

## The Self-control Model of Shiite Youth with a Grounded Theory Approach

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Self-control plays a significant role in physical and spiritual health. Studies have shown that spiritual attitudes and religious teachings play a role in promoting self-control. The purpose of this study was to determine the components of self-control construct in Shiite youth.

**Methods:** Based on the purpose of the study, i.e. determining the self-control construct, and based on criterion-oriented studies in this regard, in the present study, qualitative approach was applied with grounded theory method for collecting data. The participants were 32 youths whose self-control was evaluated using a semi-structured interview. In this study, all the ethical considerations were observed and no conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Results:** The findings of this study showed that self-control construct in Shiite youth has four main components and fourteen subcomponents: 1) Attitude (belief in the benefits of avoidance, belief in harms of committing, attention to the emotions involved in the problem, problem solving, self-esteem); 2) self-motivation ability (the benefits of avoiding, paying attention to the damage done, paying attention to the emotions involved in the problem, and positive self-assertion); 3) the ability to control oneself and the environment (the ability to control attention, the ability to control impulse, the ability to control the environment, the active conditioning, socializing with good friends); and 4) adaptability, self-awareness, problem solving ability, flexibility, acceptance of excitement and behavior management, secondary positive evaluation.

**Conclusion:** By comparing the results of the presents study with the text-based studies such as the one by Rafi'ee Honar, who considers the self-control construct as self-monitoring, target recognition, motivation, excitement control, cognitive control and persistent control, it can be found that the model developed in the present study makes the psychological self-control constructs more clear and, consequently, provides a more appropriate ground for developing self-control scales of the Shiite youth and appropriate psychological training programs for promoting self-control.

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### Summary

#### Background and Objective

Many harmful and damaging behaviors are associated with weak self-control (1, 2). Health-related studies

show that self-control can predict early mortality, unsafe behaviors such as overeating, drug and alcohol abuse, insecure sexual intercourse, drunk driving, and non-compliance with medical regimens (3). Self-control has positive outcomes such as achieving higher goals, academic achievement, better income and self-esteem (4, 5). Individuals with proper self-control have better interpersonal relationships (3, 6).

In all divine religions, self-control is emphasized in line with God's satisfaction (7). In Islamic teachings, the most important word related to self-control is "piety". The word "virtue" and its derivatives have been mentioned 257 times in the Quran. Self-control is different from self-regulation. In fact, self-control is self-conscious self-regulation in avoiding obstacles. Self-control is the capacity to direct impulses, responses and automatic habits (8). Self-regulation involves attempting to achieve a positive goal and avoid a negative target, but self-control is only an attempt to avoid a negative target (9). Rafi'ee Honar (2016), by summarizing and analyzing concepts related to self-management, considered the core of self-control as "the ability to inhibit the response" (7).

According to these definitions, self-control can be considered as "the ability to avoid adverse behavior". An undesirable behavior is an irrational behavior that is not in the long-term interests of the individual and the individual is aware of the harms of that behavior. Therefore, self-control is not a matter of when one does not do anything that is undesirable. According to Baumeister (2018), although there is much evidence for the fundamental role of will in self-control, more precise models must be presented to explain self-control (8).

Self-control is a psychological instrument that has acquired dimensions and can be strengthened (10). Therefore, many studies have provided educational packages to strengthen self-control (3). Studies and meta-analyses have examined many self-control reinforcement packages based on behavioral approaches and reported little effectiveness (3, 11, 12). The lack of self-control model seems to have led to the development of non-efficient packages. The presentation of self-control model facilitates the development of more effective training packages.

## Methods

**Compliance with ethical guidelines:** In the present study, the research participants were provided with sufficient information about the research nature of the questionnaires and the purpose of the research, as well as the confidentiality of their personal information and they were assured that their information would be kept confidential. Therefore, the participants participated in the study voluntarily and consciously with full consent. They were also free and could avoid answering questions if they did not wish to.

Considering the fact that the purpose of the research was to develop the self-control construct in Muslim Shiite youth, qualitative research method and ground theory method were used to collect and analyze data.

The sample population included Shiite Muslim youth, out of whom some were selected using accessible sampling method and some using purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the participants. The number of interviewed participants was based on the principle of saturation (13). According to this principle, interviews are stopped when the researcher concludes that the interviews do not provide new data. The data from the study were saturated in the 27th interview and interviews with the thirty-second person ended. Participants included 14 women and 18 men aged 22 to 45.

## Results

The findings of this study showed that self-control construct in Shiite youth has four main components and twenty sub-components. The first component, i.e. "Attitude" consists of four components: belief in the benefits of avoidance (the material benefits of the world, the spiritual benefits of the world, the afterlife physical and spiritual benefits), the belief in the harm done (worldly material harm, worldly spiritual harm, afterlife physical harm and afterlife spiritual harm), focus on feelings involved in the problem and self-esteem.

The second component, i.e. self-motivation consists of five sub-components: focus on the benefits of avoidance (the material benefits of the world, the spiritual benefits of the world, the afterlife physical benefits, and the spiritual benefits of the hereafter), attention to the harm done (worldly material damage, worldly spiritual harm, afterlife physical and spiritual harm), attention to the emotions involved in the problem, positive suggestion and pattern of the Ahlul-Bayt.

The third component is the ability to control yourself and the environment, and consists of five components: the ability to control attention, the ability to control the momentum, the ability to control the environment, active conditioning, socializing with good friends, and maintaining the desired action. The fourth component or "adaptability", which consists of five components including self-awareness, problem-solving ability, flexibility, acceptance of excitement and behavior management, is a positive secondary evaluation of spirituality.

## Conclusion

The results of this study suggest a new theoretical framework for self-management. The findings showed that the self-control construct in Shiite youth has four main components and twenty sub-components. The strengths of this study included using qualitative interviews and grounded theory. By comparing the results of this research with the text-based studies such as the one by Rafi'ee Honar (2014), which considers self-control as consisting of self-monitoring, target recognition, motivation, emotional restraint, behavioral restraint, cognitive control, persistent control, it can be found that the model derived from this extensive research is more comprehensive and is better able to

reveal the psychological components and mechanisms of self-control. As a result, it has provided a more appropriate basis for developing the scale of Muslim Shiite self-control and developing appropriate spiritual psychological training programs for promoting self-control. Qualitative interviews and grounded theory seem to be more suitable for presenting psychological and spiritual models such as self-control compared to the text-based approach, and can provide a wider and more efficient model.

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#### Ethical considerations

The Ethics Committee in Biomedical Research of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences has confirmed this research.

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#### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

#### Authors' contributions

Past research explanation and conclusion: First Author; Help with formulation of general structure of the article: Second Author and Fifth Author; Statistical analysis: Third Author; Helping with explaining the findings and statistical analysis: Fourth Author.

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