

Extended Abstract

The Relationship between Cultural Values and Students' Critical Thinking Dispositions with the Mediation of Dimensions of Family/Teachers Communication Patterns

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Introduction

The main purpose of any educational system is to help students to become lifelong learners. One essential method to achieve this goal is to equip students with critical thinking ability. Critical thinking is defined as a thoughtful judgment or reflective decision making (Facione, 2011). A critical thinker possesses both critical thinking skills and dispositions. Dispositions toward critical thinking are tendencies that motivate the person to apply her/his critical thinking skills in the target situation. In order to help students learn how to think critically, educators must value both critical thinking skills and dispositions. However, only a few studies have focused on investigating the field of dispositions toward critical thinking.

Based on Shommer-Aikins systematic model (Shommer-Aikins, 2004) as well as previous qualitative research (Kakay, 2001) this study was designed to investigate the mediating effect of dimensions of family/teachers communication patterns (including conversation orientation and conformity orientation) in the relationship between cultural values (including horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, horizontal individualism and vertical individualism) and critical thinking dispositions (including truth-seeking, open-

mindedness, critical thinking self-confidence, analyticity, systematicity, inquisitiveness and cognitive maturity).

Method

In the present study, a total of 681 undergraduate students (425 females and 266 males) were selected by multistage random cluster sampling method from all the colleges of Shiraz University.

Participants completed the short version of the Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Scale (Sivadas, Bruvold, & Nelson, 2008), the child version of the Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument (RFCP; Ritchie, & Fitzpatrick, 1990), the Teachers Communication Patterns Instrument (researcher-made) and the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI; Facione, & Facione, 1992).

Results

Factor analysis was used to examine the structural validity of the CCTDI; results were consistent with the two previous research findings (Kakay, 2001; Walsh, & Hardy, 1997). Instead of the seven factors proposed by Facione and his colleagues (Facione, & Facione, 1992) four factors including truth-seeking, open-mindedness, critical thinking self-confidence and analyticity were extracted.

The results of path-analysis supported a complete as well as partial mediational effect of the dimensions of family/teachers communication patterns for most of the relationships between cultural values and students' critical thinking dispositions.

Discussion and conclusion

Consistent with the Shommer-Aikins systematic model (2004) and previous qualitative research findings (Kakay, 2001), the results of the present study revealed different patterns of relationship among cultural values and each types of critical thinking dispositions mediated by the dimensions of family/teachers communication patterns. Family and/or teacher conversation mediated the relationships

between all of the cultural values and students' critical thinking self-confidence. Family conformity orientation mediated the relationships between horizontal and vertical collectivism and students' truth-seeking disposition. Family conversation and conformity orientations showed mediating effect on the relationships between horizontal and vertical collectivism and horizontal individualism and students' analyticity disposition. Family conformity orientation showed mediating effect on the relationships between horizontal and vertical collectivism and students' open-mindedness disposition. In general, the results indicated that in comparison with the dimensions of teachers' communication patterns, the dimensions of family communication patterns possess more mediational effect. Furthermore, the results also showed that horizontal collectivism facilitates the development of the students' critical thinking dispositions more than the other cultural values.

Keywords: Cultural values, Dimensions of family/teachers communication patterns, Critical thinking dispositions, Iranian college students.