

## CONSTRUCTIVE CHILD-REARING PRACTICES, THE LEVEL OF SCHOOLING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG A GROUP OF IRANIAN (SHAAHROODEE) MOTHERS

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### Abstract

Within the framework of constructivist theories of development, the ways by which mothers assist their children in the process of their development could be the source of many shortcomings if such assistance is not constructive enough. Hence, the estimation of the extent to which these practices are constructive would be the primary step towards paving the way for their improvement. On the other hand, the level of mothers' schooling and the level of mothers' moral development could also be a determining factors in the extent to which child-rearing practices are constructive. In this research, the levels and relationship between these two constructs are assessed using the data gathered from a group of 119 Shaahroodee. Sampling method was available. To collect the needed data, a researcher-made questionnaire on constructive child-rearing practices and the Rest Questionnaire on moral development was used. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings are indicative of the fact that the child-rearing practices of this group of mothers are not that constructive while their level of moral development seems to be mostly conventional. The correlation between these two constructs was estimated to be 0.53. Furthermore, the main construct was found to be positively correlated with the level of schooling. In order to increase the extent to which child-rearing practices are constructive, better quality education and moral training seem to be required.

**Keywords:** Constructivism, child-rearing practices, level of schooling, moral development, Shaahrood, mothers.

### 1. Introduction

Rearing is an action and like any other action needs an actor. From the constructionism point of view, the actor in this case is the person, himself or herself. The person does not act privately, but does it with others (Hamidi, 2008). From the constructivist point of view, the most important and fundamental thing which is constructed is the person himself/herself. Bowlby, Vygotsky, Erikson, and Kohlberg can all be considered as constructivists, since all of them have an interacting view about the process of moral development. As one of constructivist theorists, Bowlby was considering emotional development. He considers the interaction of one with others important and attachment is a quality which develops between an infant and mother in the first year of life (Seyfert, in Hamidi 2008). This leads to the emotional-behavioral relationships which stems from group activities.

Any person starts his/her starts his life in family. Therefore, parents are the first beings which interact with the child and help him/her in his/her development. This hearty relationship guides the child toward a satisfactory psychological development. A weak and shaky relationship will lead to problematic behavior in developing sincere relationship with others, avoiding such a relationship, and delinquency (Hamidi, 2008, Fadaie et al. 2010, Berk, 2009; Yekta, 2011). Wigotskii is another constructivist author who has paid attention to the cognitive development.

Losimonovich Wigotskii is one of social constructivist theorists who puts importance on the social interactions in the process of development. He points out that ones development of cognitive abilities is affected by culture and social structures (Azim Oglu, 2010). Apart from culture, he also points to the

importance of interaction with adults during childhood as a factor in the development of child's abilities (Berk, 2009). This shows his view about the role of interaction with others as a key assumption in critical development.

child rearing practices are based on knowledge and values (Hahn 2006, Seyf 2009). Therefore, these practices change as a result of changes in knowledge and values. Coleberg is among those researches who has theorized on moral development. As pointed out in Hamidi (2008), Seyfert and Hafnang believe that moral development is knowing and making reaction to what is taken as correct/incorrect or valuable/unvaluable. This development proceeds in a chain of conventions and pre-conventions and as a person develops, he moves from the state of pre-conventions to conventions and then to ultra-conventions (Hart et al. 2005). Colberg points out that parents are either in a state of convention or ultra-convention. In the convention stage, they are less flexible as compared to the later stages (Fadaie et al. 2010). They argue that one should stick to laws and regulations, while in the stage of ultra-convention, they become more flexible towards regulations (Kadivar 2004). Therefore, since they are in different stages of convention, their methods of child-rearing could be quite different. Putting all together, we conclude that it is important to know the stage of conventions and moral child-rearing and their relation to their practices, in order to improve their understanding of better ways of child-rearing. Methods of child-rearing have a high level of importance from social and personal perspectives, and therefore, it is important to study the effects of local and native facts on these methods. Discrepancies in child-rearing practices in parents can be seen from incorrect behavior of some parents with their children. For example, child-abuse may lead to later delinquency which in turn reinforces this ill cycle. Findings of Hawasi 2001 and Kaldy et al. 2004 confirms this correlation.

We now turn to our study on Shahrood people. Shahrood, with a population of 238830 (Iran Statistical Survey 2011) contain a variety of natives. Neary 14000 are immigrants from other cities of Iran and have different cultures (Shariatzadeh 1992). This city was selected, Since the child-rearing practices in it are highly culture-dependent and also because practical reasons for performing the research and gathering the data. Like other applied researches, our aim is to discover the discrepancies and try to provide possible solutions for these problems. We will try to find better ways of child-rearing and methods for improving moral development in order to achieve a better and comprehensive development of children. This is accomplished by identifying methods of child-rearing and their relationship with the level of moral development in mothers.

Findings of Dairy at al. (2006) indicate that methods of child-rearing is rooted in culture. The important role of child-rearing methods in development explains the need for further research in this area.

Limited research is done on moral development. Alizadeh (2011) performed a comparative study about the effects of environment on the moral development of students. Mohammadi (1998) studied the correlation between moral development and the effects of mental stresses in teen agers. His findings show that the more the moral development, the less is the effectiveness of mental stresses. Lotrabadi (2009; In Kadivar, 2014) showed that the quality of social interactions and providing necessary information to youngsters is much more effective than direct moral education. No research is done on the relationship between moral development and the corresponding methods. This has been our motivation for the present research.

