

The Relationship between the Forms of Family Upbringing and Curiosity: A study on Primary School Students in Zarqa First Directorate of Education in Jordan

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the relationship between curiosity and parental practices that are followed in upbringing fifth and sixth graders in the Primary Schools in Zarqa First Directorate of Education in Jordan. (350) students participated in the study. The subjects responded to questions related to two variables: oral curiosity and parental practices in raising their children. The study followed the descriptive approach. The study found that fifth and sixth graders have a curiosity motive and this quality is closely related to the parental practices. The study further found that on the male students' part, the parents' democratic practices are significantly positive related to curiosity. On the other hand, it was also found that there was a significantly negative correlation between curiosity and dictator practices of their parents. By contrast, the mother's democratic practices were significantly positive related to curiosity of their daughters. There was, however, a significantly negative correlation between curiosity and the mother's dictator practices. As for the father's democratic or dictator practices, there was no significant correlation between his practices and his children's curiosity.

Keywords: Parental Discipline, Curiosity, Primary Stage, Democratic and Dictator Practices.

1. Theoretical Background

The surrounding social environment plays a quite important role in forming children's personalities, shaping their behaviors, providing them with knowledge, skills and social experiences needed for their survival as well as enabling them to confront the various external life situations. In addition to several social institutions, the family contributes to preparing children to get involved in the social life, and forming attitudes, tendencies and outlook to life. The family aims at enabling individuals to cope with the requirements and conditions of the society, thus equipping them to acquire human qualities and characteristics through the different stages of growth that they go through (Al-Jundi, 2010).

In this regard, a number of scholars in psychology, education and sociology assure that the experiences that the individuals have had in their first years in the family play a key role in their mental, social and emotional growth. Moreover, these experiences form their attitudes and opinions and determine the individuals' psychological stability and adaptation (Abu Maraqq and Aqueel, 2012).

The ways that parents treat their children are the most important factors that affect the psychological and social concord of children including the emotional disorders. A number of recent studies concluded that there is a positive correlation between children's emotional disorder and patterns of family upbringing. The child's personality is formed during the first years of their life since the experiences they are exposed to are considered the most primary factors that influence their linguistic, emotional and social growth. Thus, the

family is essentially responsible for providing the child with the main components of their personality such as love, hatred, cooperation, submission, domination etc. (Heilat, Al-Qudah and Rabay'a, 2008).

Many studies indicate that the children of strict parents, parents who do not treat their children democratically, do not tend to be curious. The studies also indicate that lenient treatment which encourages children to be self-dependent lead to aggressive and ineffective behaviors as well as reduction in their creativity and innovation (Arnone, 2003).

Behavioral theories prove that what the parents do before and after the curiosity behavior affect the recurrence of this behavior in the future. The conditional procedural theory suggests that any incentive given to children after a certain behavior increases the probability of doing this behavior again. For example, using secondary incentives such as paying attention, praising, smiling, laughter and hugging after the occurrence of a curiosity behavior increases the occurrence of that behavior. By contrast, if that behavior is not enhanced, it will decrease (Fisher, 2000).

From the classical procedural theory point of view, curiosity and exploration behaviors are triggered by strange and unusual incentives. For instance, the events that are related to exploration become conditional incentives that trigger another exploration behavior. In other words, the instructions, questions and exploration behavior that the others may have function as conditional incentives that trigger curiosity.

Pandora's social learning theory indicates that a curious child is a model for curiosity since children imitate their parents' curiosity. Accordingly, the study's problem was developed to uncover curiosity of children between 11-12 years and the relationship between curiosity and the parental practices that they receive. The researchers chose this age range because the subjects have already passed early childhood which does not enable them to objectively recognize their social surrounding. Moreover, they have not reached the age with which other external factors, such as teenage, interact. The researchers have noticed there are very few Arab studies that tackled curiosity and its relationship with other variables. Therefore, the researchers first reviewed the other available studies such as *Abu Maraq and Aqueel's (2012)* which tried to find out the relationship between the parental upbringing and the students' moods at Al-Khalil (Hebron) University as well as determining the most important treatment practices and parental upbringing. The study was conducted on (308) students chosen randomly. Two methods were used: a questionnaire about parental upbringing practices and a test on the teenagers' mood state. The study concluded that the parents' support, especially with regard to education, proved to be effective. In addition, the university students were found to have good mood. Moreover, there was no correlation between parental practices and the mood state of the study sample. Finally, there were no significant differences in terms of gender, income, educational level, faculty, or place of residency.

