

## How Family Cultural Spaces Affect Children's Learning Performance and Educational Achievement

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**Abstract:** The objective of this paper is to identify family cultural spaces and their effects on learning formats and performance in families and children's educational achievement. A sample of 54 families was selected randomly from four boy's and girl's high schools in two districts in North and South of Tehran. Specialized counselors interviewed these families. They asked fathers to answer Baumrind Child rearing Pattern Questionnaire. The grade point averages of the previous semester were taken as the representative of children educational achievement. The result of long observations and interviews showed that the studied parents had differing cultural spaces influenced by their cultural assets, including their educational background, time and type of reading, time and type of television programs, and other cultural activities. These factors are known to have considerable influence on family cultural spaces and family educational achievement. Study findings showed that each family had differing levels of family cultural space. The majority of families in each group had created spaces and had performances conforming to their own cultural spaces with high bearing on their child rearing patterns. The results also showed that the family child rearing patterns had direct bearing on children's educational achievement.

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### Introduction

Family cultures are undeniably different. Parents make different economic, social, and cultural assets for their families. Their cultural assets have the highest impact on their thinking and behaviors affecting their child rearing patterns and guiding how they form their cultural spaces.

It is evident that family cultural asset plays an important role in creation of family cultural spaces, which in turn, influences the formation of children's personalities and their cultural setting.

There are indeed other sources of influence such as schools and cultural centers, including educational and training system, media, and friends' network, which influence the formation of children's personalities and their culture settings. But, various researches have shown that parents have the highest impact (Pervin, 1374 and Minochine, 1375).

Inglhart generalized the same concept by stating that each age group belonged to a given period marked by specific culture settings predominant during their growing years.

It is possible to evaluate family's different assets including cultural assets by observing parents' behaviors, evaluating the interior design of family homes (Segalin, 1987), studying the thoughts expressed during interviews, and assessing the types of answers given to various questions.

These observations help one to hypothesize that parents with lower cultural assets create lower family cultural spaces. Cognition, innovation, and talent

growth and development in children is highly unlikely in low cultural spaces. The probability of troubled children increases in families with unsuitable cultural spaces.

Past studies have shown that authoritative and assuring child rearing patterns have higher influence on mental health and educational achievement when compared with autocratic and permissive (*laissez faire*) patterns (Bahrami, 1387). Mental health and educational achievement of children have significant correlation with their fathers' educational background. Study results indicate that informative fathers are more knowledgeable about children upbringing styles, and consequently, can adapt more suitable ones for their children.

Another study on family cultural assets, cultural spaces, and life styles showed that 16 percent of parents had high, 41 percent had medium, and 43 percent had low cultural assets. The majority in each family group had created cultural spaces according to their own cultural assets (Monadi, 1386).

Researchers have grouped general characteristics of parents-child behavior into three categories: 1) warm: affectionate parents pay more attention to children's needs and interests as opposed to ignoring them and exercising deprivation, 2) supervising and controlling: parents exercise close supervision on children behaviors, have definitive behavioral standards, and expect children to observe those standards, but do not necessarily administer punishment (Berent, 1997); and 3) involved: parents

are child-oriented and associate themselves to children's attitudes and behaviors (Mccoby and Martin, 1992).

Baumrind (1991) offered three parental behavior patterns by considering warmth and controlling behavioral dimensions: 1) authoritative and assuring, 2) autocratic, and 3) permissive. Parents with authoritative and assuring behavioral pattern exercise high warmth and control, autocratic parents exercise high control and low warmth, and permissive parents exercise low control and high warmth (Lamborn, 1991).

### Study Objectives

The main objective of this study was to identify various family assets and cultures. This objective led to two approaches:

- 1) to determine parents' family culture and child rearing patterns; and
- 2) to identify cultural similarities and/or differences among individual families and to determine how cultural spaces affect children training and, ultimately, personalities.

### Study Variables

There were three study variables:

- 1- Cultural asset, divided into three categories:
  - a. Internalized cultural assets (what people know and what they can accomplish)
  - b. Objective cultural assets (cultural materials and objects including books, library, paintings, art works, and antiques)
  - c. Subjective cultural assets (education and specialties that are represented by earned certificates and diplomas)
- 2- Child rearing patterns (identified by Baumrind child rearing pattern questionnaire)
- 3- Educational achievement (represented by children's grade average points obtained in previous semester)

### Study Questions:

- 1- Do families have similar cultures?
- 2- What factors differentiate family cultural spaces?
- 3- How family cultural assets and cultural spaces affect children training and child rearing processes.
- 4- What affects cultural spaces and child rearing patterns have on children's educational achievements.

