Modeling Moral Behavior Based on Parent-Child Interaction and Perceived Social Support: The Mediation Role of Cultural Intelligence and Religious Orientation in Female High School Students

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article history:** Received 15 Nov. 2023 Received in revised form 12 Feb. 2024 Accepted 5 Apr. 2024 Published online 01 Sep. 2024 **Keywords**: Parent-Child Interaction, Perceived Social Support, Cultural Intelligence, Moral Behavior	**Objective:** This investigation was undertaken with the objective of constructing a model of moral behavior predicated on the interactions between parents and children, alongside perceived social support, with cultural intelligence and religious orientation serving as mediating variables among high school females in Tehran. **Methods**: The research employed a descriptive correlational methodology. The statistical population for this study encompasses all female high school students aged between 12 and 16 years, with a total of 400 individuals selected as a sample through the application of cluster sampling during the academic year of 2023. Data collection was facilitated through the utilization of standardized questionnaires. **Results**: The findings indicated that parent-child interactions exert a direct influence on moral behavior; additionally, it was determined that perceived social support similarly has a direct impact on moral conduct. Further results corroborated that parent-child interactions do not influence moral behavior via the mediating function of cultural intelligence. Ultimately, additional findings revealed that perceived social support exerts an indirect effect on ethical behavior through the mediating influence of cultural intelligence. **Conclusions**: The results predominantly validate the significance of social support, familial context, and parental influence in both mitigating and enhancing moral behavior.

Introduction

The relationship between parents and their offspring constitutes one of the most significant, consequential, and profound connections in an individual's existence. This association encompasses the bonding processes and their functions in facilitating the socialization of children (for instance, concerning gender, vocation and employment, values and relational competencies, as well as health-related behaviors), the provision of social support, the expression of affection, the attribution of meaning to life experiences, and the engagement in conflict resolution (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011). The manner in which parents and children navigate these functions undergoes transformation over time as their relationships evolve through various developmental stages (Branje, 2018; Steinberg, 2001). Given the distinct communication dynamics that are generally present in mother-child compared to father-child interactions, it is plausible that mothers and fathers may exhibit differing responses to the evolving needs of their children (De Goede et al., 2009). Although the corpus of research concerning parent-child communication is extensive and exhaustive, it remains in a state of continual evolution. As this relationship serves as a crucial social asset for both parents and children throughout their lifetimes, scholars are undoubtedly striving to grasp the intricate complexities of familial dynamics and their structural components (Michaelson et al., 2021). The bond shared between parents and children is indeed among the most impactful relationships in an individual's life. Infants and young children depend on their parents to fulfill fundamental needs, with parents supplying the necessary resources to sustain them and facilitate the well-being of future generations (Floyd, 2006). From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, the intrinsic human motivation to nurture, shield, and provide for one's offspring has emerged as a product of natural selection principles (Tooby & Cosmides, 2015). The majority of parents allocate resources towards their children, encompassing time, affection, financial support, education, and health care. This investment, along with the resultant interdependence, cultivates a vital interpersonal connection between parents and children, effectively socializing them into adulthood and influencing their communicative competencies (Afifi et al., 2011).

The findings of the present research underscore the necessity for heightened emphasis on cultural intelligence and ethical behavior, alongside initiatives aimed at enhancing these attributes among students (Mirzaei Daryani et al., 2017). Cultural intelligence is instrumental in enabling children and adolescents to exhibit appropriate behaviors by swiftly and accurately comprehending various

cultural elements, which in turn facilitates the emergence and enhancement of additional moral behaviors, ultimately resulting in improved performance and character development (Ott & Michailova, 2018; Wang & Goh, 2020).

Adolescence is regarded as a pivotal phase for religious growth, as the burgeoning capacities for abstract thought, hypothetical reasoning, and metacognition contribute significantly to the formation of religious identity and commitment (Benson et al., 2019). Religion serves as a fundamental foundation for social development and provides an essential mechanism for socialization, particularly in the realm of moral conduct. Given the cognitive advancements that occur during adolescence, including augmented capabilities for abstract reasoning and the comprehension of symbolism, it is crucial to scrutinize the impact of religion during this developmental stage (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2003). More than 80 percent of American adolescents aged 13 to 17 have articulated the significance of faith in their daily lives and decision-making processes, while nearly 90 percent indicated some form of belief in a deity or a "cosmic life force." Lippman and Keith reported that 82% of 20,000 teenagers and young adults from 41 nations professed belief in God (Lippman & Keith, 2006).

Moreover, substantial evidence exists supporting the protective function of religion concerning various dimensions of youth well-being, encompassing both social and psychological ramifications. Cultural-religious determinants, such as religious affiliation and nationality, may exert a direct influence on adolescent performance or may serve to moderate the correlation between religiosity and adolescent performance. In conjunction with these contextual elements, it is imperative to acknowledge the potential influence of gender in any inquiry concerning religiosity, as gender has been demonstrated to affect both religiosity and adolescent performance (Kang & Romo, 2011).

