PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
RELACIONES PADRE-HIJO EN LOS EMIRATOS ÁRABES UNIDOS (EAU)

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ABSTRACT

The family plays a crucial role throughout the child's life, being responsible for raising him/her according to certain values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors accepted both in the family and respective society/culture. Specifically, parent-child relationship is proved to affect interpersonal skills and relationships, behaviors, academic achievement and professional, amongst others. Research shows that for a healthy, positive, and adaptive development, a close, warm, supportive, and accepting parent-child relationship should have place. In this research, it was aimed to analyze parent–child relationships in a very specific and idiosyncratic context that has been under lots of recent economic, social, cultural, and, we assume, familiar changes and that has been understudied: United Arab Emirates. Concretely, we explored Emirati parents' perceptions on seven main dimensions of parent–child relationships: parental support and satisfaction, involvement, communication, limiting setting, autonomy and role orientation. The participants were 122 Emirati parents, mostly mothers (73.8%) and married (96.3%), with ages between 21 and 63 years old (M=35.98, SD= 9.172), and with different levels of education (50% of the parents have a bachelor degree). The instrument used was the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), a standardized instrument published by the Western Psychological Services that integrates 78 items with a 4-point agreement Likert scale, divided by the dimensions previously presented plus a validity indicator (social desirability). All the questionnaires were individually administered, and descriptive and correlational analyses were performed to understand Emirati parents' attitudes towards their children and explore how the PCRI dimensions interrelate. Overall, Emirati parents perceive themselves as satisfied, involved and communicative with their children, meanwhile they face some difficulties in establishing limits and promoting autonomy, and tend to accept and apply within their families traditional gender roles. The dimensions of the PCRI exhibit a global pattern of positive and moderate intercorrelation, consistent with the theoretical background of this instrument.

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Keywords: Parent-Child relationship; United Arab Emirates; Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI).

RESUMEN
La familia juega un papel fundamental en la vida del niño, siendo responsable por criarlo conforme valores, creencias, actitudes y comportamientos aceptados en la familia y sociedad. La relación padres-hijos afecta las habilidades interpersonales y relaciones, comportamientos, rendimiento académico y profesional. Estudios muestran que, para un desarrollo saludable, positivo y adaptativo, es necesario una relación cerca, cálida, de apoyo y aceptación. Esta investigación analizó las relaciones entre padres y hijos en un contexto muy peculiar tras muchos cambios economicos, sociales, culturales y familiares, que han sido poco estudiadas: los EAU. En concreto, hemos explorado las percepciones de los padres en siete dimensiones de las relaciones entre padres e hijos: apoyo y satisfacción de los padres, participación, comunicación, establecimiento de límites, autonomía y orientación del rol parental. Fueron inquiridos 122 personas, en su mayoría madres (73,8%), casados (96,3%), con edades entre 21 y 63 años (M=35.98, SD=9,172), y con diferentes niveles de educación (50% de los padres tienen un título de grado). Se utilizó el Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), un instrumento estandarizado publicado por Western Psychological Services que integra 78 items con una escala de acuerdo Likert de 4 puntos, entre las dimensiones anteriormente presentadas, además de un indicador de validez (deseabilidad social). Todos los cuestionarios fueron administrados individualmente, y análisis descriptivas y de correlación se realizaron para comprender las actitudes de los padres a sus hijos y explorar cómo las dimensiones del PCRI se interrelacionan. En general, los padres se perciben como satisfechos, participativos y comunicativos con sus hijos, mientras enfrentan algunas dificultades en el establecimiento de límites y la promoción de autonomía, y tienden a aceptar y aplicar dentro de sus familias los roles de género tradicionales. Las dimensiones del PCRI exhiben un patrón global de intercorrelación positiva y moderada, en consonancia con el marco teórico de este instrumento.
Palabras claves: Relaciones padre-hijo; Emiratos Árabes Unidos (EAU); Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI).