### Study Methodology:

This study is casual - comparative because it was not possible to change parents' child rearing styles.

The study population was a sample of 54 families randomly selected from two districts in north and south of Tehran. Children in these families attend four state run boys and girls schools in Tehran. There were 27 children in each gender group.

Selected families were administered child rearing pattern questionnaire during sessions arranged by teachers-parents associations of the selected schools.

### Measurement Tools

The researcher-made questionnaire contained about 60 questions. It also included additional personal and family questions, and few open-answer questions about life style, religion, children, child-rearing style, common spaces, counseling, ways of attending to family emotional needs, family hobbies and leisure time, and type of relationship with children.

Child rearing pattern questionnaire had 30 parts including 10 parts for permissive pattern, 10 parts for autocratic pattern, and 10 parts for authoritative and assuring pattern. Baumrind made this questionnaire in 1991. It was translated by Esfandiari in 1374. The obtained validities of these patterns were 69 percent, 77 percent, and 73 percent respectively.

### Information Collection Procedures and Steps

Out of 54 families, 34 fathers and 37 mothers accepted and participated in interviews.

After random selection of 4 state run boys and girls high schools in North and South of Tehran, the selected students and their parents were interviewed. Students' grade point averages for the past semester were obtained from the schools.

The average time spent on interviewing parents and students was one hour. The content of interviews was subsequently analyzed in details.

### Results and Findings:

The results obtained from this study are as follows:

- 1- Families have high, medium, and low cultural assets.
- 2- Some families have modern cultural assets. Others have traditional and mixed cultural assets.
- 3- The higher family cultural assets, the higher cultural space. Therefore, one cannot expect highly cultured children in families with poor cultural space.
- 4- There are currently considerable differences between family cultural assets, cultural world, value system, and beliefs.
- 5- Cultural assets directly affect child rearing practices and influence cultural and mental

personality of future generations. Any action to increase individual cultural asset especially among parents will benefit society as a whole. This is achievable through media and various training programs.

The selection of personal and common cultural spaces depends on cultural level of society. Common cultural spaces are mostly impositions made by activities such as city planning for amenities, TV, media, and theater programming, and the like. They are decided and planned by officials, though people can choose which one to use.

Existence or absence of paintings and their types, existence or absence of library, the number and types of books in the library affect children's cultural and mental personality. Existence of furniture and type of them, colors used on walls, or type and color of fabrics used for curtains, are representative of family culture.

House belongings and their arrangements fully represent family culture and say a lot about family members. Family use of television, satellite access, time and type of reading, views on religion, politics,

sports, arts and the like are all indicative of family thinking and culture.

Families were classified based on their economic assets:

1. Less to do (below 200,000 Tomans income) - 8 families;
2. Medium low (from 200,000 to 400,000 Tomans income) - 18 families;
3. Medium (from 400,000 to 600,000 Tomans income) - 10 families;
4. Medium high (from 600,000 to 800,000 Tomans income) - 5 families; and
5. Well to do (above 1,000,000 Tomans income) - 8 families.

And their cultural assets:

- A) Educational levels from illiterate to doctoral degree, graded from 0 to 7;
- B) Activities such as reading, sports, arts, theatre, and the like were graded from 0 to 3 for not at all, low, and medium.

The highest score for cultural asset was 32. Scores were grouped as low from 3 to 12, medium 12-21, and high from 21 to 32.

Table 1: Parents' Educational Background

| Sex               | Mother    |         | Father    |         |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
|                   | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Illiterate        | 1         | 2       | 1         | 2       |
| Bellow Diploma    | 10        | 23      | 8         | 18      |
| Diploma           | 25        | 57      | 15        | 24      |
| Diploma + Hozeh   | 2         | 4       | 0         | 0       |
| Technical Diploma | 3         | 7       | 7         | 16      |
| Bachelors         | 3         | 7       | 8         | 18      |
| Masters           | 0         | 0       | 2         | 4.5     |
| Doctorate         | 0         | 0       | 3         | 7       |
| Total             | 44        | 100     | 44        | 100     |

The number of mothers with high school diplomas was higher than the number of fathers at the same educational level. The number of fathers with bachelor's degree and higher was higher than the number of mothers at the same educational level.

