyberspace as a factor in redefining attitudes toward hijab.” The findings indicated that modern media, in addition to providing broad access to information, have created conditions for cultural comparison, the emergence of critical attitudes, and the reconsideration of traditional values. Participants believed that cyberspace has, on the one hand, enhanced awareness and increased young people’s power of choice and, on the other hand, influenced their attitudes toward hijab through the normalization of certain dress patterns, the representation of different lifestyles, and the influence of media actors. This finding suggests that modern media function not merely as tools for information transmission, but also as influential agents in the reproduction of cultural norms and values.

Within the theme “Rethinking the role of the educational system,” participants emphasized the need to shift the paradigm of hijab education from prescriptive approaches toward persuasive, interactive, and dialogue-based forms of education. According to the data, education can lead to the internalization of cultural values only when it provides students with opportunities for inquiry, critical thinking, and understanding the philosophy of hijab. Thus, the effectiveness of the educational system depends less on the direct transfer of concepts and more on the quality of interaction between teacher and learner and on the system’s capacity to respond to the needs of the younger generation.

The fourth theme, “The family as the most important context for value transmission,” highlights the central position of the family in the process of cultural socialization. Analysis of the interviews showed that the participants regarded parental role modeling, particularly that of mothers, together with the quality of emotional relationships and empathetic dialogue, as the most important factors in transmitting values related to hijab. From their perspective, value transmission becomes effective when it is based on interaction, mutual respect, and persuasion rather than coercion and control.

The next theme, “Effective education for the conscious acceptance of hijab,” demonstrates that, in the participants’ view, traditional teaching methods no longer meet the needs of the younger generation. The use of artistic tools, digital media, storytelling, research projects, experience-based learning, and the introduction of successful role models were identified as the most important strategies for enhancing the younger generation’s cultural understanding of hijab. This finding

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indicates that participants considered active and experience-based learning to be more effective than one-way instructional approaches.

The sixth theme, "Pathology of existing cultural programs," indicates that the major challenges of current programs include the dominance of prescriptive approaches, their distance from the real needs of the younger generation, weaknesses in updating content, and the lack of two-way interaction with audiences. This finding suggests that a significant part of the inefficiency of current cultural programs does not stem from the substance of the content itself, but rather from the mode of presentation and the inability to establish effective communication with the audience. Finally, the theme "Strategies for reducing the value gap" shows that participants emphasized dialogue-oriented education, the use of modern media, and the active participation of young people in the design and implementation of cultural programs. From their perspective, reducing the value gap becomes possible when the younger generation is transformed from a passive audience into an active agent in the production and reproduction of cultural values.

Table 2. Process of Exploratory Thematic Analysis

Analysis Stage	Output
Meaning units	Participants' statements and sentences
Open coding	65 initial codes
Code integration	20 sub-themes
Final categorization	7 main themes
Core theme	Strengthening the conscious acceptance of hijab through reconstructing the interaction among family, the educational system, and media within the context of cultural transformations and reducing the intergenerational value gap

Analysis of Table 2. Process of Exploratory Thematic Analysis

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the qualitative data analysis was conducted through a systematic, step-by-step process. In the first stage, participants' responses were broken down into smaller meaning units and organized into initial codes. These codes represented recurring and meaningful concepts within the lived experiences of the participants. In the next stage, codes with conceptual overlap were merged and organized into sub-themes. Finally, the sub-themes were classified into seven main themes based on their conceptual commonalities and internal relationships.

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This analytical process demonstrates that the extracted themes were not merely the researcher's subjective inferences; rather, they emerged directly from the empirical data and were grounded in the similarities and differences found in the participants' narratives. Therefore, the resulting conceptual structure provides a relatively comprehensive representation of the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the factors influencing attitudes toward hijab.

An examination of the relationships among the themes also showed that all of them were organized around a central concept: the conscious acceptance of hijab as the product of interaction among cultural transformations, modern media, the family, and the educational system. Thus, none of these factors alone can adequately explain the attitudes of the younger generation; they acquire meaning only through their interaction with one another.

Final Conceptual Model of the Study

Narrative Version of the Final Conceptual Model: The conceptual model extracted from the thematic analysis indicates that cultural and social transformations function as the contextual conditions that first influence changes in the younger generation's attitudes toward hijab. These transformations, together with the expansion of cyberspace and increased exposure to diverse cultures, have created the conditions for the redefinition of values and the emergence of an intergenerational value gap.

Within this process, cyberspace plays a key mediating role by representing different lifestyles and accelerating the process of value reconsideration. At the same time, the family and the educational system, as the two main institutions of socialization, function as moderating forces within this process. The findings suggest that the more these two institutions employ persuasive, interactive, and dialogue-based approaches, the greater the likelihood that cultural values will be internalized and that hijab will be consciously accepted.

