

Bar Ilan University

Mothers' Prenatal Belief in Toddlers' Need for External Motivation and  
Monitoring, and Its Association with Child Maladaptive Non-  
Compliance: The Mediational Role of Parental Control

Hagar Dayan Pinus

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Development, School of Education, Bar Ilan University

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## Abstract

This longitudinal study ( $n = 120$ ) applied Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) to investigate the effects of maternal prenatal beliefs about child development prior to birth, on maternal behaviors and child non-compliance two years postpartum. Mothers' beliefs regarding the nature of children's development and the motivations that underlie it were examined during pregnancy, indicating a primary stance, unrelated to a specific child's upbringing. This was followed by a laboratory video-taped task 24 months postpartum ( $M_{child\_age} = 25.5$  months,  $SD = 1.8$ ), in which both mothers' controlling behavior and toddlers' compliance were examined. Two separate mediational models revealed that stronger maternal prenatal beliefs regarding children's need for external motivation and parental monitoring for development were associated with tendencies to exercise controlling parental behaviors when children were 2 years old, leading, in turn, to child maladaptive non-compliance. Our findings highlight the influence of an a priori prenatal parental belief as a potential precursor for parental behavior in practice and child outcomes.