BACKGROUND
It is well known nowadays that family plays a crucial role throughout the child's life. The family is responsible for raising the child according to certain values accepted both in the family and respective society/culture, guiding him/her towards a set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that will accompany the child throughout his/her life. In reality, family is the primary child's agent of socialization preparing him/her for challenging social, academic, professional, moral, and economic contexts (Al Sumaiti, 2012).

Although the whole family (as siblings, grandfathers/mothers, uncles/aunts, and cousins) is likely to interfere and influence the child's growth, parent-child relationship is proved to embody a greater and long lasting effect on the child's development as well as future accomplishments (Al Sumaiti, 2012; OECD, 2011). In fact, several studies report that when a balanced parent-child relationship does not exist, being either too close or too distant, too flexible or too harsh, too intrusive or too unresponsive, the child may face difficulties in developing adequate social and interpersonal skills, in coping with difficulties, in expressing adaptive behaviors, in building trusting relationships, in adjusting school or, later on, professional contexts, amongst others. As so, research shows that for a healthy, positive, and adaptive development, a close, warm, supportive, and accepting parent-child relationship should have place (Bigner & Gerhardt, 2014).

Even though research related to the parent-child relationship abounds in Western countries,

there is a clear lack of studies in the Middle East region, as United Arab Emirates (UAE), being the relationship between parents and children poorly explored. Despite the great researches in Western societies and the knowledge that stemmed from them, one must not assume that the same results would be found in the UAE, as this nation, along with most countries in the Middle East, differs substantially from those Western ones. Probably the main difference that comes to mind when one thinks about Western and Arab societies differences is the individualist/collectivist cultural orientation. As a matter of fact, Arab societies are frequently characterized as homogeneous, due to their collectivist way of living where *the self is made meaningful through the relationships of which the self is a part* (Azaiza, 2005, p. 297). This means that individual autonomy and personal desires are put aside as the need of being part of and being accepted in their group outweighs. As so, in order to fit in and adjust to the relationships of their in-group, subjective norms, roles, and obligations are strictly followed, for they are seen as being essential to the common welfare (Azaiza, 2005). Having the Monarchy and the Royal Family as example of strong family values as integrity, security, obedience, and conformity, there are very clear expectations and little tolerance for departures from these norms (Triandis, 1995).

On the other hand, beyond the implicit differences between Western and Arab societies that fundament the need of studies in this part of the world, the UAE has been under lots of recent changes that may affect several dimensions of the community as it was known before. This seems to be another valid reason for the researches to have place here, allowing getting to know this emergent society and its relationships. In fact, the UAE, and the Arabian Gulf region in general, has been rapidly developing, economically and socially, since the 1960s, with the commencement of oil revenues (Thomas, 2013). According to the World Health Organization (2006) this is one of the few countries that have gone through such far-reaching change just in few decades (Lyons, Morgan, Thomas, & Al Hashmi, 2013). Inevitably, this development brought many changes in the living traditions of these societies, especially if we observe the high number of expatriates that immigrated to the UAE, which are at the moment around 88% of the total population (7.316.073 out of 8.264.070 – UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). This affluence has brought about change in the UAE families, as the marriage of Emirati men to non-Emirati women and the reliance on foreign nannies and domestic help, as parents are working longer hours and women are increasingly entering the workforce (Dresch, 2005; Al Sumaiti, 2012; Thomas, 2013). In fact, Dubai Statistics Centre's data reveals that 94% of Emirati families employ maids to do housework as well as look after children (Al Sumaiti, 2012). The same tendency seems to be observed regarding private tutoring, as 51% of Emirati students undertake out-of-school lessons in at least one subject at the age of 15, a rate substantially higher than the international OECD average of 28% (Al Sumaiti, 2012; Farah, 2011). These relatively new trends may yield a negative effect on the parent-child relationship as it reduces the parents' engagement on their children development and education.

