



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Comparison of Emotional Self-regulation and Parent-Child Relationship between Prisoners and Non-prisoners

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to compare emotional self-regulation, parent-child relationship between two groups of prisoners and non-prisoners. For this purpose, 80 patients (40 male prisoners and 40 normal subjects) were selected as samples using multi-stage stratified sampling. Subjects were asked to complete emotional self-regulation questionnaire by March and parent-child model of Bagheri. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and t-test were used to analyze the data. The results showed no significant difference in emotional self-regulation skills and its aspects between two groups of prisoners and non-prisoners, but a significant difference in parent-child relationship. In some aspects (rigidity and coddling), the difference is not significant. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between the two groups (people who are the same in both groups in both security-based and freedom-based models, for example, both gilded and controlled and limited and those who are in a group or weakly in both groups in terms of parent-child relationship).*

**Keywords:** emotional self-regulation, parent-child relationship, Prisoners, Non-prisoners

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### INTRODUCTION

Many distortions and deviations can be analyzed by emotional characteristics of individuals. Some of the reasons such as adverse family circumstances, emotional gaps, wrong methods of education and parenting, educational and cultural shortcomings in the school and community, social and cultural problems of insecurity, environmental and economic problems, psychological and social pressures, lack of proper development and formation (undesirable personality traits such as indolence, self-infatuation, intolerance, low self-esteem, cause social damages suffered by individual and family [1,2].

Over time humans have used many strategies to regulate their behavioral and psychological states. They have consciously used approached to regulate their emotional and behavioral states [3].

McCullough and Boker [4] defined self-regulation as they way one controls his reactions to track his goals and live in accordance with standards. Barkley [5] defined self-regulation as any reaction or series of reactions to the events for the knowledge of next possible reaction associated with that event.

Self-regulation is the element necessary for the successful functioning of the social world. Without it, people are instantaneously stimulated by emotional setbacks, blames on small and slight resentments, saying the first thing that comes to mind and conducting any behavior that they feel is right at that moment [6]. However, exploration of social behavior and emotions resulting from perceived social value will act as a guide for future behaviors which triggers something like guilt [7].

Self-regulation requires four psychological components: First, people need to be aware of their behavior to measure its conflict with social norms. Second, people need to understand how others react to their behavior to predict the way others respond to their behavior. This requires a third mechanism which reveals behavior particularly in complex social situations. Finally, people need a mechanism to resolve the differences between the self and the social expectations or norms that stimulate behaviors to resolve any dispute.

Failure in self-regulation is associated with consequences of negative behaviors including exploitative behaviors, hatred and criminal behaviors [8].

Conversely, those people are better able to self-regulate that can improve their relationships, increase their business success and have better mental health [9-11].

One of the aspects of self-efficacy is regulation of emotions. Humans always prefer positive emotions; they constantly try to trigger positive emotions or increase and sustain these emotions and decrease negative emotions [12].

To function in society, people require regulating their emotions. Failure to do so can cause aggression and violations, violence and other forms of anti-social behaviors. Regulation of emotions is both of vital importance and psychological advantages. Lack of emotional regulation not only involves disorders such as aggression and anti-social violation, but also includes undermining morality and personal differences such as posttraumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder. Depression particularly imposes a large burden to society and easily leads to mental health disorder more common and more costly [13].

Self-regulation and self-control are essential for success in many spheres of life [14 Stenseng & Wichstrøm, 2014]. Students with self-control have better psychological judgments, better personal communications, and better practice to have success [11]. Self-control indicates predictors of academic performance and intelligence [10]. People with high self-control have lower alcoholic consumption and lower rates of crime and delinquency, better health and better health behaviors. Furthermore, altered consciousness and procedures (including self-controls) are negatively associated with many health threatening behaviors including physical inactivity, attempted suicide and risky sexual activity, poor nutrition, drug abuse, violence and hazardous drinking [15, 16].

