



**Mothers' Conditional Regard as Mediator in the
Association between Their Own Childhood Experiences
of Conditional Regard and Toddler Compliance at 2
Years of Age**

Liz Cohen-Freyman

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Abstract

This work is a part of a broader longitudinal study that examines the effects of parental behavior on child development, based on the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000). According to this theory, parental support of the three basic psychological and universal needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) will generally promote better internalization, compliance, and wellbeing. In contrast, the use of parental practices that frustrate the basic needs, e.g., conditional regard (CR), can lead to negative outcomes, particularly on social development of the child.

The sample used in this study ($n=181$) is part of a larger sample of a longitudinal study. The data collection in this study included three waves: 1) Wave 1 included 290 Israeli mothers in the last trimester of their first pregnancy ($M_{age}= 27.2$ years, $SD_{age}=3.1$), who completed a questionnaire about their parents CR-orientation; 2) Wave 2 included 192 mothers and their 18-month-old toddlers ($M_{age} =19.2$ months, $SD_{age} =2.6$), who completed a questionnaire to assess the mother's CR-orientation; 3) Wave 3 included 186 children ($M_{age}= 25.4$ months, $SD_{age} =1.8$) who participated in a "clean-up" task in a lab to assess their compliance to their mother's requests. 94 of the children participated in this study are males and 87 are females.

Previous studies have shown that conditional regard is correlated with negative outcomes, while autonomy support is correlated with positive outcomes (Assor, Niemic, Ryan and Deci, 2009). Moreover, it was found that the parents' perception of their own parents as using conditional regard or autonomy support is correlated with them having the same approaches towards their own children (Assor, Roth & Deci, 2004).

This study examined mothers' perceptions of their own parents' conditional regard as predictors of their child's emotional functioning assessed by his compliance to the mother's requests at the age of 2 years. One important milestone in early social development is the growth of compliance, or the willingness to consider requests of others. The ability to comply with requests indicates the ability to understand social standards, and act upon them, including self-regulation that allows the child to stop certain behavior and execute another (Kochanska & Aksan, 1995).

The main hypothesis of this study is that mothers' use of conditional regard toward their 18-month-old child, serves as a mediator of the relation between their own childhood experience of conditional regard with child's compliance at 24 months of age. This hypothesis was examined through the bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

The research hypothesis was confirmed only for mothers' perceptions of their mothers' conditional regard and not for their fathers'. Thus, it was found that the correlation between mothers' perceptions of their own mothers' conditional regard and child's compliance is mediated through mother's conditional regard to her child. This could be an outcome of a social norms that contribute to fact that mothers are the primary care-taker in many families, thus having more influence on shaping their child's social-emotional functioning.

This study supports the self-determination theory, and adds to the knowledge on the relation between parental practices and child compliance and internalization. The findings in this study, if replicated, have great importance in the psycho-educational field, since they highlight the early use of parental practices and their influence on child development and relationship with his/her parent.