Al-Jundi (2010) conducted a study to identify the right practices of upbringing the children from the parents' point of view. The study included (352) fathers and mothers divided equally. The researcher used a questionnaire made up of four equal topics: democracy, equality, acceptance and interest in others. The study found a positive attitude among both genders with a slight significant difference; mothers had a higher mean of acceptance, democracy and interest in others. Furthermore, democracy, acceptance and interest in others were significantly higher among employed fathers compared to non-employed ones.

Maw and Maw (2009) conducted a study that aimed at finding out the parents attitudes towards the treatment of their children and its relation to the children's inclination to curiosity. The results of the study indicate that the parents who were more curious tended to discourage depending on others and did not prefer school punishment.

Heilat et al (2008) carried out a study to determine the relationship between the practices of family upbringing (democratic, dictator, over-protective and negligent) and the emotional disorders of male sixth graders. Fifty students suffering from emotional disorders from eight schools were studied. The study found that the prevalent family upbringing practices for those students were the *dictator* and the *negligent* practices. The study also found a positive correlation that was significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between emotional disorders and the dictator parental upbringing style.

Ashawi and Dweiri (2006) studied the effect of parental treatment practices on the psychological health. (167) male and (231) female students from secondary schools in the eastern region of KSA participated in the study. The results show that there was a significantly negative correlation for the parental democratic treatment of their children. The researchers ascribed that result to the students' better psychological health.

The study did not find any significant correlation between the parental democratic, dictator or lenient treatment and the economic class of the family.

In a study to find out the relationship between curiosity and the social upbringing practices used in the family, Budair (2004) studied (450) children aged 10-12 who responded to questions about their curiosity, parental practices as seen by children, and questionnaires about the social, economic and cultural levels. The results did not indicate any significantly positive correlation between the high degree of curiosity and the parental fair practices towards their children. However, there was a negative correlation between curiosity and provoking psychological pain caused by the father. In addition, there was a negative correlation between curiosity and the mother's changing practices.

Studying the parental practices and their relationship with the child's social welfare in kindergartens in Damascus, Muhriz (2004) came to the following conclusions: the less educated the parents were, the more negligent and unfair in treating their children they were; the more income the parents had, the less negligent and unfair in treating their children they were; working mothers are more negligent than non-working mothers; and fathers having their own business are more negligent than employed fathers.

Al-Nusoor (2004) studied the relationship between the parental upbringing practices (democratic vs dictator) with the ego, self-assertion, and academic achievement. The study was conducted on (258) tenth grade female students. The results found the dictator group was significantly different with regard to the overall ego in contrast with the democratic group who was significantly different with regard to self-assertion.

Bogler and Somesh (2002) found a strong relationship between the parental upbringing practices and the academic achievement and adaptation for the study sample (243 college students). In another study to identify the effect of parental upbringing practices, as seen by the children, on having a love motivation between parents and children in different stages, Hamdan (2001) used two forms of parental upbringing practices (A & B) and a love motivation test. (300) subjected were studied. The results prove that female subjects were significantly higher than male subjects with regard to love motivation and its relationship with the parental upbringing practices. There were also significant differences among the three levels of the subjects (preparatory, secondary, and college students) with regard to love motivation and its relationship with the parental upbringing practices. The differences were in favor of the father when it comes to college students and in favor of the mother when it comes to secondary students.

Nathir (2001) conducted a study to identify the social upbringing practices as seen by parents and children in Kuwaiti families. The study concluded that parents above 50 years old were significantly more equal with their children. Moreover, parents who held a university degree scored significant differences in terms of rights and duties.

Finally, Hong (2000) carried out a study on (1000) fathers and mothers to identify the parental upbringing practices in China. The study concluded a relationship between the parental upbringing practices and the social class. It was found that middle class parents instill independence in their children. By contrast, low class parents have their own views about the children's obedience to their parents' orders and decisions.

The paper proceeds as follows: section 2 addresses the study's questions, problem, objectives, significance, and limitations. Methodology is illustrated in section 3. The results are presented in section 4 and discussed in section 5. Section 6 concludes and 7 puts forward some recommendations.

2. The study

2.1 Study Questions and Problem

Some families may play different roles and practices while bringing up their children. They may explicitly or implicitly change the psychological state and mood of their children. The identification of the relationship between curiosity and family upbringing practices, no doubt, enables us of discovering part of the child's personality and his/her family background. This, in turn, benefits the educators who deal with students at schools in order to provide the best services for them. This study tries to answer the main following question: What is the relationship between family upbringing practices and curiosity for the upper primary school students? The question has the following sub-questions:

- a. To what extent do fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education have curiosity?
- b. What is the mother's educational practice that she follows with her fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education?