Considering Arab families dynamics, the few studies that exist present parents as tender and affectionate towards their children during infancy. Nonetheless, as the child becomes more mature, by puberty age, a more authoritarian style seems to be adopted, especially for girls, who are expected to be more obedient and subordinate (Al-Haj, 1987, 1989). In fact, being a traditional patriarchal society, gender roles between husbands and wives, sons and daughters, are very well defined. Usually, the father assumes responsibility for the family and is expected to be dominant and authoritarian, monopolizing respect and unquestioning compliance with his instructions, showing little tolerance of dissent (Sharabi, 1975). In its turn, the mother is expected to support and educate their children according to the family values (Rugh, 1984). Usually, mothers have the support of both origin and extended family, as traditional Emirati families have been known to live within extended families, or at least in the same neighborhood, maintaining strong ties with all the family members (Al

Sumaiti, 2012; Avan, Rahbar, & Raza, 2007; Azaiza, 2005). If this is a way of helping to raise and educate children, supporting the mothers, this is also a way of exercising social control, making sure that the children are disciplined and guided by the right values (Azaiza, 2005; Sharabi, 1975).

In a society, culture, and region that substantially differs from the Westerns ones, and that has been undergoing through tremendous changes in the last decades, which surely affect several dimensions of the Emirati daily life, habits, and traditions, more studies are needed in order to better understand its idiosyncrasies. Specifically regarding the parent-child relationship, which, as it was presented, will directly affect children's development and achievements, different research questions can be raised. What's the level of Emirati parents' interaction with and knowledge of their child? How do parents perceive their level of communication with their children in a variety of situations? How effective parents believe their discipline techniques to be? Are parents able to promote their child's independence? Are parents satisfied with their parenthood?

OBJECTIVES

This paper aims to analyze Emirati parents' perceptions on seven main dimensions of parent–child relationships:

Parental support – analyzes whether parents perceive themselves as getting enough emotional and practical support, being able to provide adequate care to the child, or whether parents perceive parenting responsibilities as a burden.

Satisfaction with parenting – measures the enjoyment a parent receives from being a parent.

Involvement – reflects the parents' propensity to seek out for their children, manifest interest in their activities, being an important aspect of the child's welfare.

Communication – represents parents' awareness of their ability to talk with their children, showing empathy for them.

Limit setting – assesses parents' ability to establish limits (discipline) in a consistent way.

Autonomy – analyzes how willing the parent is to promote a child's independence, contributing to that child's psychosocial growth and maturity.

Role orientation – measures parents' attitudes towards egalitarian gender-related values regarding sharing parental responsibilities, as parents model for their children behaviors congruent with their gender-role orientation.

Descriptive and correlational analyzes will be presented in order to explore parents' position regarding the above parent–child dimensions and how these dimensions relate and covariate within Emirati families.

METHOD
Participants

The participants were 122 Emirati parents who have one or more children. Most of the parents were mothers (73.8%), married (96.3%), 3.7% were divorced, and their age varied between 21 and 63 years old (M=35.98, SD= 9.172). The education level of these parents differed from each other, having a minority (1.9%) concluded their studies before high school, while 39.6% attended the school until high school, 50% of the parents have a bachelor degree, 5.7% have a masters degree, and 2.8% has a PhD.

Instrument

This research utilized the *Parent-Child Relationship Inventory* (PCRI), a standardized instrument published by the Western Psychological Services (Gerard, 1994) that is used for evaluating parents' attitudes, behaviors and dispositions toward their parenting style and their children. The PCRI is a

78-items self-report questionnaire that can be administered in two ways either individually or in groups, in average time of 15 minutes. The items of this inventory have a 4-point Likert-type response format that includes: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. This inventory explores different aspects of parents' relationship with children. The PCRI contains seven content scales and a validity indicator. Rather than providing a single score, items are arranged in scales that reflect features of parenting, where high scores indicate good parenting skills. The scales are the ones presented in the objectives section: *Parental Support scale* (SUP - 9 items), *Satisfaction with Parenting* (SAT - 9 items), *Involvement* (INV - 14 items), *Communication* (COM - 9 items), *Limit Setting* (LIM - 12 items), *Autonomy* (AUT - 10 items), and *Role Orientation* (ROL - 9 items). Beyond these seven content scales, which constitute a total of 73 items, we also used one validity indicator, which gauges the participant's tendency to give socially desirable responses - *Social Desirability* scale, with 5 items. In this case, the higher the score, the higher will be the social desirability.