Relationship between parents and children have attracted interests of many education theorists and experts. Family is the first base bonding the child and the environment. In family, children learn primary thoughts about the world, grow physically and mentally, learn how to talk, learn basic norms of behavior and finally form attitudes, ethics and morale and become social [17]. Parental styles are one of the most important family variables in psychosocial development of children [18]. Parental style is a set of attitudes toward the child, which leads to emotional atmosphere where behavior of parents exhibits [19]. Experience of safe, stable relationships with parents and nurturing in a calm and orderly atmosphere help family's psychological well-being and socialization [20].

Darling and Steinberg [20] found that parenting styles are structures that reflect the nature of parent-child relationship. The researchers defined disciplinary procedures as communication structures which describe the quality of relationships between parents and children. They believed that parenting styles has important effects on the growth of children. On the other hand, it has been shown the interaction between the child and parent influences on adolescent behavioral and emotional functioning [21].

Stright et al [22] also concluded that interactions and parental education play an important role in predicting children's self-regulated learning. Meta-cognitive teachings and parental strategies and modelling help children learn meta-cognitive knowledge and thus improve self-regulation [23]. Parental support is an important instrument for development of a sense of personal inadequacy and inhibition and, in turn, is associated with the use of self-regulatory behaviors [24].

Zygelman have been divided parent-child relationship into four parts, which is not different from Schiffer: 1) strong parents, 2) authoritarian parents, 3) tolerant parents, and 4) negligent or insensitive parents.

Olson [25] addressed the nature of family, according to family status in each of the two dimensions of cohesion and adaptability. The upper boundary of the cohesion (emotional bonding) is the enmeshed family in which expressing thoughts and feelings between parent and child is intrusively extreme. The lower boundary is the disengaged family with no intimacy. The upper boundary of the adaptability (balanced change in the power structure, rules and roles) with the lack of management and discipline is the chaotic family. The lower boundary is the rigid family in which power is monopolized and rules and discipline are consistent and severe. Family potentially influences the attitudes and behaviors [26].

The parent-child relationship questionnaire was originally intended to describe a pattern of parent-child relationship based on behavioral patterns rather than parental attitudes, particularly those behaviors related to childhood to late adolescence which occur in practice [27]. The purpose of parent-child relationship questionnaire is to address the effect of relationships between parents and children. The items were originally developed in a manner that focuses on children's understanding on how to communicate with parents and its effect on their life.

The results of this questionnaire which are abstract and general based on typology, achieved a model based on three main patterns in the relationship between parents and children; however, these three types are different from Baumrind types as a famous parenting style. First, the theoretical model relies on Iranian community and a culture different from Western culture. In addition, it used the intellectual foundations of Islamic concepts to understand the empirical relationships. That is why these three types are differently conceptualized and explained. Second, each of the three main types forms a particular situation consisting of four dimensions.

The model consists of three main patterns: a) security-based, b) equilibrium-based, and c) freedom-based. Each of the three main types form a certain condition consisting of four properties in four dimensions. These four dimensions are:

1. Conduct
2. Support: experience and honor
3. Intimacy
4. Acceptance: Respect and honor

The security is equal to a certain quality situation in terms of these four dimensions. As a result, this situation is described by four characteristics, namely 1) rigidity (conduct), 2) control and limitation (support), 3) recognition (intimacy), and 4) conditional acceptance (acceptance).

The freedom-based relationships is equivalent to a certain quality situation consisting of these four characteristics: 1) uncertainty-softness (conduct), 2) coddling (support), 3) empathy without respect (intimacy), and 4) apathy and emancipation (acceptance).

Equilibrium-based model consists of four dimensions including: 1) conduct, 2) support, 3) intimacy, and 4) acceptance.

