

# Parental Authority and Youth<sup>(1)</sup>

This field-study of parent-child relationship in the Lebanese family aims to show the values which the family tries to transmit to its youth, the response of the latter to parents' authority and the factors influencing the relation between them. **These factors** include the family types, the economic status, the geographic area, the religious affiliation and sexual identity.

War conditions imposed certain limitations on the researchers. Difficult or impossible access to certain areas of the country restricted the number of Christian respondents in the sample to 33, versus 204 Moslems. The total of 237 included: 134 boys and 103 girls aged 18-23 years; 180 from urban areas, 57 from rural ones; 91 participants in political or war activity, including 69 boys and 22 girls.

Family types represented were:

- The traditional, extended family: 45%
- The changing, quasi-traditional family: 17%
- The nuclear, more modernized family: 37%

This representation is fair in the sense that the first type, the traditional, still occupies a primary rank in Lebanon, particularly in the Moslem community.

As to the economic status, the sample includes the following proportions:

- High income group: 20%
- Average income group: 54%
- Low income group: 19.4%

Parental restrictions are related to the basic factors mentioned in the first paragraph of this article in the following ways:<sup>(2)</sup>

1. Statistical tables indicate that in nuclear families where young men have their own households, parents have less authority and are less prohibitive than in traditional and semi-traditional families where interdependence is practiced on a relatively large scale.
2. Middle class groups tend to be more authoritative than high income and low income groups.
3. A high proportion of restriction corresponds with a higher degree of tension and conflict and vice versa.
4. Rural families are more authoritative with their children; hence the degree of tension and opposition is higher among rural youth, while in urban areas, young people are more ready to obey their less authoritative parents.

5. Conflicts regarding intersexual relations before marriage reach a higher proportion among boys than among girls, the latter being more successfully trained in self-control.
6. All families without regard to type, economic status or geographic affiliation, are more dictatorial with girls than with boys.
7. Parental authority is relatively weak in families where young men and women participate in political activities.

The following table gives the percentages of parental restrictions, youth's adherence to them and absence of conflict, including variables due to the sexual factor:

	Boys	Girls
Parental Restrictions:	25.25%	43.29%
Youth's Adherence:	44.8%	70.85%
Absence of Conflict:	73.82%	75.04%

Another table shows the percentages of parental authority or restrictions, of adherence and absence of conflict among participants and non-participants in **political activities**:

	Participants	Non-Participants
Parental Restrictions	25.70%	37.76%
Youth's Adherence	44.30%	69.25%
Absence of Conflict	67.23%	73.55%

Adherence of Youth to Parental Authority

Results show that an average of 60% of young men and women included in the sample adhere to parents' values regarding marriage, irrespective of social or economic status. This is particularly true of traditional families.

The following table gives a list of parental restrictions connected with marriage and other forms of behavior and, in the opposite column, the percentage of youth's **adherence** to them.

1. Restriction regarding civil marriage	61.83%
Restriction regarding interdenominational marriage	58.90%
Restriction regarding free choice of mate	41.59%
2. Restrictions regarding personal activities:	
gambling	67.87%
holding a dancing party	63.28%
wearing indecent dress	60.76%
receiving anyone in one's private room	57.31%
athletic activity	45.69%
3. Restriction concerning political involvement	55%

1 — Abstract of a study prepared by Drs. Zuhair Hatab and Abbàs Makki, forming part of a series of "Human Studies", published (1980), by Maahd-ul-Inma' il-Arabi (Arab Center of Development), Beirut, Lebanon.

2 — pp-217-227 contain an evaluation of preliminary postulates given on pp. 32-34, on the basis of conclusive results.