- c. What is the father's educational practice that he follows with his fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education?
- d. What is the relationship between curiosity and parental practices with their fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education?
- e. Does the relationship between curiosity and parental practices of the fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education vary according to gender?

2.2 Study Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- a. Identify the relationship between students' curiosity and parental practices.
- b. Identify the relationship between curiosity and parental practices according to gender.

2.3 Significance of the study

The study is important for the following reasons:

- a. It looks for the right parental practices which aim to develop the children's curiosity.
- b. It is important for the parents and the people who are interested in this field since it enables them to understand others' personalities as well as the upbringing practices and their influence on building personalities.
- c. It sheds light on the psychological state of students and on the nature of the relationship that links it with the parental upbringing.
- d. It is likely that the results of this study will contribute to proposing some suggestions and solutions that can be used in student counseling.

2.4 Study Limitations

The study had the following limitations:

Spatial Limitation: the study was conducted on fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education in Jordan.

Temporal Limitation: The study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year (2014/2015).

Methodological Limitations: The study is limited by the truthfulness of the subjects' responses to the study tool.

2.5 Procedural Definitions

- *Curiosity:* the tendency to discover, search and seek knowledge. It usually takes place when there is a contradiction between what the student thinks true and what is really true. In this study, curiosity is measured through what the individual gets on the verbal curiosity measurement for 9-12-year-old children.
- *Parental practices:* the activities that both fathers and mothers do to their children. They can be either democratic or dictator.
- *Upper primary school students:* fifth and sixth graders, aged 11-12 years old.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Population and Sample

The study population is composed of all fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education during the academic year (2014/2015). They were (16499) students. The sample included only (350) students who were chosen randomly from all schools in Zarqa first directorate. Table (1) shows the distribution of the study sample according to gender and grade.

Table (1): Study Sample Distributed According to Gender and Grade

Gender	Fifth	Sixth	Total
Male	135	44	179
Female	137	34	171
Total	272	78	350

3.2 Study Tools

First: The study used the verbal curiosity measurement for 9-12-year-old children which was designed by Budair (2004) for the Egyptian environment. The measurement was modified for the Jordanian environment. The final version of the measurement includes (50) paragraphs. To test the validity of the measurement, the content correlation validity was deducted by arbitration; the measurement was studied by ten specialists in education and psychology; their comments were taken into consideration and the measurement was modified accordingly. Paragraphs (12, 14, 16, and 22) were modified. To make sure that the measurement was consistent, the measurement was re-applied to (30) students of fifth and sixth graders with a ten-day interval between the first and second application. The reliability coefficient was (0.97) which was an excellent value for a measurement.

Second: Parental Practices Measurement which comprised two parts: a part to measure the mother's practices (46 paragraphs), and a part to measure the father's practices (49 paragraphs). Both parts measure the parents' practices from the students' views. To identify the validity of the measurement, the content correlation validity was deducted by arbitration; the measurement was studied by ten specialists in education and psychology; their comments were taken into consideration and the measurement was modified accordingly. To make sure that the measurement was consistent, the measurement was re-applied to (30) students of fifth and sixth graders. The Stability of Internal Consistency was used by deducting Cronbach Alpha which was (0.94) for mothers and (0.96) for fathers. These are considered excellent values for a measurement.

3.3 Study Procedures

After making sure that the study tools are valid and consistent, the researchers took an approval from the Ministry of Education to apply the study in the different schools of Zarqa First Directorate of Education in Jordan. The curiosity measurement and parental practices measurement were applied to the study sample (350 students).

3.4 Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS; the means and standard deviations were calculated. A *t*-test was also conducted to compare the means and Pearson correlation.

4. Results of the Study

For the *first* question, "To what extent do fifth and sixth graders in the Zarqa first directorate of education have curiosity?" we calculated the mean and standard deviation of the students' scores on the curiosity measurement as shown in table (2).

Table (2): Mean and Standard Deviation of the Students' Scores on the Curiosity Measurement

Measurement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Curiosity	132.7	18.7

The table above shows that the mean of the students' scores on the curiosity measurement was (132.7), which was higher than the general mean of the measurement (111) with a difference (21.7) degree. To find out the significance of the difference between the measurement mean and the mean of the students' scores on the same measurement, a *t*-test was calculated for the significant differences as evident in table (3).