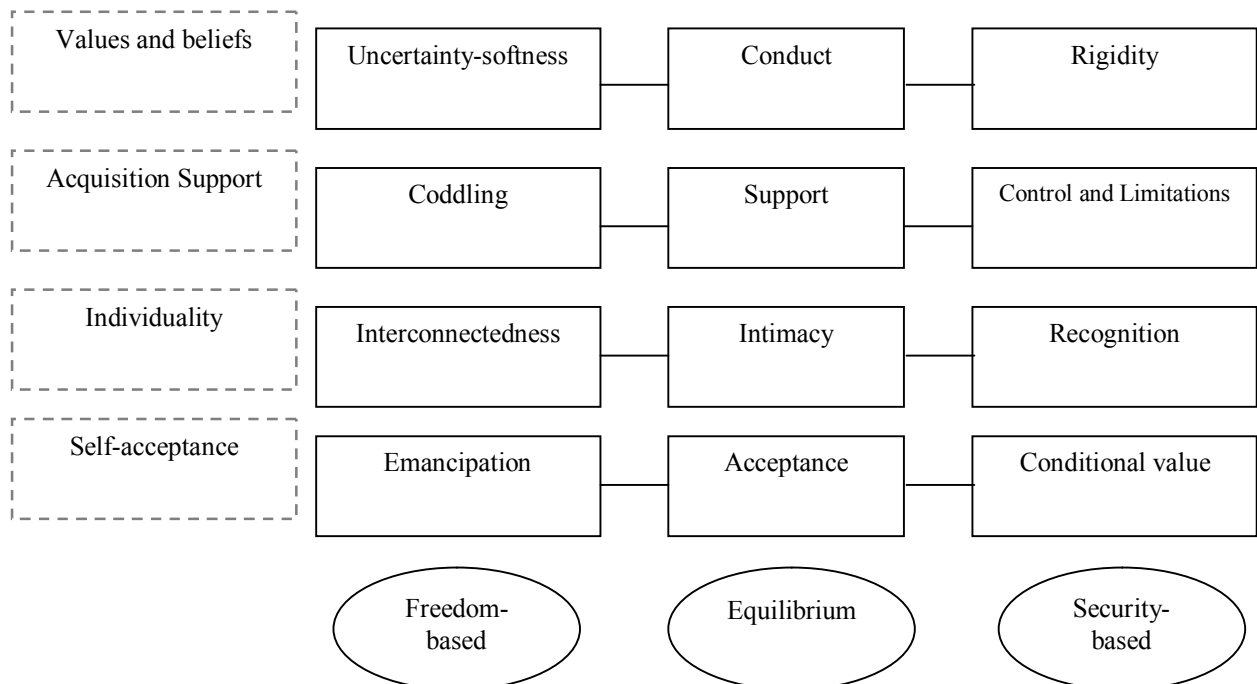


Figure 1: Theoretical model of relations between parents - children

As Figure 1 shows, each of the four dimensions forms a continuum consisting a bipolar extreme and a balanced stance in the middle of the continuum. For example, an end of the first dimension (conduct) is rigidity and the other end of the continuum is uncertainty-softness. Conduct also is the balance between these two extremes. This means that the quality between parents and children in each dimension can take many different forms, since the each continuum (each dimension) does not contain only three states of extremes and equilibrium, but very different degrees between these three conditions. Considering the methods that people use to regulate their emotions in order to increase positive emotions and reduce negative emotions, application of these methods are different. The most important factor to predict crime which occurs mostly in neglectful, unbalanced or extremely strict families. Based on the parent-child relationship model, it is expected to see significantly higher non-balanced parent-child relationship (extremely freedom-based or extremely control-based) among prisoners compared to non-prisoners. In addition, significantly lower level of self-regulation can be found among prisoners compared to non-prisoners. Based on these two assumptions, the purpose of this study is to compare emotional self-regulation, parent-child relationships between prisoners and non-prisoners.

**MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The methodology of the present study is practical retrospective using a casual-comparative method to collect data.