Total family assets were obtained from adding fathers' and mothers' assets. Families were grouped into two large general categories:

- 1) Families with modern cultural assets (with higher education, with high literary, historical, and social readings, and considerable sports and art activities), and
- 2) Families with traditional cultural assets (with low education, absence of reading and almost no sports and art activities).

Table 2: Division of Parents' Cultural Assets into Modern and Traditional

| Space  | Modern    |         | traditional |         | Mixed     |         | Total     |         |
|--------|-----------|---------|-------------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Assets | Frequency | Percent | Frequency   | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| High   | 3         | 5.6     | 2           | 3.8     | 4         | 7.2     | 9         | 16.6    |
| Medium | 10        | 18.5    | 9           | 16.8    | 5         | 9       | 24        | 44.5    |
| Low    | 1         | 1.9     | 19          | 35.4    | 1         | 1.8     | 21        | 38.9    |
| Total  | 14        | 26      | 30          | 56      | 10        | 18      | 54        | 100     |

Table 3: Type of Parents' Cultural Assets and Space Forms

| Space       | Reproduction |         | Dissimilar |         | Total     |         |
|-------------|--------------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Assets      | Frequency    | Percent | Frequency  | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Modern      | 15           | 27.8    | 2          | 3.7     | 17        | 31.5    |
| Traditional | 27           | 50      | 0          | 0       | 27        | 50      |
| Mixed       | 5            | 9.2     | 5          | 9.3     | 10        | 18.5    |
| Total       | 47           | 87      | 7          | 13      | 54        | 100     |

Parents' assets corresponded to cultural spaces in all members of traditional family group (i.e.100%). This pointed to high influence of parents' in traditional families which was supported by a traditional society. Parents' assets did not correspond to culture spaces in 3.7% of modern family group and 9.3% of mixed family group.

When family culture conforms or contrasts with common culture, it produces positive or negative effects on the personality formation of children. Therefore, they become especially important considerations in the study. Private spaces in some families differed from common spaces. Consequently, it is only natural to expect children grow up in such spaces quite differently from those that grow up in spaces similar to common spaces. Not all young individuals can deal with these differences or conflicts and subsequently form dual personalities, mental distress, and ultimately objective crisis (Monadi, 2003). Some adapt to both conflicting cultures and developed different selves. They change according to the environment they operate in, which is not good for society.

There was not much difference between private spaces and common spaces in some families. These families observed values and moralities of their society. They were half modern and half traditional. Children grow up in these families with fewer problems and rarely face deep conflicts.

Analysis of variance was used to determine if there were differences in cultural space of children who grew up with different child rearing patterns. The results showed that there are significant differences ( $p > 0.01$ ) between family cultural spaces and child rearing patterns. Tukey's Range Test was used to determine where the difference lied. The results showed that there is a significant difference between permissive child rearing practice versus authoritative and assuring practices. There is also a significant difference between autocratic child rearing practice versus authoritative and assuring practice. The significant level for both was  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 4: Analysis of Variance for Comparing Children's Average Mental Health and Child Rearing Pattern

| Child Rearing Pattern | Mental Health Grade | F Amount | Significance Level | Position of Difference bases on Tukey's Test |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------|--------------------|--|
| Permissive            | 34.30               | 193.114  | 0.0001             | 2>3, 1>3                                     |
| Authoritative         | 34.08               |          |                    |  |
| Decisive and assuring | 16.13               |          |                    |  |

One way analysis of variance was used to study whether cultural spaces of children who grown up with various rearing styles are different or not. Table 2 shows that child rearing patterns had significant difference with

children's educational achievement ( $p < 0.01$ ). Tukey's Range Test was used to determine where the difference lied. The results showed that there is a significant difference between permissive child rearing practice versus authoritative and assuring practice. There is also a significant difference between autocratic child rearing practice versus authoritative and assuring practice. But there is no significant difference between autocratic child rearing practice and permissive practice.

