

Religious Affiliation, Religiosity and Parenting:

Comparison of Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze Mothers in Israel

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Abstract

The role of religiosity in shaping family functioning in general and parental discipline in particular have received wide research attention, especially in studies conducted among Christian parents from Western cultures. Little is known about the relationship between religiosity and parenting in non-Western cultures, and among non-Christian parents. The current study aims to explore the role religion and religiosity play in predicting maternal use of psychological control and punitive discipline of mothers from Israel who belong to two ethnic-national groups and represent four religions: Jewish, Muslims, Christian, and Druze. The study was based on a survey of 502 Israeli mothers of children aged 3-5. Mothers were asked to fill out an online structured, anonymous self-report questionnaire survey that was distributed through social networks. We use multivariate hierarchical regression to explore the role of religion and religiosity in predicting mother's use of punitive discipline and psychological control, after controlling for child and family factors (i.e., child gender, anger and peer rejection, mother socio-demographic factors and co-parenting). The results showed that religiosity is significantly and positively associated with mothers' use of both psychological control and punitive discipline. Furthermore, it was found that Arab mothers reported more than Jewish mothers on using psychological control, while no significant differences between the four religions were found in predicting maternal punitive discipline.

Intervention and prevention efforts aim to abolish maternal psychological control and punitive discipline should take into account the variation between parents' cultural and religious values, in order to design culturally sensitive and effective interventions. Also, they should be designed to include family therapy and not to focus solely on one parent, usually mothers.

