

## **The Relationship between Family Functioning, Achievement Motivation and Rational Decision-making Style in Female High School Students of Tehran, Iran**

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### **Abstract**

*Family is the first school that an individual experiences and it has the highest share in determining the influential factors that have effect on an individual's behavior. One of the aspects of family functioning that emerges in children's scholastic performances is the motivation for academic achievement which can be caused by healthy family functioning and factors such as individual, intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In this study, 180 female high school students of Tehran, Iran were selected through cluster random sampling method and they were provided with questionnaires related to family functioning (Bloom's test), achievement motivation (Herman's test) and decision-making style (Scott and Bruce's test). Based on study objectives, hypothesis and test scores, a significant positive relationship between family functioning, achievement motivation and rational decision-making style was found. Our results revealed that family functioning plays a crucial role in increasing self-esteem, achievement motivation and creating a rational style of decision making in children.*

**Keywords: Family Functioning, Achievement Motivation, Rational Decision-making Style.**

## **Introduction**

Family is the first environment that shapes the physical, emotional and personal patterns of an individual and it plays a significant role in the provision of mental health, especially by helping the person to cope with psychological stress. As the center of love, affection, education, emotion and transmitter of civilization, culture and one's first class, family, develops the character and mental and social well-being of a person (Goldenberg, 2012; Corey, 2015).

In most of the studies, family has the highest share in determining individual's behavioral factors, perhaps because it is the first school that a person experiences and children's learning contents are directly related to the family's functioning and environment. Family functioning encompasses not only the factors such as family amenities and parent's education, but also includes moral development of the family, ways of communication between members, sufficiency of family rules, the division of family roles, members skills in dealing with problems (problem-solving), emotion expression, meeting emotional needs and etc. (Epstein et al.; Figley, 2013).

Minuchin (2009) believes that a system that has the greatest effect on the behavior of an individual is family. In fact, family not only forms the adaptive and normal behavior of a child, but also shapes abnormal behaviors of individuals. Nevertheless, family in its various forms has always had the key functioning. Achieving a healthy society depends on family health and a healthy family depends on having people with mental health that experience good communication with each other. In this regard, children as elements that have little impact on family interactions, compared to their parents, are more vulnerable than others in case of lack of healthy family relationships (Galvin et al., 2015).

Psychology has always been interested in studying family functioning; therefore, it is one of the most important parts of psychological studies and family therapy. One of the aspects of family functioning which appears in children's scholastic performances is the academic achievement motivation that can be caused by healthy family functioning and factors such as individual, intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). Nowadays, achievement motivation is an important part of every one's life. According to this, for nearly a century, professional groups and psychologists have always been extensively interested in different aspects of achievement motivation and have focused on identifying the related predictors.

In order to satisfy families' legitimate demands, just like organizations, families should have goals and specific plans and to achieve these goals and plans they should apply principals and standards. One of the principals of family management is decision-making. The decision-making is a sign of maturity and responsibility of individuals. Making the right decisions produces a sense of joy and accomplishment and increases the self-esteem and adjustability of the person. This state not only influences the decision maker, but also has positive effects on those around him and provides the mental health of the individual and family members. Decision-making style of the person represents the habitual patterns which he uses while making decisions. One of these styles is the rational decision-making style. This style reflects the tendency of the decision maker to identify all possible solutions, evaluate all aspects of each approach and finally to select the

optimum solution, when he is faced with a decision-making condition (Lerner et al., 2015; Jiang, 2014).

In Pérez's research (2012), adolescent temperament and parental control in the development of the adolescent decision-making, the results showed an inverse association between anger-frustration of adolescents with cautious decision-making in their personal domains. Also, the results showed that lack of mental control and behavior of adolescents were associated with reduced decision-making autonomy. Moreover, effect of parents' behavioral control was found in adolescents' fear and decision-making. Based on socio-cognitive theories, Wigfield et al. (2014) demonstrated that gender, cultural differences and social experiences are effective in success motivation and also parental beliefs, education methods, relationships with teachers and peers positively influence the motivation.

Dogan et al. (2010), investigated the relationship between students' decision-making skills and attitude of their parents. Results confirmed the relationship between students' decision-making skills and attitude of parents and associated factors.

Study of Bronstein et al. (2005), showed that the low level of parental control and external reward is associated with decreased motivation, but parents who encourage their children to get good grades and support and nurture autonomy of children, significantly and positively affect their achievement motivation and scholastic achievement motivation.

Najmi et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between structural family functioning, self-esteem and academic achievement in female high school students and the results confirmed that there is a significant relationship between family functioning and each dimension of educational, social, familial and physical self-esteem. Therefore, kids who have sufficient family support can have more opportunities for self-determination, self-awareness, self-expression, and these as cognitive structures affect a person's motivation and academic performance.

Tabesh et al. (2012), in a study explored the effect of emotional intelligence skills training on rational, intuitive, avoidant, dependent, and instantaneous decision-making styles. The conclusion was that emotional intelligence skills training, increases the use of intuitive style of decision-making and decreases the use of avoidant, dependent, and instantaneous decision-making styles.