Numerous sociological and developmental frameworks investigate the religious orientation within the lives of adolescents. Durkheim's theory of social integration posits that engagement in a religious organization correlates with enhanced well-being. Durkheim elucidated that commitment to a collective and active participation in social activities, including church services and events, contributed to the alleviation of an individual's sense of anomie. Furthermore, his theoretical perspective posits that religion assumes a vital role in legitimizing and reinforcing societal norms, thereby providing individuals with frameworks that promote constructive behaviors. In a similar

vein, Erikson posited that adolescents are drawn to ideologies that address existential inquiries, questions that are frequently posed during the adolescent phase. Erikson additionally asserted that religion furnishes social support and aids in the cultivation of social values, functions that likely shield young individuals from feelings of alienation.

A plethora of studies has indicated that religious orientation serves as a positive predictor of youth social behaviors (such as social initiative) and a negative predictor of youth antisocial behaviors (such as substance use and delinquency). Furthermore, social engagement, exemplified by participation in "programs, groups, or services," exhibits a positive correlation with religious attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, the findings suggest a relationship between adolescents' self-assessed religiosity and their involvement in school activities and altruistic behaviors. Consequently, religious orientation serves as a predictor of favorable health behaviors, including seat belt usage, dietary habits, sleep patterns, and physical exercise among high school students (Koenig, 2012).

Furthermore, in addition to enhancing social conduct among adolescents, religious orientation is also associated with a decrease in antisocial behavior. For instance, Munir and Malik (2020) indicated that private religious practices (including personal prayer, engagement with the Bible, perusal of church magazines, and literature) exhibited a negative correlation with delinquent behaviors among Mormon adolescents. Moreover, the significance of a profound comprehension of religion as a protective factor against antisocial behaviors, including substance use and abuse, absenteeism, sexual activities, and issues such as inflicting harm on others, has been recognized. The engagement in religious rituals and adherence to other religious criteria demonstrates a negative correlation with high-risk behaviors, such as tobacco use, alcohol intake, drug consumption, sexual activities, delinquency, and inflicting harm on others. In summation, there exists considerable evidence supporting the connection between religiosity and the promotion of positive prosocial behaviors while simultaneously discouraging negative prosocial behaviors, albeit a substantial amount of this research has been conducted with Western populations (Regnerus, 2003).

In accordance with the elucidations provided regarding the research theme, the objective of the researcher within this study was to delineate a causal model of moral conduct predicated on parent-

Modeling Moral Behavior Based on Parent-Child Interaction and Perceived Social Support | Naji et al.

181

child interactions and perceived social support, mediated by cultural intelligence and religious orientation, specifically within high school females in Tehran.

Material and Methods

The statistical population pertinent to this research comprised all female high school students residing in Tehran, within the age range of 11 to 16 years (first year high school students) during the academic year 2023. The sample size for this study was determined based on the calculation of ten individuals for each manifest variable within the structural equations' model. Given that the total number of manifest variables stood at 21, the resultant sample size for the current investigation was established at 400 individuals; however, this number was adjusted to 379 after the exclusion of invalid questionnaires, which were selected through a combination of availability sampling and subsequent two-stage cluster sampling methodology. Two educational institutions were chosen from each district, followed by the selection of two classes from each institution. The students present within these classes were solicited to complete the questionnaires.

This research was conducted utilizing a quantitative survey methodology and is characterized as cross-sectional in nature. A documentary approach was employed to review the theoretical literature and prior research conducted in this domain. Standardized questionnaires were utilized for the purpose of collecting data pertaining to the research variables. The analytical level of this survey is categorized as wisdom, while the unit of analysis is the individual. For the analysis of data at the descriptive level, relative frequency charts and tables were employed; conversely, at the inferential level, appropriate statistical tests, correlations, and structural equation modeling (utilizing AMOS software) were implemented. The validity of the questionnaire items was confirmed through both face validity and construct validity assessments. To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a preliminary test sample comprising 40 individuals was drawn from the statistical population. Following the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the items corresponding to each variable were revised and adjusted to ensure internal consistency, ultimately culminating in the preparation and distribution of the final questionnaire among 400 members of the statistical population. The subjects were duly assured that their information would be safeguarded, and adherence to the principles of research ethics was maintained.