Procedure

All the questionnaires were individually administered, to a convenience sample, and the participants took between 10 and 25 minutes to answer. No major doubts emerged during the administration sessions.

Regarding the statistical analyses, SPSS (version 21.0) was used to perform descriptive analyses, in order to understand in depth Emirati parents' attitudes towards their children, and correlational analyses to explore how the PCRI dimensions interrelate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Descriptive Analyses

The Table 1 presents the mean and respective standard deviation per dimension, as well as the middle point of each scale, and their minimum and maximum possible and obtained scores and Table 2 a more specific analysis, containing all the PCRI items with the respective endorsement percentage considering the total agreement (strongly agree + agree) and the total disagreement (strongly disagree + disagree). Globally, Emirati parents have a positive perception about themselves as parents, but a detailed analysis is needed in order to better understand parent-child specific dynamics.

Table 1 – Mean, standard deviation, scale middle scores, minimum and maximum scores possible and obtained for PCRI dimensions

PCRI Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Scale middle scores	Min. & Max. scores possible	Min. & Max. scores obtained
Parental Support	23.73	3.377	22.5	9 - 36	13 - 33
Satisfaction with Parenting	31.96	4.568	25	10 - 40	20 - 40
Involvement	44.66	5.703	35	14 - 56	33 - 55
Communication	29.13	3.838	22.5	9 - 36	20 - 36
Limit Setting	31.00	5.138	30	12 - 48	17 - 44
Autonomy	22.15	3.611	25	10 - 40	15 - 31
Role Orientation	23.16	3.543	22.5	9 - 36	13 - 32
Social Desirability	11.45	2.286	12.5	5 - 20	6 - 18

Considering the parental support dimension, on average Emirati parents seem to be in a good position to provide adequate care to their children, as generally they perceive that they get enough financial, emotional and practical help to support the family, being the mean obtained slightly above of the middle point.

Nevertheless, there seems to be some divergences of opinions, as the range of the scores obtained is relatively high, having some parents a high score and others a low score. Observing the endorsement percentages on table 2, we can verify that although most of the parents are satisfied and enjoying their lives (items 36 – 85%, and 17 – 88%), yet some of them feel alone in raising their child (item 6 - 37%), worry about money (item 12 - 40%), would need some time away from their child (item 23 - 44%), feel stressed and overburdened with parenting and housing responsibilities (items 29 - 40%, 34 – 66%, and 42 – 45%).

Satisfaction with Parenting scale measures the fulfillment and pleasures that parents experience as parents. Considering that the middle score is 25 and the mean obtained is 31.96, we may conclude that parents are happy with having children and being a parent which is an important factor and a basic requirement for being a good parent. Indeed, 93% of the parents get a great deal of satisfaction from having children (item 22) and 98% admit that being a parent is one of the most important things in their life (item 48). Although, this doesn't mean that at some point of the life parents wonder what the rewards are in raising children (item 19 – 39%) and if they did the right thing having children (item 55 – 26%), for sometimes the expectations don't match with a parent reality (item 27 – 25%).

In its turn, Involvement scale focuses on the interaction and knowledge levels of parents about their children in term of their activities and friends. Once again, the mean obtained is far above the middle score (44.66 vs. 35), which indicates that Emirati parents seek out for their children, spend time with them and are attentive to their children welfare. Most all of the scores are high, and even a detailed analysis of the items' answers reveal that the majority of the parents spend a great deal of time and are very close to their child (items 5 – 86%, and 35 – 89%), protect them (item 57 – 97%), and talk to them (item 63 – 76%). As parents in the present sample have from young children until adolescents, and the involvement between parent-child and parent-adolescent clearly differs, a minority of parents admits having some difficulties in talking to their children (items 60 – 26%, 63 – 24%, and 77 – 25%).