**The samples**

The studied group consisted of two groups of normal subjects who had no history of prison and prisoners in the central prison of Zanjan province in 2011-2012. The samples included 80 persons (40 out of 150 prisoners and 40 non-prisoners). Distribution of the sample was conducted by stratified multistage random sampling method. First, two groups of prisoners and normal people were determined. Then, 40 prisoners were selected. Next, 40 normal people with no history of prison were selected. Prisoners were randomly selected by the type of crime (robbery, rape, vandalism, etc.) and normal individuals were selected based on age, education, and no experience of prison. Cronbach's alpha was used for examining the validity.

**Materials**

Emotional self-regulation questionnaire of March: The items are selected from the Handbook of Self-regulation developed by Larsen and translated in Persian by Gorji (2006). This questionnaire determines the effect of emotional self-regulation on both groups of prisoners and non-prisoners. The questionnaire consists of 44 7-choice items scored based on the 0, 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, 6 scale (never, very rarely, sometimes, moderately, often, most of the time, always, respectively). The negative items are inversely scored. The questionnaire is developed to measure the type of strategies which are used to change emotions. The score of total items is regarded as the total score of self-regulation. Its validity is content validity and its reliability was obtained by implementation of the questionnaire on 60 subjects (30 girls and 30 boys, 0.75). Cronbach's alpha was calculated (0.80). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha obtained on 80 subjects (40 prisoners and 40 non-prisoners) is 0.76.

Parent-child relationship of Bagheri: This scale makes it clear that whether the relationship between parents and children is different between prisoners and non-prisoners? The questionnaire includes 160 items (80 for mothers and 80 for fathers) based on a 5-point scale ranging from totally disagree, partially agree, agree, very agree and totally agree scored by 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. The negative items are scored inversely. The score obtained by the sum of items is regarded as the total score of parent-child relationship. In this study, Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained from the parent-child model is 97 (father 94 and mother 95).

**Methods**

To collect data, the questionnaires were distributed among prisoners and non-prisoners by direct presence, coordination with the General Director of the Bureau of Prisons and Security and Corrective Measures and Chief of the Protection Department of the Central Prison. The subjects were provided with explanations on the questionnaire. The required questionnaires were collected by random stratified sampling method.

**RESULTS**

According to Table 1 and Table 2, where variables of emotional self-regulation skills and its dimensions including cognitive factors, behavioral factors, focused displacement, focused emotional change, decreased negative emotions and increased positive emotions are separately reviewed for prisoners and non-prisoners, values of the emotional self-regulation variables were all higher than 5%. This indicates that the null hypothesis, i.e., the normal distribution of the variables, is accepted in the significant 5%.

**Table 1: normality test of emotional self-regulation skills and its dimensions for non-prisoners**

Variables	Number	Value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P-value	Decision	Result
Cognitive	40	0.575	0.896	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Behavioral	40	0.543	0.930	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
focused displacement	40	1.171	0.129	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
focused emotional change	40	0.805	0.535	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
decreased negative emotions	40	0.790	0.560	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
increased positive emotions	40	0.650	0.792	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution

Considering the P-values obtained in the above table (>0.05), the null hypothesis, i.e., the normal distribution of variables, is accepted in significant 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference in emotional self-regulation skills and its dimensions between prisoners and non-prisoners.

**Table 2: normality test of emotional self-regulation skills and its dimensions for prisoners**

Variables	Number	Value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P-value	Decision	Result
Cognitive	40	0.531	0.941	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Behavioral	40	0.458	0.985	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
focused displacement	40	0.665	0.768	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
focused emotional change	40	0.593	0.873	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
decreased negative emotions	40	0.990	0.281	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
increased positive emotions	40	0.994	0.277	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution

Considering the P-values obtained in the above table (>0.05), the null hypothesis, i.e., the normal distribution of variables, is accepted in significant 0.05.