### **1.1. Questions and Hypotheses**

Is the effectiveness of the methods of child-rearing by mothers increased by increasing their education?

Is the effectiveness of the methods of child-rearing by mothers who are ultra-conventional (from the standpoint of moral development) is more than that of mothers who are conventional?

Hypotheses are the followings, which are based on earlier research on constructivism;

A higher level of education helps having methods of child-rearing.

There is a correlation between the methods of child-rearing in mothers and moral development. Methods of child-rearing in mothers who are in the stage of conventional development are less effective than those who are in the ultra-conventional stage.

## **2. Methodology, Results, Conclusions**

### **2.1. Methodology**

The statistical sample in this research was Shahroodi mothers whose children are in primary school. We used two tools for measuring: First, a tool for evaluating the methods of child-rearing and Second, a Rest (1999) questionnaire for moral development.

In order to check the reliability, we performed a re-evaluation and in order to increase it, we employed other trends to improve it to an acceptable level. The validity after two assessments became 95 percent and the validity was also affirmed by the academic staff in our Psychology Department.

The Rest questionnaire was used to assess mother's moral development. The reliability of this tool which was obtained by re-examination was evaluated to be 83 percent, while the validity was 82 percent (Kadivar, 2004). The method for data acquisition in this research was data counting and the data was processed using the spearman's Chi-2 test.

The method for selecting samples were based on availability. We had sessions with 144 mothers. From the set of 144 questionnaires, 25 were rejected since they were incomplete. We used two tools for assessment in this research. The first one was the author made, child-rearing method and the second one was Rest's (1999) moral development questionnaire.

In order to double-check the validity of the results we repeated the assessments and improved the results to the extent that they become acceptable. Validity was estimated to be 95 percent for the two assessments and the corresponding reliability was approved by local experts.

The Rest's questionnaire was used to evaluate mother's moral development. Validity of this tool which was estimated by re-examination was found to be 83 percent, while its reliability was 82 percent (Kadivar, 2004). Data processing was based on data counting and the data were processed using Spiermann's chi-2 correlation test.

## 2.2. Results

The following Table shows the descriptive statistics:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
23.63	3.59	14	29

In this research methods of child-rearing are divided into three categories: consistent, semi-consistent and inconsistent, based on the corresponding standard deviations. Our first question was the correlation between the consistency of the methods of child-rearing and the level of education of Shahroodi mothers who took part in our study. The following Table shows the results.

Table 2. The correlation between the child-rearing and the level of education of Shahroodi mothers

	R	df	R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
Child-rearing methods	0.52	118	0.25	0.001

The observed correlation is positive and agrees with the prediction of the hypothesis. Consistency of the child-rearing method increases as the level of education increases.

The second question of this study was about the correlation between two basic factors: consistency of the child-rearing methods and moral development of Shahroodi mothers. The following Table shows the results.

Table 3. The correlation between the child-rearing and the level of moral development Shahroodi mothers

	R	df	R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
Child-rearing methods	0.53	118	0.32	0.001

The observed correlation is positive and medium. It is consistent with the hypothesis and the larger the moral development, the more consistent is the child-rearing method.

The third question which is a better presentation of the second one is about the dis-similarity between the two groups found in moral development from the view point of the method of constructive child-rearing. In order to answer this question, one can examine the relation or dis-similarity of these two groups.

Table 4. The result of chi-2

Constructions	df	Chi 2	Sig.
Moral development and methods	2	18.67	0.001

Table 4 in which we have compared moral development from the view-point of child-rearing method construction with chi-2 test, shows that there is dis-similarity between moral development of the two groups of test mothers and the probability of randomness is low (0.001).

As we said before, according to the hypotheses of the research, child-rearing methods are based on knowledge and values. This hypotheses are consistent with the findings of our research. Findings show that the level of education is also affecting the methods. This supports the findings of Zakerzadeh (2011) and Tabakoli (2011). The lower the level of education of mothers, the more is the effectiveness of their child-rearing methods. Although more than half of the mothers taking part in this study hold at least the high school diploma (12 years of education) and this shows that they have benefited from the general knowledge about child-rearing to the extent presented in the school, our results show that more than half of them suffered from inconsistent or semi-consistent child-rearing. This shows that this education has not offered them much about their development in this respect. Training and education are two important aspects of human development. According to Hamidi (2008), training is the basis of education and education provides the necessary background for training. Findings of this research also support the entanglement of training and education.

### 3. Conclusions

The research hypothesis predicts correlation between consistency the level of constructivistic of child-rearing and moral development. Findings of this research are in line with this prediction. Our results supports this. Findings show that there is dis-similarities between the two groups of moral development with respect to the methods. Therefore, on can say that those in lower levels of moral development have less effective methods of child-rearing. These findings are in line with the results obtained by Lotfabadi (2001). According to the findings of this research, we can claim that there exist ways to improve semi-effective and ineffective methods up to an effective method.

Because of the lack or insufficiency of educational programs about the methods of child-rearing, initialization or improvement of these programs can lead to effective and fruitful methods.

One of the shortcomings of this research is the selection method of data providers. Mothers are selected via their primary school children. This leads to mothers not having primary school children being ignored.

Moreover, using research methods which are more reliable and more valid may lead to more accurate findings. Putting all together, we encourage further studies in this direction.

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