Table (3): Significance of the Difference between the Measurement Mean and the Mean of the Students' Scores on the Curiosity Measurement

Measurement	Difference between the Two Means	Degree of freedom	<i>t</i> -value	Significance
Curiosity	21.7	346	21.6	0.000

Table (3) indicates that there was a significant difference between the measurement mean and the mean of the students' scores on the same measurement since *t*-value was (21.6) which makes a significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). This denotes that the students do have curiosity.

To answer the *second* study question "What is the mother's educational practice that she follows with her fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education?" we calculated the mean and standard deviation of the students' scores on the parental practices measurement for the mother as shown in table (4).

Table (4): Mean and Standard Deviation of the Students' Scores on the Parental Practices Measurement for the Mother

Measurement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample
Parental Practices Measurement for the Mother	157.7	15.9	350

The table above shows that the mean of the students' scores on the parental measurement for the mother was (157.7), which was higher than the general mean of the measurement (138) with a (19.7) degree difference. To find out the significance of the difference between the measurement mean and the mean of the students' scores on the same measurement, a *t*-test was calculated for the significant differences as shown in table (5).

Table (5): Significance of the Difference between the Measurement Mean and the Mean of the Students' Scores on the Parental Practices Measurement for the Mother

Measurement	Difference between the Two Means	Degree of Freedom	<i>t</i> -value	Significance
Parental Practices Measurement for the Mother	19.7	346	23.1	0.000

Table (5) indicates that there was a significant difference between the measurement mean and the mean of the students' scores on the parental measurement for the mother since *t*-value was (23.1) which makes a significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). This denotes that the mother's practices were democratic.

Third, to answer the *third* study question "What is the father's educational practice that he follows with his fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education?" we calculated the mean and standard deviation of the students' scores on the parental practices measurement for the father as shown in table (6).

Table (6): Mean and Standard Deviation of the Students' Scores on the Parental Practices Measurement for the Father

Measurement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample
Parental Practices Measurement for the Father	162.4	17.2	350

The table above shows that the mean of the students' scores on the parental measurement for the father was (162.4), which was higher than the general mean of the measurement (147) with a difference of (15.4) degree. To find out the significance of the difference between the measurement mean and the mean of the students' scores on the same measurement, a *t*-test was calculated for the significant differences as shown in table (7).

Table (7): Significance of the Difference between the Measurement Mean and the Mean of the Students' Scores on the Parental Practices Measurement for the Father

Measurement	Difference between the Two Means	Degree of Freedom	t-value	Significance
Parental Practices Measurement for the Father	15.4	346	16.6	0.000

Table (7) indicates that there was a significant difference between the measurement mean and the mean of the students' scores on the parental measurement for the father since t -value was (16.6) which makes a significant difference at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). This denotes that the father's practices were democratic.

As for the *fourth* study question "What is the relationship between curiosity and parental practices with their fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education?", Pearson correlation between the mean of the students' scores on the curiosity measurement and the mean of the students' scores on the parental practices measurement was calculated. Table (8) refers to the mean and standard deviation of the students' scores on both measurements.

Table (8): Pearson Correlation of the Students' Scores on the Parental Practices Measurement and Curiosity Measurement

Measurement	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation coefficient	Significance
Curiosity	350	132.7	18.7	*0.17	0.002
Mother's practices		157.7	15.9		
Father's practices		162.4	17.2	0.095	0.078

Table (8) above shows that there is a correlation between curiosity and the mother's practices since the correlation coefficient was ($R=0.17$) which is significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). By contrast, there was a weak correlation between curiosity and the father's practices since the correlation coefficient was ($R=0.095$).

Fifth, to answer the *fifth* study question "Does the relationship between curiosity and parental practices of the fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education vary according to gender?", we calculated the means, standard deviations and correlation coefficient between the mean of the students' scores on the curiosity measurement and the mean of the students' scores on the parental practices measurement. Table (9) illustrates.