**Table 3: comparison of emotional self-regulation means and its dimensions in prisoners and non-prisoners**

Dimensions	Group	Number	Mean	t-value	Sig(2.tailed)	Result
Cognitive	Non-prisoner	40	54.9	0.104	0.917	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	54.7			
Behavioral	Non-prisoner	40	123.15	0.889	0.377	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	126.68			
focused displacement	Non-prisoner	40	89.35	1.079	0.284	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	92.45			
focused emotional change	Non-prisoner	40	93.68	0.008	0.994	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	93.65			
decreased negative emotions	Non-prisoner	40	120.58	0.633	0.529	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	122.98			
increased positive emotions	Non-prisoner	40	44.83	0.277	0.783	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	44.28			
Emotional self-regulation	Non-prisoner	40	526.475	0.534	0.595	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	534.725			

As the Table 3 shows, significant level (sig) is higher than  $\alpha=0.05$ ; therefore, the null hypothesis, i.e., the equal mean for both samples is not rejected in significant 5%. Thus, there is no significant difference in emotional self-regulation skills and its dimensions. That means, both groups are common in using all dimensions of self-regulation and use common strategies such as efforts to recognize emotions through thinking, suppressed emotions, efforts for success, enjoyed challenges, activities and regulated goals and utilization of distraction techniques.

**Table 4: normality test of parent-child relationship for non-prisoners**

Variables	Number	Value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P-value	Decision	Result
Rigidity	40	0.888	0.409	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
uncertainty-softness	40	1.072	0.200	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Control and limitation	40	0.665	0.769	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Coddling	40	0.726	0.668	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Recognition	40	0.852	0.462	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Interconnectedness	40	1.073	0.200	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Conditional value	40	0.928	0.356	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
apathy and emancipation	40	1.247	0.089	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution

Considering the P-values obtained in the above table (>0.05), the null hypothesis, i.e., the normal distribution of variables, is accepted in significant 0.05.

**Table 5: normality test of parent-child relationship for prisoners**

Variables	Number	Value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P-value	Decision	Result
Rigidity	40	0.741	0.641	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
uncertainty-softness	40	0.589	0.879	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Control and limitation	40	0.709	0.696	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Coddling	40	0.781	0.575	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Recognition	40	0.515	0.954	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Interconnectedness	40	0.695	0.799	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
Conditional value	40	0.527	0.944	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution
apathy and emancipation	40	0.704	0.705	Accepted null hypothesis	Normal distribution

Considering the P-values obtained in the above table (>0.05), the null hypothesis, i.e., the normal distribution of variables, is accepted in significant 0.05.

**Table 6: comparison of parent-child relationship means in prisoners and non-prisoners**

Dimensions	Group	Number	Mean	t-value	Sig(2.tailed)	Result
Rigidity	Non-prisoner	40	22.38	2.701	0.008	Significant
	Prisoner	40	26.50			
uncertainty-softness	Non-prisoner	40	21.30	1.787	0.078	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	24.08			
Control and limitation	Non-prisoner	40	21.73	0.720	0.474	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	22.83			
Coddling	Non-prisoner	40	23.10	2.765	0.007	Significant
	Prisoner	40	26.90			
Recognition	Non-prisoner	40	21.08	2.630	0.10	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	25.03			
Interconnectedness	Non-prisoner	40	18.90	1.598	0.114	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	21.73			
Conditional value	Non-prisoner	40	21.88	1.742	0.850	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	24.48			
apathy and emancipation	Non-prisoner	40	22.40	1.495	0.139	Insignificant difference
	Prisoner	40	25.10			
Total	Non-prisoner	40	172.75	2.344	0.022	Significant
	Prisoner	40	196.62			