We can conclude that children who grow up under authoritative and assuring child rearing practice have the highest educational achievement. Conversely, children who grow up under permissive or autocratic child rearing practice have the lowest educational achievement.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance for Comparing Children's Educational Achievements and Child Rearing Patterns

| Child Rearing Pattern | Mental Health | F Amount | Significance Level | Position of Difference bases on Tukey's Test |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------|--------------------|--|
| Permissive            | 16.81         | 176.645  | 0.0001             |  |
| Authoritative         | 16.93         |          |                    |  |
| Decisive and assuring | 18.94         |          |                    |  |

Table 6: Regression Analysis Statistical Indexes of Parents' Demographic Variables as a Predictor of Children Educational Achievement

| Model                        | B      | Non-standard coefficient of Standard Error | Standard coefficient of Beta | T      | Significance Level |
|------------------------------|--------|--|------------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| Constant                     | 17.92  | 0.521                                      |                              | 34.413 | 0.1000             |
| Father's age                 | -3.84  | 0.14                                       | -0.160                       | -2.734 | 0.007              |
| Father with Masters Degree   | 1.667  | 0.202                                      | 0.372                        | 8.242  | 0.0001             |
| Father with Bachelors Degree | 1.375  | 0.137                                      | 0.457                        | 9.998  | 0.0001             |
| Father's Occupation          | -0.238 | 0.136                                      | -0.082                       | -1.761 | 0.0001             |
| Number of Children           | -2.15  | 0.080                                      | -0.013                       | -0.270 | 0.787              |
| Family Income                | -4.52  | 0.0001                                     | -0.076                       | -1.761 | 0.079              |

This table shows that out of 6 model variables, 3 variables are able to clarify changes in criterion variable. Interestingly, two of the variables are dependent on father's education. Fathers' bachelors ( $b=1.375$ ) or Masters ( $b=1.667$ ) degrees significantly predict changes in criterion variable. One of these variables is dependent on father's age. Fathers' age ( $b=-3.84$ ) significantly predict changes in criterion variable. Father's education together with father's age can predict educational achievement at 99% significance level.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Findings from observation of families, the results obtained in this study by using Baron's Content Analysis (1977) together with results of interviews all

point to the fact that studied families were not similar. They had differing views of daily life. They had various educational background, economic-social status, and social relationship. Bordiou (1989) believed that cultural assets are more effective than economical or social assets. Bordiou's statement confirms and conforms to this study results.

The results showed that the children's educational achievements in family cultural spaces where fathers practice authoritative and assuring child rearing pattern is higher than children's educational achievements in family cultural spaces where fathers practice autocratic or permissive child rearing patterns.

The result of this study conforms to majority of past researches conducted in the same subject. For

example, the result confirms the results obtained by Shirazi study (1382), which showed that people with high achievement motivation grow up in environments that expect children to be sufficient and competent and tolerate more independence in young age.

In research conducted outside of Iran, results of Lamborn study (1991) is close to results obtained in this study. This study showed that adolescents who consider their parents as authoritative and assuring scored high for social sufficiency and scored low in social-psychological disorder scale. The converse was true about adolescents who consider their parents as negligent.

Adolescents who considered their parents as autocratic scored high in obedience and conformity with adults' standards. But they scored relatively low in self-concept when compared to others. Conversely, adolescents who were from rational and non-restricting families had strong self-confidence but reported misbehavior in schools to some extent and tended to have high absenteeism (Lamborn, 1991).

The result of this study also conforms to results obtained by Jamshidi (1375). Jamshidi showed that "dutifulness" can be the best predictor of educational success. He also pointed that other personality characteristics are less related to educational outcome (average grade point) (Jamshidi Eini, 1375).

A study into the relationship between demographic characteristics of fathers (age, education, income, job, number of children) and educational achievement of children indicated that positive and significant relationship exist only between father's education and children's educational achievement in the study group. Father's age had negative relationship with children educational achievement.

Borjali (1378) showed that social strata affected child rearing patterns. Middle class parents were interested in vocal stimuli and tended to develop their children's internal characteristics during school education. The results obtained by Borjali conform to findings of this study and point out that children's mental health and educational success is directly related to father's education. However, children's educational success is inversely related to father's age.

Although, there is no research similar to this study with the focus on evaluating the relationship between fathers' child rearing patterns with children's mental health and educational success, but the results of this study conform to findings of many research conducted in this field.

All in all, results are indicative that the effect of fathers on children's mental health and educational achievement is far beyond what was earlier expected. Therefore, further research is required in this area to determine the extent of influence. The new research shall focus on the effects fathers may have on children

training and education process and examine the types of effects.

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