

Values in Raising Children in the Southern and Eastern Countries

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The Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2010 points to the differences in perceptions between what people consider are the priority values for raising children in societies on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean. Magued Osman examines more closely this issue from the perspective of societies in the southern and eastern Mediterranean, with a focus on 'religious beliefs', 'family solidarity' and 'obedience'. In this regard, he examines the question of whether there are absolute guidelines of what is good and bad, or whether things are relative to the circumstances.

The current section analyses a series of questions related to the perception of a sample of respondents from five Southern and Eastern countries of the Mediterranean, namely Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Turkey. The questions are related to values parents are emphasizing when raising their children. Six values ('curiosity', 'obedience', 'religious beliefs', 'independence', 'respect for other cultures' and 'family solidarity') are listed and respondents were asked to identify the most important and the second important to them personally, to societies in countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and to societies in Europe.

According to data collected from the five countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean countries, parents are placing more emphasis in bringing up their children on 'religious beliefs' (Chart 7.1). This was more obvious in Egypt and in Morocco where 51% and 46% reported that 'religious beliefs' is the most important value to them personally that should be emphasized when raising children. Even though 'religious beliefs' turn out to be the most important value in the other three countries as well, a lower percentage was given by respondents from Lebanon (40%), Turkey (40%) and Syria (32%). The second largest proportion of respondents identified 'obedience' as the most important value in Egypt, Morocco and Syria, and identified 'family solidarity' in Lebanon and Turkey. The third largest proportion of respondents in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria reported 'curiosity' as the most important value while in Turkey 'respect for other cultures' appeared as the third most cited among the six values. As illustrated in Figure 1, the lowest prevalent values with reference to the most important value received only 7% in Egypt, 15% in Turkey, 19% in Morocco, 21% in Syria and 28% in Lebanon (aggregated percentages related to 'respect for other cultures', 'independence' and 'curiosity'), suggesting a different level of homogeneity with regard to the value map pertaining to each society on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. When responses to the most and the second most important

RAISING CHILDREN IN SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES CHART 5.1

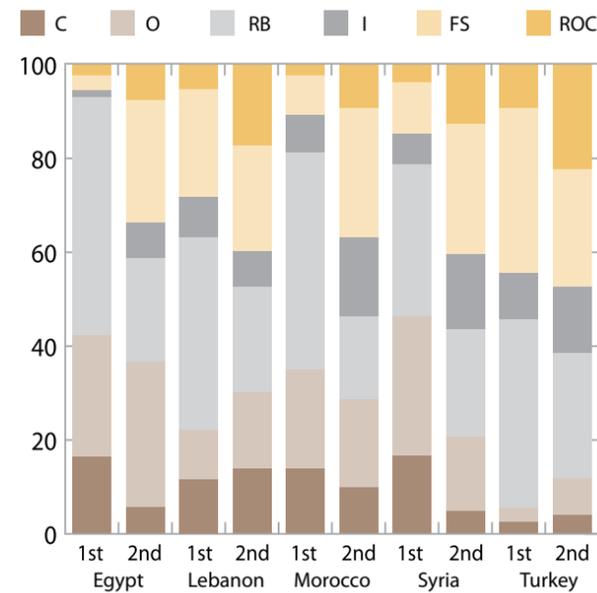
Egypt	Syria	Morocco	Lebanon	Turkey
RB (51)	RB (32)	RB (46)	RB (40)	RB (40)
O (26)	O (30)	O (21)	FS (21)	FS (35)
C (16)	C (17)	C (14)	C (12)	ROC (10)
FS (3)	FS (10)	I (8)	I (11)	I (9)
I (3)	I (8)	FS (8)	O (11)	O (3)
ROC (1)	ROC (4)	ROC (3)	ROC (6)	C (3)

RB: Religious beliefs, **O:** Obedience, **C:** Curiosity, **FS:** Family solidarity, **I:** Independence, and **ROC:** Respect for other cultures. % of respondents describing the value as the most important to them personally.
Base: % of all respondents. Chart developed by M. Osman on the basis of the Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010

value in raising children were combined, it was found that an additional significant proportion in the five countries identified 'religious beliefs' as the second most important value. The highest proportion was reported in Egypt (73%) followed by Turkey (67%), Morocco (65%), Lebanon (62%) and Syria (53%). 'Obedience' and 'family solidarity' came in second and third place in the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean with more emphasis on 'obedience' in Egypt (57%) and Morocco (41%) and with more emphasis on 'family solidarity' in Turkey (64%), Syria (49%) and Lebanon (34%). The other three values namely 'curiosity', 'independence' and 'respect for other cultures' received less emphasis with regards to raising children. 'Respect for other cultures' came last in the list of the most important value in raising children in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria while 'curiosity' came last in Turkey (Chart 7.2).