As the Table 6 shows, the significance levels (sig) are lower than the  $\alpha=0.05$  for rigidity and coddling. Thus the null hypothesis, i.e., the equal mean of both samples (prisoners and non-prisoners) is rejected in significant 5%. Therefore, there is a significant difference in above dimensions between prisoners and non-prisoners in terms of the parent-child relationship; however, the difference is not significant for other dimensions.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The findings for variances of both groups show that significance level of variables is higher than 5% for emotional self-regulation. Therefore, there is no significant difference in emotional self-regulation skills and its dimensions between prisoners and non-prisoners. Thus, both groups are common in using all dimensions of self-regulation and use common strategies such as efforts to recognize emotions through thinking, suppressed emotions, and efforts for success, enjoyed challenges, activities and regulated goals and utilization of distraction techniques. This finding is consistent with Bagheri and Yousefi [28], who

found no significant difference between two groups of strict and non-strict and two groups of self-efficient and non-self-efficient in using emotional self-regulation strategies. This is also inconsistent with Kajbaf [29] in relation to motivate beliefs and learning strategies of self-regulation and academic achievements of high school students. Kajbaf [29] found a significant difference in anxiety between girls and boys. Finding of the present study is consistent with Kajbaf [29] who showed a significant difference in other variables between girls and boys. This finding is also inconsistent with Mohsenpour, Hejazi and Kiamanesh [30] examining self-efficiency, achievement goals, learning strategies and sustainability in academic achievement for mathematics. They concluded that learning strategies of self-regulation are related to academic achievement.

The results of the study regarding the difference in parent-child relationship between prisoners and non-prisoners indicate that significance levels are lower than  $\alpha=0.05$  for rigidity and coddling. Thus, the null hypothesis, i.e., the equal mean for both samples (prisoners and non-prisoners) is not rejected in significant 5%. Thus, there is a significant difference in parent-child relationship between prisoners and non-prisoners. However, there is no significant difference in other dimensions.

Two extremes of the equilibrium model for conduct (rigidity), damaged formation, normal values, disability in decisions and confusion and for support (coddling), parental behavior such supporting parents are extreme, controlling and limiting which cause retardation from social competitions and avoidance of common goals and planning and economic, social and family failures. That means, the quality of relationships between parents and children have assumed different scenarios and can be seen as interpersonal uncertainty. Accordingly, the quality of relationships between parents and children involves many combinations of different situations in each dimension of the extremes.

Deviation factors include emotionally incorrect parent-child relationship, kindness and extreme rigidity. Criminals generally grow in tolerant, unbalanced, or extremely strict families. This finding is consistent with Baldwin and Brace who found three dimensions of acceptance and rejection, attention and inattention, dictatorship and democracy in the psychological environment between parents and children. Kadivar [31] divides the emotional structure of the family to warm and welcoming families and restraint and rigor families. In welcoming families, identification is easier and the child models his parents and accepts the family regulations. In restraint and rigor families, children who are not emotionally satisfied may be aggressive, dependent on others and isolated. Therefore, they identify their style to use their knowledge and skills. Darvizeh [32] found that sympathetic behavior of parents can predict self-regulation skill. Moreover, this is consistent with Eisenberg, Fabes and Shepard [33] who used a balanced combination of acceptance and control.

The results in relation to the difference in parent-child relationship between two groups (people who are simultaneously in both groups, people who are in one group or weakly in both groups) showed a significant difference in parent-child relationship between the determined group (people who are in both groups and people who are in one group or weakly in both groups). That means, the determined group is either in the security-based model or in the freedom-based model or in both models (both coddled and controlled and limited). Therefore, there is a conflict in parent-child relationship and parenting styles. This relationship should be encouraging or punishing. As a result, limitation and strictness, attention and inattention as well as acceptance and rejection can disturb the parent-child relationship. Psychologists believe that children who are not emotionally grown, are not able to tolerate suffering, and are emotionally deprived are more likely to crime.

This study is consistent with Kadivar [31] who divides emotional structure of the family to warm and welcoming families and restraint and rigor families. This division includes many combinations of degrees with different severities between extremes in the continuum which leads to inner conflicts. In addition, damage to the formation of values and rules of life and beliefs, interpersonal uncertainty, inhibition of experiences will prevent growth and development and will lead to conflict with wishes and failure in tracking goals. This will result in an inefficient pattern in the family. Moreover, failure in identifying needs and rigidity can extend the incoherence and crimes in the families.

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