Results

Before testing the hypotheses, the normality of data distribution was first tested. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the data have a normal distribution at a significance level of more than 5%. To determine the fit of the measurement model, three criteria of reliability, convergent and divergent validity were used, and composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to measure reliability, the results of which can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Convergent validity and reliability of the measurement model

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Parent child interaction	0.88	0.90	0.547
Perceived social support	0.76	0.78	0.533
Ethical behavior	0.91	0.93	0.579
Cultural intelligence	0.81	0.83	0.678
Religious orientation	0.79	0.83	0.559

According to the AVE values higher than 0.5 as well as composite reliability values and Cronbach's alpha (higher than 0.7), the convergent validity and appropriate fit of the model were confirmed. For divergent validity, the Fornell-Locker (1981) test was used, which states that the representative of each construct has a higher correlation with the construct itself than other constructs. In the table 2, the divergent validity results are presented.

Table 2. Divergent validity of the measurement model

| Variables	Parent child interaction	Perceived social support	Ethical behavior	Cultural intelligence	Religious orientation
Parent child interaction	0.73				
Perceived social support	0.37	0.69			
Ethical behavior	0.76	0.71	0.66		
Cultural intelligence	0.39	0.44	0.50	0.56	
Religious orientation	0.45	0.52	0.58	0.64	0.52

The results of the table 2 show that the load of each reflective agent for each structure on the main diameter (root of AVE values) is higher than the load of that agent for other structures. Therefore, the divergent validity of the model is confirmed. To test the research hypotheses at the sample level and generalize them to the statistical community, structural equation modeling was used using Imus software. The measurement model of different dimensions of the cultural intelligence

variable reached the best possible fit based on the items in the questionnaire; Then, to test the hypotheses, the structural relationships between the existing factors were measured. The table 3 shows the fit indices of this model.

Table 3. Structural equation model fit indices

Indices	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
Accepted value	1-5	> 0.90	> 0.90	0.50-1	0.50-1	< 0.08
Obtained value	3.91	0.948	0.923	0.526	0.57	0.08

Based on the output of the AMOS software, the fit indices of this model reported in the table 3 are completely acceptable. Therefore, the mentioned model has an acceptable fit and high reliability.
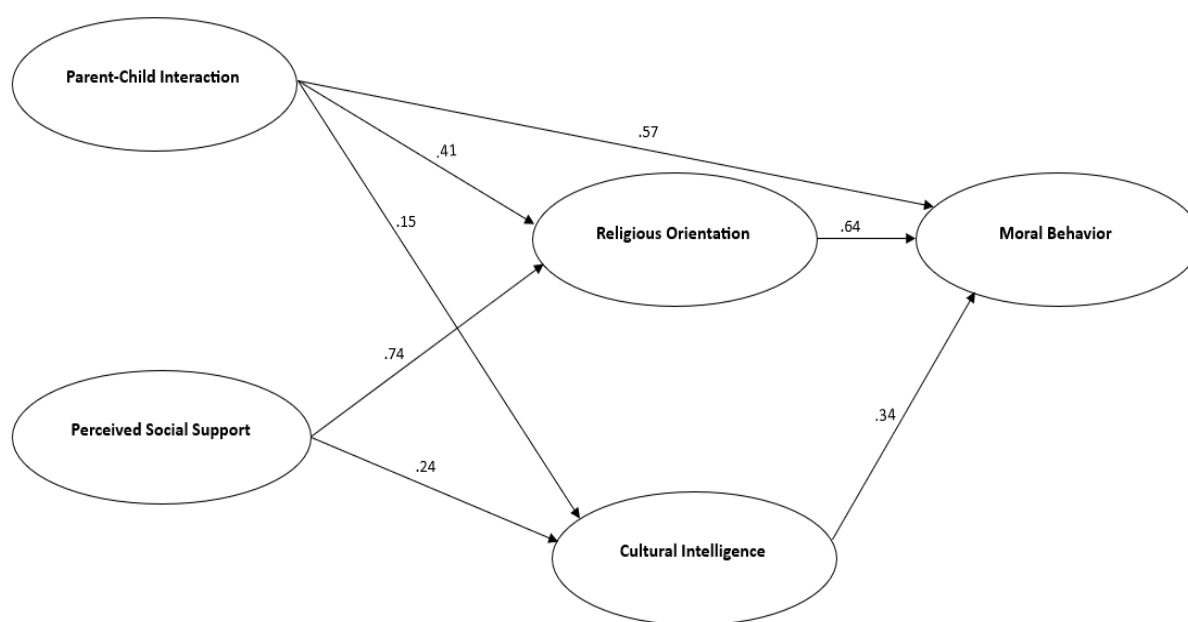
Figure 1. Research measurement model in significant mode

To confirm the hypotheses, the partial index of the T statistic value should be outside the range of ± 1.96, the value of the parameter between the two ranges is not significant and indicates the absence of a significant difference in the value calculated for the regression weights with a value of zero at the 95% level. The results of the hypothesis test are shown in the table 4.