The pattern of disparity according to demographic variables (age, sex, residence, educational level and employment status) differs across countries on the southern and eastern

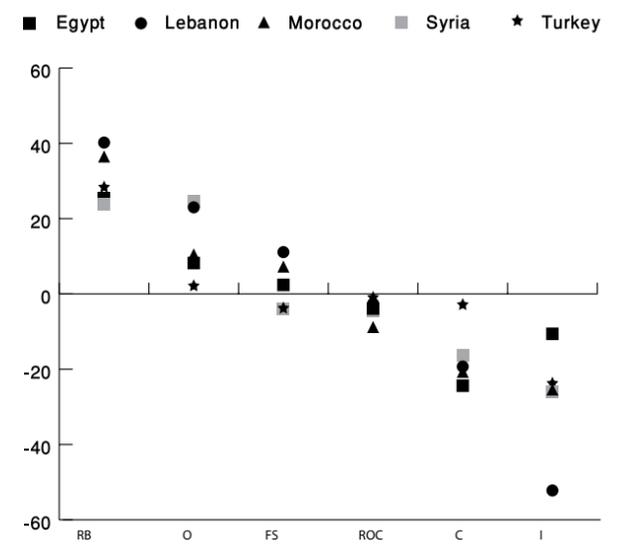
RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF SIX VALUES IN RAISING CHILDREN CHART 5.2



C: Curiosity, **O:** Obedience, **RB:** Religious beliefs, **I:** Independence, **FS:** Family solidarity and **ROC:** Respect for other cultures.
Base: % of all respondents. Chart developed by M. Osman on the basis of the Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010.

shores of the Mediterranean. The value of 'religious beliefs' is considered the most important value parents emphasize among all social groups in Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. In Syria, 'obedience' appears as the most important value among males, older respondents who are employed and respondents leaving in suburbs of large cities. In Turkey, highly educated respondents and students put more emphasis on 'family solidarity'. When respondents from the five countries were asked about the values that are important to parents raising children in societies on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, an agreement was found regarding 'religious beliefs' as the most important value. 'Obedience' followed 'religious beliefs' in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria. In Turkey, the second

VALUES GAP BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND SOUTHERN/EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN CHART 5.3



RB: Religious beliefs, **O:** Obedience, **FS:** Family solidarity, **ROC:** Respect for other cultures, **C:** Curiosity and **I:** Independence. Gap in values between European and southern and eastern Mediterranean parents in raising children.
Base: % of all respondents. Chart developed by M. Osman on the basis of the Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010..

most prevalent value was 'family solidarity'. A comparison between the results of the most important value from the respondent's own opinion and what s/he believes is adopted in the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean societies indicates that the most important value is 'religious beliefs' in both cases. However, it was found that the percentage attributed to this value from the respondent's own opinion is significantly lower in Turkey (40% vs. 50%), in Syria (32% vs. 38%) and in Lebanon (40% vs. 45%). An opposite trend was found in Egypt. The percentage of Egyptians who personally say that 'religious beliefs' are the most important value in raising children was higher than the percentage saying that societies on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean consider 'religious beliefs' as

Sweden - Publication for Arabic Language Learning

Based on a collection of course materials, the publication 'Elifboken' supports non-Arab speaking young people in learning Arabic language. The book is an initiative of the Swedish NGO Mekteb which aims to help second generation of emigrants to develop their own Swedish-Muslim identity through the organization of courses on Arabic language and Qur'an reading with mixed groups of Swedish and international students. By using different didactic exercises, they teach young people in their communities general grammar rules and through the Elifboken publication students also increase their understanding of other languages which can be advantageous in terms of their professional development. In addition, the training component related to Arabic script is designed to broaden participants' perspectives on the outside world and other cultures, and to develop their overall communicative ability. Developed as part of the 'Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges' Initiative, the organisers have been looking into ways that the book's methodological approach can be rolled out at a European level.