Table (9): Means, Standard Deviations and Coefficient Correlation of the Male and Female Students' Scores on the Curiosity Measurement and Parental Democratic and Dictator Practices Measurement

Gender	Measurement	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Males	Curiosity	179	132.6	18.2		
	Democratic Mother	179	120.1	19.5	**0.29	0.000
	Dictator Mother	179	35.9	9.3	**0.20	0.008
	Democratic Father	179	114.5	21.2	**0.23	0.002
	Dictator Father	179	45.6	13.1	**0.25	0.001
Females	Curiosity	171	132.6	18.2		
	Democratic Mother	171	120.5	19.5	**0.19	0.012
	Dictator Mother	171	38.9	9.3	**0.22	0.003
	Democratic Father	171	113.7	21.2	0.15	0.054
	Dictator Father	171	51.0	13.1	-0.10	0.181

Table (9) above shows that there is a significant correlation between curiosity and the democratic mother's practices since the correlation coefficient was ($R=.29$) for males and ($R= 0.19$) for females. By contrast, there was a weak, though significant, correlation between curiosity and the dictator mother's practices since the correlation coefficient was ($R= -0.20$) for males and ($R= -0.22$) for females. This, in turn, indicates that dictator practices, especially from the mother's side, hinder curiosity for both boys and girls. As for the father, his democratic practices had a significant correlation with the boys' curiosity; correlation coefficient was ($R= 0.23$). On the other hand, there was no significant correlation between the father's democratic practices and the girls' curiosity since the correlation coefficient was ($R= 0.15$). His dictator practices, by contrast, had a negative correlation on the boys' curiosity ($R= -0.25$). However, there was insignificant correlation between the father's dictator practices and the girls' curiosity. This may suggest that the fathers are more concerned about their male children than their female children.

5. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the fifth and sixth graders in Zarqa First Directorate of Education do have curiosity which is a characteristic of the growing period for 11-12 year-old children. Alongside the physical growth, children become more interested in seeking the exploration of the unknown since children are naturally curious. If they remain curious, they will continue exploring things which will make them happy. When they feel happy, they will repeat the exploration. The results also show that the upbringing that the sample of the study have had is generally democratic from both parents. More importantly, there is a positive correlation between curiosity and the mother's discipline practices. However, the study did not find a significant correlation between curiosity and the father's discipline practices. This result may be referred to the study population which is rather conservative and most mothers are non-working and thus they spend more time with their children than the fathers. Consequently, mothers have greater influence on their children's behavior than fathers. Furthermore, the study showed that there was a positive significant correlation between the mother's democratic practices and boys' and girls' curiosity; coefficient correlation was (0.29) for boys and (0.19) for girls. This, in turn, suggests that the democratic discipline behavior develops boys' and girls' curiosity because children are more attached to their mothers than their fathers. On the other hand, there was a negative significant correlation between the mother's dictator discipline and boys' and girls' curiosity as coefficient correlation was ($- 0.20$) for boys and ($- 0.22$) for girls. This denotes that dictator discipline behaviors hinder the exploration practices for both boys and girls.

As for the father, there was a significant positive correlation between the democratic discipline behavior that he follows and only the boys' curiosity, but there was insignificant correlation between the father's democratic behavior and the girls' curiosity. This means that there was a friendly relationship between the father and his male children. This is explained by the bias that the father has in favor of his male children, e.g. he always talks to them about their problems but ignores their ill-behavior. By contrasts, he does not do the same with his daughters. In fact, there are more social restrictions on the girls especially 11-12 year-old girls who are in their early teenage. The father wants his daughter to assist her mother at home, and nothing more.

With regard to the father's dictator discipline behavior towards his children, there was significant negative correlation between his dictator behavior and the male children's curiosity in comparison with a negative, but not significant, correlation between his dictator behavior and his female children's curiosity. This implies that the father's influence on his male children as a result of his friendly relationship with them, when he is democratic, encourages them to become curious. However, when he is dictator, he hinders their explorative behavior. As for the girls, the father does not care about them. This result is explained in terms of his aloof relationship with them. Thus, the father is not influential on his daughter's explorative behavior. Our study is congruent with Budair's (2004) who found a negative relationship between curiosity and the father's provocative behavior that incites psychological pain. Budair also found a negative correlation between curiosity and the mother's instability in instructing her children. Despite the agreement with previous studies, this research is of special interest because of studying a specific group of children, i.e. 11-12 year-old children.

6. Conclusion

In light of the results and the subsequent discussion, the study concludes:

1. The presence of a significant positive correlation between curiosity and the mother's upbringing practices.
2. Curiosity is positively or negatively affected by the social upbringing practices.
3. The mother plays a greater role in inciting curiosity than the father.
4. The mother's influence in raising her children, especially males, is greater than the father's.

7. Recommendations

The study recommends:

1. Conducting studies about curiosity on a larger population.
2. Utilizing curiosity in the educational process.
3. Holding counseling courses for fathers and mothers on 'upbringing children'.

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