Table 4. Summary of the results of the research hypothesis test

Effect type	Research hypotheses	Direct effect	T value	P	Result
Direct	Parent-child interaction has a direct effect on moral behavior.	0.57	2.14	0.001	Confirmed
Direct	Perceived social support has a direct effect on moral behavior.	0.62	3.51	0.001	Confirmed
Mediation	Parent-child interaction has an indirect effect on moral behavior through the mediation of cultural intelligence.	0.49	4.99	0.001	Confirmed
Mediation	Parent-child interaction has an indirect effect on moral behavior through the mediation of religious orientation.	0.58	5.80	0.001	Confirmed
Mediation	Perceived social support has an indirect effect on ethical behavior through the mediation of cultural intelligence.	0.65	7.52	0.001	Confirmed
Mediation	Perceived social support has an indirect effect on moral behavior through the mediation of religious orientation.	0.69	8.47	0.001	Confirmed
Direct	Parent-child interaction has a direct effect on moral behavior.	0.57	7.19	0.001	Confirmed

To test the mediating variable with Baron and Kenny method, three steps must be taken. In the first step, the direct path between the independent and dependent variables is checked. If the regression coefficient of this path is significant, it goes to the second stage, and otherwise, the mediation test will not be possible. In the second step, the mediator variable is added to the model and the path of the independent variable to the mediator and then the mediator to the dependent variable is examined, and if both paths are significant, it indicates the role of the mediator in the model. In the third step, if the direct path between the independent and dependent variable is significant, it means that the independent variable affects the dependent variable in both direct and indirect ways, in other words, the variable has a partial mediating role. But if the regression coefficient of the path is not significant, it means that the variable has a full mediating role. As the table 4 shows, the coefficients of the path between parent-child interaction and moral behavior as well as perceived social support and moral behavior were significant and confirmed. To test the mediation of cultural intelligence, the effect of parent-child interaction and perceived social support on moral behavior was again analyzed before introducing the variable of cultural intelligence, and this effect was also found to be significant.

Discussion

Encouraging ethical behavior in the classroom is essential to successful teaching. There are many theories about behavioral management. Fundamentally, however, each of them operates on a shared set of beliefs within the school. Therefore, a teacher should devote enough time to create and reinforce those beliefs with his classes. One of the first steps is to teach students to listen actively. It is no longer a natural talent for people to actively listen to each other. Most of us are

drowning in a sea of noise and distraction from technology and media all day. Consequently, the classroom must become an antidote to the rest of the world. If a student can learn from others by actively listening to what they have to say, they have room to think. This is what the teacher creates when there is respectful listening in the school. Focused attention is an important starting point for teaching. In fact, opening the mind in the present to new and different ideas and hearing discourse from others is the necessary beginning of education. Ethical behavior requires that everyone in the class practice respect and well-being as the primary motivation for learning.

According to the results, the following are suggested:

Since one of the main ways to explain moral behavior to students and children is to provide positive examples, then parents and teachers should play a positive role in their children's lives and be a positive role model for them with their behavior. These patterns can include respect for others, honesty, discipline and empathy. By providing positive examples, children learn the best strategies for positive behaviors. Children should also be taught to respect others. Respecting others is one of the important moral principles that should be taught to children. Teaching respect for others helps children to use kindness and attention to others' needs well in their relationships with others. An educational strategy to improve children's morals is to encourage them to participate and serve others. Parents and educators should encourage children to participate in social activities and serve others. For example, they can encourage children to volunteer in community service and participate in charitable activities. This helps children understand moral values such as empathy, forgiveness and responsibility.

In line with the results of the research and considering that the parent-child interaction has a significant effect on improving the moral behavior of students, it is suggested that parents use play therapy as one of the available solutions to strengthen the parent-child relationship. Play therapy can help parents better understand their child's emotional needs, behaviors, and thought processes. By observing their child in play therapy sessions, parents can gain insight into their child's inner world and gain a greater appreciation for their child's unique perspective. Play therapy can also help children develop better communication skills, which can improve their ability to express themselves to their parents. Parents can also learn new ways to communicate with their children and respond to their needs in a more effective way. In general, play therapy can be an effective tool for improving relationships between parents and children. It can help parents better understand

and respond to their child's emotional needs, improve communication and trust, and provide a platform for conflict resolution and stronger bonding.

Due to the role of cultural intelligence moderator, it is necessary to provide solutions to strengthen the cultural intelligence of students. One of the first ways to strengthen the cultural intelligence of children by making them interested in other cultures is to create first-hand experiences of those cultures for children. Therefore, it is recommended to parents that, if possible, planning to travel and getting to know different national and international cultures should be prioritized in their lives. Sensory learning is also one of the useful strategies; Children respond to sensory learning at a young age more than at any other time in their lives. To strengthen children's cultural intelligence, regardless of their age, they can be introduced to new foods and different games, as well as games that are popular among different generations, music and even rhythmic movements. This will also teach them that learning can be sensory or physical and not just a mental process.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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