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the most important value in raising children (51% vs. 38%). This discrepancy, which was absent in Morocco, suggest that Egyptians might perceive themselves compared to other neighborhood societies, more attached to 'religious beliefs' when raising children. This state of mind is reversed in Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. When asked about values that are important to parents raising children in Europe, the larger proportion of respondents from Lebanon, Morocco and Syria identified 'independence' as the most important value (57%, 37% and 35% respectively) European parents emphasis in raising their children. An additional fourth of the respondents in the three countries identified 'curiosity' as the most important value. In Turkey, the larger proportion of respondents identified 'independence' (38%) followed by 'religious beliefs' (21%) while in Egypt the larger proportion identified 'curiosity' (40%) followed by 'independence' (23%).

The gap between the value map of European societies and of societies on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is obvious with regard to raising children. This gap is quantified for each of the six values as the difference between the percentage of respondents reporting that this value is the most important one societies in the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and in European societies. The larger gaps were in 'religious beliefs' and 'independence', reflecting a perceived less emphasis in Europe on 'religious beliefs' and more emphasis on 'independence'. To compare the magnitude of the cultural gap in each country, the sum of the absolute differences was calculated. Results indicated a more evident gap in Lebanon (149) followed by Morocco (106), Syria (97), Egypt (72) and Turkey (61). Results from data collected in European societies indicate that parents living in Europe have value preferences towards 'family solidarity' and 'respect for other cultures' when raising their children. Opinion of respondents from the five countries did not reflect a similar value map of European societies. Such discrepancy illustrates the perception gap between the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and European countries (Chart 7.3).

An additional question was asked on the views related to whether there are absolute guidelines of what is good and

bad or things are relative and depend on the circumstances. A vast majority of Moroccans (90%) says that truth is absolute. The same trend was found in Egypt where 74% of the respondents agree that truth is absolute. A lower percentage of absolutism was found in Syria (65%) and in Lebanon (62%). The views of Turkish respondents towards truth as absolute were quite different. A majority of Turkish (71%) respondents believe that truth is relative and deciding what is bad or good depends on the circumstances. Considering that truth is absolute was found to differ by demographic characteristics especially age and residence. The percentage of respondents saying that truth is absolute increases with age. In Syria, the percentage among the youngest cohort (15 to 29 years old) was 58.9% compared to 83% among the oldest group of respondents (65+ years old). Retired respondents in Lebanon and Turkey are more likely to say that truth is absolute. Rural residents in Lebanon and Syria and residents of suburbs of large cities in Morocco and Turkey are in favor of the absolutism of truth. In Egypt, the discrepancy was between residents of small or middle sized towns and residents of large cities, where 57% vs. 79% of the respondents said the truth is absolute. Students in Lebanon, Syria and Turkey are less conservative than the general population with a lower percentage reporting that truth is absolute. The percentage is nearly six points less than the corresponding percentage for the whole society (Lebanon 56.5%, Syria 58.2% and Turkey 22.9%). Another evidence showing the impact of education can be illustrated in the significantly higher percentage of Turkish respondents with no formal education saying that truth is absolute.

Value absolutism can be a determinant for values adopted for raising children. A negative association is suggested between value absolutism and 'respect for other cultures'. Viewing value absolutism as an explanatory variable for respecting other cultures can have its policy implication in modifying attitudes through education and media programmes.

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Spain - Quarterly on Mediterranean Cultures

With the aim of contributing to research and studies on the Mediterranean, 'Quaderns de la Mediterrània' is a publication focused on giving an insight into contemporary issues across the Region. Produced on a quarterly basis by the Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMED), which is based in Barcelona, the journal tackles current events across the two shores of the Mediterranean such as mutual perceptions, mass media, migration, shifting values and the sociological, economic and political processes of the peoples. In each issue of 'Quaderns' there is a central dossier which tackles a key subject, as well as a series of articles on current events, a collection of pieces on cultural, anthropological and sociological aspects, a selection of internet resources and a book review section. In this way, the publication, which has been successfully running since its launch in the year 2000, also contributes to debate and discussion on intercultural dialogue issues and the future of Mediterranean societies.

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