



Future orientation links perceived parenting and academic achievement: Gender differences among Muslim adolescents in Israel



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ABSTRACT

In light of findings showing that in non-western cultures parenting is not directly related to adolescents' academic achievement, this study examines a multiple-step model linking perceived parenting and academic achievement via self-empowerment and each of two future orientation domains: higher education and marriage and family. Participants were 882 college-bound 11th grade Muslim girls and boys (577 girls) in Israel. Structural equation modeling estimated the model, as well as equivalent models, twice: once for the higher education and once for marriage and family. Analysis shows that while the structure of the model has a satisfactory goodness of fit for girls and boys, the path weights indicate gender differences, and the models explained higher percentage of the academic achievement variance of girls than of boys. Discussion explains the indirect link between perceived parenting and academic achievement in terms of the *educational distance* between parents and their adolescent children compensated by positive parenting, and the gender differences in terms of the meaning self-empowerment and future orientation about both domains has for Muslim girls and boys in Israel.

1. Introduction

Research on the effect of parenting on children's academic achievement suggests mixed results. While some studies report a direct parenting-academic achievement link (Dotterer, Lowe, & McHale, 2014; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2009; Majumder, 2016), others fail to corroborate it (Li, Walker, & Armstrong, 2014; Lou, Aye, Hogan, Kaur, & Chan, 2013; Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & O'Brien, 2011). One explanation for the inconsistency is culture. The direct link is reported in American studies whereas the indirect link is reported mainly in studies carried out in non-western contexts, including Mexicans residing in the United States (Carlo, White, Streit, Knight, & Zeiders, 2018).

Applying these findings to our interest in the parenting-academic achievement relation among adolescents from the Arab society in Israel as a case of traditional non-western society, we developed a multiple-step model and compared its goodness of fit for girls and boys. Drawing on earlier studies on the indirect parenting-academic achievement relations (de Bruyn, Deković, & Meijnen, 2003; Diaconu-Gherasim & Măirean, 2016) and on our earlier work (Seginer, 2009), in the multiple-step model we developed future orientation mediates perceived

parenting and academic achievement.

Underlying this model are two research bodies pertaining to the motivational properties of future orientation and the effect of parenting on future orientation, discussed below. The rationale underlying the examination of gender differences is presented twice. First when examining the question of gender differences vs. similarities, as particularly moderated by culture. Second, in discussing gender differences in light of the cultural characteristics of the Arab society in Israel. Our gender differences hypotheses draw on this explication, and presented in [The current study](#) section.

1.1. Does gender make a difference?

The high visibility of gender should have made it a prime issue of psychological research. Instead, it gained interest mainly in the wake of the feminist movement (Eagly, Eaton, Rose, Riger, & McHugh, 2012) and presently a topic of controversy. While the number of research articles on gender and women published since the 1960s grew exponentially, a growing number of meta-analyses and metasyntheses (Zell, Krizan, & Teeter, 2015) report that the vast majority (85.5%) of the gender differences analyses result in very small ($d = 0-0.10$) to

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small ($d = 0.11$ – 0.35) effect sizes. Drawing on a larger number of studies and more elaborate analyses, in essence these findings replicate findings of earlier analyses (Hyde, 2005; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).

A recent seminal study (Hyde, Bigler, Joel, Tate, & Anders, 2018) contests the sex and gender binary by novel findings from neuroscience, behavioral neuroendocrinology, and psychology. Exception are findings on gender differences in depression where the odds ratio (OR; female:male) is approximately 2.0. Moreover, the growing numbers of LGBT and multiple nonbinary gender identities challenge the gender binary as misrepresenting both the biological and psychological reality of individuals for whom sex at birth differs from gender identity.

Yet, gender is culture-embedded. Reports that the magnitude of gender differences varies across sociocultural conditions (Hyde et al., 2018) are explained by gender as a culturally determined role, guided by social values (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Particularly, gender equality is associated with the individualism-collectivism cultural dimension so that the closer a society is to the collectivistic pole the greater are gender inequality and differences. Analyses also show that gender equality is related to national wealth and educational opportunities open to women, and thus indirectly to individualism (Hofstede et al., 2010). The cultural specificity of the Arab society in Israel and its relevance to the social construction of gender for adolescents are discussed in a subsequent section.

1.2. Future orientation: a thematic three-component conceptualization

Future orientation is one of several terms describing how individuals subjectively relate to the future. Conceptualized as global (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) or domain specific (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Peetsma & van der Veen, 2011; Seginer, 2009), studied experimentally (Gollwitzer, Ottingen, Kirby, Duckworth, & Mayer, 2011) or by means of self-report (Mello, Finan, & Worrell, 2013), among adolescents (Hamilton, Connolly, Liu, Stanger, & Abramson, 2015) or old age people (Kotter-Grühn & Smith, 2011), its relevance draws on the motivational properties of projecting the self onto the future. Theoretical propositions (Bandura, 2001; Lewin, 1939; Nuttin & Lens, 1985) that future thinking regulates present behavior have been supported by empirical findings indicating its effect on each of multiple behaviors, including adolescents' academic achievement (Barber, Munz, Bagsby, & Grawitch, 2009; Carvalho, 2015; Peetsma & Van der Veen, 2011; Seginer, 2009).