Yaseminejhad (2011) analyzed the effect of life skills training on procrastination and academic achievement in female students of secondary schools in Islamabad city. The results of data study, using multivariate analysis of covariance showed that life skills training reduces procrastination in female students of the experimental group compared to the control group. However, this training showed no significant effect on the academic achievement of the students. Also, the results revealed the importance of life skills training on reducing procrastination in learners.

Tamannaifar et al. (2011) examined the factors that contribute to academic achievement and impede academic failure. The results suggested that, there is a significant relationship between

motivation and academic achievement. In addition, achievement motivation of girls was higher than boys.

Current study is important because it can provide novel and solid research results regarding family functioning, achievement motivation and children rational decision-making which can be utilized by parents and educators and school counselors. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between family functioning, achievement motivation and rational decision-making style in female high school students of Tehran, Iran.

### **Material and Method**

This research is a fundamental study with a descriptive-correlational method. Thus, in the current study we sought to examine the relationship between family functioning, achievement motivation and rational decision-making style among female high school students of Tehran, Iran, in the years 93-94. Total number of 180 individuals was selected for this study using cluster random sampling method. Data and sample information were selected in two phases. During the first phase, a list of high schools for girls from different districts of the city was prepared, next three female high schools were chosen randomly. In the second phase, two classes were randomly selected from each school and 180 female students who satisfied the inclusion criteria (volunteering for participation, lack of mental and physical illness, living with parents and minimum age of 15), were chosen from the schools.

After selecting samples, research objectives were explained for each class and the subjects were given a questionnaire and were asked to carefully read the questions and give the best possible answer and not to leave a question without an answer as much as possible. The researcher asked the students to answer the questions on their own and ask for help if there were any vague points.

In order to collect information for testing the hypothesis, questionnaires were used as the main investigation tools. Following questionnaires were used in this study:

- Bloom's Family Function questionnaire (Bloom, 1985)
- Hermans' achievement motivation questionnaire (Hermans, 1970)
- Decision-making style questionnaire (DMSQ) by Scott and Bruce (1995)

Then, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods (mean, median and standard deviation) and inferential statistical methods (Pearson correlation). Statistical analysis was performed by using SPSS software on Windows platform (version 22; IBM SPSS Statistics, Chicago, IL, USA).

## **Results**

### **A. Descriptive Results of Research**

The mean and standard deviation of measured parameters are provided in Table 1.

Table 1-Mean and standard deviation of measured parameters

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Family functioning	180	62.04	8.29	39	72
Achievement motivation	180	85.41	11.95	55	111
Rational decision-making style	180	16.79	3.50	7	25

The highest standard deviation value belonged to achievement motivation and the lowest value belonged to rational decision-making.

## B. Analytical Results of Research

### 1. The first hypothesis test

H1: There is a significant relationship between family functioning and achievement motivation in female high school students of Tehran, Iran.

Table 2- Results of Pearson correlation test to examine the relationship between family functioning and achievement motivation

Variable	Achievement motivation	
Family functioning	correlation	0.68
	Sig	0.001
	N	180

As it is indicated in table 2, according to statistical test results ( $r=0.68$ ), ( $P=0.001$ ) at the significance level of  $\alpha < 0.05$ , the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence, there is a significant and positive relationship between family functioning and achievement motivation.

### 2. The second hypothesis test

H2: There is a significant relationship between family functioning and rational decision-making style in female high school students of Tehran, Iran.

Table 3- Results of Pearson correlation test to examine the relationship between family functioning and rational decision-making style

Variable	Rational decision-making style	
Family functioning	correlation	0.67
	Sig	0.001
	N	180

As it is indicated in table 3, according to statistical test results ( $r=0.67$ ), ( $P=0.001$ ) at the significance level of  $\alpha<0.05$ , the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence, there is a significant and positive relationship between family functioning and rational decision-making style.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The results of this study indicated that healthy family functioning predicted significant percentage of achievement motivation. Although, some researches were carried out regarding family functioning and achievement motivation, the relationship between these two variables had not been studied before. Furthermore, the results of this study were consistent with findings from Najmi (2011), Wigfield (2014), Sun (2009), Eng (2008), Park (2008), Taylor (2004). Also, in this regard Bronstein (2005) concluded that the Authoritative parenting style has a positive impact on achievement motivation and scholastic performance. The results of table 2 yielded a significance level between family functioning and achievement motivation. Thus, there is a significant and positive relationship between family functioning and achievement motivation. In other words, better family functioning leads to higher achievement motivation, and our first hypothesis was confirmed.

In addition, results of this study verified that healthy family functioning predicted significant percentage of rational decision-making style. The findings of current study were consistent with results of Dogan (2010) and Perez (2012), which concluded that parents' behavior and family functioning affect children's decision-making style and predict these variables. So, our second hypothesis was confirmed.

Finally, based on the results of current and previous studies, it can be deduced that family functioning, especially parenting has a key role on children upbringing and reforming society. Consequently, it is crucial to examine the factors that affect the family turmoil and mental health.

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