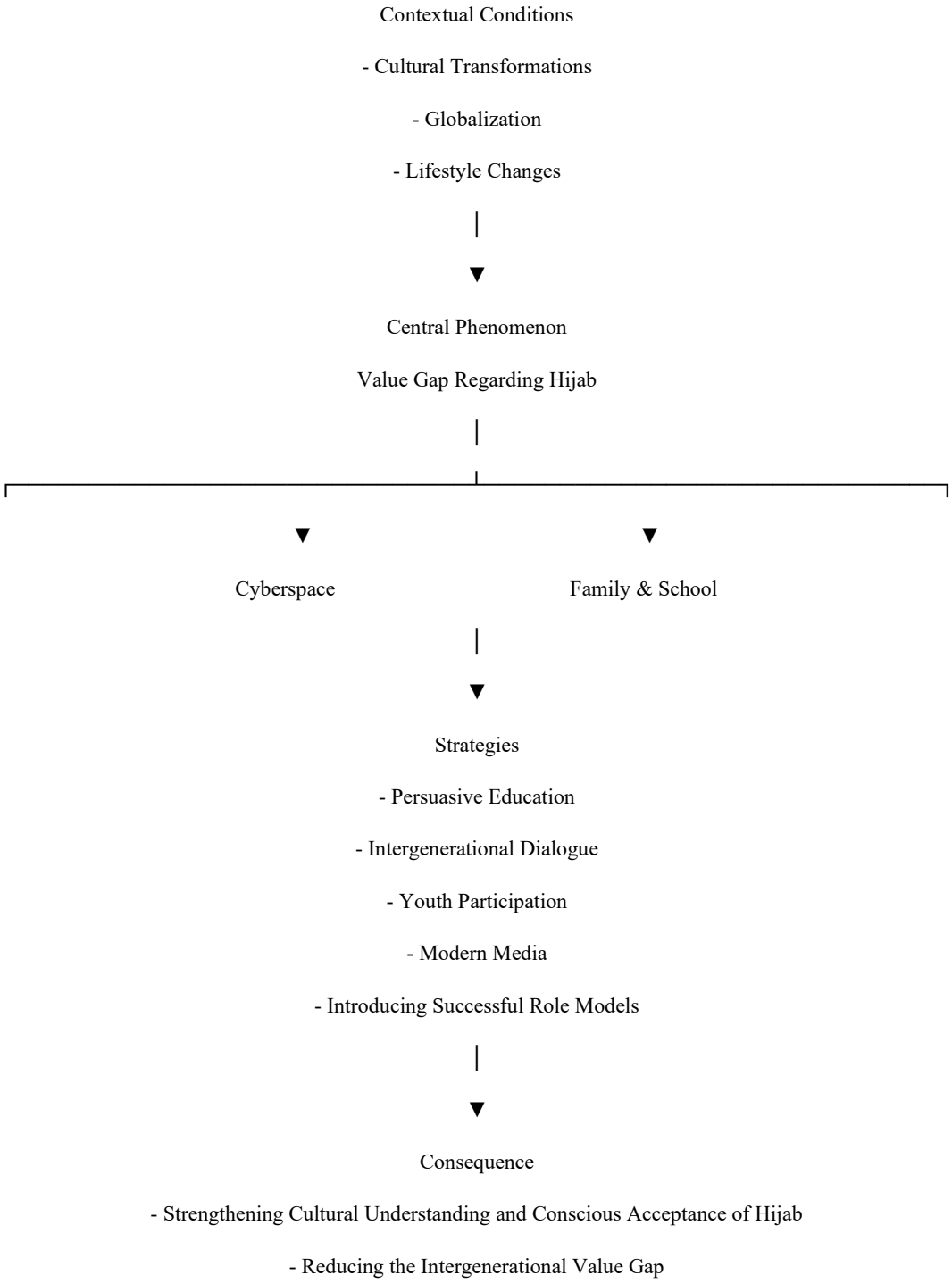
Conversely, the continuation of prescriptive and one-way approaches not only fails to reduce the value gap but may also contribute to deepening the distance between generations. Overall, the final model of the study demonstrates that the conscious acceptance of hijab is a social, cultural, and interactive process that emerges through the synergy of the family, the educational system, media, and the broader cultural context of society.

Accordingly, cultural policymaking in the field of hijab should move away from one-dimensional approaches and instead focus on the development of intergenerational dialogue, participatory

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education, enhanced media literacy, and the active involvement of young people in cultural processes.

Final Conceptual Model



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The conceptual model derived from the thematic analysis demonstrates that socio-cultural transformations, as contextual conditions, constitute the primary factors influencing the shift in the new generation's attitude toward the hijab. These transformations, driven by the expansion of cyberspace and increased exposure to diverse cultures, have paved the way for the redefinition of values and the emergence of an intergenerational value gap. In this context, cyberspace plays a crucial mediating role, accelerating the process of value reflexivity by representing various lifestyles. Consequently, the family and the educational system, as the two primary institutions of socialization, assume a moderating role in this process.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the more these two institutions employ persuasive, interactive, and dialogue-based approaches, the higher the likelihood of the internalization of cultural values and the conscious acceptance of the hijab. Conversely, the continuation of authoritarian and unidirectional (top-down) approaches not only fails to mitigate the value gap but also fosters a deepening division between generations. Overall, the final model of the study indicates that the conscious acceptance of the hijab is a social, cultural, and interactive process shaped by the synergy of the family, the educational system, the media, and the socio-cultural context of society. Accordingly, cultural policy-making regarding the hijab must move away from unidimensional approaches and focus on developing intergenerational dialogue, participatory education, enhancing media literacy, and actively involving youth in cultural processes.