Table 2 – Item contents and endorsement percentages (total agreement vs. total disagreement)

Items	Total Agreement	Total Disagreement
Parental Support		
6. When it comes to raising my child, I feel a lone most of the time. (-)	36.9	63.1
12. I worry a lot about money. (-)	40.1	59.9
13. I sometimes wonder if I am making the right decisions about how I raise my child. (-)	82.0	18.1
17. I get a great deal of enjoyment from all aspects of my life. (+)	87.7	12.3
23. I sometimes feel if I don't have more time away from my child I'll go crazy. (-)	43.8	56.2
29. My life is very stressful right now. (-)	39.7	60.4
34. I sometimes feel overburdened by my responsibilities as a parent. (-)	66.1	33.9
36. I am generally satisfied with the way my life is going right now. (+)	85.2	14.8
42. My spouse and I work as a team in doing chores around the house. (+)	55.3	44.9

Satisfaction With parenting

3. I get as much satisfaction from having children as other parents do. (+)	88.5	11.5
7. My feelings about being a parent change from day to day. (-)	51.7	48.4
19. I often wonder what the rewards are in raising children. (-)	39.3	60.6
22. I get a great deal of satisfaction from having children. (+)	92.7	7.4
24. I regret having children. (-)	9.9	90.1
27. Being a parent is not as satisfying as I thought it would be. (-)	24.6	75.4
48. Being a parent is one of the most important things in my life. (+)	98.4	1.6
55. I wonder if I did the right thing having children. (-)	26.2	73.8
56. I would really rather do a lot of other things than spend time with my child. (-)	18.9	81.1
67. If I had it to do over, I would probably not have children. (-)	10.7	89.3

Involvement

5. I spend a great deal of time with my child. (+)	86.0	14.0
14. Being a parent comes naturally to me. (+)	86.9	13.1
16. I love my child just the way he or she is. (+)	95.1	5.0
35. I feel very close to my child. (+)	89.3	10.7
41. I am very involved with my child's sports or other activities. (+)	72.2	27.9
53. I feel I don't really know my child. (-)	9.8	90.2
57. It is a parent's responsibility to protect his or her child from harm. (+)	96.7	3.3
58. Sometimes I wonder how I would survive if anything were to happen to my child. (+)	86.8	13.1
60. My child rarely talks to me unless he or she wants something. (-)	25.6	74.4
63. I spend very little time talking with my child. (-)	23.9	76.1
64. I feel there is a great distance between me and my child. (-)	17.3	82.7
72. I seldom have time to spend with my child. (-)	27.9	72.2
75. I carry a photograph of my child in my wallet or purse. (+)	78.7	21.3
77. I feel I don't know how to talk with my child in a way that he or she really understands (-)	24.6	75.4

Communication

1. My child generally tells me when something is bothering him or her. (+)	87.7	12.3
9. If I have to say no to my children, I try to explain why. (+)	88.6	11.5
11. I can tell by my child's face how he or she is feeling. (+)	89.3	10.7
20. My child tells me about his or her friends. (+)	77.8	22.1
28. I feel that I can talk to my child on his or her level. (+)	87.7	12.3
33. I generally feel good about myself as a parent. (+)	91.0	9.0
39. My child would say that I am a good listener. (+)	84.2	15.8
46. When my child has a problem, he or she usually comes to me to talk things over. (+)	77.0	22.9
62. It is better to reason with children than just to tell them what to do. (+)	92.6	7.4

Limit Setting

2. I have trouble disciplining my child. (-)	35.8	64.1
4. I have a hard time getting through to my child. (-)	33.9	66.2
10. My child is more difficult to care for than most children are. (-)	29.5	70.5
15. I sometimes give in to my child to avoid a tantrum. (-)	61.4	38.7
21. I wish I could set firmer limits with my child. (-)	52.1	47.9
26. My child is out of control much of the time. (-)	22.9	77.1
31. I wish my child would not interrupt when I'm talking to someone else. (-)	72.8	27.2
40. I often lose my temper with my child. (-)	46.1	53.8
44. My child really knows how to make me angry. (-)	50.8	49.1
54. I sometimes find it hard to say no to my child. (-)	51.7	48.3