1.2.1. The thematic three-component conceptualization

The thematic emphasis of the model tested in this study drew from Cantril's (1965) work and subsequent findings showing that when asked about their hopes and fears about the future, individuals spontaneously relate to future life domains. In particular, and across different parts of the world from Australia and Singapore (Poole & Cooney, 1987) to China (Zhang, Chen, Yu, Wang, & Nurmi, 2014), Finland (Nurmi, 1991), Germany (Trommsdorff, 1986), Israel (Seginer, 2009), Italy (Scabini, Marta, & Lanz, 2006) and the United States (Douvan & Adelson, 1966), adolescents mentioned education, and the two universal adult roles of "love and work" (Erikson, 1963): work and career and marriage and family.

Underlying the three component structure of the model have been two premises. (1) That active and conscious representation of the future – like the performance of other behaviors – is prompted by motivational forces. (2) That representation of the future induces future related behavior. Both were prompted by two propositions developed by Cantril. That hopes and fears thinking is guided by weighing the *value* of expected satisfaction, and that by creating a prospective reality world, individuals advance the fulfillment of their purposes. Thus, although Cantril – and researchers following him (Nurmi, 1991; Trommsdorff & Lamm, 1980) – employed a uni-dimensional approach, embedded in his work are two other dimensions. The *motivation* prompting thinking about the future, indicated by the value and expectance of prospective

satisfaction, and *behavior* indicated by fulfillment of purposes. The variables indicating each component and the rationale underlying the relation between the components are described below.

1.2.1.1. The motivational component. This component is indicated by three empirical variables: value, expectance, and internal control. Underlying their inclusion are three considerations. One pertains to the motivational qualities of *value* and *expectance* (Atkinson, 1964) and their relevance to future thinking (Cantril, 1965; Nuttin & Lens, 1985). The second concerns the motivational nature of *internal control* (Rotter, 1966; Weiner, 2010) so that behavior is regulated by attributing the occurrence of events to the person's behavior, ability or other personal characteristics. The third consideration relates to the directional motivation-behavior relation, maintaining that motivation is indicated by "...the acquired valences or preferences, attributions, and expectancies...all used to predict the direction and persistence of behavior" (Ryan, 2013, p. 4). Specifically, *value* pertains to the importance, usefulness, and centrality of each future life domain. *Expectance* relates to individuals' subjective confidence in the materialization of hopes and plans regarding a future life domain and its affective outcomes (Carver & Scheier, 2001), and *internal control* to generalized beliefs about individuals' power over the attainment of goals (Weiner, 2010).

The proposition underlying this model that the motivational component precedes the cognitive representation of the future draws on three analyses of motivation and its relation to action in general, to thinking as a cognitive activity, and to thinking about the future in particular. Of the three analyses, one is global, maintaining that motivation prompts action ("...the study of motivation is the study of action", Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 110). The second is specific to the motivation-cognition association, addressing a conceptual analysis of the effect on cognitive processes of value and expectancy (Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993). The third analysis concerns motivation as an antecedent of planning, as one instance of future related cognitive behavior (Nurmi, 1991).

1.2.1.2. The cognitive representation component. Cognitive representation of the future "...puts us in direct contact with events, independently of their objective and real presence" (Nuttin & Lens, 1985, p. 17). Given that prospective events may be either positive or negative, the cognitive representation of a domain consists of both hopes and fears, and indicated by how often individuals think about each (Cantril, 1965; Trommsdorff, 1983). As noted below, these foreseeable future events arouse domain-related future directed behavior of two kinds: exploration of future hopes, plans and goals and commitment to pursue them.

1.2.1.3. The behavioral component. Drawing on the work of Lewin and Erikson, the behavioral component is indicated by two variables: *exploration* and *commitment*. The purpose of exploration is to examine the extent to which future options fit personal abilities and values, social expectations and environmental circumstances (Lewin, 1939). Commitment indicates "a sense of knowing where one is going" (Erikson, 1968, p. 165). Both enhance the future orientation-present behavior link and thus add to the instrumentality of future orientation.

In sum, the three component model applies to each of several future-life domains. The motivational component prompts the cognitive representation of the future and future-focused behavior. The cognitive representation prompts the future-focused behavior, which in turn regulates various aspects of present behavior.

1.2.2. Adolescent future orientation in context: perceived parenting

The significance of parenting for adolescents well-being reported in earlier work (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Laursen & Collins, 2009) continues to be supported by expanded research, varying in the conceptualization of parenting and adolescent wellbeing, in design, and

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