The present study was conducted with the aim of analyzing the role of education and training in reducing the value gap and promoting the new generation's cultural perception of the hijab in the digital age within Lamerd County, utilizing an exploratory-explanatory mixed-methods design. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that the new generation's attitude toward the hijab is the product of a complex interaction of individual, familial, educational, media, and cultural factors, and cannot be explained solely by relying on a single factor or approach. The results indicate that the transformations brought about by the digital age—particularly the expansion of social networks, interactive media, and widespread access to diverse information sources—have reconstructed traditional patterns of socialization. This shift has transformed the transmission of cultural values from a unidirectional process into an interactive, multi-source, and

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reflexive one. In such circumstances, the value gap between generations, rather than being a theological or ideological confrontation, reflects differences in socialization methods, identity sources, and lifestyles within the context of a network society.

The research findings demonstrated that the family remains the most critical institution for transmitting cultural values and shaping attitudes toward the hijab. However, the effectiveness of the family increases when parent-child relationships are built upon empathetic dialogue, mutual respect, responsiveness to questions, and practical role modeling. In contrast, although the formal education system possesses high potential for strengthening cultural perception, participants argued that it has not yet adapted to the cognitive, communicative, and cultural characteristics of the digital generation. The dominance of transmissive (rote) teaching methods, unappealing content, alienation from students' actual needs, and limited opportunities for dialogue and inquiry were evaluated as the most significant challenges of the educational system in this domain. These findings suggest that hijab education can lead to the internalization of values only when it distances itself from prescriptive approaches and is instead grounded in cognitive persuasion, critical thinking, participatory learning, and the elucidation of the philosophical, cultural, and social functions of the hijab.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the media and cyberspace play a dual role in shaping the attitudes of the new generation. Although the expansion of digital media has provided a platform for exposure to diverse cultural models and the redefinition of attitudes toward the hijab—sometimes exacerbating the value gap—this very platform can become one of the most effective tools for cultural education if it generates scientific, engaging, persuasive content tailored to the needs of the new generation. Therefore, the results of this study move away from a reductionist view of the media as merely a threatening agent, emphasizing instead the intelligent utilization of modern media capacities in the educational and training process.

The thematic analysis of the interviews also revealed that reducing the value gap requires a paradigm shift in educational and cultural policies. Participants emphasized the necessity of transitioning from coercive and direct-instruction approaches toward dialogue-oriented, participatory, problem-based, and media literacy-focused education. Additionally, utilizing the capacity of art, narrative, storytelling, successful social role models, multimedia content creation, and the active participation of youth in designing and implementing cultural programs were

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proposed as key strategies to increase educational efficacy regarding the hijab. These findings align with the theoretical foundations of the study, particularly Berger and Luckmann's theory of socialization, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, Giddens' structuration theory, and Habermas's theory of communicative action. This alignment demonstrates that the acceptance of cultural values remains sustainable only when developed within a context of interaction, dialogue, participation, and mutual understanding.

In sum, the conceptual model derived from the research shows that the conscious acceptance of the hijab is the result of synergy among four main components: the family, the educational system, modern media, and the socio-cultural context of society. In interaction with one another, these components can enhance the quality of cultural value transmission and facilitate the reduction of the intergenerational value gap. Accordingly, the success of cultural policies in the domain of the hijab requires departing from unidimensional approaches and moving toward a model of participatory cultural governance—a model in which the family, school, media, and the youth themselves act as active partners in the process of cultural socialization.

Despite the contributions of this study, its findings must be interpreted in light of certain limitations. The restriction of the statistical population to female teachers and school principals in Lamerd County, the relatively small sample size, and the specific cultural characteristics of the region limit the direct generalizability of the findings to other regions of the country. Consequently, it is suggested that future research be conducted with larger sample sizes, involving various social groups—including students, parents, clerics, counselors, and media activists—and employing comparative studies across different provinces and regions of the country.

Furthermore, investigating the role of artificial intelligence, social media algorithms, and media literacy in shaping the new generation's attitudes toward cultural values could offer new horizons for developing the literature in this field and designing educational and cultural policies tailored to the demands of the digital age. Ultimately, the findings of this study indicate that reducing the value gap and enhancing the new generation's cultural perception of the hijab, above all, requires recreating the educational system on the foundations of dialogue, persuasion, participation, media literacy, and respect for the characteristics of the digital generation—an approach that can facilitate the sustainable internalization of cultural values and strengthen social cohesion.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Payame Noor University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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