66. I often threaten to punish my child but never do. (-)	44.6	55.3
70. Some people would say that my child is a bit spoiled. (-)	53.2	46.7

Autonomy

8. Parents should protect their children from things that might make them unhappy. (-)	88.5	11.5
25. Children should be given most of the things they want. (-)	27.1	72.9
32. Parents should give their children all those things the parents never had. (-)	40.5	59.5
38. I can't stand the thought of my child growing up. (-)	33.6	66.4
45. Parents should be careful about whom they allow their children to have as a friends. (-)	95.1	4.9
50. Teenagers are not old enough to decide most things for themselves. (-)	82.7	17.2
51. My child keeps many secrets from me. (-)	27.9	72.1
59. I miss the close relationship I had with my child when he or she was younger. (-)	52.0	48.0
71. I worry a lot about my child getting hurt. (-)	86.9	13.1
76. I have a hard time letting go of my child. (-)	63.9	36.0

Role Orientation

49. Women should stay home and take care of the children. (-)	59.8	40.1
52. Mothers who work are harming their children. (-)	36.9	63.1
61. A father's major responsibility is to provide financially for his children. (-)	49.2	50.8
65. For a women, having a challenging career is just as important as being a good mother. (+)	59.1	40.9
68. Husbands should help with childcare. (+)	94.2	5.8
69. Mothers should work only if necessary. (-)	63.9	36.0
73. Below age four, most children are too young to be in a regular preschool or day-care program. (-)	45.9	54.1
74. A women can have satisfying career and be a good mother too. (+)	83.6	16.4
78. Having a full-time mother is best for a child. (-)	82.0	18.0

Social Desirability

18. My child is never jealous of others. (-)	36.1	63.9
30. I never worry about my child. (-)	14.0	86.1
37. I have never had any problems with my child. (-)	31.9	68.0
43. I have never been embarrassed by anything my child has said or done. (-)	50.8	49.1
47. My child never puts off doing things that should be done right away. (-)	54.5	45.4

Note: For those items followed by "(+)," endorsement in the positive direction increases the scale score; for those items followed by "(-), endorsement negative direction increases the scale score.

Regarding parents' perception of how well they communicate with their children in different situations, results suggest that the existence of a good channel of communication parent-child, being the mean above the middle point (29.13 vs. 22.5) and most of the total scores high (between 20 and 36, being 9 the minimum and 36 the maximum scores possible). In fact, good practices seem to exist among these parents as 93% agree that is better to reason with children than just to tell them what to do (item 62), explaining why, every time they have to say no (item 9 – 89%), and being able to talk on the child's level (item 28 – 88%). Generally, all parents are good listeners (item 39 - 84%) and support their child (items 1 – 88%, and 11 – 89%). Although, probably associated with the fact of some of the parents have older sons/daughters, when it comes to friends they may not talk so much (item 20 – 22%).

The Limit Setting scale presented a mean of 31, which, considering that the middle score is 30, is slightly above the middle point. This result, associated with the wide range of different scores obtained, suggests that if some parents are able to establish limits, others are not. As a matter of

fact, some parents admit having trouble disciplining their child (item 2 – 36%), getting through him/her (item 4 – 34%), set limits (item 21 – 52%), say "no" (items 15 – 61%, and 54 – 52%), and are aware that their child may be seen as a bit spoiled (item 70 – 53%).

Considering Autonomy dimension, results indicate that generally, Emirati parents don't promote the child's autonomy and independence as the mean obtained was 22.25, being the middle point is 25, and the overall scores are low (between 15 and 31, being 10 the minimum and 40 the maximum scores possible). Concretely, in the UAE parents seem to overprotect children (item 8 – 89%), worrying a lot about the child getting hurt (item 71 – 87%), and tend to control their friendships (item 45 – 95%), perceiving adolescents as incapable to decide most things for themselves (item 50 – 83%). Beyond this need of control, some parents also admit having a hard time letting go of their child (item 76 – 64%), missing the close relationship when he/she was younger (item 59 – 52%), and not standing the thought he/she growing up (item 38 – 34%). These results are not surprising as previous studies already suggested that Arab parents usually tend to over control and limit their children independence, mainly in order to assure that they are living according with the values they defend (Azaiza, 2005; Bigner & Gerhardt, 2014; Sharabi, 1975).

Role Orientation scale evaluates parents' thoughts about gender roles in parenting including the housekeeping and child-rearing tasks. Although the mean is slightly above the middle point (23.16 vs. 22.5), when analyzing each item and the respective percentages, some contradictions become clear, suggesting that parents seem to agree that there *should* be equality in terms of mother/father role in educating and taking care of their children, but the reality seems to be different and more attached to traditional female/male roles. In fact, although 94% believes that husbands should help with childcare (item 68) and 84% agrees that women can have a satisfying career and be a good mother too (item 74), the opposite beliefs are also evident, for 60% believes that women should stay home and take care of the children (item 49), 64% agrees that mothers should work only if necessary (item 69) and 49% defends that father's major responsibility is to provide financially for his children (item 52). These conceptions may be linked to what they think is the best for the children, as they assume that having a full-time mother is best for a child (item 78 – 82%) and that below age four, most children are too young to be in a regular preschool or day-care program (item 73 – 46%). In the extreme, 37% of the sample acknowledges that mothers who work are harming their children (item 52). Overall, these results reflect a society still very oriented by traditional female/male values and respective roles, which inevitably will influence in the same way children beliefs and behaviors.

Finally, the validity indicator of these results, the social desirability scale, suggests that the majority of parents was honest in their answers, presenting a mean of 11.45, bellow the 12.5 points for the middle score. There seem to be only two items were the agreement is higher, suggesting the existence of a certain level of social desirability. Specifically, 51% of the parents refers that they have never been embarrassed by anything their child has said/done (item 43) and 55% says that their child never puts off doing things that should be done right away (item 47). If we compare these percentages with those from Limit Setting scale, it becomes obvious that some level of social desirability is present.

CORRELATIONAL ANALYSES

As shown in Table 3, the dimensions of the PCRI exhibit a global pattern of positive and moderate intercorrelation, consistent with the theoretical background of this instrument.

Indeed, Parental Support seems to relate significantly, positively, and moderately with all dimensions, with the exception of Role Orientation. This suggests that high levels of support received by parents is associated with high levels of satisfaction as parents, of involvement and communication with their child, and with ease in establishing boundaries, both promoting child's discipline and

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autonomy. In fact, seems logical that parents that have emotional and practical support from their extended family and/or nannies and domestic helpers, and that don't struggle with financial problems (as item 12 suggests), have more physical and psychological availability to their children.

Satisfaction with Parenting presents higher correlations with Involvement and Limit Setting scales, suggesting that parents that are satisfied with their roles are more able to be involved in the child's daily life and promote discipline, and vice-versa – the closer parents are to the child and the better they are able to establish limits, the more satisfied they are. Lower, but still moderate, correlations are also present with Communication and Role Orientation, meaning that satisfied parents communicate better with their children and tend to educate them towards a more egalitarian gender values, and vice-versa.

Involvement and Communication dimensions present the highest correlation of all, which is consistent with the meaning of these terms as the more involved a parent is in his/her child's activities, the better should be the channel of communication between them. A positive and moderate correlation is also observed with Role Orientation, suggesting that the more parents are involved and interact with their child, the more they share parental responsibilities between father and mother, loosening expectations based on gender. This result may reflect a subtle change on the children's education, as traditional Emirati parents, especially fathers, tend to preserve a certain distance from their child, principally after puberty, and to live according to marked differences between males and females roles. As so, it seems that some parents are starting to allow themselves to be closer to their child, also demonstrating a more egalitarian attitude towards gender roles, reinforcing previous descriptive results.

The preceding assumptions seem to be reinforced by the also positive correlation between Communication and Role Orientation: the better the channel of parent-child communication, the less traditional are the attitudes towards gender roles, and vice-versa.

Finally, Limit Setting and Autonomy present a strong positive correlation, indicating that parents with good educational practices regarding one of these dimensions also present effective practices towards the other dimension. Concretely, a parent capable of promoting a controlled home environment, where he/she generally doesn't feel besieged by the child's demands, is also able to promote the child's independence, accepting his/her expression, and vice-versa. The present result also suggests a possible and progressive change on the way the child education has place, being some parents able to conciliate both discipline and autonomy. This may seem to contradict the above descriptive results, where most of the parents in this study admitted having difficulty in promoting children's discipline and, especially, autonomy. Regardless, what the correlation between both dimensions means is that the few parents that promote discipline promote independence as well and those who face difficulty in promoting discipline also struggle to promote autonomy.

Table 3 – Correlations between PCRI dimensions

Dimensions	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Parental Support	—					
2. Satisfaction with Parenting	.241**	—				
3. Involvement	.326**	.530**	—			
4. Communication	.234**	.263**	.642**	—		
5. Limit Setting	.342**	.460**	.324**	.159	—	
6. Autonomy	.276**	.146	.049	-.118	.485**	—
7. Role Orientation	.096	.234**	.332**	.205*	.170	.165

** *p<.01*
** *p<.05*

CONCLUSIONS

This research explored Emirati parents' attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding their children's relationship, education and habits in their daily life. If part of the results were already expected according to previous studies in Arab contexts, others enabled us to better understand this culture, and yet others suggest some changes in this society.

The descriptive analyses in general and the review of all items and their endorsement percentages in particular allowed us to explore in detail Emirati parents' perceptions about parenting. Globally, our sample of parents seems to be having satisfactory support regarding their parenting responsibilities, although, obviously, there are always some aspects that could be better. This support felt is rather understandable if we consider that most of these parents have the extended family support, as well as nannies/domestic helpers, and financial support and free services from the UAE government. Although common sense around the world tend to see Asian people as less affectionate and more distant from their children (Bigner & Gerhardt, 2014). Our study reveals Emirati parents as satisfied while parents, and with high levels of involvement and parent-child communication. Nonetheless, establishing limits and promoting autonomy seem to be two difficult practices to accomplish as these parents tend to struggle with saying "no" to their children and, simultaneously, they exercise a high level of control on their children daily lives. Finally, we found that our Emirati parents still guide themselves, their tasks, and their families towards traditional male/female roles, defending that children are better taken cared of if they have a full-time mother, justifying like this their belief that women should not work and be mothers at the same time. Although, we should consider that our sample were parents, some of them with adolescents sons/daughters, so it is understandable that they defend the values through which they've been raised.

Regarding the correlational analysis, it was verified that parental support is an important aspect for parents to feel satisfied and with high levels of involvement and communication, easing the limits' setting and autonomy promotion, even though these are domains where parents face some difficulties. Similarly, being satisfied as a parent is also correlated with better involvement, discipline, communication, and egalitarian role orientation, meaning that parents that are able to be more involved, to discipline, communicate and raise their children towards a non-traditional male/female responsibilities, are more satisfied as well. The more involved parents are with the children, the more they communicate, and, also, the more they are involved and communicate, the less traditional they seem to be regarding gender roles. As so, although most of the parents are not yet at this point, as it was discussed before, this may suggest that of them are, and that close relationship with children is associated with less traditional values. Finally, despite the fact the majority of the parents has difficulty in establishing boundaries and promoting independence, it seems that parents who are able to practice one of these are also able to practice the other. This means that good parental practices in different areas are associated.

On one hand, this research enabled us to better know parental practices and relationships in a society, culture, and region understudied, and that is going through several economic, social, cultural, and familial changes. On the other hand, a larger sample would benefit the analyses and the results interpretation, and more tests should be ran in order to further explore the data – for example: are these results the same for mothers and fathers? Does age or education have any effect? Does the child's gender and age interfere with parental practices?

Overall, we can conclude that Emirati parents perceive themselves as satisfied, involved and communicative with their children meanwhile they face some difficulties in establishing limits and promoting autonomy. In addition, they tend to accept and apply within their families traditional gender roles, although some item analyses and correlations suggest that a subtle deviance from these conventional values may be having place.

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